

# The Freethinker

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HAVING SURVIVED both the Cuba crisis in October and the weather crisis in subsequent months, we now hopefully face whatever social and/or natural crises may be in store for us during this year of grace—and of Dr. Richard Beeching. Evidently this dual survival of both the menace of nuclear war and of the new Ice Age that so recently threatened an Arctic intervention, has been shared by that evergreen and perennially sanguine corps

d'élite of Christ's Holy Catholic Church Militant here upon earth, the Society of Jesus. For along with the Spring, there duly arrived that notable ecclesiastical paper, *To Our Friends*, the house journal of the Jesuit Seminary at Heythrop, Oxfordshire, which, as the publisher's blurb informs us, is sent out four times a year to all parents of Jesuits and to the Friends of the Heythrop Jesuit Seminary Association. May I add that since I belong to neither of these aforementioned categories, I am eternally grateful to the anonymous benefactor—no doubt an attentive Jesuit reader of this paper—who so assiduously sends me this quarterly bulletin. Here, unlike the popular Catholic press, one gets the real thing. For the Society of the Holy Name of Jesus has throughout its four-odd centuries of chequered ups and downs, usually maintained its leading position as the Old Guard, the "Brains Trust" of the Catholic Church. For most, at any rate of the post-Reformation era, it would be correct to paraphrase an old English proverb and to say that what the Jesuits think today, the Vatican will think tomorrow.

## A Jesuit Experiment

In view of such a relationship, I read with the greatest interest a most informative factual article in this latest issue entitled, "Retreats—with a Difference". For here we have a factually documented survey of Catholic Action under Jesuit leadership actually at work in our contemporary world; a disclosure that is as valuable as it is rare, particularly in the case of that elusive, though undeniably influential movement, Catholic Action, which like its divine master so frequently "moves in mysterious ways its wonders to perform".

Evidently beneath the placid surface of our second Elizabethan age, the sons of Loyola are still hard at work on the conversion of England, the same as they were (as this issue of *To Our Friends* reminds us) in the first Elizabethan age. For whatever may have been the case with regard to Jesus, no one could possibly question the historicity of the Society named after him. In point of fact, it could be plausibly argued that the Jesuits have had more influence historically than Jesus, who seems to have bequeathed little to Christianity beyond its name. A Christian who ever made any serious attempt to carry out the positive injunctions of the Jesus of the Gospels would appear to be a rare exception.

## Catholic Action in Practice

The word now lies with our Jesuit author. "Every year" he tells us, "hundreds of men in the armed services,

especially in the RAF, in industry and in school teaching, pass through Loyola Hall, Rainhill, Liverpool, to be trained as leaders in their respective professions". In particular, it would appear, in the RAF, for we are told further that "the oldest and most typical courses are those held for the RAF which have been held every year since 1946".

This interesting item is then immediately followed by the rather startling piece of information that "for each course and there are eight RAF courses each year, fifty men are sent by the RAF and it is in fact laid down in Queen's Regulations that "all Catholic personnel without prejudice to leave, etc., may spend ten days of basic training on a Catholic leadership course". (In the text, the adjective "Roman" before "Catholic" has been rather clumsily erased). From which item of information, it would appear that the military authorities in the British Army are working hand in glove with Catholic Action; a surprising fact, particularly as we have always understood that the Anglican, and not the Roman, was the State Church in this country. It would perhaps be too much to ask whether say, the National Secular Society or the Rationalist Press Association would be given equal facilities in any future version of Queen's Army Regulations.

## Royal Blessing

Further, as the Jesuit scribe goes on to add with evident satisfaction, the efforts of the Holy Fathers to indoctrinate the British Air Force evidently meet with favour in the most exalted quarters in the contemporary British Establishment. For then we learn: "recently Fr. Peter Blake, SJ, Superior at Loyola Hall and chief organiser, has been awarded the OBE by Her Majesty the Queen in recognition of his services; and Prince Philip has written personally to commend the work". Good news that; better certainly than the reception so often leading to the gallows and the rack with which the first Elizabeth usually received Jesuit visitors to England, as our Jesuit publication does not, of course, omit to mention.

## Catholic Brainwashing

What do the Holy Fathers do with their young pupils from the RAF? Our author is quite explicit: "When they arrive at Loyola Hall, they begin a three day retreat and it is during this time that they are given the grace to know Our Lord, to return to the Sacraments if they have been away from them and to realise the importance of religion in their lives. This silent retreat—which is only broken (as a concession to human weakness) by the reading of the cricket and football news on Saturday afternoon"—a nice touch that!—is immediately followed by a week of lectures and practical exercises to build up confidence and knowledge and to teach the technique of Catholic Action. With this precise objective in mind, we learn as we go on: "The aim of a Leadership course is to produce men who have a sound grasp of their faith and are stimulated to encourage a Christian atmosphere in the station or

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### *The Jesuits and Catholic Action*

By F. A. RIDLEY

barracks or factory to which they will return when the course is finished".

### Industrial Courses

Evidently Fr. Blake and his colleagues are satisfied with their efforts, for we learn that "the men respond magnificently". Moreover their numbers are steadily increasing, for in 1962, of the 3,082 persons who passed through Rainhill—600 more than the previous year—a higher proportion than ever were men attending Leadership courses. Nor are these courses solely intended for soldiers; there are also industrial courses intended, as we are duly informed, to serve the purposes of Catholic Action in the industrial field. For, "The Industrial courses are modelled on the RAF courses, but the lectures are adapted to meet the special problems of modern industrial life; how to achieve social justice, leadership in trade unions [does the TUC approve of this?—F.A.R.], the Christian in politics and local government, the relations between management and men and so on all given by lay people well qualified to speak on these topics. Group discussions are held on these and on kindred subjects like the use of leisure, the use of money, problems of married life, pagan morality in this century and the conditions for happiness".

This certainly ambitious programme appears to be quite satisfactory to its Jesuit promoters in civil as well as in

military life. For, "the success of the courses is indicated by their popularity and the fact that more and more factories are willing to give men time off to attend them, even to make up their wages while they are away". So that it would seem that the infinitely adaptable sons of Loyola have now learned a trick which baffled the man (sic) after whom they are named: how to serve both God and Mammon at the same time! But was there not once an apt proverb, one no doubt born of much bitter experience, current in Catholic lands: "O thou who wouldst walk with Jesus, do not walk with the Jesuits"?

### The Menace of Catholic Action

Many years ago I recall reading a pamphlet with this title (written, I seem to remember by the late Alexander Stewart) which warned insistently against the then growing menace of Catholic Action, then in its early days. The facts presented above, all taken mostly verbatim from the pages of the Heythrop Jesuit journal, would certainly appear to indicate that this "menace" has not meanwhile diminished along with the passing years. Whilst we are much indebted to *To Our Friends* for the (unsolicited) information recorded above, we feel inclined to remark apropos of the title of our interesting Jesuit contemporary: "Save me from my friends for I know how to attend to my enemies myself".

## Emmett McLoughlin and "The New York Times"

EMMETT McLOUGHLIN'S *Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church* (Lyle Stuart, New York, \$4.95) was reviewed in THE FREETHINKER just over a year ago (April 13th, 1962). Subsequently (on October 5th and October 26th, 1962) we referred in Notes and News to what the publisher called "the complete silent treatment by the [American] press". The *Chicago Times* had, we reported, refused an advertisement and "Even the *New York Times* has refused advertising or, indeed, any mention of the book".

One of our American readers, Mr. Richard Stern of New Jersey, in a letter dated December 1st, 1962, asked the *New York Times* if our allegation was true. He received an acknowledgment, dated December 12th, promising a reply when the New York newspaper strike had ended. Mr. Stern has now received the *Times'* explanation, which we reprint in full below:—

April 4th, 1963.

Dear Mr. Stern,

Now that the strike is over and we are back at work, we submit the following explanation concerning advertising of the book *Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church*, as we indicated we would in our letter to you dated December 12th, 1962.

It is true that *The New York Times* has refused advertising of the book. This decision is not based primarily on criticism of the content of the book, even though when it was first submitted for review, our book review editor decided against reviewing it on the ground that it is "an extremely prejudiced and essentially ignorant attack on the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy and laity".

Regardless of the content of the book, we feel that the title in itself is sufficient warrant to refuse the advertising. We consider that title both prejudiced and sensational. It suggests that these two evils permeate the Church; thus it is, in effect, an indictment rather than a descriptive title. We feel, moreover, that it has been designed for sales rather than for serious purposes.

As we see it, this is not a case of restriction of expression, but rather a case of misuse of that freedom to which we should not be parties.

Moreover, the statement in THE FREETHINKER that *The New York Times* has refused "any mention of the book" is erroneous.

If any event were to occur concerning *Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church* which our news editors judged to be newsworthy, it would be reported without hesitation in accord with *The Times'* policy of printing the news without fear or favor.

Thank you again for your interest in *The Times*.

Sincerely yours,  
VINCENT REDDING, *The New York Times*.

## The Bishop of Woolwich and the Royal Wedding

WE WONDER if the Bishop of Woolwich watched the royal wedding on television. If so, he may have noted the first hymn, which began:

Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.

Now that God (via Paul Tillich) is "the ground of our being", perhaps that second line should end, "descend to thee". Or should the old wording be retained "crudely spatial" though it is? Is it not, to quote *Honest to God* (page 43), "still the language of most of his [God's] children—and particularly his older children"? And does not Dr. Robinson assure us that, "There is nothing intrinsically wrong with it . . ."? Nevertheless, "If Christianity is to survive, let alone recapture 'secular' man, there is no time to lose in detaching it from this scheme of thought, from this particular theology . . .".

The Anthem (which was also sung) might be considered rather more Tillichian:

God be in my head  
and in my understanding;  
God be in my eyes  
and in my looking;  
God be in my mouth  
and in my speaking;  
God be in my heart  
and in my thinking;  
God be at my end  
and at my departing.

# Baha'i—Another "World Religion"

By "AKIBA"

THE BAHAI RELIGION which has been holding a congress in the Albert Hall, London, shows some striking resemblances to the Christian religion, particularly in respect of its history and sectarian origins. Baha'ism bears the same relationship to Babi'ism, as Pauline Christianity does to "Petrine" or Jewish-Christianity. Babi'ism, the religion of the Bab (the Gate) was initiated by his proclamation at Shiraz, Persia, on May 23rd, 1844.

Islam, like the majority of world religions had preserved in its traditions, the popular belief that in the "year sixty", a Messiah (Mahdi or Qa'im) would arise who would complete the victory of Islam upon earth. Interpreted differently by the two main branches of Islam—the Shi'ah and Sunni sects—it was nonetheless generally accepted that (1) Mohammed was the Seal of the Prophets—the final divine revelation and (2) that mission of the Imam Mahdi must be therefore no other than the purification of the religion of the Qu'ran (Koran) and its acceptance by mankind.

This expectancy, paralleling that held by the Jews at the beginning of the Christian era, identified Bab in the eyes of the clergy and people during the early days of his mission. The Bab, however, did not confine himself to reforming (or trying to reform!) the morals and worship within the framework of traditional Islam. He went further and announced new revelations and new holy writings which abrogated ((horror of horrors!) the religious laws of the Qu'ran. Rather this was the charge laid against him by the Shiite clergy of the time. The truth of the matter was somewhat different: the Bab represented a revolutionary threat to the ossification and ostentatious corruption of the Persian clergy, regarding his revelations and writings as the completion, the seal of the Koranic laws, not their negation. The Christ of the Gospels, too, also came to fulfil, not abrogate the law—it will be recalled.

The Bab gained many supporters, and persecution of his sect became fierce. His first disciples were known as "The Letters of the Living", seventeen men and one woman, the famous martyr, Tahirih, all of whom accepted the truth of the Bab's claim. The Bab's charge to his disciples as he sent them forth to preach the new gospel, attempted to restore to Islam the consecration and purity of its early days. He wrote:

"O my beloved friends! You are the bearers of the name of God in this Day. You have been chosen as the repositories of His mystery. It behoves each one of you to manifest the attributes of God, and to exemplify by your deeds and words the signs of His righteousness. His power and glory . . ."

None of these disciples survived the storm of opposition which gathered as the full extent of the Bab's claims became known. After some amazing experiences and hair-breadth escapes, the Bab was executed by a regiment of soldiers in the public square of Tabriz on July 9th, 1850 (after the first attempt at execution had failed) under orders given by the Vizier, and the Babis were subjected to one of the cruellest persecutions recorded in all human history. The total slain by mobs under severest torture, with civil and ecclesiastical sanction and approval, is believed to have exceeded 20,000 men, women and children.

The death and martyrdom of the Bab left the Babi sect in a state of some disorder and confusion. A few of his followers sought to maintain a permanent Babi movement,

and this sect became known as the Ezelis, from their leader Subhi-Ezel.

This situation obtained until 1863, when a certain Mirza Husayn Ali, who had renounced his social standing by joining the Babis and assuming the name of Baha'i'Ullah, proclaimed that the Bab was but the John the Baptist to his own mission, that he was the person whom the Bab had spoken of, "Him whom God shall make manifest". In an authoritative and comprehensive outline of the Baha'i Faith by John Ferraby, *All Things Made New* (approved by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the British Isles)—the author takes great pains to establish the credentials of Baha'i'Ullah, and discredit Mirza Yahya (Subhi-Ezel). The latter is accused of "corrupting the text of the Bab's writings to make it appear that the Bab had named him as successor, adding to the call to prayer a formula identifying himself with the Godhead, commissioning several murders, and violating the honour of the Bab in a way Shoghi Effendi (the first and last Guardian of the Baha'i Faith) could not bring himself to specify when referring to it in *God Passes By* (page 215)."

Mirza Yahya is even accused of initiating a series of attempts to murder Baha'i'Ullah, the first resulting "in Baha'i'Ullah being so severely poisoned as to be ill for a month" (page 216).

Behind all these wild and unproven accusations, the real truth stands conveniently concealed. The original Babi community found Baha'i'Ullah's claims to be without support or foundation in the Bab's writings or instructions. The bitter struggle between the Baha'is and Ezelis corresponds to, and parallels, the bitter struggle between the Pauline-Christians and the Jewish-Christians. There can be little doubt that the Ezelis were the true continuators of the Babi Faith, and that the Baha'is, by relegating the Bab to the role of a John the Baptist to the "True Manifestation" did, in fact, sever their connections from Shiite Mohammedanism and set a course towards a new world religion.

Both Baha'i'Ullah, and his successor, Abdul Baha (1844-1921) were voluminous writers. They claim the Baha'i Faith does not deny the older religions: it fulfils them. All the old religions look forward to the appearance of a Great One who shall usher in a period unique in human history, completing the purpose of the founder of the Religion. According to the Baha'is that time has now come, the advent of Baha'i'Ullah fulfils prophecies in all the Holy Books. Therefore he says:—

"The revelation which, from time immemorial hath been acclaimed as the Purpose and Promise of all the Prophets of God, and the most cherished Desire of His Messengers, hath now, by virtue of the persuasive will of the Almighty and at His irresistible bidding, been revealed unto men. The advent of such a revelation hath been heralded in all the Sacred Scriptures. Behold now, notwithstanding such an announcement, mankind hath strayed from its path and shut out itself from its glory" (ibid, page 162).

The basic principles advanced as a basis for a new civilisation have been proclaimed in Europe and the Western hemisphere—as well as in Asia. The Baha'is of North America, under the guidance of the late Shoghi Effendi, developed a system of administration, whose

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

Archbishops have in the past replied to heretics, but as a rule they prefer to rest on a dignified silence. We were glad to see therefore that the Archbishop of Canterbury has produced a pamphlet for 1s. 6d., *Image Old and New*, in reply to the Bishop of Woolwich's best seller *Honest to God*. It should have been of course, a devastating criticism but, according to the *Daily Express* (April 26th), it is "gentle in temper, scholarly in representation"; and if the specimens given in the review are typical Dr. Ramsey has utterly failed to reply to Dr. Robinson.

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It appears that the Archbishop has—at least so he says—never met "either a simple Christian or a theologian who believed that God travelled through space to visit this planet". But everybody knows that God sent his begotten Son here to die to save us from the consequences of sin—which for Christianity, means eternal frizzling in Hell. God's Son was born here, through a sinless virgin it is true, but he travelled back "through space" to Heaven, and there is not much difference in travelling from Heaven than going back to Heaven "in space". In any case, where is God Almighty if he is not "up there"? Every religious lesson taught in our schools for centuries insisted that God was in Heaven, and Heaven was "up there".

★

At the Convocations of Canterbury and York due to take place in May, proposals will be made to bring parsons and laity together for running the Church of England, though both the Archbishops of Canterbury and of York are quite sure that this "would damage the Church". The real difficulty is one of "doctrine", and though many of the "laity" are far more royalist than the king, there must be many among them who would like to go much further than Dr. Robinson and his homeless Deity. Are there not also quite a few Christians on both sides who do not believe in the Virgin Birth?

★

In the meantime, it appears that a "guide" has been published which wants the vicars of the future, to have "a dashing man-of-the-world appeal". We specially welcome those future parsons who will not be "afraid to question their own presuppositions", though we should like to hope they will not be afraid to question unbelievers and heretics either. During the 19th century many clergymen had the pluck to meet Freethinkers in public debates, but where are any such Christian soldiers these days? Are they afraid of being routed again?

★

At the recent Royal Wedding the Authorised Prayer Book was used, especially the Lord's Prayer, and the never-to-be-given-up "In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost". "Accuracy" in fact at all these ceremonies can go by the board. The Revised Version, the New English Bible, and the many other new versions have never given us that Holy Reverence which a religion must supply whenever we have God in our midst. One of the biggest blows to true Christianity is abolishing the—more or less—poetical Authorised Version for other more accurate versions with all the poetry snuffed out. Where is God's once Precious Word now?

★

The real lesson that emerged from the interview with a prostitute on ATV in its religious programme the other Sunday evening was that the Church has almost

completely failed to teach what Thomas Hood called the "unfortunates" the error of their ways. To hear one of them publicly declare in the face of one parson, at least, that she refused to believe that she was "sinning" must have staggered the millions of Christians who saw the programme. Had "our Lord" so completely failed then?

### BAHA'I—ANOTHER "WORLD RELIGION"

(Concluded from page 147)

headquarters are in Chicago. Here the annual conventions of delegates from the "Spiritual Assemblies" in each city decide and discuss general policy. And what is the "unique" message offered to mankind?

1. The oneness of the world of humanity.
2. Independent investigation of truth.
3. Abolition of all prejudices.
4. Agreement between science and religion.
5. Equality of the sexes.
6. A universal auxiliary language.
7. Education for all, everywhere.
8. The spiritual solution of economic problems.
9. A universal faith based on the identity of the foundations of the great religions.
10. A world union governed by the representatives of all peoples.

These tenets are a compound of generalities, platitudes and principles which could be culled from any "progressive" religion or political party.

The death of Baha'i Ullah in 1892 led to further split in the movement between Muhammad Ali, a half-brother of Abdul-Baha, who was "distinctly decreed in His will by Baha'i Ullah" to be the successor (ibid, pages 226-227). In this, the pattern of all religious sects and "world religions" or religions pretending to be "world religions" follows the usual course. Personal animosities, pride, jealousy—all very human motives—protrude their ugly head into "spiritual" matters.

At present, the main body of the Baha'is have no Guardian of the Faith, and have been smitten by a crisis that has yet to be resolved. A rival branch, known as the Caravan of East and West, established in 1930 by Mr. and Mrs. Lewis Stuyvesant Chanler and Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, has formed an independent youth movement founded on Baha'i principles.

It is difficult to see how either branch can make significant headway now that its original momentum, and capacity for new(?) teachings and revelations appears to have been exhausted. In a world where industrialisation, mechanisation and reason are conquering new kingdoms—religions either of the old or new variety have no room, no place.

### EXPLANATION!

By "spiritual soul" we mean a soul substantially spiritual: a spirit which acts as the substantial form of the body.  
—Editor of *The Faith* (Malta).

### 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.  
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# THE FREETHINKER

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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

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, Room 7, Bath Street), Sunday, May 12th, 3 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Pope John and the Cold War".  
Hornchurch Humanist Society (Harold Wood Social Centre, corner of Gubbin's Lane and Squirrels Heath Road), Tuesday, May 14th, 8 p.m.: TREVOR LUESLEY, "Has the Co-operative Movement a Future?"  
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, May 12th, 11 a.m.: DR. MAURICE BURTON, "Man and the Destiny of Nature".

## Notes and News

POPE JOHN, it seems, was mainly responsible for the decline of the Christian Democrats in the Italian Parliamentary election and the increase in the Communist vote by over a million—"beyond our hopes and forecasts", as Signor Togliatti put it. First findings of the electoral inquiries, according to the *Daily Telegraph* (1/5/63) "put the blame for the bad showing of the Christian Democrats and the triumph of the Communists in the first place on the Vatican". The Pope's friendly welcome to Mr. Adzhubei, Mr. Khrushchev's son-in-law, and the recent encyclical are said to have "caused bewilderment among the Roman Catholic electorate".

US ROMAN CATHOLIC bishops, through their Washington lobbyist, Monsignor Frederick G. Hochwalt, have informed Congress that their stand on Federal aid to education is unchanged, that they will defeat any programme of aid for the public (state) schools which does not include aid for their own parochial schools. "Granted that the Catholic bishops may be indifferent to the fate of the public schools as such", commented *Church and State* (April, 1963), "one would think they might at least permit Congress to do something for the [two million] Catholic children in these institutions". If Cardinal Spellman and his colleagues persist in their political meddling, said *Church and State*, "they will scandalise their church and bring it into disrepute with their own members".

A QUEBEC Royal Commission on Education headed by Monsignor A. M. Parent presented the first volume of its

report to the Provincial Prime Minister, M. Jean Lesage, on April 22nd. It urged the appointment of a Minister of Education, "to promote and co-ordinate educational services at all levels", and an advisory Superior Council of Education to replace the moribund 66-man (22 Catholic bishops, 22 Catholic laymen and 22 Protestants) Council of Education. Since 1875, the report pointed out, the Council "has operated in two sections, one Roman Catholic and one Protestant, and the division has become steadily more marked". If the new proposals are accepted, the Catholic and Protestant committees would lose their autonomy, and there would be tighter state control. "Some measure of progress", comments Lanje Gardyen from Montreal, "but the fight for secular education must go on!"

WHAT DID the Most Rev. Fulton J. Sheen see at the Ecumenical Council? In the first of a series of articles in *The Faith* (Malta), May, 1963—where he was misnamed "S. J. Sheen"—he said he saw poverty. Never before had he seen such poverty, not even on the hillsides of Rio de Janeiro or in China. At the Council he saw "the poverty behind this poverty"; he saw "the bishops on whose shoulders rest this terrible want and hunger and suffering". These bishops—some of whom "slept three in a room because they could not afford separate quarters"—have, said Bishop Sheen, "suffered more for the poverty of their priests and people than the priests and people themselves". "Never before" had the handsome, resplendant Catholic TV personality (whom some regard as the model for Monsignor Frasso in *The Ecstasy of Owen Muir*) seen "the poverty of Christ as I saw it at the Council". The Holy Father has appointed the Bishop, President of Pontifical Mission Societies in the USA, so the article ended with an appeal for the poor he had seen at the Council.

MAY 1ST was the feast of St. Joseph the Worker, but the month as a whole is dedicated to his (and God's) spouse. And this Sunday, the people of Deptford, London, will be able to see the statue of "Our Blessed Lady" carried around the Church of the Assumption of Our Lady (outside if the weather permits) and finally crowned (also outside, if the weather permits). They will also see the Children of Mary wearing their cloaks and medals, the Men's Guild organising the procession, and the Women's Guild, complete with sashes, participating. All to prove to Their Lady that they "really do love Her".

AGNES BERNELLE, singer of Brechtian songs—not exactly to the liking of the critics—seems to have nutty notions, like her husband, Desmond Leslie, who assaulted Bernard Levin on TV the other week. But, whereas Mr. Leslie's speciality is the flying saucer from other planets his wife looks no further than the Himalayas. Or should it be "hears"? For, according to the *Daily Mail* (18/4/63), Miss Bernelle listens to a "secret sound", which she explains(!) is part of a Himalayan religion. "They give you a sound to concentrate on", she says, "The name of the sound must never pass your lips. But when you want to relax you listen to it. And when you get really good at listening you can get in touch with the super-conscious". Perhaps—if we may borrow from Mr. Levin's offending description of Miss Bernelle's singing—the sound derives from the super-conscious "banging its tonsils together".

R I P  
MR. LEO ABSE'S MATRIMONIAL  
CAUSES BILL

# Pascal

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

FOR AN ORDINARY English Freethinker the name Pascal may suggest little more than betting on God. Either God is or is not; neither hypothesis can be justified by reason; therefore the individual must make a choice. So argued Blaise Pascal. Bet on God; if God is, all the better. If God is not, you lose nothing. No tote; no pool.

L'Union Rationaliste has recently published a study of Pascal by M. Jacques Rennes, *Le Procès de Pascal* ("The Trial of Pascal"), in which the learned author examines Pascal's theological writings with conscientious, severe care.

Blaise Pascal was born on June 19th, 1623, where his father held a post. The family moved to Paris in 1630 and to Rouen in 1640. Young Pascal had developed a keen interest in mathematics and physics, produced a work on conic sections and invented a calculating machine, wrote on the properties of a vacuum, and carried out some interesting and important experiments. He also suffered from frequent illness.

In 1646 his father, injured falling on the ice, was looked after by a disciple of Jansen, who converted the whole family; father two daughters and son.

What was the Jansenist heresy? For it was condemned in 1642 by Pope Urban VIII. Cornelius Jansen was Bishop of Ypres, who wished to reform the Roman Church by bringing its doctrines more into line with the teaching of St. Augustine of Hippo. Original Sin, he said, made it impossible for man to gain salvation without the grace of God. Jansen denied free will; the will could be made free only through divine grace for the accomplishment of works "not only supernatural, but even morally good" (Augustine, p. 1145). The Jesuits attacked this doctrine. The Inquisition, strange to relate, tried to calm the rising tempers, but in vain. The doctrine of the Bishop of Ypres was no more, it was declared, than a rehash of that of the heretic Calvin.

Nevertheless Jansenism spread, and became centred in the Abbey of Port-Royal; originally just outside Paris, in 1625 established in Paris where a boulevard is named after it. A number of distinguished men and women joined the community as *Solitaires* in search of a revelation of divine grace.

In 1646 Blaise Pascal resolved to live for God only. Jansen's doctrine appealed to his mathematical mind and its austerity to his pathological condition. When his father died in 1651, he wrote to his sister Mme. Perier, "We must not let ourselves sorrow, as do the pagans who have no hope; we have not lost our father when he died; for he was taken from us, so to speak, when he was admitted into the Church by baptism; from that moment he was God's; now that he is dead, he is completely detached from sin; and has accomplished the work for which he was created".

Pascal was a sickly young man; for some time he was paralysed below the waist and could walk only with crutches. His doctors advised him to seek diversion. He therefore joined his friend the Duke of Roannez in his travels, and mixed in polite society. This led him to write a *Discours sur les Passions de l'Amour*, in which he declared "What is our destiny in this world? It is to love".

This period of his life soon came to an end. One day his carriage horses took fright on a bridge over the Seine, carriage and horses plunged into the river, and Pascal was saved only by the breaking of the harness. This

accident left a profound impression on him. He lost his appetite, could not sleep and was haunted by the thought of death. One night between half past ten and midnight he fell into an ecstasy which he described in a curious document found in his pocket after his death. "Monday, 23 November day of St. Clement, pope and martyr . . . Fire! God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob . . . Certainly, Certainly, Joy, Peace . . . Joy, Joy, tears of joy", and so on. Very revealing!

His younger sister Jacqueline, who after the death of her father, had entered Port-Royal, was pressing her brother to take a director and his memorandum of November 23rd, 1654, finishes, "Total submission to Jesus Christ and to my director. Eternally in bliss for a day of exercise on earth. *Non obliviscar sermones tuos* (Ps. xxviii, 16)". It is no wonder that Voltaire thought Pascal had gone mad.

Method could come from this madness. Arnauld, one of the leaders of the Jansenist movement, asked Pascal to take part in the pamphlet war with the Jesuits. The result was the series known as *Les Lettres Provinciales*, which appeared between January 1656 and March 1657, which has gained a place in the history of French literature. Such was the success of these *Letters* that they were burned in the public square at Aix, reprinted at Cologne and translated into English and later into Latin. They attempt to show the relation between theology and morality, to set out the Jansenist doctrine and to attack the Jesuits. Despite their eloquence and occasional sparks of humour, no one not obliged to by University curriculum would want to read them today, save perhaps as an example of the best French prose of the time.

In 1656 Pascal finally entered Port-Royal, being led to the decision by the miraculous healing of his niece of a weeping fistula. He renounced all mathematical and scientific study, condemned himself to the strictest asceticism and made notes for an exposition of the Jansenist faith. He died on August 19th, 1662, and the notes were published in 1670 edited (some say "garbled") by the Port-Royal leaders who put into order the hotch-potch which they found. It is said that these *Pensées* ("Thoughts") were inspired by a conversation with a man without religion who declared that a study of the history of the Church had convinced him that there did not exist a divine Providence. They had a considerable success, such that nearly sixty years later Voltaire devoted several pages of his *Philosophic Letters* to them. Pascal planned apparently to proceed from a study of man's wretchedness and his inability to solve the mystery of his own nature by reason, to the necessity of religion; thence to the Jansenist doctrines in which he himself had found a hope of an eternity of joy.

That a man who has been hailed as a mathematician of the first order and an outstanding scientist, who had also great literary gifts, should have held such ideas, has inspired M. Rennes to make a study of his work, and he finds the key to its violent contrasts and incoherencies in Pascal's obsession with salvation, an ever growing obsession till it became wholly exacting. For the religious he may be a glorious example; for the rationalist a pitiful absurdity, replacing human values by intellectual servitude.

Pascal was, very naturally, the creature of his time, whose outlook was limited by the dogmas of the moment

and by his own neurotic condition. He bets there is a god, because of the material advantages possible. He bets Christianity is true, Jansenist version, because he fancies that thus he gains salvation. All things human are, he opines, open to doubt; not so divine truth. He does not notice that this opinion is human and therefore open to doubt. The divine truth is revealed. How? Through a man; therefore open to doubt. You cannot however argue with a man who has had a personal revelation set in fire which brought him joy and peace.

The Jews, though God's instruments in accomplishing the redemption, are an object of the deepest hate as the murderers of God. The Jesuits are servants of the Devil. So thought Pascal.

In *Les Pensées*, so M. Rennes observes, Pascal reveals himself as a sort of magalomaniac. He had intellectual abilities which placed him above most men, but he was a weakling. He wished in his inmost heart to be something inconceivably great. This he found in his moment of revelation; he became one with his god. What he attained was not a greatness of heart, but a mean and selfish goal such as most men have. What has brought him fame is eloquence of language, not grandeur of ideals.

## Too Many Cats?

BEFORE IT HAPPENED, even the dog-lovers had agreed that Father Solanas was well intentioned. Of course the old man had been a fool about cats, and he would stop to talk to any cat he met in the street and tell it that it was washing itself a pretty colour; but he really did care about his parishioners—just as much as about the cats. Everyone knew that it broke the priest's heart when he had to drown kittens which his queen—an old cat that had begun to look like a dog in the way that old women begin to look like old men—still gave him. Everyone knew that Father Solanas also broke his heart about the poverty in the district.

But what could the priest do? A cardinal in England had said that pets ought to fast during Lent, and if cats could share that obligation surely it would be sinful to give them a form of birth control? Yet the whole business racked the good father. He wept over his poor parishioners with their vast families, and it seemed dreadful to him that it was forbidden to permit them to limit the mouths they had to try to feed. But the Church must know best? Had not another cardinal in America said, "Where should the Church have its finger if not on the pulse of the world?"

Yet it was terrible for the priest to see the gentle peasants suffer. Paco in particular. He was such a good man with far too many children for his miserable wages, and now his wife was expecting again. Father Solanas was driven to talk to his cat about it, as he did not dare to relieve his mind by speaking heresy to anyone else. But neither Paco, nor his wife, nor Father Solanas expected—triplets.

Obviously the good father was sadly confused and thinking of his dear pussies when he drowned two of the wretched infants in the font. The strange thing was that Paco went on talking about the priest, long after it had happened, as if he were a good man and not the unworthy servant of Holy Mother Church that the old humanitarian had proved himself to be.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

## The Kirk's Alarm

By JOHN W. TELFER

FROM EDINBURGH comes a lament that the Kirk is so short of clerics that churches are to be given a "shake-up"; there is to be a drive to find men and boys suitable for entry into the ministry.

The Presbytery's Committee on Probationers and Divinity Students was told by the convener, the Rev. David Easton, that "the intake of first-year Divinity students in Scottish universities is so dangerously low that even if a successful recruiting drive was started immediately, it would be more than 10 years before the Kirk was brought up to strength" (*Scottish Daily Express*, April 3rd). "In the years from 1955 to 1962," said Mr. Easton, "the average number of first-year Divinity students was only 50.5. The Kirk needs at least 100 a year to meet the *increasing demand*" (my italics—J.W.T.). Exactly where this "increasing demand" comes from Mr. Easton doesn't say, but it most certainly is not due to any religious revival amongst the Scots. For, as we learn from the *Glasgow Observer and Scottish Catholic Herald*, April 19th, "Forty per cent of the adults in Scotland are not members of any church".

Moreover, the Rev. C. K. O. Spence, convener of the Planning and Readjustment Committee, recently warned Greenock Presbytery of a "superabundance" of churches. In 10 years, he said, there may be "too many churches chasing too few worshippers in Greenock". And, after a shock recommendation was submitted to close one church—the South Church in the town centre, Mr. Spence added, "Not only the South Church, but other churches in this area have no future" (*Scottish Daily Express*, April 3rd).

Of course, despite the irrefutable evidence that Christianity is on a Cresta Run to decomposition, our remaining ecclesiastics (desirous of preserving their lucrative and comfortable positions) are using all kinds of "gimmicks" to lure the vanishing worshippers, and particularly the young people. Modern religion, always the handmaiden of capitalism has not surprisingly adopted capitalistic stunt methods to sell its deleterious commodity. A young Tullibody minister, the Rev. George Charlton, at a meeting of Stirling and Dunblane Presbytery, challenged the Kirk to "get with it" with pop hymns to attract youth (*Scottish Daily Express*, April 10th). "Young people", he said, "are walking past the church because the music of the Church is not for them". And it must indeed be disheartening to see teenagers in their thousands flock to hear, not the Word of God, but the guitarist. Was Jesus the greatest "twister" of all, by the way?

But, while the Kirk ponders whether or not it should "get with it", the Rev. Bill Kenny, of St. Andrew's, Dumbarton, believes he has solved his own attendance problem, by inviting members of the Glasgow Rangers football team to "come to the church and give a talk on sport" (*Sunday Mail*, April 14th). What would "orthodox" John Knox think about that?

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## CORRESPONDENCE

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

## ATHEISM AND MORALITY

In practice, the word "good" implies "good" for (me? us? people? Britain?)—to extend this to mean "good for all people everywhere always" implies a universal uniform society from which all conflict of interests has been excluded, which in turn implies petrification and, indeed, the disappearance of any need for a moral absolute. Morality evolves as and when society evolves, and a "perfect" society—while it may serve as a useful philosophical postulate—is as unthinkable as a "perfect" morality. Hence in discussions such as that between Copleston and Russell it is only clarification of problems, and not their solution, which is possible, and the dialectic victory of one or the other is irrelevant.

W. AULD.

I cannot agree with Mr. John L. Broom (THE FREETHINKER, 26/4/63) that Bertrand Russell did not have the better of Fr. Copleston. Russell stated, I admit briefly, the premises upon which atheists and humanists should base their moral judgments: "You have got to take account of the effects of actions . . .". This is the basis of utilitarianism; one judges actions "according to the proportion between the total quantities of pleasure or pain which they cause". (I quote from G. E. Moore's *Ethics*—a book which deals with this problem in detail.) If one is going to accept a "perfect moral level" the *modus operandi* will be "consequences".

DENIS COBELLI.

I should not have thought it necessary for Mr. Broom to question Mr. Ridley's reference to "our still very imperfect moral level". Without concerning ourselves with moral absolutes, I think it can be seen that a more advanced morality than that of our time is well within the bounds of possibility. One of these days we shall all realise that it is not really civilised to fight and slay people of another land over political questions in which we have little or no say. And succeeding generations will certainly think it barbaric to hunt and kill wild life in the name of sport. These are just two instances of the higher public morality of the future.

It is interesting that Mr. Broom recalls the Copleston-Russell debate on the radio some twelve years ago. Admittedly, Bertrand Russell did not emerge very well from this. And it is extraordinary he should have insisted that he had no justification for distinguishing between good and bad "any more than I have when I distinguish between blue and yellow". If Russell had argued that the infliction of pain for its own sake was evil, if he had associated ethics with the practice of the Golden Rule, if he had related good conduct to the promotion of human happiness and the happiness of the community, he would have been on much firmer ground. As a working principle, may we not say that what makes for human well-being, individually and collectively, is good, and what does not is evil?

Some men seek theological sanction for moral conduct, but none is required because the comparative consequences of good and bad behaviour are patent for all to see.

G. I. BENNETT.

Bravo Mr. Broom for exposing the fact that we materialists have no extra-human props to lean on. As some modern theologians would say, "Man has come of age", and some existentialists have it, "we are alone, abandoned, and in despair". Our gods, myths, hypostatizations, metaphorical objects, and spiritual values, have gone. In our society we just don't put up with cruelty, but if someone really does prefer it to kindness then that's that. There are no such things as ultimate values; just human beings valuing some things and disapproving of others. An "ought" cannot be derived from an "is". We human beings sometimes take ourselves too seriously and want to have "rights" to attack others for preferring cruelty to kindness. But we have no such "rights" when some of us have the power we put down people like Hitler, but when we haven't we just have to perish in concentration camps.

I do not say this with glee. It's just one of the facts of life.

WALTER DYTE.

Mr. John L. Broom wants a justification for moral principles which, by their nature, they cannot possibly have. Morality is a matter of "individual opinion or taste", since its only ultimate reference is to feeling. Mr. Broom says that if this is so "we have no more right to attack a man for preferring cruelty to kindness than for his preferring biscuits and cheese to ice cream". However, this is confused for two reasons.

Firstly "the right to attack a man" is itself a moral principle, and we define "rights" according to our feelings. Mr. Broom argues as if "rights" were somehow *behind* moral principles. Secondly we have to consider the intensity of feeling involved and

its social significance. In his example, Mr. Broom compares things which involve intense feeling and which have immense social significance with things that arouse no intense feeling and have no social significance. Our moral principles are based on our emotional reactions to people and society, not to food or drink or paintings. Personal feeling is the criterion in every case, but with morality it is feeling in a certain field, i.e. that of human relations.

Mr. Broom's criticism of my remark that "the First Cause argument must be believed by every pious Catholic . . ." is very reasonable. But I think that my statement has more justification than Mr. Bloom realises; it is based on the following considerations:—

1. A Catholic who denies that the existence of God can be logically demonstrated is guilty of heresy and mortal sin.

2. For Catholics, Aquinas is the greatest of all philosophers; he is thus taught as correct in all Catholic schools.

3. Few Catholics know of any "proofs" other than the five in Aquinas, of which the simplest is the First Cause argument.

Hence the First Cause argument is believed by most, if not all, Catholics. A Catholic may reject it only if he believed in another argument that "proved" God's existence. This is a remote possibility.

Mr. Broom says that a Catholic is free to reject Aquinas's five proofs providing he accepts God's existence "on other grounds". The only permissible "other grounds" are alternative logical arguments. If by "other grounds" Mr. Broom means such things as revelation and intuition his interpretation of the Catholic position is inaccurate.

G. L. SIMONS.

What, asks John L. Broom, is the basis of our moral judgments? I should have thought he would have appreciated the complexity of the problem he poses and recognised that it is not by any means confined to Atheists. If—as Mr. Broom thinks—Father Copleston had the better of the exchanges quoted, it is because he simplified the problem to one between "good and bad" or "good and evil", and assumed an absolute air. Russell at least hinted at complexity.

I suggest that both men would condemn the actions of the Belsen commandant from the same standpoint—what we may roughly call "human decency". The point is that Copleston has no other ground of judgment not available to the Atheist, though he may claim that his disapproval has supernatural sanction. One might then ask him to judge, say, the actions of Torquemada.

G. H. TROWN.

## OBITUARY

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Lt. Col. Thomas Clegg Rowland-Hill, JP, of Kingston Hill, Surrey. Mr. Rowland-Hill was a very old member of the National Secular Society, and a subscriber to THE FREETHINKER.

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