

The Freethinker

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TELEVISION AND RADIO are the greatest publicity media we now have and, as such, are to be dreaded by "impostors", to use the term employed by the BBC in a series of broadcast exposures. We may note in passing that the Christian religion, even if it has gained a new lease of life through presentation on TV and radio, is also bearing the brunt of satirical attacks which would have had to face trials for criminal "blasphemy" not so very long ago.

But in what was once a Christian country, infidelity, blasphemy, heresy—call it what you will—even when savagely punished by the law, did not do much more than affect a very small proportion of the public. It is true that a work like *The Age of Reason* circulated all over the country and was a bestseller, but its readers at any given time must only have numbered a very few thousand. If it were broadcast in serial form it would be heard by millions, and it could well do more harm to the Bible, in a couple of weeks, than in many years of selling in book form.

Spiritualist Squeals
Thus, one can understand the horror stricken squeals which came from all Spiritualists, when they heard that the devastating exposure of Sir William Crookes made by Trevor Hall in his book *The Spiritualists* was to be broadcast. It is one thing for a comparatively few "antis" to read it—few Spiritualists have the courage to do so—but quite another for something like 8 millions of listeners to learn the sorry tale of how a brilliant man of science was thoroughly hoodwinked—bamboozled is a better word—by a clever and quite unscrupulous young minx into believing that she could materialise a spirit from the mighty deep. And, in spite of the strongest Spiritualist interests, the broadcast took place on February 19th. That Crookes at first believed her implicitly may be quite true; that he continued to do so as time went on is just impossible to believe. Trevor Hall's book, following the trail with the eye of a Sherlock Holmes, is a fascinating exposure of one of the greatest impostures in Spiritualistic history. And the naive drivel put out by "informed" Spiritualists in rebuttal is simply food for mocking laughter.

"Mischievous Nonsense"
It is a mistake to think that the "experiences" Crookes had with the delectable Florence Cook were his first Spirit adventures. He had already met D. D. Home, the "immaculate" medium—a term I think Home gave to himself because he had never been "exposed". This probably is true mostly because he took good care not to submit to the indignity of being the subject of any tests. When he met Bradlaugh, who had no more belief in Spiritualism than in miracles, nothing happened, no doubt due to the occasion being one of Home's "off" days. But "immaculate" or not, Home had to disgorge a sum of £30,000 or so which had been given to him by a credulous old woman. She thought Home would put her in touch with the "spirit" of her dead husband which he failed to do, so she sued Home for the return of the money. The judge, Vice-

Chancellor Gifford, scathingly attacked Home, and called Spiritualism "mischievous nonsense".

Another "medium" of the period who made a very big name for herself was Anna Eva Fay, and of course Crookes met her also and was suitably impressed. These "experiences" prepared him for Florence Cook, and all who have read Mr. Hall's book or have heard the broadcast based upon it will know how thoroughly Crookes was deceived. To read the "apologetics" since published in psychic journals, one would think that never in all his "experiences" with Florrie was there the least hint of fraud, that Florrie's "materialisations" of Katie King were exactly

as Crookes described them: everything true and above board!

Making A Fool of Him

But before Mr. Hall took the question in hand, it had been examined by the late J. N. Maskelyne, by Frank Podmore and by Joseph McCabe, not of course so thoroughly as by Trevor Hall, but sufficiently to show how a great scientist can make a fool of himself. Yet not altogether as big a fool as his Spiritualistic admirers and defenders do their best to make him.

Home, Anna Eva Fay, and Florence Cook, all should have made him a stout supporter of Spiritualist claims of "eternal life" in a "Summerland", but did they? McCabe, for example, unearthed a letter written in 1874 by Crookes to a Russian lady in which he said that after four years of investigation he had found "no satisfactory proof that the dead can return and communicate". This letter was published in *Light* on May 12th, 1900. Yet Crookes is always among the first of the "great men of science" who are quoted as believing in Spiritualism, and never retracting a word on the subject.

Arm-in-Arm with Katie

The reader of *The Spiritualists* must decide for himself whether the evidence given in it, is sufficient to prove that Florence Cook was Crookes's mistress, and that he knew all along that the "materialisations" of Katie King were fraudulent. As far as Spiritualism is concerned, the question of an amorous affair is really irrelevant. To believe Crookes was "carrying on" with Florrie may be an attack on his reputation, but that is all. I feel fairly certain that Mr. Hall is right. Take as an example Crookes' own account of one of his encounters with Katie—the "spirit".

Katie never appeared to greater perfection, and for nearly two hours she walked about the room conversing familiarly with those present. On several occasions she took my arm when walking, and the impression conveyed to my mind was that it was a living woman by my side, instead of a visitor from the other world . . . I asked her permission to clasp her in my arms, so as to be able to verify the interesting observations which a bold experimentalist has recently somewhat verbosely recorded. Permission was gracefully given, and I accordingly did—well, as any gentleman would under the circumstances.

Are we really expected to believe that Crookes on his

IEWS and OPINIONS

The BBC and a Spiritualist Imposture

By H. CUTNER

own showing actually was convinced that the living body of a young woman whom he held thus in his arms was a spirit? Florrie then was about 20, and Crookes 42 years of age. Were they both then quite without experience?

But if all this was a huge fraud—and it was—what becomes of Spiritualism? The vast majority of people who heard the broadcast were left in no doubt that it was a fraud, a huge imposture, but before the publication of Trevor Hall's book only those who had read and studied the case knew the truth, and in the nature of things their number was relatively small. All who heard the broadcast now know that one of Spiritualism's greatest cases of "materialisation" was completely untrue—how much now can they trust the other "evidences" for Spiritualism? What becomes of the mediums who get "messages" from the dear departed? What about

"apports" and "spirit guides" like White Eagle or Blossoming Flower—the Negroes, the Hindus, the Angels, and kindred spirits with whom all good mediums are in constant touch? What about the photographs of "spirits" still residing in Summerland, everyone of which is guaranteed "authentic"? Don't they also all go overboard?

The BBC had "behaved in a scandalous manner", said *Psychic News* (2/3/63). It was the "height of effrontery", a "studied insult". No one, it declared, "would have dared to make these libellous accusations when Sir William Crookes was on earth". And though there was no mention of any steps that Sir William's spirit might take by way of revenge, the BBC was solemnly warned that its attack would not harm Spiritualism. "It will harm the BBC".

We beg leave to doubt.

Formosa's Roman Catholics

By P. G. ROY

THE VATICAN NEWSPAPER, *L'Osservatore Romano*, of November 28th last published a revealing interview with Monsignor Stanislao Lo-Kuang, the (Chinese) Bishop of Tainan (Formosa). Formosa, or "Nationalist China" as some people like to call it, has an entire population of about 11 million. Of these, 8 million are natives ruled by about 3 million fugitives from the Chinese mainland. In the mountainous interior there are another 300,000 Malaysians. Chinese nationality can therefore be claimed by less than a quarter of the inhabitants.

For a century, Spanish Dominicans have tried to convert the population to the Roman brand of Christianity; up to 1950 they could claim a mere 15,000, but since the arrival of Chiang-Kai-Shek's remnants, the Roman Catholic quota has quickly risen to 200,000 (with about 40,000 catechumens). "Ninety per cent of the converts are Chinese refugees, with a sprinkling of Formosan Chinese and indigenous mountain dwellers". "Owing to deep-seated Buddhist and Confucian tradition among the native population our missionary work is exceedingly difficult", the Bishop admitted.

Why is it so much easier to proselytise among the Chinese refugees? he was asked, and replied: "They have witnessed the sacrifices of our Church and her resistance against atheist Communism in China, and they are eager to show their appreciation. In addition, the Chinese fugitives are uprooted from their native soil and traditions, therefore they are susceptible to a new doctrine". Missionary work for the Church is so easy, in fact, that its expansion is merely limited through the lack of priests—there are only 14 resident bishops and the seminaries in Formosa and Hongkong are working overtime to turn out more priests for the job. However, military service on Formosa is obligatory and every young man has to do his three years; it is exceedingly difficult to get dispensation from Army service, as the government points out that, if it were allowed for a handful of Catholics, it would have to give exemption to the thousands of Buddhist clerics.

Why do they not open new schools? This too is very difficult and costly because of the regulation that any new school must stand in its own ground of no less than 18 km² (nearly 7 square miles) to give facilities for camps, playgrounds, hospitals and sports, and the ground rate is very high. In addition, the selection of teaching staff is very restricted and the curriculum supervised.

The relations with the Government being so good, what then are the difficulties the missionary work encounters?

"We have never had cause for real complaint," said the Bishop, "due to the fact that the government sees to it that religious freedom is fully exercised. There are no restrictions to visitors from abroad, though it is hardly possible for a non-Chinese to settle permanently in our island. The government looks benevolently upon the educational work of the Church, not least in view of an appalling increase in juvenile delinquency at a rate unknown in China proper."

Asked what was the cause of this moral deterioration, the Bishop said: "Life on Formosa is still somewhat unsettled and there is no sense of security among the Chinese fugitives. They are still dreaming of the day when they may return to their native district and the homes they left behind. They are but displaced persons. This is the most important factor, but there are others, mostly of a social character, such as unemployment, which particularly amongst the young, inevitably leads to increasing delinquency."

To the question why there is so much unemployment, the bishop pointed out that in a relatively short time the island had been invaded by 3 million foreigners, and its economy had not fully digested this influx; life was still not quite normal after having been geared to new standards.

"The problem has been aggravated by a too sudden birth explosion and various private organisations are campaigning for the necessity of birth control in order to restrict the ratio of overpopulation". The government stands aloof and does not interfere in this dispute, but the Roman Catholic hierarchy has already strongly protested against this campaign, for which the means come mainly from Protestant countries such as the United States. Generally speaking, the problem was not so urgent as for instance in Japan where abortions are legal, and where there are more than one million a year! In Formosa abortion was still illegal and punishable.

Since the time when they had to leave China proper, the work of the missionaries has completely changed its direction. Before it was mainly amongst the lower classes—peasants, poor artisans, etc., it being hardly possible to approach the educated classes. Since the diaspora, the natives of Formosa, have shown no interest, whilst the uprooted intellectuals eagerly accept Christianity which, as it seems, offers some protection against the new ideas from the mainland. "The Catholic Church has been

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Religious Coercion in Israel

By ALEX HERSHAFT

IT IS COMMON KNOWLEDGE that Israel has pioneered Western democracy in the generally backward Middle East. In many respects Israel is as progressive as the big democratic powers. Every adult resident is enfranchised regardless of race, creed, or citizenship. All political views are tolerated, and even the tiny Communist Party is free to hold meetings, to publish its newspaper, and to send representatives to the Israel Parliament. Capital punishment is meted out only in extreme cases.

In one respect, however, Israel is still a very backward and autocratic country. Because of the political makeup of Israel's government, there are laws and agreements in force which discriminate unfairly in the name of religion against members of the Israeli community and infringe upon their fundamental human rights.

All matters of personal status, such as marriage, divorce, burial, and inheritance, are governed exclusively by the politically sanctioned religious authorities. Thus, every Israeli Jew has to submit to the rigid and outdated discipline of the orthodox rabbinate, even when this conflicts with his own religious feelings. Such a condition causes grave injustices and innumerable personal tragedies. Marriages performed by Reform or Conservative rabbis abroad or civil marriages are considered common law marriages in Israel. The 7,000 members of the Jewish Bnei Israel community from India find it very difficult to marry members of other Jewish communities, even though they have been guaranteed full rights as Jews under the Law of Return.

Because of the laws governing personal status Israel is discriminating against women. For instance, a Jewish man has the right to marry a second wife if his former wife has been declared of unsound mind. The Jewish woman has no similar right. She is condemned to remain "anchored" for life.

Because of the laws governing personal status Israeli citizens are discriminated against in matters of religion. For instance, an Israeli citizen who is not Jewish is not permitted to give testimony before a rabbinical court even when his testimony is indispensable to the carrying out of justice.

Because of the laws governing personal status Israeli citizens are discriminated against in matters of name. For instance, a person in Israel whose name is Cohen, Katz, Kaplan or Rappaport is not permitted to marry a divorced woman, not even when the woman was divorced by himself.

Because of the laws governing personal status Israeli citizens are discriminated against in matters of origin. For instance, a non-Jewish woman, even if she has accepted Judaism, is unable to marry a man whose ancestors were called Cohen, Katz, Kaplan, or Rappaport.

Because of the laws governing personal status Israeli citizens are discriminated against in matters concerning their affiliation to a religious community. For instance, Israeli citizens who do not belong to a "recognised" religious community are unable under any circumstances to marry. Citizens belonging to separate communities are unable to marry each other. Marriages between Orthodox and Karaite Jews are not possible. Marriages between Israeli Catholic Christians and Israeli Orthodox Christians are impossible. Marriages performed in Israel and joining Israeli Protestants of all kinds are illegal.

Because of the laws governing personal status Israeli citizens are forced to change their religion. For instance, a Jew who wishes to marry a non-Jew, a Muslim who wishes to marry a non-Muslim, and a Christian who wishes to marry a non-Christian are unable to marry unless they or their partners agree to a change of religion. Such a change of religion is usually purely formal, of course, bringing honour neither to the religion the person leaves nor to the one which he accepts under legal duress; nor again to the State which compels him to do so.

Trains and buses are generally not allowed to run on Saturday, and people who are too poor to own an automobile or to hire a taxi have no means to visit their relatives or friends, or to go to the beach on their only day off from work. When the new Hadassah medical centre was opened outside Jerusalem, religious zealots stoned the special buses which carried essential medical staff on Saturdays, causing bodily injury and extensive property damage. The huge staff is now transported by ambulances and the hospital does not have visiting hours on Saturdays.

Ships are not allowed to dock on Saturdays. On many occasions, the passengers of a ship which arrives after sundown Friday because of a technical delay have to spend 40 long hours in view of Israel's shore before being allowed to disembark. All work must come to a standstill in the overburdened Israeli ports on Saturdays, resulting in disproportionate losses to the country's economy.

Public places of recreation and entertainment, including theatres and museums, are shut on Saturdays. Squads of young toughs, exempted from military service on religious grounds, enforce the blackout with clubs and stones.

Orthodox intransigence impedes scientific progress, particularly in the medical field. The Minister of Health, a member of the National Religious Party, has forbidden experiments with birth-control pills on religious grounds: dissection of bodies in hospitals is seriously curtailed. Recently, the police were engaged in a five-hour battle by 500 zealots who objected to the performance of an autopsy upon the body of a man who collapsed in the street. Eight policemen were injured, one critically; no arrests were made.

In addition to the political power gained through the participation of the religious parties in the government coalition, organised orthodoxy holds still another weapon. By virtue of the "kashrut" and "interest" licensing system and the "Saturday work permits", the Chief Rabbinate exercises considerable control over the private sectors of the country's economy, particularly the food and banking industries. The Reform congregation in Herzliya lost its meeting hall when the Rabbinate threatened to withdraw the latter's kashrut licence.

The orthodox authorities guard jealously their religious monopoly. Reform and Conservative congregations have encountered great difficulties in finding halls for meetings and worship. One Reform and one Conservative synagogue have recently been opened and a building of the Hebrew Union College is nearing completion. Three more Reform and Conservative synagogues are scheduled to become autonomous next year. Yet, they have no prospects of receiving the fully deserved official recognition which will enable them to attend to the personal needs of their members.

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

Some devout Christian lady has been accused of scratching a painting of Jesus by Graham Sutherland—who is equally devout for he is a Roman Catholic—because she didn't like it. A correspondent to the *Daily Mail* (February 21st) thinks the painting "depicts what appears to be a headless, disembowelled product of Belsen", and another plaintively asks, "Why do we have to tolerate the hanging of ghastly paintings in our churches?" But why not? We have full Biblical authority.

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For example, Holy Writ (through Isaiah) says: "He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows . . ." and so on. The Renaissance artists made Jesus look either like Apollo, or a Saxon nobleman, and of course a white man, which Jesus could never have been. No, Graham Sutherland is quite right—his is the true way to depict his Deity.

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Now that a landing on Mars is thought to be rapidly becoming possible, the Roman Church is already getting busy on the question of whether "our Lord" will be able to "save" Martians—if there are any—as he does Roman Catholic earthies. So far however, the Vatican piously and firmly rejects the idea that people who have the good (or is it bad?) fortune to inhabit other planets can be "saved". But is not the Vatican a little too sure? What if God Almighty had already decided to land on Mars to save its sinners? What if he came exactly as Mr. Sutherland depicts his Jesus, and found the Martians looking like him and only too pleased to be saved?

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After all, God must have created Mars as he created the Earth, with a Garden of Eden and a Hebrew-talking Serpent unless he had mapped out a more original and better planned way of peopling Mars, with men and women who didn't speak Hebrew, who knew nothing about the traditional Apple, and who were therefore utterly without sin. In fact, people who would make Jesus superfluous. Happy people!

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The late Professor Ian Aird, who made such a big reputation operating on Siamese twins, left some posthumous papers in which he said he was convinced of personal immortality. Unfortunately he produced not only no new arguments for his belief, but not an iota of evidence. As one correspondent to the *Daily Mail* (February 20th) points out, Professor Aird omitted to deal with "the facts of evolution of man from lower animals"; and if immortality is true of man then it must be true also of the animals from whom man is descended. In other words, evolution has given the death blow to every speculation about what happens to man after death. For him, death is the end exactly as it is for a humble chimpanzee.

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Prophets of doom are not confined to the Christian religion. We therefore gladly give publicity to the woes and wailings of a Mohammedan prophet, Yusef Mohammed Balal of Syria, who gives March 15th as the date on which, we regret to say, the end of the world will take place. He has 35,000 revered followers, and they are doing their best to sell all their possessions before the fatal crack of doom. Also, they have to "clean" their consciences.

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Our friend Adrian Pigott, sends us a delightful story "perhaps too good to be true" that he found in *African*

Genesis by R. Ardrey. It concerns the distinguished zoologist, Sir Solly Zuckerman, who as a young man published a study of primate behaviour, establishing that sex was the basis of animal society. Sir Solly was a South African, then newly arrived in London, and he proposed calling his book, *The Sexual Life of the Primates*. But it was "whispered to him that Primates in England could refer to nothing but the hierarchy of the Established Church". So the book appeared under the title, *The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes*.

FORMOSA'S ROMAN CATHOLICS

(Concluded from page 74)

the only organisation to resist Communism, whilst both Buddhism and the Protestants have given way to pressure and are co-operating with the régime", said the Bishop, declaring optimistically that the Church was working hard to educate and prepare the Christian forces so that when the day of return to the mainland dawned, they will be ready "to effectuate a mass conversion of the Chinese race".

RELIGIOUS COERCION IN ISRAEL

(Concluded from page 75)

Over the years there have been sporadic attempts to restore religious freedom in Israel. Several pamphlets were issued and a petition to reconsider the Marriage and Divorce Law of 1953 was circulated. Since Israelis live on a very tight budget, even these brave but comparatively meagre efforts had to be discontinued for lack of funds.

Late in 1961, following a spontaneous demonstration against the introduction of new restrictions on public transport, the League for Abolishment of Religious Coercion in Israel was born. In the first eight months of activity the League has established ten chapters and gained tens of thousands of members and supporters throughout Israel. In pursuit of its aims, the League has organised demonstrations, sponsored public meetings, and provided free transport on Saturdays to the Hadassah Medical Centre in Jerusalem. It has established contact with sympathetic members of the Knesset and other public officials, brought several cases before the Supreme Court, offered free legal advice to individuals affected by religious coercion, notably members of the Bnei Israel community, and attempted to arouse public opinion through the mass media as well as through its own publications.

The League for Abolishment of Religious Coercion in Israel is the only independent, non-party organisation in Israel which works specifically for freedom of conscience and religion and the separation of Church and State. The League is not anti-religious. It supports the right of every man to worship God in his own way or not to worship Him. The League is financed by individual contributions and staffed by volunteer workers. Its address is P.O. Box 200, Jerusalem.

[Editor's Note.—Since we received Mr. Hershaft's article, a test case of a mixed marriage performed abroad has been successful before the Israel Supreme Court. The court ordered the Ministry of the Interior to register a civil marriage contracted in Cyprus between a Jew and a Belgian Roman Catholic woman. The Israeli Minister for Religious Affairs, Dr. Wahrhaftig announced (Daily Telegraph, 28/2/63) "that a Jew marrying a gentile was a traitor".

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.
London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. A. MILLAR.
(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
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North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.
Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street). Sunday, March 10th, 6.45 p.m.: E. TAYLOR, "Aristotle, Socrates and Plato".
Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, March 12th, 7.30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Atheism and Moral Sanctions".
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, March 10th, 6.30 p.m.: 82ND ANNIVERSARY. Guest Speaker: COLIN MCCALL.
Marble Arch Branch (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, March 10th, 7.30 p.m.: PROFESSOR HYMAN LEVY, "An Unbeliever Looks at Death".
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, March 10th, 11 a.m.: MAURICE CRANSTON, M.A., "The Rights of Man in 1963".

Notes and News

ALASDAIR MACINTYRE, in a review of two religious books in *The Guardian* (27/2/63) cited a typical case of absurd though probably thoughtless, Christian exaggeration: "that God asks nothing in suffering of mankind which he himself has not experienced in the person of Jesus". It is not to diminish the agony of Jesus, said Mr. MacIntyre, "to point out that his sufferings were only a fraction of what was suffered by countless individuals in Germany or Russia or Algeria". To call the death of Jesus "the worst that happened", as the author of one of the books did, "is simply to have no sense of 'the scale of human suffering'". Mr. MacIntyre added. And he gave other illustrations of statements "the obvious falsity of which astounds the reader". But then, such books are not, of course, intended for the critical, they are written by and for the occupants of what Mr. MacIntyre calls "a self-enclosed world".

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IT WAS GOOD, too, to see Mr. MacIntyre question the treatment of Teilhard de Chardin as "a reputable cosmological thinker" without any reference to "the devastating criticism which his writings have undergone".

★

REVIEWING ANOTHER religious book in the same issue of *The Guardian*, Dr. Alec Vidler recalled that once, when the draft of a Queen's speech for the opening of Parliament was being circulated among the Cabinet, it was found

that somebody had written at the foot of the draft, "Refer A.G.". This did not mean as at first was thought, "refer to the Attorney-General", but "Insert the customary reference to Almighty God at the end of the speech". Such a reference is, as Dr. Vidler said, "little more than a ceremonial tailpiece", but it is the "remarkable achievement" of Werner and Lotte Pelz in their book *God Is No More* (Gollancz, 21s.), "to interpret the words of Jesus in the Gospels . . . without any reference to God (except an occasional bowing out of the concept)".

★

HERE ARE TWO court reports on the same day from the old and the new world. (1) "The father of five children who were abandoned on Paddington station claimed at Marylebone Juvenile Court yesterday that the mother had said: 'I had to leave them for God'. She was, he said, 'going to overthrow the Pope'" (*Daily Telegraph*, 14/2/63). (2) "A coroner's jury has ruled that the religious beliefs of Mr. and Mrs. John A. Arsenault Jr. of Brantford, were partly to blame for the death of their newborn baby last month. The jury said that asphyxiation caused the death but it resulted from lack of medical attention because of the parents' religious beliefs. The parents are members of the Mission of the Holy Spirit, a sect which does not consider doctors necessary for child deliveries" (*St. Catherines Standard*, Canada, 14/2/63).

★

MISS ELLEN AMELIA PENNY, who died five years ago, left interest on £3,000 3½ per cent War Stock to Wells Cathedral, on £2,000 stock to Bristol Cathedral and on £1,000 stock to what she called Taunton Cathedral (which doesn't exist) as well as bequests to seven other churches in the West Country (*Daily Telegraph*, 22/2/63). She also asked in her will that the three bishops and seven vicars should attend her funeral and that the bells should be rung each year on her birthday. "Was she successful in getting the three bishops and seven vicars to her funeral?" asked Mr. Justice Buckley in the High Court. "Only one diocesan registrar," he was told.

★

WHEN THE PLAY *The Bedsitting Room*, by John Antrobus and Spike Milligan, moved from the Mermaid Theatre to the Duke of York's on March 2nd, a new parrot was required for the role of the transformed Mr. Macmillan. Spike Milligan accordingly sent an advertisement to *The Times*: "Wanted Tory parrot to play the part of Harold Macmillan in *The Bedsitting Room*. Must provide own cage. Apply Spike Milligan at the Mermaid Theatre". But Cassandra of the *Daily Mirror* informed us (22/2/63) —the advert was not acceptable in that form. So Mr. Milligan tried again: "Wanted Tory (or Right Wing/True Blue/Conservative) parrot to play the part of Right Hon. Prime Minister (or Crofter's Famous Son) in *The Bedsitting Room* . . .". No luck. Still, we believe he got the parrot, though not through *The Times*.

★

WE CANNOT claim acquaintance with the works of Ursula Bloom, and if an article, "Faith at Your Bedside" (*The Viewer*, 16/2/63) is a fair sample of her style, we have no inclination to read her latest, *Parson Extraordinary*. Miss Bloom is disjointed, repetitive, changes tense in mid-sentence and leaves other sentences unfinished. "Many young feel that the title 'atheist' sounds better", she writes. But better than what? She does not say. Instead she goes on: "A doctor once told me that, although he had seen hundreds of men die, he had never seen a single atheist amongst them. He told me: 'In that hour they seem to see the truth'." Are her love stories as hoary as that?

Evolution, Sex and Mr. Bennett

By D. H. TRIBE

IN "Vicissitudes of Adolescence" (THE FREETHINKER, 14/12/62), Mr. Denis Cobell spoke approvingly of Professor Carstairs's commendation of Margaret Mead's studies in Samoa and conclusion that charity was more important than chastity. The Professor, he said, "had the religious moralists grounded". The writer was over-optimistic. G. I. Bennett, a self-styled atheist, rose on the wings of an angel to protest (4/1/63). His charitable introduction was, "I fancy Denis Cobell is a very young man. Certainly he writes like one". Mr. Bennett now tells us that he does not believe Samoan *mores* are "to be taken as a model for our own", and that he was "not concerned" with "the anthropological interest". What he said in January was: "No, there cannot be any comparison between a complex society like ours and a primitive community of Samoans. Civilisation imposes restraints: that is the price we pay for being civilised". Surely this gratuitous snub, based on a wealth of unconcern and, it would seem, of ignorance, suggests that the Samoans are primitive, without civilisation, without restraints, and hence "barbarians". (Mr. Bennett has never, as far as I know, written about the Chinese—and until he gains some interest in anthropology I certainly hope he won't. Heathen Chinese [sic] was, of course, a literary allusion.) He was, he said, issuing a "challenge from those of us who have a moral conception of the role of freethought": he strongly repudiated "the idea that moral nihilism and freethought go together"; he did not believe "that easy virtue makes for happiness and freedom from neurosis, which it is the fashion for a considerable number of 'modernists' to assume". Now he says that I have astonishingly misstated his views in the precis, "indict modern freethought for 'moral nihilism'". The "rider that anyone who pleads for tolerance is *ipso facto* immoral" is a logical deduction from statements of this sort.

Also in Mr. Bennett's "temperately-worded demurrer" of January were such warriors of the popular press and pulpit as "animal kingdom, which mates and procreates blindly", "a woman gives her body freely and experimentally", "easy virtue", "a girl who has lived loosely"—with the charitable assumption that as a married woman she will probably carry on as before. My reply to this letter appeared on January 18th, and his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* on February 15th. This time appeared a "temperate" statement about "farmyard activity" and an allegation that I "concocted" a number of false charges against him. The farmyard is, as it happens, on the whole a very moral place; though to him it is as bad as Samoa (June 22nd, November 16th, 1962).

Among his invitations was one that I should analyse his attitudes from what he has written "in past years". I regret that I am no authority on *Bennettiana*, which I am sure would make interesting, if melancholy reading. In one of his many testaments—which, incidentally, has many good things in it—he wrote: "For my part, I am not greatly worried about the hold that doctrinal religion still has on many people's minds. I once had to struggle against it myself, but I think its evils tend to be exaggerated" (22/6/62). It would seem the struggle hasn't been hard enough. He has "some sympathy" for George Eliot's view that "there is something in religion that may elevate and ennoble, and this obviously explains her reluctance to condemn religious faith out of hand" (14/12/62). He also clings to quasi-theological views of man: — "Ethics

have no place in nature; they are peculiar only to man" (16/11/62). Evolutionists are of the opinion that man is a part of nature.

I am asked for a statement of my sexual ethics. May I refer Mr. Bennett to the popular "Religion and Sex" which I wrote (THE FREETHINKER, 22/6/62), and to *Towards a Quaker View of Sex*, which shows that some atheists have not even kept pace with liberal Christian opinion in sociology. The former he has already read; he was somewhat critical (6/7/62). The best way to avoid seeing something nasty in the woodshed is not to look into other people's woodsheds. In sex, as in everything else, people have an obligation to society, notably with regard to unwanted babies (which are not unknown within the bounds of holy wedlock) and the spread of venereal disease. Otherwise, legislative and moral codes should be permissive. A few years ago, when I was doing socio-medical research at the Brisbane City Mission, I was told by the Superintendent—a very wise reverend gentleman—of the horror many women confessed to experiencing on their wedding night, because they were unprepared for it. With some, it may have been frigidity, and for them celibacy would be right. As Dr. Eustace Chesser has often pointed out, there is no need to fear that a tolerant society will promote promiscuity in the otherwise "virtuous", who will find it abhorrent whatever society says. Nor will legislation or the strictures of Mr. Bennett or anyone else prevent it in others of a different constitution. I respect Mr. Bennett's views; I object only to his carping at others.

A point to clear up here is that, in my private life there are people who subscribe to Christianity and other ideologies whom, for their personal qualities, I am proud to call my friends. There are some atheists whose friendship I am unlikely to seek. A letter in a journal is, however, not private, but public. When, as an active freethinker, I consider Vatican assets of the order of £10,000 millions, an annual income of the Church of England in excess of £30 millions, and how very far removed we are from a secular or equitable society, I am not ashamed to be "a man who sees himself as a soldier in a camp facing an enemy of considerable strength". On a battlefield there are only two sets of people who cannot distinguish between friend and foe: psychotics and professional spies. I am sure Mr. Bennett belongs to neither. He has simply wandered off the field to place daisy chains on the graves of "19th century thinkers" (excluding pioneer anthropologists, sociologists, and sexologists) or prod the thickest with his proctorial staff.

Finally, I am asked about "an evolutionary society". It is, of course, nonsense to say that "ethics and evolution have different impelling forces and directions, and are at war". Ethics is a product of psycho-social evolution, the adaptation of higher organisms to their environment and to one another. Its primary purpose is survival, which, for social animals, is at once an individual and a corporate consideration. As brain size and consequent intelligence increase, survival is dependent on more than warring with the elements and with other species. It is associated with happiness; for with great deprivation of happiness come first psychological, then physical conflict—aggression when extroverted, suicide when introverted. Among social animals like man, happiness is ideally gained by the individual through self-respect and the good opinion of others. Organisationally, it can be fostered, if not created.

by seeking the highest common factor of needs in mandatory and prohibitive laws and conventions (utilitarianism), allowing a wide range of permissiveness for purely individual whim (tolerance), and introducing experiments (pragmatism). In common with that of the other social sciences the contents of ethics depend on the existing state of knowledge in any society. Dietary laws, which are ethical to those who accept them, are an obvious example. There will be active elements, associated with a thirst for new knowledge, effecting evolutionary change; and passive elements, associated with the sense of security that comes from the routine and familiar, to allow time for these changes, where satisfactory, to consolidate themselves. With the spread of modern communications, different cultural traditions have suddenly found themselves on one another's doorsteps, and "live and let live" has become a cardinal slogan for both ethics and evolution.

Religion and Atheism

By P. P. CROMMELIN

THERE IS a curious quasi-spiritual affinity between religion and atheism. A religion derives much of its vital energy from the positive rejection of other religions; atheism derives much of its vital energy from the positive rejection of all religions. Atheists reject religion in the same kind of way that religious people reject idolatry; only whereas religious people are always willing to save their own idols from destruction, atheists are unwilling to save any.

Religion may be regarded as the true cause of atheism. Atheism is the proper human reaction to the failure of religions to demonstrate the credibility of the gods, not excepting the god called Jesus Christ. We cannot exempt Christianity from the common failure of all religions. Christ has never been completely credible as god-man or man-god. We can all however enter sympathetically into the sufferings of one who may have thought he had a divine mission to save the world, and found himself in the end nailed to a cross. But human sympathy with suffering humanity is one thing; the worship and adoration of a god quite another and a totally different thing. Atheism rejects the worship but strives to preserve the human sympathy.

The correction of errors is necessary to the gaining of knowledge. By examining the dogmas and correcting the errors of religion, the Atheist hopes to gain a clearer insight into the nature of logic and into the nature of man. "The proper study of mankind is man" although this is by no means the only study open to man. Religion is no longer necessary to art, science or technology, but the study of comparative religion is necessary to a full liberal education. Moreover the study of comparative religion is the best way to avoid being captured by any kind of religious dogmatism.

Here in England there are many Atheists, but also there are many Atheists afraid or unwilling to manifest their unbelief. There are reasons for this. A large amount of business and commerce is still geared to religious institutions. A large amount of educational activity is still geared to religious institutions. A large amount of political and social life is still geared to religious institutions. A large number of charitable enterprises are still undertaken in the name of religion. These facts make it difficult and even dangerous openly to profess atheism in what still professes to be a Christian country. Christianity is no more necessary to capitalism than it is to communism. It is, however one of the basic principles of capitalism not to destroy anything which may prove to be useful to the system of free enterprise. So long as organised religion

remains strongly anti-communist, it can remain sure of financial and political support within the anti-communist world. The political value of religion has, of course, been enormously increased in the "Free World" by the varying degrees of hostility to religion manifested by "Communist" governments.

Atheism as such, is not concerned with politics or economics, but only with religion. Atheism exists because some people are convinced that the dogmatic teachings of religion are in fact errors of judgment. Atheism exists because some people are convinced that religion has for ages been attempting to conform mankind to a pattern of life which cannot be justified, because the existence of God, which is the foundation of most religions is something which cannot be clearly demonstrated by any argument acceptable to all mankind. Atheism exists because some people are sure that there ought to be a purely secular morality quite untouched and untainted by any religious assumptions.

Here in England, the immediate task of the Atheist is to convince the large number of potential Atheists that it is not an act of base treachery, but a serious moral and social obligation to repudiate a religious faith which has become intellectually untenable. Neither deception nor self-deception can be truly conducive to a sound and healthy morality.

The immediate and unsolved problem of atheism is to organise itself into a human force and power strong enough to overcome religious opposition to the large number of social reforms urgently needed if human evolution is to result in anything which might be described as a final victory for the human species. The ultimate aim and object is the complete replacement of all religious institutions by purely secular social services, and the final healing of the secret fear which is the root cause of all religion.

Having been for many years a Roman Catholic priest, and having taken the gods and the "supernatural world" far more seriously than these products of human imagination really deserve, I found it difficult at first to adjust myself to a godless universe where no further use can be found for prayer or sacrament, where miracles do not happen, where "no life lives for ever" and "dead men rise up never".

Yet atheism is itself a sort of religion, and is indeed one well suited to an ex-priest. For just as religion is a challenge to the faithful to live according to the faith they profess with their lips, so is atheism a challenge to the Atheist to profess nothing which is not demonstrably a physical or historical fact. And facts are facts, and in the long run they must disillusion even the most illusioned victim of religious dogma.

CORRESPONDENCE

The Editor welcomes letters from readers, but asks that they be kept as brief and pertinent as possible.

NAPOLEON, MOSCOW AND LEIPZIG

As a Napoleonic student of many years standing, I was very interested in the recent correspondence in your columns regarding the reasons for the ultimately disastrous failure of Napoleon's 1812 campaign. Without in any way disputing the very interesting facts covered by your two correspondents, J.B. and R. Siddall, I nevertheless think that they both overlook certain very important military and political facts which had an important, perhaps even a decisive bearing upon the eventual issue of the campaign. From the political standpoint, Napoleon would seem to have thrown away at the start of the campaign what was probably his only real chance of achieving any kind of permanent victory over the vast Russian empire when he refused a request to join

forces with a revolutionary movement of the Russian serfs against the Tsar's régime. It will be recalled that feudal serfdom in Russia was not abolished until 1864.

As Napoleon's *aide de camp* General Count de Segur shrewdly noted in the course of his classic narrative of the 1812 campaign: "The cast of Napoleon's mind was more inclined to monarchs rather than to serfs"; viz. Bonaparte feared the effects of an agrarian revolution in Russia more than he feared the political and military rivalry of the Tsar's government.

Furthermore, Napoleon appears to have made a decisive military blunder when at the Battle of Borodino he refused to send in his old guard to give the *coup de grâce* to the retreating Russian army. Had he done so, Borodino might have annihilated the Russian field army and forced the Tsar to make peace. Three years later at Waterloo, Bonaparte again made the same mistake, for had he sent in the Imperial Guard at 3 p.m. (and not at 7 p.m. as he did when the battle was already lost), it seems probable that he would have decisively beaten Wellington before the Prussians, under Blücher, arrived. Military historians have commented that a curious lethargy seemed to have overtaken the great General at several decisive moments in his later campaigns.

Actually, in my submission, great as was the French debacle in the retreat from Moscow, in reality it did not actually and finally decide the fate of the Napoleonic empire. For this was not finally decided until the three day Battle of the Nations at Leipzig (October 16th-19th, 1813) the greatest battle in recorded history prior to this century. When I was in Leipzig in 1957 (nowadays under Communist rule), I spent a fascinating afternoon in the Napoleonic Museum in that city wherein all phases of this decisive battle are portrayed in appropriate details, and I became convinced by the librarian that neither Moscow nor Waterloo represented Napoleon's real *coup de grâce*. For this was in actuality, administered on the third day of the Leipzig battle of the nations by the Russian reserve army under General Bennigsen, who thus revenged his previous crushing defeat by Napoleon at Friedland, June 14th, 1807, one of the four classic Napoleonic battles (the others were Marengo, Austerlitz and Jena). In the Napoleonic Museum there is still preserved a contemporary letter of the King of Prussia to Tsar Alexander saying: "it was you [i.e. the Russian army, F.A.R.] who defeated the usurper".

The still extant charts of the battle in the Museum at Leipzig fully bear out this description, an additional proof of Maximilian Hardin's remark (quoted by Mr. Siddall) read up Russian history you will find it very edifying.

Napoleon who was heavily outnumbered at Leipzig, and only saved the remains of his army from total annihilation by a masterly strategic retreat, may perhaps have taken comfort from his own well-known aphorism: "Providence is on the side of the big battalions".

F. A. RIDLEY.

WHY NOT MILITANT?

I quite agree with Peter Crommelin (22/2/63) that militant atheism does to some extent defeat its own purpose by serving as a stimulus to militant "clericalism". We do not get angry with a child when he is ignorant nor should we with an adult. One needs more patience with an adult because of the religious teaching he has had and because he is liable to be hostile.

I will even go further and say that an atheist peace worker must be very patient with the hostile atheist who insists that most peace workers are Communists or influenced by Communists, and that all Communists are bad and cannot be trusted. They forget that in the main Communists are atheists too, and are spreading their atheism by teaching and not by militant methods, and that this works. So we atheists can learn something from the Communists, even although we may not agree with all they do. The world is in an awful mess through the militant attitude of men towards each other.

(Mrs.) K. TACCHI-MORRIS.

If Mr. Crommelin really believes in "any reunion of the divided forces of Christian clericalism" he is as sadly mistaken, as he is misguided, in expressing fear of militant atheism.

People living "their own lives as they choose" are nonetheless being acted upon in various overt and insidious ways to accept religion, and Christianity still flourishes by lip service of the "christened-wed-buried" adherents as well as the media of mass communication.

Christianity must be stamped out, not allowed to exist to plant seeds of destruction and hatred by virtue of giving "benefits of doubt" and indulging in such niceties as "liberal" humanism.

Did we stand aside and allow Nazism to exist or allow people to "ignore its teachings"? Should we have done? Are the Christian nations to be applauded for encouraging the re-emergence of Nazism to act as a bulwark against a Communist (atheist) "menace"?

B. J. CLIFTON.

Many thanks to Mr. A. C. Robinson (p.64) for his kind appreciation and also to Mr. William Kent for his very just vindication of Sir Leslie Stephen, who would have been invariably courteous, but never apologetic for his opinions.

I should also like to say how much I agree with Mr. Amphlett Mr. Micklewright on militant freethought. And surely Mr. Crommelin cannot be serious when he suggests the possibility of what amounts to an Atheist Inquisition. I should have thought the very essence of Freethought was summed up in the saying attributed to that great freethinker Voltaire: "I disagree with all you say, but I would go to the stake in defence of your right to say it".

REGINALD UNDERWOOD.

CHRISTIAN EFFRONTERY

What is amazing to the impartial observer is the glib effrontery with which Christians quietly discard the divine guidance of centuries of prayer when they find their position no longer tenable.

With lying, cheating, pillage, persecution and bigoted propaganda, they defend wrong against right, darkness against light, all in the name of God's Word. No crime is too bad with which to defame and destroy the torch bearers of enlightenment. The Lord will forgive all done in his name. Then, in little snippets of news one finds, decades later, these same views of the martyrs of freethought absorbed and accepted as ordinary commonsense with no recognition of the authors, nor apology to the multitudes who have suffered at the hands of the followers of gentle Jesus. No shame, no contribution, no admission. Such is the way of the Lord's disciples.

Two news items give rise to the foregoing. The Churches are suddenly realising that the Lord was really being a bit of a prude and the Pope is asking Catholics to read the Bible.

JAMES HENDREN.

THE CRICKETING PARSON

Was it coincidence, for instance, that Sheppard, who preached increasingly in Cathedrals, and during the fourth Test gave addresses on Saturday and Sunday, should have mangled at least four of the six Test catches he dropped on Friday and Saturday?

—The Guardian, (27/2/63).

THE ANGELIC PRESIDENT

A sculpture of President Kennedy when a young student, depicting him as a young watchful angel hovering over St. Teresa, will be used over the main altar of Maryglades Roman Catholic seminary in Memphis, Michigan. Mr. Kennedy posed for the sculpture in 1939 while on holiday in Riga, Latvia, when a Harvard student.

—Daily Telegraph (22/2/63).

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