

The Freethinker

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Do WE NEED a new morality, especially for teenagers? I think not.

The chief need at present is to stop dramatizing our situation; to stop thinking of ourselves as unique and uniquely ill-treated. All the neurotic, apocalyptic talk about the failure of the "old" and the desperate need for the "new" in morality is becoming rather ridiculous.

We pride ourselves on our realism, but we are being presented with a new melodramatic romanticism of the 20th century backstreets: the young "Tough and Tender" confronting the glass and concrete jungle. Byron's "Manfred", facing the evil forces of the spirit world in some craggy tower in the craggy European mountains; Shelley's open-necked youth crying tragedy so beautifully from the soft Italian shores, has now become the lonely teenager, smart-cum-scruffy, leaning against the hard brick wall, tie askew, cancerous fag drooping from the corner of his gob, an insolent urbane leer in his eyes, taking it cool, rejecting the complex constraints and obligations of the world, and with them, the disgusting hypocrisy of the "oldeys". Do not be deceived, though. Look deep. Under the tough surface of that jazzy sweater, there is a vacuum, an aching void, where his heart should be. Gazing up to the skies, lighted more by the orange materialistic blaze of commerce than by the stars, he is sickened by a universe made dull by potted TV astronomy and empty of those exciting myths and colourful gods which fed rich meaning into the lives of earlier, luckier generations. Off he slouches to smoke a bit of hemp, meet his permissive doll round the corner, dallying with her lovely dyed hair, making a meal of his misery until the bang goes off and the mushroom shaped cloud swallows up his agony.

A Caricature
Well, what a silly caricature it is; what an orgy of self-centred self-pity. And the trouble is, it is not even the teenagers' own image. It is the adults who, in some mood of sensationalist worry and denunciation (or perhaps with juicy play-writing and lurid newspaper-writing-and-selling acumen) have drawn this cartoon. The majority of young people do not come within miles of the stereotype, neither do they want to.

To begin with, all the supposed facts which are held to make ours a unique, crucial and generally worsened situation, are, at the very least, highly dubious. It is by no means certain that young people of today are more given to sexual licence, more anti-social, more irresponsible, more apathetic, more confused about moral issues, than young people of earlier times. The several studies of young people (by Thelma Veness, Mr. and Mrs. Eppel and others) all show that most of them are far less sinister and sensational than this. They appear to have quite modest, sensible aims: they want peace and quiet and happiness and love and a house with a garden and a sand-pit at the bottom (not, one would have thought, unique in human history?). They seem to get on quite well with their parents. They do not appear to be continually raging

round the streets, foaming at the mouth for casual irresponsible sex, and they seem to be remarkably and sensitively concerned with mutuality of consideration in their personal relationships. Of course, they are worried by the bomb, but who is not?

Many aspects of the social situation are considerably improved today. But the gloomy, ghastly vultures—the companions of doom—cannot be happy unless they have blackened 20th century mankind completely. These croaking vultures will agree that, though some so-called social and material improvements (little things like piped water, baths, lavatories, better health, longer life, more pleasure

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A Humanist's Decalogue

By RONALD FLETCHER

and less pain) have been made, we are in fact (inwardly) far more wicked than before, and, during the past 50 years, have perpetrated far greater evils than have ever been committed in human history. They will praise earlier, simpler, nobler times and denounce such recent evils as Hitler's treatment of the Jews. But this modern-mantling myth of the vultures cannot be attacked too hotly.

An Improved Modern World

In the 20th century, the hating, plundering and murdering of Jews by Hitler was repudiated in disgust, horror and sadness by the rest of the world. But throughout the history of Christendom, until the power of the Church was broken (by awful rationalists and revolutionaries) this, though not at all times so violent, was the generally accepted attitude and practice towards the Jews.

No, the world has improved very much during the past 150 years, and men are now in the throes of great difficulties and intense conflicts largely because they have every intention of improving matters still further—and for everyone, not only for the few most fortunate nations.

It is doubtful, too, whether those factors which are held to have changed the nature and social position of the teenager have really raised any new moral issues. It is true that the possibility of nuclear war is a ghastly prospect; but earlier generations have also had to face the threatened disruption of their lives and destruction of their civilizations by war, and though nuclear war would be much more devastating, it is doubtful how far the fear of it really enters into our experience as a deeper emotional factor. Somehow, it is a possibility difficult really to believe. In any case, the threat does not change moral issues.

Moral Issues Unchanged

The rights and wrongs of morality are what they are whether I am to live one year or seventy. The idea that the threat of early extinction is a valid excuse for indulging uncontrolled appetites is only a variant of the idea that: "If I knew there was no after life—I should just have a good time. What would be the point of being good?" But such a person has not begun to know what morality is about.

It is true, too, that we live in a complex world which is difficult to alter by political action. Sometimes, therefore, we feel helpless even apathetic. But this is not

a new situation. The institutions of society must always seem a massive set of constraints to the young people who grow up within them, and though it is true that modern society is more complicated than hitherto, it is also true that far greater efforts are now directed to making it clear for young people so that they can be helped towards meaningful social participation and citizenship. Also, young people now have greater opportunities to alter their society than had earlier generations. It must not be forgotten that complete adult suffrage in Britain (for women as well as men) is only 35 years old.

Similarly, though there may be a "gap" between parents and adolescents, this, surely, cannot be greater than in earlier generations? Modern parents, though they may be perplexed as to how to help and advise their children, are so because they are more sensitive to the problems of upbringing and are less confident in the "parental authority" which they are supposed to possess. This should be a ground for greater understanding, not less.

Sexual Morality

As to sexual morality, it is generally said that improved nutrition and health with earlier maturing, the extension of the period of dependence at school, better education, and the relatively high incomes shortly after school-leaving, have resulted in a great change in sexual behaviour, which raises new moral issues. Certainly these factors are at work, but I strongly suspect that we are exaggerating their effects. I do not think the extent of earlier maturing is so striking as to have made much difference. Children have always matured early enough to make sex a problem. In any case, coupled with the knowledge about earlier maturing, we have also been shown how markedly the rate of maturation differs between individuals. To compare generation with generation is therefore an almost pointless oversimplification.

"Monkey Runs"

The increased wealth of teenagers certainly makes for greater independence, but whether this has substantially changed the pattern of sexual behaviour is, again, open to doubt. Before the last war, for example, most youngsters left school at 14, and many left grammar schools at 15 and 16, and, though their wages would not be as high as those of the present day, they certainly used them for similar purposes. I sometimes think I must be the only adult in Britain who remembers the "Monkey Runs" on Sunday evenings before World War II, when young men, wearing the smartest and flashiest suits they could manage to buy (or white silk scarves showing under their belted, military-style macks), prowled up and down the flagstoned pavements in towns and villages alike, casting lewd flirtatious glances and uttering occasional guffaws of embarrassed laughter at the haughty-then-coy-and-giggling-then-straight-away-all-haughty-again girls who were also dressed to kill; and how the sorting out of the gangs and couples went on; and the drifting off to the rough wooden seats along the roadsides, the stiles, the dark fences behind the houses, the woods, the patches of wasteground... Have things changed so much?

Not Only the Young

Finally, when one stops to think about it, why are all these criticisms levelled particularly at the young? When it is said that the young experience difficulties over sex, that they are morally confused, helpless in the face of large-scale organization and distant authority, politically apathetic, worried about the bomb, and so on, the implication seems to be that the old ones are different. But are we? The truth is, surely, that every charge, every criticism, every worry that can be voiced against the young at the present time can, with equal validity, be voiced

against the rest of us.

There are, also, no new ethical principles that we can conjure out of the blue for our guidance. It is, as is always the case, a matter of applying the ethical principles we already possess to the changed situation in order to be as clear as possible what our conduct ought to be.

Given this sceptical approach, it is very questionable whether I should try to lay down commandments; especially, too, because I believe that young people are capable of working out their own way, and, whether we like it or not, will do so. Indeed, it is an arrogance to assume otherwise. I agree with Emerson:

"Do not think the youth has no force because he cannot speak to you and me, Hark! in the next room, who spoke so clear and emphatic? Good Heaven! it is he! it is that very lump of bashfulness and phlegm which for weeks has done nothing but eat when you were by, that now rolls out these words like bell strokes. It seems he knows how to speak to his contemporaries. Bashful or bold, then, he will know how to make us seniors very necessary."

A Challenge

Still, when in the context of all these criticisms we are asked point-blank by young people: "What ought we to do? What rules of conduct do you offer us?"—we must try to give an answer. It is no use simply arguing the toss in front of them, praising or blaming them, disputing endlessly whether things are getting better or getting worse. At some time, we must face up to their challenge.

Hence the following decalogue. May I say, however, that, unlike Moses, I cannot lay claim to having had conversations with the Almighty, and, perhaps in consequence, I possess neither the certitude of Moses nor his extreme simplicity of mind and utterance.

(To be concluded)

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Religion and the Law

TWO DAILY PAPERS that we saw deplored the behaviour of MPs over Mr. Leo Abse's Matrimonial Causes Bill. "Though nobody was rude enough to use the word", said Norman Shrapnel in *The Guardian* (4/5/63), "Mr. Leo Abse bowed to an ultimatum . . .", an ultimatum delivered, of course, by the combined Christian Churches of England and Wales.

"Members of Parliament should be ashamed," wrote Deryck Winterton in the *Daily Herald* (6/5/63). "Don't the majority of MPs have any convictions on the problem?" he asked. "So long as MPs behave like this there is no hope of success for any Private Member's Bill that is at all controversial", and because "Governments are far too scared of losing votes or splitting their followers to do anything themselves", the result is that "the Commons do not tackle problems like divorce at all".

Amendment of the Oaths Act is overdue, argues a police officer, writing in the *Police Review*. "In the modern world it seems unnecessary", he says, "to bring God into the courtroom, especially when more and more people (judging from the recent book by the Bishop of Woolwich and other religious writings) are in some doubt as to who God is and where He might be found".

If some formal declaration of responsibility is called for, the police officer adds, a witness could conclude his testimony with, "What I have said is true", or "I have told the truth".

A very sensible suggestion, but what chance would it have in Parliament, in the light of Mr. Abse's experience?

Honest to Whom?

By F. A. RIDLEY

THE FACT that the recent book, *Honest to God*, written by Dr. John Robinson, Bishop of Woolwich, has become a best-seller (along with an ancient Hindu treatise on sex techniques!) can only be regarded as another indication—in the present circumstances actually a rather striking one—of the disintegration of Christian theology. For our heretical Bishop is no Luther, no Calvin. It would even be ridiculous to compare him from the standpoint of either literature or scholarship with say, such earlier Anglican modernists as Dean Inge or Bishop Barnes. For both these learned heterodox clerics were men of indisputable ability.

Moreover, both the gloomy Dean and the iconoclastic Bishop were, if not orthodox Christians, at least orthodox theists. What precisely, his Woolwich Lordship imagines that he is, is dubious even from the standpoint of Christian theology. For evidently as noted above, Dr. Robinson is no Calvin; for as the late Archibald Robertson aptly commented in his remarkable book, *The Reformation*, John Calvin, the intellectual master of the Protestant Reformation, carried Christian theology precisely as far as it would go without ultimate internal disintegration. As that able publicist then went on to note, Calvin's modern theological successors merely indicate their own intellectual bankruptcy and that of the Christian creed which they seek to revise by their present lucubrations.

To judge from a rather hasty perusal of this latest epoch-making *locus classicus* of modernist theology, the Bishop of Woolwich appears to represent the proverbial *reductio ad absurdum* of the whole process. For in its heyday, when theology reigned supreme as "Queen of the Sciences", a great theologian—say an Augustine or an Aquinas—derived his professional reputation precisely from enriching his dubious science with fresh dogmatic demonstrations, whereas today, conversely, the art of a successful theologian appears to be equivalent to the art of strategic retreat.

To be able to give up dogmas with a becoming intellectual agility nowadays appears to summarise the technique of every successful theologian. In which department Dr. Robinson appears to have established something of a record. Perhaps the only modern writer who has renounced more dogmas per page of a small book was the late Chapman Cohen and he would not, I imagine, have described himself as a theologian. And in any case he was neither a DD (Cantab) like Dr. Robinson, nor did he hold the rank or draw the not inconsiderable emoluments of a bishop.

Without in the very least subscribing to the ultra-orthodox standpoint of the Anglo-Catholic *Church Times*, one cannot but sympathise with a recent comment that it made upon *Honest to God*. What it said, in effect, was that whilst the Church of England had had its heretical bishops, from Bishop Colenso of Victorian fame (who threw Moses to the higher critics) and Bishop Barnes of more recent celebrity (who threw the Virgin Birth and the Trinity to the Unitarians), Dr. Robinson is positively the very first bishop to renounce every dogma of the Apostles' Creed which he is ordained and paid to defend. Using words in their ordinary sense, it is surely difficult to find fault with such a criticism.

In point of fact, whatever opinion one may form about the ethical propriety of a bishop doing what is in effect the work of the Humanist movement, whilst still drawing his

salary on the assumption that he is opposing it, the Bishop of Woolwich does not even appear to be capable of criticising traditional Christian theology at all accurately. For a substantial part of his not very large book is devoted to debunking the idea of God as an anthropomorphic person; as (to use his own expression) "an old man in the sky" as a visible entity "out there" in the more remote periphery of the visible universe. But all this is scarcely even accurate from the point of view of traditional theology itself, at least in its original sense. For any competent Devil's Advocate arguing the case for orthodox Christianity could easily demolish such a travesty, along with the Aunt Sallies put up by his Woolwich Lordship. In my passion for logical exactitude, I almost feel like undertaking the task myself, even though I do not expect an honorary membership of the Christian Evidence Society for so doing. For the Bishop of Woolwich does not know even his own theology. Whatever anthropomorphic language popular preachers or laymen may use, classical or medieval Christian theology has never taught in its standard definitions that God is either an old man in the sky or a visible entity out there in space.

Let us give our Anglican Bishop just a few authoritative definitions, beginning with that of his own Church, to which as a bishop he must have publicly assented. The Thirty Nine Articles of the Church of England define God as "a Being without body, parts or passions", a good definition perhaps of nothing, but certainly not of an old man in the sky. Or take St. Augustine to whom God is "a circle whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere", again dubious pre-relativity mathematics but certainly not a spatial definition "out there"; or the definition of God as "Pure Act", as posited by Aristotle and St. Thomas, and which is still the official definition of God of the Roman Catholic Church. There is nothing anthropomorphic about such a definition; our Bishop in his apparent zeal to embrace the point of view of current critics of Christian orthodoxy, has, so to speak, emptied the baby out with the bathwater, like the famous French royalists who, as King Louis XVIII was constrained to remark, were "*plus royaliste que le roi*".

Broadly speaking, Christian modernism, of which Dr. Robinson is the latest representative, has hitherto passed through three main stages. It began by criticising the Old Testament, a process by now virtually completed. In the Protestant Churches, anyway, it is pretty generally agreed that the Old Testament can and should be read (and criticised) like any other book, a point of view nowadays generally accepted outside a lunatic fringe which stretches from Billy Graham to such still arch-fundamentalists as Jehovah's Witnesses. As far as the verbal inspiration of the Old Testament is concerned, the modernist battle is all over bar the shouting. A contemporary cleric can throw Balaam to the ass, or Daniel to the lions with impunity and retain his orthodoxy (and its temporal emoluments), unimpaired.

The second phase, that of the Higher Criticism of the New Testament, is still inconclusive, for obviously Christianity is much more immediately affected by its results than in the case of the exclusively Jewish Old Testament, the truth of which is ultimately of more concern to Judaism rather than to Christianity. However, sufficient inroads have already been made upon the

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This Believing World

The "News of the World" has at last (April 28th) unearthed the "mystery" of the recent "Black Magic" events which made such a good story recently—in fact, descriptions of Black Magic ceremonies have always made good stories, especially if human sacrifices took place! The reporter met one of the believers, a youth of 19 with "shifty eyes", who gave the whole show away—no doubt for a suitable money present. But the most interesting thing about the article was its heading, "Strange secrets of the Black Mass fanatics". The "secrets" were so strange that anybody even with an elementary knowledge of the subject could have recited them offhand.

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We were told that Black Magic was, when it was first practised, "a direct insult to the Church [of Rome] which it opposed". We were also told that the "service" was often conducted by a renegade priest, that a naked woman was used at the altar—she was supposed to represent Diana as part of that Goddess's fertility worship—that worshippers stood around in a nine-foot circle and, among other "strange secrets", the Lord's Prayer was recited backwards. (This certainly would have had as much effect as reciting the alphabet backwards.) All these "fanatical" proceedings can be found in any "occult" work. Still, Black Magic always makes a good story.

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Addressing the Lewisham Liberal Education Association Mrs. Caroline Brown claimed that "hymns in some primary schools were frequently a form of muddled indoctrination in the guise of music" as if most of her hearers didn't know. She also objected to "non-religious" teachers teaching small children Bible stories some of which at least, when a child grew older, he had "to unlearn". In fact, she wanted a more "enlightened attitude towards religious teaching", the aim of which was "selectively to reject some of the Bible stories . . ." and relate the child to modern living.

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The point to note here is how our educationalists now recognise what we have taught for two centuries, that under examination unhampered by fear of the blasphemy laws, the "tall" stories in the Bible are simply untrue. God's *Holy Word* is based on myths and symbolism written up in the form of fairy tales and, under the impact of modern science can no longer be believed. We are proud to record that at last the work of our pioneer Freethinkers is achieving such marvellous results.

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But of course it is impossible to outgrow centuries of indoctrination, ignorance and credulity in a week or so. We have always some atavistic forces to contend with. For example, the Mormons can rope in quite a number of converts with super-fairy stories; but their latest attempts to enforce no tea-drinking at the weekly socials because they own the church hall where these take place would even make Peter roar with laughing if only that Holy Apostle had a sense of humour.

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The truth is that the Mormons want to enforce an eleventh Commandment—as the *Daily Mirror* (April 30th) appears to suggest. It would read, "Thou shalt not make tea", and it asks, "Is the road to hell paved with lumps of sugar?" And what is its comment? That some Churches "are out of touch with modern life" about as big an understatement as possible. All the Churches will one day, learn that, at least in the West, the days of Oriental

"indoctrination" are numbered—and that includes Christianity.

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Believers in flying saucers and great space ships from Mars and Venus reaching this planet hundreds, perhaps thousands of years ago will no doubt be pleased to learn that their opinions are strongly reinforced by a Russian scientist (London *Evening Standard*, April 30th). In the Lebanon, a correspondent came across dozens of gigantic rectangular blocks of stone which the Russian scientist insisted formed a "rocket launching pad" to blast them back home again. These stones are "bigger than the stones forming the Pyramids", and therefore they must have been made by visitors from other planets. There is no end to the story-making from the East which gave us the *Arabian Nights*, thank God!

HONEST TO WHOM?

(Concluded from page 155)

traditional view of the New Testament to guarantee ultimate victory. Both the Virgin and the Gaderene swine will eventually follow Samson and Delilah into the theological dustbin.

The third and most crucial stage is represented by the burning question (for Christians) of the origin of the Christian Church itself. Was it an individual or a collective creation? Were its sacraments ordained by its founder (or founders) or were they borrowed from the ten contemporary Gnostic mysteries? Here, as Dean Inge very sensibly noted, "the points at issue are between those who know and those who do not know, or want to know, the actual facts". However, this third phase in the evolution of modernism is still in the stage of learned research and scholarly argument; it has not yet reached the Christian general public. In my own opinion, as I have indicated elsewhere, Christianity initially emerged from the contemporary social crisis of the Roman Empire, and the existence of an individual Jesus (or perhaps of several) is not in itself a really important problem. Just at present, Dr. Robinson, unless his little book is to be regarded merely as an individual, but isolated *tour de force*, appears to have opened yet a fourth stage in the sequential evolution of Christian modernism: the existence of a personal God (and, presumably of human immortality). If so, *Honest to God* may have at least some historical, though scarcely intellectual, importance.

But a nice ethical question still remains. For whilst the Bishop of Woolwich is apparently prepared for the Church to get rid of a personal God, he yet nowhere suggests that the Church should also scrap the abundant revenues that it levies in the name of a God in whom he no longer believes. This may be "honest to God" but is it honest, even in the most narrowly commercial sense of the term, to the rank and file Christian believers who sincerely believe that they are doing their duty to their God who will presumably reward them. And does not this confirm the prophetic aphorism of Karl Marx that "the Church of England would rather lose the whole of its Thirty Nine Articles [and God, F.A.R.] than one thirty-ninth of its income". Evidently the Bishop of Woolwich agrees with Marx!

WITHOUT COMMENT

"On some occasions when the Litany has been sung in church, so far from finding it an occasion for spiritual uplift, I have been conscious of some of my brethren whistling through their teeth.—Bishop of Southwark at the Convocation of Canterbury (*Daily Telegraph*, 7/5/63).

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Lecture Notices, Etc.**OUTDOOR**

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. A. MILLAR.

(Tower Hill), Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

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, May 19th, 6.45 p.m.: J. A. MILLAR, "Why I am Terrified of Christianity".

Ilford Humanist Group (Friends Meeting House, Cleveland Road), Monday, May 20th, 7.45 p.m.: R. ARNOLD, "Abortion Law Reform".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, May 19th, 11 a.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, OBE, "The Religion of the Bishop of Woolwich".

Notes and News

THIS WEEK'S Views and Opinions is the introductory section to "A Humanist's Decalogue" by Dr. Ronald Fletcher, Lecturer in Sociology at Bedford College, London. The Decalogue itself—"Ten Non-Commandments" will follow next week. We are sure readers will welcome this important statement by Dr. Fletcher (particularly in the light of recent correspondence discussions on morality) as we did when we first read it in slightly shorter form in *New Society* (May 2nd, 1963). We are grateful to the Editor of that paper for permission to reprint and to incorporate additional matter supplied by the author.

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LAST WEEK we printed *The New York Times'* explanation of its refusal to review or to advertise Emmett McLaughlin's *Crime and Immorality in the Catholic Church*. This week it is the turn of the *Chicago Tribune* (wrongly referred to last week as the *Chicago Times*) "The World's Greatest Newspaper", as it calls itself, to give its reasons. "May I remind you," W. F. Bohnsack the Advertising Manager, wrote to Mr. Richard Stern, "that an accusation must also produce a defense. When both parties are heard, then some decision can be made as to who is right or wrong". "In this particular instance," Mr. Bohnsack continued, "we did turn down the advertisement for the book you mention. It was not because of the title nor the book's contents, but the manner in which the advertising copy was worded." So there you have the defence. We wonder what decision you will come to?

"THE CATHOLIC CHURCH has made access to the documents difficult; but the main facts have been known to scholars of the Nazi era. Though the Vatican had information to the effect that Jews were being gassed at the rate of several thousand a day (up to nine thousand at times of peak efficiency), though Pacelli must have known that a massive movement of non co-operation by European Catholics, a display of effective solidarity with their Jewish brethren, would have put severe obstacles in the path of the Final Solution, he did not move". At last the much extolled "Pope of Peace" has been exposed in a British newspaper—*The Sunday Times* (5/5/63). The scholars knew, but remained silent, and it was left, as usual, to Freethinkers to assert the truth. Now Rolf Hochhuth's play, *The Vicar* may, as *The Sunday Times* headline put it, "stir sleeping consciences" over "Papal Policy and Mass Murder".

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"MANY OF the characters are actual portrayals", said *The Sunday Times* writer, George Steiner. "The Vicar" is, of course, Pius XII, and the young Jesuit who pleads in vain for a papal condemnation of Nazism, is "a figure based on actual fact". When the play is performed in English at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in the Autumn, said Mr. Steiner, "cuts will no doubt have to be made", but he called for a full printed text, complete with "the supporting documentary material".

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NOW WE KNOW—thanks to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool—that it is not true that the Pope has "become soft on Communism". Sometimes we wonder who is infallible, the Pope or Dr. Heenan.

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IT IS not for us to take sides in the dispute between the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Woolwich over the latter's religious best-seller, *Honest to God*. Colin McCall has already critically reviewed the book (5/4/63) and this week F. A. Ridley considers it in relation to traditional theology. We content ourselves here, then, with impartially recording that, whereas to Dr. Ramsey, "the book appeared to reject the concept of a personal God as expressed in the Bible and the Creed" (*The Guardian*, 8/5/63), Dr. Robinson insists that he "had affirmed as strongly as he could the utterly personal character of God as the source and ground and goal of the entire universe, and he wholly accepted the doctrine of God as revealed in the New Testament and enshrined in the Creed".

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STILL, AS *The Guardian* correspondent, Michael Wall, pointed out (8/5/63), the Archbishop is obviously concerned about the effect of the book on "the conversations being conducted with the Roman Catholic Church by theologians and on the other conversations with other Churches". And he was apparently especially grieved by the Bishop's article in *The Observer* prior to the book's publication. Dr. Robinson, however, regarded himself as a missionary trying to help those on the fringe of the faith or quite outside it. Of one thing we feel certain: *Honest to God* will convert no intelligent Atheist.

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THE CONGREGATIONAL Union of England and Wales has declared in a recent report that "puritanical" Christians were unrealistic and harmful to the Christian cause. Many sincere Christians regularly watch a TV play or light entertainment on a Sunday evening, said the report (*Daily Herald*, 30/4/63). "And few Christian women now considered it a grievous sin to knit or sew on Sundays".

OBITUARY

J. V. Duhig

"THEOLOGY OR TRUTH?"—that was the typically forthright title of a typically forthright contribution by Dr. J. V. Duhig which we printed on April 5th. At that time, though we didn't know it, the author was seriously ill in St. Andrew's Hospital, Brisbane, Australia, after a heart attack a month earlier. Dr. Duhig died on April 14th at the age of 73.

James Vincent Duhig was born in Brisbane in 1889, a son of the late Edward Duhig, and a nephew of Roman Catholic Archbishop Duhig. He graduated as a Bachelor of Medicine at Sydney University in 1914, and enlisted for the first world war in the Medical Corps, in which he became a major. After the war he took a post-graduate course at King's College, London, specialising in pathology, and then toured Europe and the USA, where he made friends with many artists and authors. Returning to Brisbane, Dr. Duhig founded the pathology department at the Mater Hospital in 1919, and gave a great deal of time to hospital work there and elsewhere. He was a member of the first committee appointed to advance the establishment of the faculty of medicine at Queensland University, and became its first professor of pathology, the University's pathology museum being named after him in recognition of his work. He was a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of Physicians, a Fellow of the Australian and New Zealand Academy of Arts and Sciences, and for ten years president of the Queensland Royal Art Society. He was a keen art collector and contributed art criticisms to the weekly *Sydney Bulletin*. He also won the Laura Bogue Luffman literary competition with a play, *The Living Passion*, afterwards published in London and chosen as one of the best plays of the year. He read and wrote French fluently and translated (among other things), Prosper Alfaric's *From Jewish Messianism to the Christian Church* for the Pioneer Press.

It will be seen that there were no "two cultures" for James Duhig. Humanity was one, and human interests were *his* interests. "I am a man and nothing that is human is alien to me" might well have been his motto. He had, of course, a passionate concern for science, but he frequently urged audiences not to neglect art, music and literature. All were essential in "rebuilding a shattered civilisation". He was described by the State president of the Australian Medical Association, Dr. V. N. Youngman, as "a man gifted in many ways and a brilliant pathologist". Another contemporary referred to his "almost encyclopedic knowledge of many subjects".

Hatred, James Duhig certainly had—for those things deserving of hate, and especially for religion. Because, in his very last words in this journal, "Religion often promotes hatred". He knew Catholicism and the harm that it could do—he had been brought up in it and his uncle was a primate—small wonder that he detested it and expressed his detestation. He felt it too strongly to express it mildly. And he suffered in consequence. "Merely to say an ex-Catholic is now an Atheist or Rationalist brands him as something bad", he wrote to me, "when in actual fact, as we know, he has improved his intellectual status". But Catholicism was also ridiculous. "A Catholic priest in fancy dress cannot change a wafer into a God".

James Duhig had, in fact, a delightful sense of humour, most noticeable in his private correspondence, but also detectable in his articles. At times, undeniably, he could be impatient, especially of humbug, but as a colleague remarked, "few men had a more kindly heart and few give

assistance so readily to students of cultural subjects". I, too, can vouch for his generosity and helpfulness.

It is good to know that despite his six weeks of illness, he suffered little or no pain. His wife, Mrs. Kathleen M. Duhig, writes: "Jim had been in excellent health and eagerly followed the Sheffield Shield cricket matches. He came home on the last day of the match, had a good dinner and went off to bed at his usual time, but he awakened me at 2.30 a.m. . . . I called the local doctor and he diagnosed acute heart failure. He gave him an injection and he settled down. The next day we got him into hospital . . . He was terribly tired and slept most of the time. He never complained . . . even with the first massive attack he only complained of the difficulty of breathing".

In short, James Duhig enjoyed life and lived it fully to the end.

The funeral was private and the cremation took place on April 17th.

We send our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Duhig, and to his two sons (both pathologists) and his two daughters.

COLIN MCCALL.

My Horror of the Cross

By ROBERT HUDON (Canada)

I HAVE BEEN a sceptic from a very early age and I believe this attitude to be due in part to my first confrontation with a cross. My parents were very devout Roman Catholics, and my father died when I was two years old, as I recounted in "Personal Story" (THE FREETHINKER, 23/1/59). During his last illness, my father would, whenever possible, get up from his bed and, supporting himself on a chair, kneel down and pray before a cross, and to enable him to do this, the cross had been lowered to floor-level.

From what I have since been told by an elder sister, I was then at the toddling stage. I would take a few steps, then fall, and it was apparently during one of these excursions that I first became aware of the cross. My father was kneeling in prayer as usual, and in his hand he held what I now know to be a rosary. The beads attracted me and I tried to take them from him, but I was roughly restrained and, during my struggle I noticed for the first time the cross on the wall. The memory of it has remained with me to this day.

My father, a lumberman, died of pneumonia, leaving a widow and twelve children. It was on the day of his funeral that I next became aware of the cross. The house was filled with people and I had been sent to play in the garden. When the mourners left the house, they were led in procession by a man carrying a cross. I ran forward, collided with the cross and lost consciousness.

After the funeral, my mother who had no head for money, found it impossible to keep the family together. The elder boys were sent away to work for various employers, while I was taken into the home of a Roman Catholic couple. They were farmers, and on my first evening with them they dressed me in my best clothes and took me on a tour of the village. The two most prominent places were the general store and of course, the church. At the former, my adoptive parents bought me some sweets and I was deliriously happy. But on the

return journey we had to go into the church. I can remember being led by the hand to a tall statue, where my foster mother whispered, "That is St. Joseph". I was bewildered and wanted to touch the statue to find out if it was alive, but there was a rail in front.

Later, at school, I learned that St. Joseph was the husband of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of Jesus Christ, but he, Joseph, was not the father, apparently having been tricked by the Holy Ghost.

Outside the church was a large cross with a life-size figure of a man nailed to it. I was told that that was Jesus Christ crucified for our sins. I saw the nails driven through the palms of the hands and was told that the red stains on his breast were blood dripping from the wounds. It was a repulsive sight and, noticing my horror, my foster parents insisted that I knelt down and prayed. I implored them to take me away; but I was told that I had better behave myself or—pointing to the cross—"that might happen to you"! This was too much for my still very young mind, and in a panic, I ran away crying "No! No!"

After this incident, my punishment for any wrong-doing was to be forced to kneel at the foot of a cross.

It is no wonder that juvenile delinquency is so pronounced among Roman Catholics, and the blame rests on the priests. In their hands, the cross is a dagger which overshadows the whole life of every Catholic from birth to the grave.

Points from New Books

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

STRANGE THINGS were happening in the lands where for so long the prince-bishops had lived in luxury and the abbots had happily kept harlots in cages. Men whispered that red dwarfs had been seen walking on waves, and green knights had marched through walls. It was certain that prophets were arising to challenge friars' pimples and clerical bellies, only to be themselves corrupted by their improvised faiths and powers. Yet for the first moments when some fresh speculator in the vested interests of religion appeared with a new spoonful of smile and spit, it might seem to disciples that deliverance was at hand and that Jesus the Judge, white and fleshless, would manipulate artillery in the cold sky to aid the new Elect. So there was every reason for every man to persecute his neighbour in the City of Munster in 1553. The Catholics were challenged by the Lutherans, and then the Lutherans were ousted by the Anabaptists, whose tongues had been nailed to pulpits for promising a novel paradise and novel penalties.

Peter Vansittart brilliantly captures all this madness in *The Friends of God* (Macmillan, 25s.). He shows us men bedevilled with lunatic dilemmas. The Pope excommunicates a comet, the priests warn men that if constituted authority tells them that two and two make five they must believe it even against known knowledge, the Lutherans make uneasy alliance with the Catholics against the gods of the peasants, the Anabaptists offer polygamy. In between these religious frenzies, when fanatics listen to the tiny cries of cats and dogs sacrificed at the cathedral altar, citizens cower in corners and mutter that a crowd of monks has been discovered to be wolves dressed in Augustinian robes, that a statue of the Virgin has flown off as a crow to escape the vengeance of a mob, that Faust is now saying that Satan is the elder son of God whom Christ cheated of his inheritance. But ever and again

there is the craving of the slave for a master, always the eagerness to follow the latest prophet and make another holocaust of victims. And all the time God diminishes, proving himself to be neither very powerful nor very good. Fat vindictive stars spin over a furnace.

The whole novel is, indeed, a remarkable and sustained achievement. Here are crowds of men and women who are ready to swear that leaves grow upon limbs and beards sprout on trees. Did Christ say, "Love your enemies"? Ah, but what was the expression on his face—loving, raving, joking, sarcastic even? How much more satisfying to tie the heretic to a red hot seat and watch him sizzle. As for oneself, one can fornicate against one's true conscience to mortify the soul; and for this God will reward his Elect. Do not birds fly through the chamber of the true prophet to keep the air in motion and banish sickness and unseen worms?

The picture presented is a vast accusation against those who preach and exploit religions. The author does not overstress the moral, but lets us see the corruption in every detail. The voices of the preachers cry out, and God is rung like a bell at one crime after another. We need no more to remind us that man should not worship his god, but be himself his god.

A recently published anthology edited by I. J. Good, *The Scientist Speculates* (Heinemann, 50s.), contains a highly stimulating article by Stefan Themerson. The last sentence is particularly memorable: "... it is a pity that when God created various things at the beginning and saw that they were 'good', he did not make the meaning of the word more clear by saying for whom they were good."

CORRESPONDENCE

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

FOSTER-PARENTS

I was greatly interested to read Margaret McIlroy's article, "The People' on Adoption" (THE FREETHINKER, 19/4/63). I know two young boys whose history illustrates Mrs. McIlroy's theme, that affection and understanding are more essential attributes of foster-parents than their brand of religion or lack of it, and that, furthermore, religion can sometimes be a baneful influence in a child's upbringing.

Jim and Michael, after being removed from their parents who neglected them, spent a number of years in a large children's home. They showed serious behaviour problems—bed-wetting, soiling and stealing—and were probably not considered very suitable for fostering. When Jim was ten and his brother eight, however, they were sent as foster-children to Mr. and Mrs. Richards, a couple who had considerable experience of bringing up children and who were both affectionate and understanding towards children. They made no secret of their lack of interest in religion. When asked by the visiting officer, "You will teach the children about their Heavenly Father won't you?" Mrs. Richards answered, politely but firmly, "No". This did not prevent the boys being placed in her care.

During their four years with Mr. and Mrs. Richards, Jim and Michael responded to the security and affection they were offered. This was their first experience of normal home life, of feeling that they were wanted and valued, of being able to eat as much as they wanted (their astonishment when they had a boiled egg for breakfast and could have a second one if they fancied it is worth recording), of having outings in the family car, and acquiring a set of "relatives" to take an interest in them and send them Christmas presents.

Although some of their behaviour problems persisted for a long time and their foster-parents sometimes wondered if they were achieving any success, both boys were extremely happy, and their physical health was excellent. Eventually the bed-wetting and other difficulties cleared up.

About eighteen months ago, Mrs. Richards had a serious illness, for which there was no complete cure. She was told by the doctors who attended her that she must permanently reduce her work and responsibility. The visiting officer (after some delay)

found a foster-home for Jim and Michael with Mrs. Morris, whose main interest in life is religion. She not only takes the boys to church and Sunday school three times every Sunday, but forbids them to ride their bicycles, spend money, watch television (except religious programmes) or have any recreation on Sundays. Because Mrs. Richards never went to church with them (they did however, attend Sunday school while living with the Richards's), Mrs. Morris considers her to have been a bad influence in their lives and the boys are strictly forbidden to visit her house. They do, however, make clandestine visits to Mr. and Mrs. Richards.

It is noticeable that Michael has reverted to his old slyness, which he had largely overcome. When "Grandpa", a relative of the Richards family, sent the boys some money last Christmas, Michael hid his share inside the handlebar of his bicycle. Mrs. Morris discovered that Jim had more money than usual and insisted upon knowing where it had come from. When the boys told her about "Grandpa's" Christmas present they were forced to hand it to Mrs. Morris to save for them.

Both boys have been unhappy in this foster-home. Jim became so desperate a few months ago that he ran away and lived out for several days before being brought back by the police. The visiting officer commented, "I can see you are not happy here". But nothing has been done for him.

Anxious to find an escape route, Jim tried to join the Merchant Navy, but his educational level was not good enough. He is now trying to join the Army, though his friends have tried to dissuade him. At sixteen he feels he cannot face another two years with the Morrises and is determined to try any means of getting away. Michael, at fourteen, has the prospect of several years in his present home. He is trying to adapt himself to his circumstances, and has become rather sullen and shy in the process. Another of Mrs. Morris's ideas is that Jim has a bad influence on Michael and so the two brothers are never allowed out together.

Fortunately, there may not be many people whose religious beliefs lead them to behave as Mrs. Morris does, but I think the story of these boys indicates the importance of considering human qualities before religion when choosing substitute parents for children.

AUDREY MARSHALL.

P.S.—All the names mentioned are fictitious, since it would create more difficulties for "Jim" and "Michael" if "Mrs. Morris" learned about this letter. All the other details are true and authentic. — A.M.

DOGMATIC ATHEISM

Mr. Little asks "why not be dogmatic about atheism instead of joining the waverers who want to go beyond or against available evidence?" This sounds confused. Waverers do not want to go against available evidence. Their trouble is that they cannot make up their mind. They avoid dogma at the expense of rationality.

As Mr. Little observes, Dr. Duhig's article may be more "useful" than "attempts to dispute dogma", but this is a suggestion that has a nasty ring of expediency about it. Many statements can be useful irrespective of their truth—as dictators, priests and astrologers have found out. It was the truth of Dr. Duhig's statements that concerned me, not their capacity to evoke desired reactions.

I was aware, with Mr. Underwood, that I was being dogmatic about Dr. Duhig's statements. I also know the difference between "dogmatic" and "didactic". Regarding the first point, I believe that we should necessarily allow ourselves one dogmatic belief—that nothing is certain. I attacked Dr. Duhig because he gave the impression of violating this essential principle. Regarding the second point, "didactic" method can also be dogmatic; when it is, it is dangerous because it creates closed minds.

Mr. Dent asks if we should tell our children that fairies and angels do not exist. I believe that we should, and with confidence. But at the same time we should mention that there are people who think that such things do exist. I am totally opposed to creating a "dogmatic compartment" in a child's mind where beliefs popularly regarded as certain can be stored away. What seems certain today may seem less certain tomorrow.

I have no sympathy with Mr. Huxley's letter. He says, "non-existence . . . is rightly inferred from the lack of valid proof of existence." This is very loose thinking. I suppose he believes that before man's evolutionary history could be proved, the story of Adam and Eve was true. I am also very sorry that Mr. Huxley considers my recommendation that atheism should preserve intellectual honesty and awareness—"sheer bunkum". But bearing in mind his first point, his second is not surprising.

G. L. SIMONS.

ATHEISM AND MORALITY

As one who calls himself Humanist I would like to reply to Mr. Broom. The sanctions imposed by Humanism are based upon experience and observation of human behaviour. A mother soon learns that to feed her baby in a certain way is to make him happy and contented. A family learns that give and take on all sides is a good basis for contented existence, and the reverse is also so obvious that observation of certain behaviour patterns becomes axiomatic.

Personal feelings often have to be sublimated, observation of this builds character and leads to the further general rule formulated by ancient teachers, "Do unto others as you would they should do to you".

As Humanists we distinguish between good and bad by observing the effects; I could not agree with Lord Russell that we have no justification. We are justified in calling an action good when we observe that its effect is character-building, or just, or kindly, all these judgments are based on experience and observation. Our criteria are therefore judgments based on experience, our court of appeal is human social behaviour.

GEORGE DICKINSON.

BERTRAND RUSSELL

I am sure that your readers will have enjoyed the fine article by G. L. Simons about this truly remarkable man. Mr. Simons has described him as being "the greatest Englishman". I would go further and call him the greatest of living men, because of the sensible advice which he is giving to the world in respect of sanity and peace.

Mr. Simons could not be expected to have mentioned the latest of Bertrand Russell's services to Mankind—because this has only just been published in Britain.

It is a foreword to one of the most significant books that have been written in these anxious years. An honest American (Fred J. Cook), has had the courage to have described his own country, the USA, as being *The Warfare State*.

This is the title of his wonderful book, the theme being that the American reactionaries (e.g. big business-men in Wall Street and the well paid "chair-borne" admirals and generals in the Pentagon) are collaborating to increase East-West tension. They are getting so strong that they are becoming out of control by the Government.

Bertrand Russell's remarks include this sentence—"If there are any human beings in the world at the end of this century, Mr. Cook will be one of the men whom they will have to thank for their existence".

ADRIAN PIGOTT.

NOT YOU!

I don't know whether that short paragraph in THE FREETHINKER (26/4/63) about an uninvited visitor was a reference to yours truly.

BILL WARWICK.

[It wasn't.—Ed.]

NEW PAPERBACKS

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