

The Freethinker

Volume LXXXIII—No. 16

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

"IT MAY BE harsh, but they are right to say YOU ARE NOT FIT TO ADOPT ONE OF OUR BABIES," runs the headline of an article, signed John Justice, in *The People* of March 31st, 1963. This article is on the surface perfectly fair. It quotes the view of Lord Chorley, who is soon to raise the question in the House of Lords—"agnostics and atheists should have the same rights and privileges as devout Christians". It mentions sympathetically cases of ideal adoptive parents who have been refused children because they were agnostics, but it finally concludes on the basis of interests of the children concerned that they should go only to Christian homes.

Cranks and Freaks

Most adoption societies do not much care, apparently, whether the prospective parents have genuine religious convictions, as long as they are not eccentric enough to write "atheist" or "agnostic" on adoption papers. People who would do this are "cranks" and, in the opinion of *The People*, "aggressive people with strong views who are apt to thrust them on a child". The important thing appears to be to avoid honesty and serious thought about religion. Muddle-headedness seems to be an ideal state to *The People*.

"Leading psychologists," the paper continues, "stress that adopted children, in particular, find religion a stabilising influence". Adopted children are liable in any case to feel different, and "barred from a Christian faith, they are apt to regard themselves almost as freaks".

Natural Conformists

It may be conceded that there is a grain of sense in all this. Children are natural conformists, which is exactly why most non-Christian parents do not withdraw their children from the routine religious instruction and observances of a non-denominational school. It would not be unreasonable for adoption societies to advise non-believing parents to make this small concession to help the adopted child to feel ordinary. However, *The People* does not follow its own argument to its logical conclusion. How much worse off would the child be if instead of humanists it had parents whose principles, for example, forbid watching television or going to a theatre, and prevent the child from playing with his friends on Sundays! Above all, *The People* might consider the damage still being done to many children by parents and denominational teachers who terrify them with stories of hell fire. At least one can be sure that no child adopted by agnostics will be terrorised in this way.

The Real Tragedy

However, the most important point about religion and adoption is never even referred to by *The People*. Though a ban on non-Christians is operated by most large adoption societies, there are other ways of acquiring a child, and many non-believers have in fact adopted children successfully. Most Protestant adoption societies have long waiting lists of suitable couples, and by denying children to non-Christians they are probably not keeping

any of their babies from a loving home. The real tragedy is that thousands of "Catholic" children are doomed to institution life because no Catholic couple wants them, and non-Catholics may not have them. Psychiatrists have no doubt about the harm living in an institution for any length of time does to a child. The institution baby is usually late in learning to speak, and so tends to be retarded intellectually. A close, loving relationship between

the infant and his parents is the foundation for his whole formation of conscience, the ability to feel tenderness for other people and hence to establish satisfying marriage relationships in later life, may never take place in the person who has

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

"The People" on Adoption

By MARGARET McILROY

never experienced a relationship with a loving parent or parent-substitute. A succession of nurses employed to look after the physical needs of a large number of young children, or nuns, who are not permitted to form a personal attachment to any living creature, cannot replace loving parents. No wonder young people who graduate from a children's home to lodgings, with nothing to take the place of a family but an occasional visit from a welfare officer often end up in some kind of trouble. A resentment against society brings many of them into conflict with the law, while young girls blunderingly seeking for some show of affection often become unmarried mothers themselves. Thus the tragic situation is passed down from generation to generation.

Worst of Crimes

To deny a child parental affection is the worst of crimes. Magistrates are now empowered to overrule a parent who maliciously refuses approval to an adoption. These powers should be extended to deprive the Roman Catholic Church of the right to prevent children from finding loving families. As the law stands today, a baby abandoned on a railway station will probably end up with good adoptive parents, but if a baby is abandoned on the porch of a Catholic church, the Church assumes a hideous sort of property right in it, and the poor creature is likely to spend its entire childhood in an institution. The official Roman Catholic attitude is that it is the greatest of privileges to be brought up a Catholic, and every other advantage is insignificant beside it. This attitude is not based on reason, and the known facts concerning the harm done by institution life to a child will not shake it. However, it is shameful for non-Catholic people, Protestant or humanist, to acquiesce in the present law. If the Church were to retain the right to place "Catholic" children with Catholic families when these were available, it would have no justification for objecting if the remaining children were given homes with Protestants.

The Child or the Church?

The People says that the children are the ones who should be considered. It concludes, "Their happiness comes first. The rights of atheists and agnostics must take second place". We could agree with *The People* if it would add, "The rights of the Roman Catholic Church must take second place too".

Fight the Good Fight

By REGINALD UNDERWOOD

WISE, THAT IS WORLDLY-WISE old Mother Church has made a few mistakes in her time—for if you can't make a mistake you can't make anything. But when at some dim past in her history she hit upon the idea of transforming herself into a duality, she did not make the mistake of calling the corresponding parts the Church Militant and the Church Passive, she called them the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant.

There have been varied and, as usual, contradictory interpretations of what militant and triumphant are intended exactly to mean. It seems to be broadly understood however that militant refers to the earthly half of the Church and triumphant to the heavenly. The earthly half at any rate is reasonably comprehensible to ordinary mortals. The heavenly half seems to be a conjuration of those whose heads had been so long in the clouds that the clouds had at last got into their heads. It is a purely metaphysical conception, best left for the theologians to squabble about. An elucidation of it might come within the province of a Wee-Free thinker. It is beyond the province of a rational freethinker.

All the same, a freethinker could quite easily and justifiably deduce from it that the Church Triumphant is triumphant because the Church Militant is, and always has been, militant, at times even military, eager to gird up its loins, sally forth to do battle with its foes and, as far as possible, to put them to the sword with a good and gory Old Testament thoroughness.

For the Church Militant even today is by no means as moribund as some complacent wish-thinkers wish or think. And let it be noted that wish-thinkers make poor freethinkers. Taken as a whole, with all its ramifications and activities, the Church Militant can still be a pretty tough adversary. It can still be unscrupulously, though not always openly, aggressive, with a guile gained from a length, breadth and quality of experience which no honest form of secularism need envy.

But it does provide one broad and very useful hint, that the surest way of never getting anywhere and of never attaining anything is to sit back and hold tight, to think, even to freethink, as loud as you like and always to refrain from any attack upon or defence against every form of active enmity. To pursue such a course would certainly ensure that there would never be any freethought militant let alone freethought triumphant. But if the objective of all freethinkers is not freethought triumphant it would be interesting to know what is. And that not merely for the sake of scoring over an opponent but to prove and demonstrate that all freethinking is incalculably better than the thinking hedged in by an authority which has no credentials other than those it has conferred upon itself.

The supposition that churchianity, clericalism, evangelicalism and the rest will, if left alone, die of their own inanition, is not supported by the facts. The predatory Romish body, so charitably called the Scarlet Woman by its loving fellow Christians, has never before gone to and fro in the land more grimly intent on seeking whom it may devour—and apparently not in vain. Many of the minor, but thriving religiosities, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, who have already got as far as Kingdom Hall if not Kingdom Come, are likewise pugnaciously out to debilitate reason, to blinker human understanding and to discredit all commonsense in order that they may implant as substitutes

the nightmarish delusions of their own penny-dreadful imaginations.

As for the timid notion that to carry the war into the enemy's camp is only to arouse antagonisms better left undisturbed, that is to commit the very error the wary religious institutions have so sedulously avoided. That is indeed to ignore the example and the warning they have gratuitously if unintentionally given. It could result in nothing but complete ineptitude. It would simply be flight instead of fight.

It is all very well to say let sleeping dogmatists lie. We can rest assured that once awakened most of them will lie fast enough, but we mustn't let them sleep fast. We mustn't encourage them to sit down and take a nap when we require them to sit up and take notice. The more they can be harried out of their smug self-satisfaction and compelled to defend their dogmatism, the greater the opportunity for freethought to expose their weaknesses. If they could show their case to be incontestably the superior, then it would be incumbent upon all freethinkers to acknowledge and prefer it, which of course they would do once they were convinced.

For surely the whole point and purpose of freethought is, as far as is humanly possible, to get at the truth and eliminate falsehood, regardless of whatever disagreeable consequences the attempt may entail. Nobody wants to give offence or to cause discomfiture for the sake of doing so. But the insistence on truth-seeking must be paramount. It can be neither sacrificed nor diluted to accommodate the specious consolations of religious sentimentalism.

At fairly frequent intervals this uncompromising attitude dawns upon the grudging but autocratic attention of both reverend ecclesiastics and non-ecclesiastic reverends. They will then desist for the time being from their own interminable game of pot and kettle and ungraciously direct a common effort of putting down a common enemy who, they fear, is bent on undermining the very sources of their position, their money and their vanity. But freethinkers needn't be abashed. They can fortify themselves with the reflection that it was always the way of truth to say stand up and of falsehood to say stand down.

Freethinkers, atheists, agnostics, humanists, all much of a muchness, have had to think and feel their own often difficult way to the convictions they hold, whereas few religious allegiants have more than mere traditions, masquerading as convictions and foisted upon them by others. The freethinker can set aside tradition but he cannot set aside his conviction that all obscurantism, all obstructionism originate in religious shibboleths that fail to withstand five minutes scrutiny, and which therefore should be exposed and abolished.

But such shibboleths with all their evil consequences can never be abolished except by the militancy that some of the more diffident freethinkers seem to deplore. Even pacifists have to be militant. Even pacifists will rightly fight with a most unpacific passion for their own pacific ideals. Mental strife is not military warfare. Neither does it involve any kind of inquisition. Vital freethought is bound to be aggressive and there is much that it must condemn. But it can be aggressive without arrogance. It can condemn without self-righteousness. It will have no truck with the bitter intolerance and vindictive persecution that have so disfigured the records of religion.

(Concluded on page 124)

De Gaulle and The Vatican

By F. A. RIDLEY

A RECENT Paris Newsletter in the *Evening Standard* carried the significant headline, "De Gaulle Named The Man He Thinks Should Be Pope". We then learn that at a recent meeting of the French Cabinet, the President (or Dictator?) of the Fourth Republic astonished his colleagues by indicating that "France should seek the election of a French-speaking pope". Upon further inquiries, the President's ministers elicited the intriguing information that the prelate whom de Gaulle has in mind, is not a cardinal of native French extraction, nor (as some of his colleagues apparently thought at first), a Negro cleric from French-speaking Africa, but the present Archbishop of Montreal, the metropolis of French-speaking Canada. Moreover, it would appear that (assuming the accuracy of our contemporary's report), the current question of finding a successor to Pope John is by no means a merely academic one. For again quoting the *Evening Standard* report, the French Cabinet at this meeting had before it a disquieting despatch from the French Ambassador at the Vatican, M. de la Tournelle, who apparently indicated that the present state of Pope John's health is so grave that a fresh papal election is liable in the immediate future. Such news can after all, hardly be regarded as surprising, since Pope John is a very old man—82 next November—and is stated to have over-worked consistently since his election to the Papacy four and a half years ago.

Assuming, therefore, that there will be a vacancy at the Vatican, perhaps before the expiration of this present year, what are the future perspectives disclosed by President de Gaulle's suggested intervention, since he—or so our contemporary assures us—has already instructed his ambassador at Rome to implement—to the great displeasure, as we learn further from the same article—of the Italian cardinals who actually run the administration of the Roman Cura and from whose ranks the Pope is usually chosen? Does de Gaulle in his role of the new "Charlemagne", having successfully thrown England out of Europe, now propose again, as in the Middle Ages, virtually to annex the Papacy to France?

It may probably be assumed initially, that if the French President has announced his intention of trying to secure the election of a French-speaking pope, he will exert all the influence that he possesses to achieve this ambitious objective. During the period immediately following the last war, it so chanced that I sat on an international committee in Paris, one of whose members was Henri Freney, a close associate of de Gaulle and one of his ministers in the Government set up after the liberation. M. Freney described de Gaulle to us as a man of inflexible determination and of immense obstinacy in carrying through any scheme upon which he had set his heart; a description that appears to be fully justified by de Gaulle's subsequent spectacular career.

Nor in seeking to sway the next electoral conclave in favour of a French-speaking candidate, is de Gaulle making any intervention that lacks international precedent. For the French royalist and aristocratic tradition to which the President belongs by both birth and inclination, is full of royal interventions from the time of Charlemagne (for whom de Gaulle is said to have an inordinate admiration) to those of the Sun King, Louis XIV, who regularly ran his candidates at every successive papal election.

Did not the French monarchy even succeed for a time during the later Middle Ages (14th century) in filling the

chair of St. Peter with French popes and even in actually transferring the seat of the Papacy from Rome to Avignon, which remained a papal possession right down to the time of the French Revolution? And did not an earlier French general than de Gaulle, General Bonaparte, actually snatch the crown from the hands of the pope, Pius VII during his coronation ceremony at Notre Dame in 1804 and proceed to crown himself as Emperor? Does de Gaulle intend to do the same with his French pope? In seeking the current role of a pope-maker, President de Gaulle—now himself King of France in all but name—can find many convenient precedents during the long history of the French monarchy.

More, however, would be involved in the election this year (or in the near future), of a French Canadian or for that matter of any other foreigner (non-Italian) to the Papacy. For election to the Papacy has been an unbroken Italian monopoly since the early 16th century; since, to be exact, 1523, when the Dutch Pope Hadrian VI died after a brief and unhappy reign. Prior to the Reformation, of course, many non-Italian popes were elected: e.g. the Borgias were Spaniards and there was even an English pope in the 12th century, a monk of St. Albans, Nicholas Breakspear, Pope Hadrian IV. However, since the early 16th century, the Italian monopoly has been complete and even such famous foreign cardinals as Pole (16th century who only missed election by a hair's breadth), Manning and the Belgian, Mercier (runner-up in both 1914 and 1922), eventually failed to secure election. The Italian Papacy, the roots of which lie in the predominantly Italian bureaucracy in the Vatican, has so far defied all efforts to shift it. (The most recent unsuccessful candidate from amongst the non-Italian cardinals was the Armenian, Agagianian at the last Papal Conclave in 1958.)

However, for some time past, there have been growing indications that the Italian monopoly may be nearing its end. The literally world-wide expansion of the Roman Catholic Church within this present century, with the successive addition of American, Asiatic and African cardinals, would appear to have made the exclusively Italian Papacy of the recent centuries, an obviously out-moded anachronism. Is not a more catholic (i.e. universal) selection of candidates desirable in the Universal (Catholic) Church?

Assuming as we may probably do, that Pope John—who despite his presumably short reign may well go down to history as a great pope—will not live much longer, who is likely to succeed him and, more generally, is his eventual successor again likely to be an Italian? As things stand at present, the field appears to be clear for another head-on clash between the liberal and traditionalist wings of the Church over the policy to be pursued at the Vatican Council, a clash similar to that which preceded the eventual election of Pope John after one of the longest papal conclaves on record. Then the leading candidate of the traditionalist cardinals (who are not at all enamoured of Christian reunion as envisaged by Pope John), was Cardinal Siri, Archbishop of Genoa who, still in his fifties, is still in the running for the Vatican stakes, whilst presumably, the candidate of the liberal cardinals will be Cardinal Montini, Archbishop of Milan who (or so it has been stated) would probably have been elected at the last conclave had he then been a cardinal.

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

We are always prepared for Salvation Army officers talking sheer nonsense in defence of their "blood and brimstone" religion, but a cutting reached us the other day in which one of them points out that after all there was little in the Russian spacemen's flights into space. He disputed "the claim made by Gagarin that he was the first man to go up into space", and cited John 14, to prove that Jesus went "up there" first. He went "to prepare a place" for "you" (obviously the disciples) and therefore it was Jesus who was the first spaceman and not Gagarin. Moreover, this verse also proves the "truth of the Bible, and the cause of Christianity".

The Archbishop of Canterbury will no doubt one day enlarge on his denunciation of the Bishop of Woolwich's book, *Honest to God*. Dr. Robinson was "utterly wrong" because he said that Christians "speak of God as being up there". They do not literally believe that "God is in a place beyond the bright blue sky", said the Archbishop. Well, we were certainly taught that in school, and the only reason Dr. Ramsey has given it up is because science has "utterly" disproved it.

But the Archbishop who now wants us to believe that "God up there" is merely a poetic way of expression and does not tell us where God is or what God is doing wherever he is, or of what earthly use—except as a good old swear word—He is, up there or not. As the Bishop of Woolwich has also given up a "literal" heaven, what is a pious God-fearing Christian to do? Join the infidels? Good God!

The Archbishop of York is not one whit behind the Archbishop of Canterbury in "words of Christian wisdom", as the "quote" in the *Daily Express* (March 28th) proves. He said, "We need an army of writers for the spread of clean Christian literature at all levels". The operative word here is "all". In any case, the 18th and 19th centuries were literally deluged with "clean" Christian literature filling bookshops all over the country to bursting point. And the more they were poured out by parsons and priests and bishops, the more the general public became either apathetic or unbelieving. But who these days reads the interminable volumes of sermons, or the long disquisitions on the existence of God, or the unerring truth of Biblical prophecies? Even new "biographies" of Jesus are mostly unread though we admit that the New English Bible sold extremely well. The only snag here is the uncomfortable question—is it ever read? Indeed, is the Bible, no matter what translation, ever read?

We are now being inundated with new titles for God Almighty who hitherto was always recognised as "the Creator", meaning the Creator of the Universe. But new names keep cropping up. For Sir James Jeans, he was a "mathematical" deity, and that witty cartoonist, Osbert Lancaster, depicted, the other day, in the *Daily Express*, two choir boys singing a hymn—"O Mathematics, our help in ages past. Our hope for years to come—". It was the kind of "blasphemy" for which G. W. Foote received twelve months hard labour eighty years ago.

On the other hand, Freemasons adore not exactly a mathematical God but an architectural one. He is the Great Architect of the Universe, and perhaps all those Christians who believe Jesus is really God Almighty will soon proclaim that Jesus is not only the Greatest Mathematician,

but also the Greatest Architect that ever lived. It is only a question of time.

If film actress Doris Day can leave Roman Catholicism and embrace the unintelligible twaddle of Mother Eddy as of almost Divine Wisdom, we need not be surprised if another famous film actress, Miss Jayne Mansfield, has fallen for the hopeless superstition of Spiritualism, and credulously believes everything that happens at any seance. *The People* (March 31st) devotes a long article to Jayne, not really because what she thinks about Spiritualism is of any importance, but because it makes a good story.

Miss Mansfield has now met Rudolph Valentino who was particularly happy that she is now a believer "and had become one of them", though she finds it difficult to understand why she has been unable to contact her dead aunt. Of course, this may be because the lady is not "up" there but "down" there, and is not allowed an exit permit. And the same reason possibly accounts for Jayne not being able to meet Marilyn Monroe. Still, as a remarkable proof how right the spirits are, she was warned against somebody whose name began with an A. She nearly signed a film contract with such a man who a little later went bankrupt. How can unbelievers explain that?

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

(Concluded from page 122)

Freethought knows that an ounce of sweet reasonableness is worth a ton of high-and-mighty pontificating. In support of its principles it can even take a leaf from the Christian Bible: to rise and shine and not hide its light under a bushel. To back up its militancy it can, with suitable amendments, take a hymn from the Christian hymn book: Fight the good fight with all thy might, with a minimum of heat and a maximum of light.

DE GAULLE AND THE VATICAN

(Concluded from page 123)

At present it would appear to be a straight fight between Montini and Siri, with the edge on Montini, since presumably all John's cardinals created since 1958 would support him as likely to carry on the present policy. However, there is an old—and oft-quoted—papal proverb: "Go in Pope, come out Cardinal" viz. the favourite rarely succeeds. Should there be a close contest for the succession, it is quite on the cards that a "rejoicing third" in the shape of a non-Italian cardinal might eventually secure election. In which case, the considerable influence no doubt currently exercised by "His Most Christian Majesty, King Charles de Gaulle", might well end by securing the election of his Canadian candidate, the Montreal Cardinal Leger, who would thus become the first non-Italian pope since 1523. In point of fact, if the College of Cardinals does decide to end the Italian monopoly at this next election, the Montreal cardinal—French-speaking, a British (Commonwealth) citizen and geographically an American, would be as cosmopolitan a candidate as could be found anywhere. However, be that as it may, and whatever the ultimate result of the next election to the Papacy, I do not think that President de Gaulle, even if fresh from his common market victory over Britain as an old man (74) in constant peril of assassination is at all likely either to found a new Holy Roman Empire, to convert the Vatican into a French satellite or, as his predecessors did in the Middle Ages, to transfer the men of the Vatican from Rome to Avignon.

THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1

TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.25; half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Inquiries regarding Bequests and Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

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.

Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

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, April 21st, 6.45 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "A Rationalist Surveys the Contemporary Religious Scene".

Birmingham Humanist Group (Arden Hotel, New Street), Wednesday, April 24th, 7.30 p.m.: L. J. MACFARLANE, "Marxism and Humanism".

Glasgow Secular Society: Please note, April 21st meeting postponed until May 12th.

Ilford Humanist Group (Friend's Meeting House, Cleveland Rd.), Monday, April 22nd, 7.45 p.m.: DR. RONALD FLETCHER and DR. HOWARD JONES, "Youth in Revolt" (Tape-recording).

North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, April 19th, 7.15 p.m.: A MEETING.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, April 21st, 11 a.m.: J. B. COATES, "Entering the Humanist Phase of History".

Notes and News

ON JULY 20TH, last year, we reprinted one of Charles Bradlaugh's *Doubts in Dialogue* between a Theist and an Atheist, which first appeared in the *National Reformer* on January 11th, 1885. This week we are pleased to print eleven "observations" on the dialogue submitted by a Very Reverend Monsignor of the Roman Catholic Church, under the pseudonym "Theologicus", with some "counter-observations" by the Editor. And next week we hope to reprint another of Bradlaugh's *Doubts in Dialogue*.

★

WE ARE sorry that it is necessary again to criticise Sir Julian Huxley, but his contribution to the *Honest to God* controversy (*The Observer*, 31/3/63) displayed some of the same faults as the book itself. Whereas the Bishop of Woolwich advocated Christianity without religion, Sir Julian called for religion without God, and was prepared to retain the term "divine", on the pretext that it "did not originally imply the existence of gods". Many phenomena, he said, "are charged with a magic quality of transcendent or even compulsive power over our minds, and introduce us to realms beyond ordinary experience". "They merit a special designation", Sir Julian continued,

and "for want of a better I use the term *divine*, though this quality of divinity is not supernatural but *trans-natural*". This from a Humanist biologist after the years of struggle of Atheists, Freethinkers and Humanists to demonstrate the naturalness of phenomena.

★

THE CHURCH leaders are behaving true to form in condemning the divorce-by-consent clause in Mr. Leo Abse's private Bill now before Parliament. The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, for the Church of England; the Archbishop of Wales, for the Church in Wales; the Archbishop of Birmingham, for the Roman Catholics; and the Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council have signed a statement declaring that "it would help to undermine the basic understanding of marriage as a life-long union if the principle were introduced that a marriage could be terminated by the desire of the partners". We were glad to read (*Daily Herald*, 3/4/63) of Mr. Abse's determination to "fight to the very end in this battle", and certainly BBC *Panorama* viewers must grant him an easy victory over the Bishop of Exeter on April 8th. Now we wish him similar success in the House.

★

THE IRISH CUSTOMS have seized a large consignment of Dominic Behan's autobiography, *Teems of Time and Happy Returns*, in paperback, exported to Dublin by Four Square Books Ltd., who will soon be issuing it in Britain (*Sunday Telegraph*, 7/4/63). Interviewed in London, Mr. Behan described the action as "outrageous", and went on: "The Irish Government is always saying there are not many books on its banned list. Sure there are not; they are just not available because of the Customs". The reason for the seizure was obvious, he said. "It gives real insight into the whole history of Ireland since 1922. At 2s. 6d. a copy, it would get into too many hands".

★

HORSES PLAY a dominating role in the life of Penelope Betjeman, wife of the poet, John Betjeman, we learn from the *Sunday Telegraph* (7/4/63). And "The doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas that you cannot love a horse because it cannot love you back proved a serious obstacle to her entering the Roman Catholic Church". Happily though, "Mr. Evelyn Waugh explained it away to her satisfaction".

★

THE AIM of the new version of the Prayer Book Psalter (SPCK, 9s. 6d.) was not, says the Archbishop of York, "to make a new translation, but to mend an old one. We have brought our renderings into the closest accord that our skill could achieve with Coverdale's vocabulary, syntax and rhythm; our aim has been 'invisible mending'". But no "mending" of the Twenty-third Psalm could hope to be invisible, and admirers of the piece as poetry will find it hard to see any improvement in "darkest valley" over the famous "valley of the shadow of death".

★

IN THE *Daily Herald* (3/4/63), Henry Fielding discussed honesty and referred—in deplorable journalese—to "Two chaps called Hartshorn and May", who "once did a great study on dishonesty". Mr. Fielding didn't risk frightening his readers by naming the work, but he reported that they found no difference between male and female standards of honesty and that religious training didn't necessarily make children more honest. Indeed, "in some cases there is evidence that it makes children less rather than more honest".

Observations on "Doubts in Dialogue"

By "THEOLOGICUS"

(A Very Reverend Monsignor of the Roman Catholic Church)

CHARLES BRADLAUGH was obviously a man of intelligence, an acute thinker who suffered from conversations with half-educated Christians. As a Christian I would say that his chief defect lies in his conception of God, as understood by a theologian. Briefly, here are some observations on the article:

1. The Theist's definition of God is not adequate. He describes God as "the creator, preserver and ruler of all things". This merely describes what God made. The best definition of God is that He is "Existence"—his very nature is to exist. The essence of man is that he is an animal who is rational—the essence of God is existence. His life consists of a dwelling inwards on Himself—the Infinite dwelling on the Infinite—the fusion of thinker and thought (Father and Son) gives rise to Love (the third person in the Trinity). See an elaboration of this in Frank Sheed's *Theology and Sanity* (Sheed and Ward).

2. The Atheist says "I cannot think the universe non-existent". If by "think" he means *imagine*, I agree; if by "think" he means he cannot come to a rational conclusion (or conceive), then I would disagree.

3. "All religions make God a masculine person". This is not true of the Christian religion. God is looked on as a father merely to help our human minds. Anthropomorphic descriptions of God are common in the Bible, e.g. when we speak of God as angry. In the Trinity we must understand Fatherhood and Sonship in a special sense—no bodies are involved. The Son is a son because he is the Idea originating from Thinker, who is the Father.

4. The Atheist has not the theologian's definition of Infinity—the definition of the ill-educated Christian, yes. Infinity means absolute completeness—He has everything that can be had—everything that is possible. He is, as the philosophers say "pure act". Creation is part of this Infinite, because creation is part of existence.

5. "Why may I not think universe self-existent?" asks the Atheist. What does he mean by self-existent? Does he mean it caused itself? Obviously not, because in order to cause itself, it would have to be there to cause itself, which is nonsense. If he means that it is eternal, then you have something without a cause. The Christian philosopher says that there is only one uncaused cause, one which is eternal, one with a mind to create order seen in the universe and with a will to create such a universe.

6. "Five minutes before the creation of the universe what was God?" asks the Atheist. First, it is incorrect to speak in terms of time before the creation of the universe, since time is measured by the succession of change. There would be nothing by which to measure time. Second, God was exactly what He is now: Existence itself, the infinite thinker dwelling on infinite thought and infinite love resulting. The philosophers will tell us that there was no change in God, even when the world was created, since God is outside of time.

7. The Atheist seems to agree that the definition of spirit is "All that is not matter". A spirit is a living being with intelligence and will.

8. "Intelligence is a result," says the Atheist. To answer this one has really to go back to the principle of causality. If this is not accepted one cannot proceed very far. If you see a star in the sky at night, you attribute a cause to it. If you think that intelligence can emerge from matter without a cause, it is difficult to argue further. An outside

being could give intelligence the power to emerge from matter—which is near the Christian idea that man evolved from the "slime of the earth". In any case, I cannot see how you call intelligence a result but not an entity. A volcano is a result but surely an entity, too.

9. One could discuss the Atheist's theory of intelligence endlessly. I advise a reading of St. Thomas's *Summa Theologica* as so many points need elaborating. I agree that intelligence is something from within. God's intelligence is different from ours. He knows everything in one act: He cannot learn because He has nothing to learn. He has not memory because He is outside of time. He has not perception because He does not learn.

10. The basis of intelligence is sensation. On this we agree: there is an old Scholastic adage "*Nihil est in intellectu quin prius fuerit in sensu*"—everything comes to the intellect through the senses. This applies to human knowledge. God knows everything and does not need to learn. There is a difference between knowledge and intelligence.

11. Morality. A person who professes no religion, using his intelligence, could achieve a high standard of behaviour. He follows reason and our definition of sin is a course of action which is against right reason. We would maintain that a man with religion *should*—if he follows his religion—attain a higher standard.

(a) He is aided not only by reason but also the direct revelation of God. Your reason should tell you that adultery is wrong. It is a help to us if we know that God has directly and by revelation told us that it is wrong.

(b) We would maintain that the Christian has special supernatural aids to overcome habits of sin.

(c) It is a help to us, if we realise that sin is not only harmful to us or our neighbour, but also is a "slap in the face" to the Being who created all the marvels of the world in which we live.

Counter-Observations

By COLIN McCALL

THEOLOGICUS SAYS that the Theist's definition of God in Bradlaugh's "Doubts in Dialogue" is not adequate. I should regard it as a fair statement of the theistic position. The fault with Theologicus's own definition is that existence is not a predicate, or property. We may logically say (taking our critic's example, and omitting the meaningless "essence") that man is a rational animal or that the page on which I am writing is rectangular. Here we are dealing with properties or attributes. We cannot meaningfully say that God (or anything else) is existence. The last sentence of Theologicus's opening observation is, of course, mere word-play.

And, leaving him free to "disagree" (2) on the possibility of conceiving the universe non-existent (since I cannot know what he can conceive), we come to his third observation. "The Son", we are told, "is a son because he is the Idea originating from Thinker, who is the Father". We must conclude, then, that the Virgin Mary gave birth to an "Idea" in a stable in Bethlehem, which has at least the merit of solving the virgin birth problem. But Theologicus knows as well as I that it is patently false to deny the masculinity of the Christian god. Like other modern theologians (including Protestants such as

Dr. Paul Tillich and Dr. John Robinson), Theologian is trying to alter Christianity out of all recognition—at any rate when faced by an Atheist—while at the same time retaining the historic terminology. One may be pretty certain that he does not qualify his pulpit references to “Our Father” with, “God is looked on as a father merely to help our human minds”.

Bradlaugh's Atheist's definition of infinity (“illimitable extension, indefinable extent; that is extension of x, to which I cannot think bounds”) seems to me sound. Theologian's “pure act” (4) is quite meaningless, while creation becomes part of God, which is a pantheistic, rather than theistic view. It is certainly not Christian in any genuine meaning of that term.

In making his fifth observation, Theologian forgets the Atheist's definition of the universe (“all phenomena, and all that is necessary for the happening of each and every phenomena”) and instead treats it as a separate entity, apart from the phenomena that comprise it. There is no “universe” apart from or additional to the sum total of phenomena, and it is a common theological fallacy to assume that there must be a cause for the sum total of all phenomena, in addition to a cause for each phenomenon. “Universe” is simply a shorthand term for all phenomena, and the Atheist cannot conceive a beginning of all phenomena. Theologian's “Christian philosopher” offers no solution to the problem. Ignoring the fallacy just mentioned, and assuming that the universe is orderly, the argument obviously is that it is necessary for “one with a mind to create order”. But if this is necessary, it is surely equally necessary for another “one with a mind” to create the first “one with a mind”, and we are off on an infinite regression.

To argue (as in the sixth observation) that “there was no change in God, even when the world was created” is futile. The Creation, by all Christian accounts, was “an act”, or involved an act, even if an indefinitely extended one(!), and action involves change. Indeed, Theologian has earlier described God as “pure act”. God cannot then be changeless. And Theologian is wrong (7) in assuming that the Atheist agrees with the Theist's definition of “spirit” (“All that is not matter”).

The next three observations (8, 9 and 10) may be considered together, and we can agree that there is a difference between knowledge and intelligence. According to Theologian, there is also a difference between God's intelligence and ours, but this is pure, useless assertion. Even so, it is accompanied by some very foolish remarks, e.g.: “He has not perception because He does not learn”. Are we to assume, then, that perception is dependent upon learning? This is really getting things wrong way round. And why the query about causation? Surely it is implied in the Atheist's treatment of intelligence as “a result”. Vesuvius, of course, is an entity as well as a result, but Theologian should be able to think of many “results” that are not entities. Has he never heard of qualities: redness, roundness, softness or sweetness, for instance?

Finally, we come to morality. If a person “is aided not only by reason but also the direct revelation of God”, if he has “supernatural aids”, then he should have an advantage over one who lacks such aid. But is “revelation” in fact an aid to morality? What if it conflicts with reason? This, as we know, is often the case, for what is termed “God's revelation” is basically a standard of conduct laid down in the past by men. And it is a standard in many ways inappropriate to modern times. One only needs to think of Theologian's Church's opposition to birth control, divorce and euthanasia as being contrary to (God's)

natural law. And the definition of “sin” as “a course of action which is against right reason” is misleading. It is a sin to eat meat on a Friday, but it is not irrational to do so. Sin, I should describe as an offence against an imaginary God or His Church.

So, while I find Theologian's observations interesting, I do not believe that they go any way towards substantiating the case for theism or refuting the case for atheism as presented by Charles Bradlaugh nearly eighty years ago.

Atheism at New York University

[Editorial Note: We publish below, complete and without comment, a leader entitled “Religion and Science”, which appeared in *The Brooklyn Eagle* on Tuesday, March 26th, 1963.]

The Brooklyn Eagle yesterday published a news story based on the letter of a Cuban resident of this borough who was shocked at the kind of “English lessons” given to foreign-language students at the American Language Institute of New York University at Washington Square.

The Eagle was just as shocked as Mr. Arvelo, who has reason to know how atheism and communism undermine the very foundations of a country's existence as a sovereign nation. We do not infer that Leonard R. Marelli, the instructor at NYU who has been teaching “English” to these foreign-language students is partial to communism or atheism. But we are frankly amazed that New York University should permit the teaching of this particular brand of “English” to students from the Far East, and Latin America.

These young people have been the victims of Communist domination and occupation of their nations. They will return to their homelands to fight for democracy, or to act as instructors in interpreting American democracy to their own peoples.

Mr. Marelli's explanation is that his so-called “English lesson”, dated March 16th, is merely a device to teach our language. We can think of a dozen better quotations from Shakespeare; or if the Bard's English isn't good enough, how about any one of our great writers, starting with Abraham Lincoln, whose prose is probably better than Mr. Marelli's.

Mr. Arvelo's letter to *The Eagle*, enclosing the lesson and “exercise” in English from NYU, reads in part:

Down in Cuba, where I come from, the bearded Red dictator had to have his so-called revolution before he was able to do this kind of brain-washing in the schools and universities. But here, it seems, they do not need any revolution at all, since they are doing the indoctrinating very openly. I hope that you may be able to use your influence to investigate and stop this, or any other type of brain-washing in our schools (before it is too late).

Lest our readers believe we are exaggerating, we reproduce herewith, in its entirety, the text of New York University's American Language Institute course number X30.9273, dated March 16th, signed by Mr. Marelli, and entitled “Summary Exercise—1”:

The results of both the empirical and social sciences in the past fifty years have led many scientists to affirm that religion as a major force in man's life is dead. Religion, they insist, is merely man's attempt to explain what he does not understand and to try to control that which he does not yet know how to control.

Even the major religions of the world have their roots in primitive beliefs, in magic and ritual, and, as such, are no longer necessary in a world where the biological and physical sciences are constantly adding to our knowledge of the universe and our ability to control nature in almost every respect.

Once man has obtained firm control over the physical forces which shape his life he will no longer need religion to try to

understand or control his environment.

Similarly, the new economic systems of the 20th century will erase poverty and need all over the world, and man will no longer feel that he has to have the intervention of a supernatural being or beings to help him cope with the harsh realities of life. Once the life of man has become free of troubles, he will find no need for the comforting "myth" of an afterlife where everything will be better than it has been.

SUMMARY EXERCISE No. 1.

In your summary answer the following questions:

1. What do many scientists say religion is?
2. Why is religion no longer necessary?
3. How has the science of economics affected the religious outlook of many people?

Mr. Marelli and his superiors at NYU may believe this is not indoctrination, or that it is not atheistic or communistic. If they so believe, and if this is the attitude of the authorities in one of our leading universities, we will indeed need the help of The Lord to save our nation and our civilisation.

CORRESPONDENCE

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

THE BBC

During the last few months there have been some good omens for unbelievers from that staunch upholder of the Establishment, the BBC. There have been a series of evolutionary broadcasts to schools, *How Life Began*, *TWTWTW*, the "Atheism" programme in *What's the Idea?* and most recently a Humanist in the radio series, *Any Questions?* This new trend should encourage us in our efforts for a fair share of time on TV and radio.

T. C. OWEN.

CHRISTIAN UNITY

Less than a thousand years ago, before there was any separation of church and state in Western Europe, the Roman Catholic Church had Christian unity for all practical purposes. It dominated the lives of the people and imposed its will upon them with an iron hand. It built lavish cathedrals, while the people were reduced to dire poverty and lived in ignorance—except perhaps for knowing that Mary was a virgin!

It promoted wars, and tortured on the wheel and the rack those who did not accept its dogmas. It burned people alive at the stake for heresy; it put them in dungeons and left them to rot and die.

Now the Pope is seeking the re-establishment of Christian unity. It was an unspeakably horrible thing and (in 1963) every fair-minded and sane man should oppose its return in every way possible.

N. E. S. WEST (USA).

"SPARTACUS"

There are several points in Mr. Cutner's criticism of Mr. Ridley's "Spartacus" that I would like to comment upon, but I will confine myself to 3.

1. Obviously, as the Roman Games were of days' duration, all contestants would not be in the arena together. A show is recorded under Trajan to have lasted 123 days.

2. Mr. Cutner fails to see the narcotic influence of Christianity, and yet he says that ancient civilisations were killed by the Dark Ages of Faith; surely a deadly drug?

3. With gentle contempt for a dreamer, he further accuses Mr. Ridley of ardently wanting a Utopia. Mr. Cutner would violently disagree with Marx that the tool is the "dynamic of social progress", what then is left, but the dynamic of the dream for a better world? Ernest Jones, a Chartist, penned these lines in prison after the massacre of Peterloo:

Men counted him a dreamer, Dreams
Are but the light of clearer skies—
Too dazzling for our naked eyes
And when we catch their flashing beams
We turn aside and call them dreams.
Ah, Hear me, every thought that set
In greatness rose and sorrow set,
That time to ripening glory trusts
Was called an "idle dream" at first.

That the modern factories are not the hell-holes of earlier times, is that, not a vindication of the work and dreams of the Joneses and the Riddleys?

EVA EBURY.

DOGMATIC ATHEISM

Dr. J. V. Duhig's short article, *Theology or Truth?* is a fine example of dogmatic atheism at its worst. He lists a number of statements about Christianity; I maintain that in their present form about half of them are untenable, either because they are unclear, or because they overstate the atheist position.

I have complained about this sort of thing before in these columns. If atheism becomes dogmatic, it can no longer claim to be superior to any theology. For it is characteristic of dogma that it maintains propositions which go beyond or against the available evidence. When this happens, we are landed with censorship, persecution and all the other devices intended to preserve notions which cannot gain support from reason.

If atheism is not to become dogmatic, as it obviously already has done in the minds of some FREETHINKER contributors, it must permanently retain an element of agnosticism. No one can prove that God does not exist; just as no one can prove that angels or the soul do not exist, just as no one can prove that fairies do not exist. Thus to assert that God does not exist, or souls do not exist, goes beyond the evidence.

On the other hand no one can prove that these things do exist. The evidence is quite inadequate. And for people to base their lives on propositions which have no foundation in fact is both unwise and immature.

These remarks may be summed up in a general form. If an argument which tries to prove A, is invalid, it is not the case that not A is shown to be true. To this principle there is no limitation. (See the end of Chapter 2 in Russell's *Inquiry into Meaning and Truth*.) If atheism does not preserve intellectual awareness and honesty, it is indistinguishable from the worst form of theology.

G. L. SIMONS.

THE NEW YORK REGENTS' PRAYER CASE

The fact that the US Supreme Court permits the Marshal to utter the customary prayer at the beginning of each day's business: "God save the United States and this honorable Court", has been cited as being incompatible with the Court's ruling in the New York prayer case.

Whilst these two prayers do present some analogy or resemblance in that both are custom-made, they are poles apart when we come to realise that religious prejudice, discrimination and persecution is the logical outcome of incompetent religious training.

The recognition of this conflicting situation was undoubtedly an important factor in the Supreme Court's decision. "Once government finances a religious exercise", remarked Justice William O. Douglas, "it inserts a divisive influence into our communities".

There would be no problem if teachers and students were allowed to discuss the meaning and significance of prayer in a progressively scientific manner, and not as a fashion or tradition to be followed merely because of custom. To forcibly or even suggestively implant a purely speculative and imaginative religious exercise into the child's mind before he has had any scientific mental training, is an invasion of the right to self-determination. Opinions thus obtruded upon the minds of children are not their own true opinions and therefore may not be in the best interests of the student body or the nation.

What is needed most is "freedom of the personality" without which, freedom of religious worship is an illusion.

H. F. HAAS (South Carolina, USA)

BERTRAND RUSSELL IN PAPERBACK

UNARMED VICTORY—New Penguin Special on the Cuban Crisis and China-India Dispute, 2s. 6d.

An Inquiry into Meaning and Truth (Pelican), 6s.

Has Man a Future? (Penguin), 2s. 6d.

Nightmares of Eminent Persons (Penguin), 2s. 6d.

On Education - Sceptical Essays - Power - In Praise of Idleness - Marriage and Morals - The Conquest of Happiness

(Unwin Books) all at 6s.

The Practice and Theory of Bolshevism, 5s.

PENGUIN SPECIALS

Torture: Cancer of Democracy, by Pierre Vidal-Naquet, 3s. 6d.

Common Sense about Smoking, several authors, 2s. 6d.

Asia in the Balance, by Michael Edwardes, 3s. 6d.

United Nations: Piety Myth and Truth, by Andrew Boyd, 3s. 6d.

Britain in the Sixties: Housing, by Stanley Alderson, 3s. 6d.

Plus postage, from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop