

# The Freethinker

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LAST YEAR I published a small book on recent Vatican politics entitled: *Pope John and the Cold War*. In this modest production which has unfortunately, at least so far failed to set either the Thames or the Tiber alight, I sought to analyse recent trends in papal policy and procedure in particular relationship to Communism and to the so-called Cold War between East and West. I concluded this minor *opus* by suggesting that the Pope's personal antecedents, as well as urgent technical changes in the conduct of present-day global conflicts could very well effect a fundamental change in Vatican strategy with regard to both Communism and to the Cold War itself. There are now definite indications, if not of "an agonising reappraisal" (in the immortal words of the late John Foster Dulles), at least of a fundamental change in future Vatican world strategy. It would further seem that with the Easter promulgation of Pope John's Encyclical letter on the burning subject of Peace and War, in the course of which, incidentally, His Holiness infallibly confirmed many of the present demands of CND and of the Aldermaston marchers, this new phase in Vatican world policy has now definitely been officially inaugurated. In view of which fact, I am confidently now anticipating a speedy call to the august precincts of the Vatican with perhaps a papal decoration to follow! Indeed, in view of the fact that (unlike I imagine most of the contributors to THE FREETHINKER) I am technically a baptised Christian, and as such, consequently eligible for the purpose of election to the Papacy, I may even be considered for nomination when the next vacancy occurs. If so, I should not, in all probability be St. Peter's first atheistic successor.

**Cold War Chaplain Contracts Out**  
Under a somewhat similar heading to the above (viz. "Cold War Warriors lose their Chaplain"), the *Sunday Telegraph* (April 21st, 1963), made a significant remark. "When the joyful Easter bells died down last week, the workaday world awoke to a new phase in the Cold War", wrote Douglas Brown. "Gradually it recalled that the amazing Pope John in the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (*Peace on Earth*), his Easter gift to the world, had resigned his position as *ex officio* chaplain-general to the West. He had withdrawn his blessing from 'the greatest Crusade in history'". Remaining implacably opposed to Communist doctrines, he yet included Communists among "the men of good will" to whom he was appealing under the Natural Law.

Mr. Brown is then quoted by our contemporary as continuing: "The impact of this was not confined to pious Roman Catholics, or even to Christians generally. In a way difficult to appreciate in Britain, it shook the complacency of parties and governments in many different parts of the globe and on both sides of the Iron Curtain" (italics F.A.R.). Mr. Brown then went on to add the relevant comment that the future prospects of some kind of rapprochement between the Kremlin and the Vatican,

between the two major rival ideological creeds of our epoch, had been brought appreciably nearer by the papal switch-over.

He added that such leading past and present protagonists of the Cold War (in the Western camp) as Cardinal Spellman and the late John Foster Dulles—not to mention such contemporary European Catholic leaders as Adenauer, Franco, and Salazar—will or would "have been appalled by this latest Vatican turning-movement". As for the Communists, Mr. Brown remarked ironically: "Looking across the Iron Curtain, we find that the Pope has overnight become almost a 'Hero of the Soviet Union'"; adding that

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

## Pope John

By F. A. RIDLEY

"it was inevitable that Communist propaganda should seek to confound the West by suggesting that another Bertrand Russell was sitting in the chair of Peter". Clearly a new era has dawned in Vatican politics, but how long will it last?

### Pope John versus Anno Domini

"That" as Hamlet would have said, "is the question". For Pope John is old—82 next November—and by all accounts, ill. An acquaintance of mine who saw him in Rome last Christmas, then commented that the Pope did not look as if he would last much longer. If he dies (perhaps to join the ranks of the saints, for he has certainly done a good job for his Church) who will succeed him? This intriguing and practically important problem was also broached on the same day as Mr. Douglas Brown's article appeared, by Mr. Tom Driberg MP, in the columns of *The Sunday Citizen*. There, Mr. Driberg (an Anglo-Catholic), after commenting on the sharp division of opinion both in the Vatican Council itself and in the present College of Cardinals, went on to point out that say, Cardinals Spellman and Ottaviani are presumably bitterly opposed to the policy of the present Pope. It is relevant to add that both Cardinals appear to have been in the running for election as Pope at the Conclave that elected the present Pope, whilst (like the present writer in a recent article), Mr. Driberg nominated Cardinal Montini of Milan as the most outstanding contemporary liberal cardinal, and as the one apparently most likely to continue Pope John's policy if presently elected as his successor.

Mr. Driberg went on to remark significantly: "Only two fears will be felt in this and many other quarters: fear for the 81 year old Pope's health, fear that if he should die soon, the College of Cardinals might feel that he had gone too far and elect an illiberal successor to redress the balance". In which connection, it must always be remembered that the Papacy represents an autocracy subject to no control from below, and that—excepting only where the canonical dogmas of the Catholic Church (which even the Pope cannot alter) are concerned—no pope is under any kind of obligation to continue his predecessor's policy. As Tom Driberg obviously fears, the elevation of a conservative successor could undo all Pope John's present

liberalising policy. There have been many examples of such a *volte-face* in the chequered evolution of the Papacy: for example, the liberal regime of Leo XIII—1878-1903—was immediately superseded by that of the ultra-reactionary Pius X, now a canonised saint.

Assuming either that Pope John himself belies medical fears, or more probably that he is eventually succeeded by another liberal cardinal like Montini, we can presumably look forward to a period of relaxed tension between the Catholic Church and the Communist world, and—what is probably even more important in the event of such a future trend—a substantial, perhaps even a decisive, reduction of pressure from the West in the current Cold War. For (as my own little book endeavours to show) ever since 1922, when the virulently anti-Communist Pope Pius XI was elected, to be succeeded in 1929 by the equally anti-Communist Pius XII, the whole global strategy of the Roman Catholic Church has been devoted to a crusade against Communism. Now, with the advent

of Pope John, it would appear that the Cold War in the West has lost its most persistent and perhaps its most powerful advocate of an ideological “holy crusade” against godless Bolshevism, a “holy war” which today could only take the form of a world-wide nuclear holocaust. It is above all this aspect of the present switch-over in Vatican policy that makes it perhaps the most important, as well as hopeful political development of recent years. For whatever one may think of Rome as a religion, no one at all familiar with its past, is likely to deny its major importance as a political institution. Since a ubiquitous nuclear holocaust would presumably obliterate both the Vatican and the Kremlin—not to mention Bradlaugh House into the bargain—it is hardly open to doubt that the Vatican’s new line is, whatever its precise motives, in line with human progress. For the Pope, along with the National Secular Society and the whole Humanist movement, is now upon the side of human survival—in *this* world at any rate.

## Mugging Up Religion

By H. CUTNER

ONE OF THE most paying outlets for freelance journalists is writing articles on the many religions we are cursed or blessed with. There is no need whatever to make a genuine study of them; any good encyclopedia will give all the details necessary with the help of a few pamphlets. But under no circumstances ought an “anti” be read. Anti-religious books and articles are very disturbing, and merely confuse a writer doing his best to earn an honest penny.

All this came to my mind when I recently read an article in the *Sunday Citizen* (April 7th) headed, “They Don’t Believe in Doctors”. Miss Ruth Adam, described as a writer and sociologist, tells us that “Christian Scientists believe that faith cures all bodily ills”. Accompanying the article, is a “comment” by a prominent—and official—Christian Scientist, Admiral M. J. Mansergh who admits how difficult it is “to explain another’s religion”, but is very grateful to Miss Adam “for dealing so fairly and sympathetically” with Christian Science. However, he had to emphasise that it is “much more” than faith-healing. “It does not rest on blind faith”. In fact,

Healing in Christian Science is an after effect of the acceptance and understanding, in some degree, of the spiritual laws of God applicable to healing, so effectively demonstrated by Jesus and his disciples. This is brought out in the first sentence of the Christian Science text book, “The prayer that reforms the sinner and heals the sick is an absolute faith that all things are possible to God—a spiritual understanding of Him, an unselfed love.”

Whether the worthy Admiral really knows what all this really means I do not know, but I am fairly certain that Miss Adam doesn’t. The fact is that believers in Christian Science are so bull-dozed by the kind of words poured out in profusion by Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, that in time they are quite certain that these must have some meaning. Does anybody in his senses really believe that the first sentence in “the Christian Science text book” even if thoroughly believed could possibly cure cancer or polio or even measles? I have personally known Christian Scientists suffering from a common cold for weeks, and reading the complete text book several times didn’t shift it. Reading a school arithmetic would have had precisely the same effect.

The worst of mugging up a religion is that the mugger-up shows his (or her) vast ignorance. Fancy anyone writing about Mrs. Eddy and never mentioning P. P. Quimby!

It’s like writing about Jesus and never mentioning Almighty God.

Quimby was a “magnetic healer” to whom Mrs. Patterson (as Mrs. Eddy was then) went when she was ill. She had the greatest confidence in his methods, and later she “pinched” some of his ideas as her own. Just as our psychic journals are full of cures of “incurable cases”, so in the United States of early last century—and probably even now—there were numbers of these unorthodox “doctors” who cleverly combined the occult, the esoteric with “healing”, and no doubt did cure in some cases. Quimby was a magnetiser, a mesmerist, and appears to have inspired much confidence in his patients. Certainly it was from him that Mrs. Patterson discovered that disease was merely an “error”, though the point must be made here that Christian Scientists have never explained why they go to a dental surgeon when they have toothache, or to a surgeon when they break a leg or have appendicitis. If they “don’t believe in doctors” as Miss Adam insists, are we to understand that a difficult birth which may result in the death of the mother can really be made safe by reading something from Quimby *via* Mrs. Eddy?

Under Quimby, Mrs. Patterson was cured, and no doubt it was this which made her a “healer” in her own right. Finding that it paid—the whole story is too long to be told in an article—she published in 1875 the famous text book, *Science and Health* which Christian Scientists look on as “inspired” by God himself—as Mrs. Eddy always maintained. And reading some of the extracts given by Georgine Milmine in her biography of Mrs. Eddy, there is no doubt she believed herself to be The Woman, or type of God’s Motherhood for all who believe in God’s Fatherhood and the “immaculate” Jesus, the Messiah.

Miss Milmine is not mentioned by Miss Adam. Her book is the “hostile” biography utterly disowned by all Christian Scientists. The official biographer is Mrs. O’Brien, an American journalist, who used her other names, Sibyl Wilbur, as the author. Needless to say, its extravagant praise of Mrs. Eddy is only equalled by some of the “biographies” in praise of Jesus.

Miss Milmine’s book (published in 1909) had a great sale, and then after the frightened squeals of Christian

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# Pope John's Encyclical

By EDD DOERR

POPE JOHN'S encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, is a document, or better, perhaps, a phenomenon, which must be understood and dealt with by all who are concerned with what goes on outside their own skins. This fifteen thousand word document, issued on April 11th, 1963, received not only the expected plaudits from Catholic sources but also praise of one sort or another from President Kennedy, the US State Department, United Nations Secretary-General U Thant, the president of the (Protestant) National Council of Churches (US), the head of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the London *Sunday Times*, Paris's *Le Monde*, the Kremlin's *Pravda*, the Warsaw *Trybuna Ludu*, Italian Communist boss Palmiro Togliatti, and a variety of other sources. In this article I propose to explain and evaluate this encyclical as objectively as possible, admitting, of course, that my "bias" as a Humanist, a liberal and a democrat will probably render my judgments "non grata" in the eyes of Vatican apologists.

First, of course, we must summarise the encyclical's actual content. After opening with the assertion that "Peace on earth . . . can be firmly established only if the order laid down by God is dutifully observed", Pope John (or whoever actually wrote the thing) goes on to set down the rights of the individual: to life, bodily integrity, and the means necessary for life; to respect for his person, to "freedom in searching for truth and in expressing and communicating his opinions", to be "informed truthfully about public events", to share in the benefits of culture, to a basic education and to technical and professional training; to "honour God according to the dictates of an upright conscience"; to "free initiative in the economic field", to decent wages and working conditions, to private property ("even of productive goods"); to free assembly and association; to move and to migrate; to "take an active part in public affairs"; to just, impartial, efficacious juridical protection of his rights. Racism, racial discrimination, colonialism and imperialism are decried, and democratic government is given rather oblique and indirect approval. Legislation "contrary to the will of God" is held to be not morally binding. The welfare state ideas of Pope John's earlier encyclical, *Mater et Magistra*, are reiterated. Government's legislative, executive and judicial functions or powers should be divided.

The encyclical then turns to international relations, noting that "the same moral law which governs relations between individual human beings serves also to regulate relations of political communities with one another", and that international relations should be regulated for the common good. All races, nationalities and states should be regarded as equal in dignity and the rights of minorities should be respected. International disagreements should be settled by negotiation and compromise. The encyclical advocates disarmament, the cessation of nuclear bomb tests, the extension of aid to underdeveloped lands by more advanced nations, and international economic co-operation. The encyclical praises the United Nations and advocates the development of a world federal government.

In a final section, entitled "Pastoral Exhortations", Catholics are urged to "take an active part in the various organisations and influence them from within". The importance of theological indoctrination is stressed, and yet

heretics and/or "unbelievers" are held to "retain their dignity as human persons". Then follows some very interesting and somewhat unexpected material: the Pope asserts that certain "historical movements" (not specified, but presumably including the various Socialist and Communist parties) should not be regarded as being necessarily identical with or forever bound to the "false philosophical teachings regarding the nature, origin and destiny of the universe and of man" upon which they were founded; he notes that these movements may "contain elements that are positive and deserving of approval". He then says that "It can happen, then, that a drawing nearer together [presumably of the Church and/or Catholic parties with Socialist or Communist parties or governments] or a meeting for the attainment of some practical end, which was formerly deemed inopportune or unproductive, might now or in the future be considered opportune and useful".

The encyclical draws to a conclusion with the admonition that "it must not be forgotten that the Church has the right and the duty not only to safeguard the principles of ethics and religion, but also to intervene authoritatively with her children in the temporal sphere when there is a question of judging the application of these principles [of the 'natural law', the 'social doctrine of the Church', and the 'directives of ecclesiastical authority'] to concrete cases".

There it is. Now to see what it all means. In spite of a certain unnecessary and disturbing vagueness and the fact that the whole message is embedded in a sticky matrix of supernaturalistic gobbledygook, the encyclical does contain a great deal with which any Humanist or liberal or democrat could agree without hesitation. But it is immediately obvious that the encyclical contains not a single idea which is new or original, not a single idea which is not but a pale echo of the theory and/or practice of years—or in some cases decades or even centuries—of enlightened men who have worked, thought, fought and died to evolve, promote and defend freedom, democratic government and progressive ideas, and all this usually against the strong opposition of the clericalists, the religious bigots and their cronies. One has but to recall the history of the development of freedom and democracy in the English speaking world since the Magna Carta, the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution and Bill of Rights, the work of Locke and Paine and Jefferson and Montesquieu and Lincoln and Nehru, etc.

It is generally, of course, altogether fitting and proper that all men of good will, whether they call themselves Humanists or Catholics or Protestants or Jews or Muslims or Hindus or whatever, work together for common ends, but no one should allow himself to be deceived by propaganda documents issued by an oligarchy which has for many centuries opposed, in a variety of ways, what might be called the Humanist-liberal-democratic-scientific spirit. Pope John issued his two important encyclicals, *Mater et Magistra* and *Pacem in Terris*, simply because he had to, because the present Vatican leadership is keenly aware that authoritarian supernaturalism and clericalism need a new image, a new facade compatible with twentieth century realities and ideas. The Catholic Church and its aims have not really changed; the Vatican has only adjusted its methods. It is willing to parrot platitudes and

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Scientists, disappeared. It is, I think, almost impossible these days to obtain a copy, for it was too devastating an exposure of fraud and swindling to be allowed to exist.

Miss Adam rightly gives the date of the first publication of *Science and Health* as 1875, but merely says it is "the official text book of the movement". Is it? She says nothing about its complete failure when first published, or how it was published, a complicated story too long to be discussed here. As Miss Milmine says, "it fell flat on the market" in spite of a good deal of advertising; and even at one dollar instead of two dollars fifty, it could not be sold. But if any of the buyers had waited long enough, their copies could have brought almost any price (in reason). The first edition is packed with mistakes and bad grammar, and I am fairly certain Miss Adam has never seen a copy. Compared with modern editions (though some of the basic claims remain the same) this first edition is *not* the text book of Christian Science—which, as most people know or ought to know, is neither Science nor Christian. Actually, in 1885, it had to be *rewritten*, a task undertaken by the Rev. J. H. Wiggin, thenceforth Mrs. Eddy's literary adviser, endowed with competence and scholarship. And even subsequent editions have had I believe some changes.

Of course, even a scholar could not make sense of Mrs. Eddy's hotchpotch of Quimby, Andrew Jackson Davis, Mother Anne Lee (the "distinguished" founder of Shakerism) and Hegel who managed to get somehow or other into the Christian Science rigmarole. The reader should get hold of a copy of *Science and Health* and enjoy its ludicrous solemnity for himself.

Mark Twain called Mrs. Eddy "That shameless old swindler", and the chapter in *The Faith, Falsity, and Failure of Christian Science* by F. W. Peabody (1926) sheds an astounding light on the swindling which went on during her lifetime in money matters. "She swindled her trusted friends out of their property" he says, "and then pretended to have been their benefactor". But one of the most amusing of her many swindles is giving her age as forty in the marriage register when she married her third husband at fifty-six. She characterised herself as "pure as the angels".

Peabody gives a list of the managers, lecturers, and friends, who helped her to make Christian Science so famous, yet who died from "non-existent" diseases after taking liberal doses of readings from *Science and Health*. There was Pastor S. J. Hannah, an editor of the *Christian Science Journal*, who died from bronchial pneumonia. A. McLellan succeeded Hannah, and died after many years of "physical suffering", though he preached there was no such thing. He was killed by arterio-sclerosis. A. Farlow was Chairman of CS publications, and even more publicised than Mother Eddy herself if that were possible. He died of heart disease at fifty-eight. And Peabody gives many more names.

Of those "cured", in the same book Dr. C. E. Humiston gives long lists wherever he could find them after the "cure". Needless to say, these "cures" surpass even Lourdes in deliberate lying. Page after page is given to unfortunate patients with cancer, diphtheria, pneumonia, tumors, all of whom endured the Christian Science treatment which resulted in the end only in death. Dr. Humiston's conclusion is "Christian Science is an assassin of humanity".

But had all I have written (and I could go on for pages) been sent in to the *Sunday Citizen*—and it is not the result of mugging-up—it would have been "declined with

thanks". You must not tell the truth about Christian Science in a national newspaper. It is bad for circulation.

## POPE JOHN'S ENCYCLICAL

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to compromise on nonessentials in order to better promote its age old goals of ever increasing temporal power and influence. The Vatican has found that it is futile and "inopportune" to fight savagely against Protestants, Jews, Orthodox, Anglicans, Socialists, Communists, liberals, Humanists, and modern science and secular knowledge all at the same time. Just as Rome once found it opportune to support Mussolini and Franco and to render Hitler invaluable aid in taking over Germany, so now it regards it as "opportune" to woo Orthodox and Protestant bodies toward union, to approve and work with the United Nations, to work with labour unions and liberal groups, to soften slightly its position on birth control, to try to improve relations between the Vatican and the Kremlin (note the current dealings over Mindszenty, the release of the Archbishop of Lwow, the Adzhubei visit, etc.). In short, the Vatican has had only a change of face, not a change of heart. It is not in the vanguard of the movement for a better, freer, saner world: it is only a wolf in sheep's clothing, a whitened sepulchre.

Talk is cheap. To give advice to someone else is easy. To prate about the "principle of subsidiarity" and to fail to apply the principle to itself is, for the Vatican, but a clever power play. Nowhere in *Pacem in Terris* or *Mater et Magistra* does the Vatican say anything about the internal reform. All institutions are in need of reform and improvement but the Roman Catholic Church, a "perfect society founded by God!" Hogwash!

Of course, some good may come of the Vatican's new tack, but Humanists, liberals and democrats should not allow themselves to be deceived. The Catholic Church, as an institution, will be worthy of trust and respect only when it makes appropriate internal reforms, such as the abandonment of its supernaturalism, authoritarianism, absolutism, Aristotelianism, fondness for dictators and reactionary régimes, and other undemocratic and non-humanistic features. Meanwhile, all who share the basic Humanist-liberal-democratic-scientific spirit would do well to continue strengthening that great social current which avoids the extremes of both Left and Right in its struggle for a better, saner world, and to continue opposing every form of tyranny, whether physical or spiritual, regardless of the opportunistic (Pope John's own word) facades they may adopt to disarm the unwary.

## Freethinker Editor on Television

ON FRIDAY, May 24th, Colin McCall, who was introduced as the editor of THE FREETHINKER, was interviewed by John Doyle in the TWW (Wales and Western ITV) programme *In the News*. The subject was adoption, and Mr. McCall referred to the difficulties experienced by non-religious would-be adoptive parents due to the clause on the adoption form which enables the natural mother, while relinquishing all other rights over the child, to specify the religion in which it shall be brought up. This clause, he said, deprived many "Roman Catholic" children from being adopted by non-Catholic parents, therefore having to live in institutions. When Mr. Doyle said that a Catholic spokesman had denied this and had asserted that there were not enough Catholic children to meet adoptive demands, Mr. McCall responded: "Then I should ask him to explain the need for Catholic orphanages up and down the country." The interview was unscripted.

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

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

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

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

to be held in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1 (by kind permission of the South Place Ethical Society).

The NSS Executive Committee invites delegates and friends to

#### RECEPTION AND SOCIAL

in the Library of Conway Hall on Saturday,

June 1st, at 7 p.m.

#### THE CONFERENCE

(for Members only)

will be held in the

Small Hall on Sunday, June 2nd

at 10 a.m.—12.30 p.m. and 2 p.m.—4.30 p.m.

and will be followed by

#### OPEN AIR MEETINGS

at Marble Arch and Tower Hill.

## Notes and News

AS THE AGED Pope John XXIII goes into a spiritual retreat which is generally interpreted as a rest for the benefit of his failing health, it is fitting that we should glance at the changes he has initiated in Vatican policy. This, F. A. Ridley and Edd Doerr attempt to do this week. Our two contributors approach their subject from different angles and reach perhaps rather different conclusions, but they should help the reader in his own personal assessment. Mr. Doerr is co-editor of *The American Rationalist*.

★

Is it blasphemous for a man to dress up as Jesus Christ; for others to represent angels and to display slogans such as, "They shall reign for ever", "Hallowed be their names" and "Adore them for they are glorious"? Fourteen Tottenham clergymen of various denominations believe it is, if the figures and banners are in a football procession like that of Tottenham Hotspurs after their European Cup Winners' Cup victory. Certainly they are "an insult to the Lord and a grave offence to Christian decency and conscience", said the Rev. David Evans, Vicar of St. Mary's, Tottenham, while a Congregational minister, the Rev. Clifford Hill sent a telegram to the Home Secretary asking that action should be taken under the Blasphemy Laws. We doubt, however, if even Mr. Brooke will be anxious to show how much of "a ass— a idiot" the law really can be.

"SOME MEASURE of progress" was how Montreal correspondent Lanje Gardyen summed up the report of the Quebec Royal Commission on Education, which urged the appointment of a Minister of Education "to promote and co-ordinate educational services at all levels" (Notes and News, 10/5/63). Obviously this would represent too much progress for Abbé Louis O'Neill, a priest on the Faculty of Laval (RC) University, who has attacked the report as falling short of "desirable democracy"! There was "a distinct likelihood that education in Quebec will be made a gimmick", the Abbé said, "if the Government is left with the almost exclusive responsibility the Royal Commission suggests". What worries the Abbé, of course, is that—in Lanje Gardyen's words—the Roman Catholic Church is "losing out".

★

DR. CANTERO, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Huelva, has said that Spain is not yet "mentally, psychologically or socially ready for the exercise of religious liberty to the extent which in other countries is normal and even inevitable" (*Daily Telegraph*, 18/5/63). Freedom of conscience was the right and duty of every human being, but it might be dangerous for Spain "to open the flood gates" of proselytism. The country should be cautious.

★

A *Sunday Telegraph* editorial declaring it undesirable that Rolf Hochhuth's play (variously translated as *The Vicar*, *The Representative* or *The Proxy*) should be staged in England, brought a number of dissenting letters (19/5/63), including one from Adrian Pigott. "If," said Mr. Pigott, "Pius XII (and his predecessor, Pius XI, whose Foreign Secretary he was from 1930), had only made some public expression of disapproval of what the Nazis were doing, it would certainly have deterred the pro-Nazi misbehaviour of several of the influential cardinals". And Mr. Pigott instanced Cardinal Innitzer who, in 1938, "welcomed Hitler into Vienna, and ordered bells to be rung from all RC churches, which were festooned with the swastika".

★

THE *Daily Sketch* letter standard must be pitifully low, judging by the one from Miss Mollie Moncrieff, which topped the "Pick of the Post" on May 15th. Miss Moncrieff, who claimed that she had just helped to exorcise a ghost from the room in which Harvey Holford shot his wife, complained about "the shockingly selfish attitude of the public towards ghosts". They are "the same as us", Miss Moncrieff declared. "The only difference is they are held up in time and do not know how to extricate themselves. Usually their greatest desire is to gain release and make progress. Almost invariably they respond to treatment". An editorial note informed *Daily Sketch* readers that Miss Moncrieff was "a writer of historical books and articles". She herself informed them that she was a medium.

★

WHY, FOR ITS advertising poster in the London Underground trains, should the Royal London Society for the Blind choose a picture of a little blind girl praying? Is it intended to soften our hearts towards those who in the accompanying quotation from Colley Cibber ask, "What is this thing called light, which I must ne'er enjoy?" Surely that isn't necessary. In our own case it hardens us the more against a religion that encourages the blind to thank God for his multifold blessings.

★

WE REGRET that, owing to postal difficulties, there is no "This Believing World" column this week.

# Parapsychology and the Law of Libel

By EDWARD ROUX

SCEPTICS WHO DOUBT the validity of the evidence for extra-sensory perception (telepathy, precognition and clairvoyance) may sometimes find their criticisms hampered by fear of infringing the law of libel. This is because one of the chief reasons for rejecting the experimental evidence for ESP may be that it is considered to be the result of deception. To publish an accusation of deception may in some instances be libel. If the accusation is verbal it may be slander.

Experiments on ESP or parapsychology are usually in a different category from the ordinary run of scientific experiments. The public discussion of the results obtained presents difficulties which involve ethical considerations. It may therefore be interesting to discuss parapsychological investigations in relation to the law of libel.

In the field of experimental psychology, the experimental animals are often rats, dogs or other mammals. These animals are not intelligent enough to understand the nature of the experiment, so they cannot co-operate with or deceive the experimenter. If the latter is deceiving himself or attempting to deceive his fellow-scientists or if he is a bad investigator, it does not matter very much, because he will publish his results in a scientific journal and other scientists will be able to check his observations and conclusions by repeating his experiments. Thus science has a way of eliminating the fraudulent or incompetent observation or conclusion.

It is otherwise in experiments on ESP (which are a legitimate part of experimental psychology) because the experimental animals are in this case human beings who understand the nature of the experiments in which they are subjects. It has therefore been accepted that the experimental set-up in such experiments must be such as to prevent the subject from *deceiving* or *tricking* the investigator. (It is unfortunate that these two words have an emotive flavour and carry a moral implication. I do not know whether our language has an ethically or emotionally neutral word which could be substituted. I have not found one.) If it can be shown, as C. E. M. Hansel of Manchester University has shown frequently, that the subject had the opportunity by means of his known senses to achieve the results obtained, then, in the opinion of most critical scientists, the results cannot be taken as evidence of ESP. If results are published and are then criticised in this way I do not think the subject should be allowed to bring action for libel against the critic. The criticism is not really directed against the subject: it is directed against the investigator. As in any other field of science, the experimenter must be prepared with equanimity to face the critic who is attacking either his technical methods or his conclusions.

If Mrs. X, claiming telepathic powers, is examined by Professor A with positive results and subsequently by Professor B with negative results, two things at least are logically possible. Either she possessed these powers when examined by A and had lost them when examined by B, for, after all, telepathy, they say, is not always exhibited, and A may have provided a more sympathetic atmosphere than B; or she did not possess these powers at all but used some trick to produce the results. In this case it is possible that A was "taken in" and B was not. The criticism here is directed against Professor A for exhibiting credulity or being a poor experimenter and not against Mrs. X.

If Mrs. X insisted on instigating proceedings for libel, the court would find it difficult to decide whether she did or did not cheat. It would in fact have to make a scientific rather than a legal judgment. If the court found it libellous to say she cheated even if she did, it would mean that critics of ESP who believe the results are obtained by trickery must for ever be silent. This would constitute intolerable interference by the courts in the realm of science. If it were held that critics of ESP must not refer to experimental subjects by name, then the critics must also refrain from naming the experimenters. A libel remains a libel as long as the aggrieved person can be identified. Again an intolerable situation would result.

In some experiments, e.g., the Pratt-Woodruff experiment, two investigators take part, and they may take precautions to prevent either experimenter tricking the other. If, after publication of results suggesting ESP, a critic should then show that one investigator *could* have deceived the other, once more the experiment must be declared invalid. And again I think the investigator concerned should not be allowed to bring a libel action against the critic. If the experimenters did not wish an embarrassing situation to arise they should not have planned the experiment in the way they did. One should not be allowed both to have one's cake and eat it.

If the courts are not prepared to take the point of view I have indicated and if mediums and allegedly paranormal persons are allowed to collect money from writers who are sceptical about ESP, paranormal psychology must become a taboo subject.

Inevitably problems of ESP, mediumship and occult phenomena in general are discussed in the popular press. The implications with regard to the law of libel may not be as clear as is the case in the purely scientific field, but I think what I have said above still applies.

Many of us have attended public performances by "mind readers" (often operating in pairs) who do not usually allege that their results are obtained by extra-sensory means. This is a well-known form of entertainment and it is in general assumed, though not always explicitly stated, that some sort of trick is involved. Suppose that a performer states that his results were due to his telepathic powers and some member of the audience replies, "I believe, though I can't prove it, that you used a trick", would the performer then have grounds for an action for slander? I do not think so unless there were aggravating circumstances. The critic might have said: "You are a thoroughly dishonest person", etc.

The professional medium publicly proclaims that she possesses occult powers, can communicate with the spirits of the dead, and so on. Some mediums are undoubtedly clever tricksters. Others *may* be genuine in that they possess some power not possessed by ordinary people. Should a medium of the first type be prosecuted for fraud or for taking money under false pretences? I do not think so. She gives value for money in entertaining her clients who, in general, are only too willing to welcome evidence in favour of the paranormal. At the same time she must be prepared to accept the fact that many will believe that she does not possess the powers alleged. These sceptics should be permitted to express their opinion. Prosecutions or legal actions either for fraud or for libel should be disallowed. Courts of law should not be called upon to judge either that ESP exists or that it does not exist.

# Humanist Dinner in the House of Commons

THE BRITISH HUMANIST ASSOCIATION, sponsored by the Ethical Union and the Rationalist Press Association Ltd., held its inaugural dinner in the House of Commons on Friday, May 17th, by courtesy of Mr. L. A. Pavitt, MP, under the chairmanship of Sir Julian Huxley, FRS, and in the presence of many distinguished guests.

The tide was on the turn for humanism, said Sir Julian in his introductory remarks. The term meant more than ethics or rationalism; it was concerned with the whole human species and with its future evolution. Is man going to become a cancer on the planet or is he going to control himself and go on to greater achievement, greater fulfilment? The world *can* be made better if we use all the resources of knowledge, but we must base our beliefs on science (all men had beliefs, said Sir Julian, and he would deliberately avoid using the term "religion"). We should not be pessimistic or cynical; not optimistic but realistic. The realisation of more possibilities for ourselves and our children was the best goal for mankind, and humanism was the only system that could unite all mankind.

Baroness Wootton of Abinger, who proposed the toast, "Prosperity to the British Humanist Association", regretted the absence on such an important occasion of one of our most charming fighters, Mrs. Margaret Knight, due to the premature death of her husband, who was known affectionately to his friends as "the bridegroom of anti-Christ". "Clearly," said Baroness Wootton, "there is no God, and Julian Huxley is his prophet". This evening we were all His prophets, though not so distinguished as Sir Julian. And, in his own day and way, the Bishop of Woolwich was "the incarnation of Sir Julian's grandfather". Dr. Robinson was saying things that were devastating and fundamental, though wrapped up in mystical language. Thanks to him we were now able to say to the Churches that they were all Atheists without knowing it—or possibly with knowing it! The Archbishop of Canterbury was understandably cross, for the Bishop had virtually said that church was all right if you like myths or music.

But there was still a great deal for us to do, Baroness Wootton continued. We must press very hard for opportunities in the mass media for asserting the kind of humanist morality we were interested in. The incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ made an improbable story, and a morality tied to that story was terribly insecure. If we didn't believe, we shouldn't conform. We shouldn't swear an oath, even in the privacy of a solicitor's office. "I myself," said Baroness Wootton, "never go to a memorial service for my friends". The vast majority of people in these islands were of our way of thinking—though they might pray in desperate circumstances—and if we spoke to them loudly and clearly it might be an encouragement to them to come out and say so.

Seconding the toast, Mr. Kingsley Martin said that he believed the Association had a very difficult job before it. Difficult because Christianity and ethics were bound together in our society. We had to try to keep the baby while getting rid of the bathwater: while saying that ethical behaviour doesn't depend upon Jesus Christ. "You cannot have a society of wide boys", said Mr. Martin, "because there was nothing to hold them together. They are held together because most of us are squares!"

The problem was, Mr. Martin went on, how to get it over to people that ethics are important to society. People

have inside them "a god-shaped hole". Jung didn't see how they could live without religion, though it didn't matter what that religion was. People wanted substitute ceremonies for great occasions, for occasions of birth, marriage and death. Rationalist movements had failed because they hadn't provided a substitute. But, Mr. Martin added, it was most encouraging to see a much more liberal spirit at the BBC.

"What is a Humanist?" asked Professor A. J. Ayer, responding to the toast. He was now an Oxford philosopher—though only topographically—so he had appropriately looked the word up in the Oxford Dictionary and got, not surprisingly, a rather dusty answer or collection of answers. As he saw it, the first point of humanism was liberation from authority; getting rid of the idea of a superior being. The theological battle was very nearly won, but the Professor doubted if the main motive of theological acceptance was ever theological. Rather the motives were psychological: fear and hope.

Of these, the fear of hellfire was very properly being overcome but, on the other hand, there was a very strong force still operating—that of hope. It was very easy for us to say, why shouldn't people be content to put meaning into life, but this was a creed for privileged persons. "Tell it to an Indian coolie!" Some of the material obstacles were being overcome, but the whole humanist position depended upon a certain amount of education, leisure, etc.

Humanists, then, had an enormous social responsibility. In a sense they were an élite who had come through superstition to a position that they could hold. Think how the moral climate had changed in the last 50 years, Professor Ayer said. What enormous progress had been made—by old bores like ourselves! And this was what we must go on doing. We must keep working away; we mustn't be solemn, but we must be serious.

This was, as Sir Julian Huxley remarked at the close and as the two hundred or so present agreed, "a most successful evening".

COLIN McCALL.

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## Sunday Sport and Sunday School

THE REV. R. C. CRASTON of St. Paul's, Bolton, Lancs., protested strongly (in a letter to the *Bolton Evening News*, 16/4/63) against a charity football match held on a Sunday ("on Easter Sunday, moreover") which clashed with the Sunday schools and "not unnaturally attracted many young ones who would otherwise have been in church or school". Churches, said Mr. Craston, "have a hard enough task in Sunday School and youth work these days", and it is often said by many who are in a position to judge (including our Chief Constable recently) that a religious training is one of the strongest bulwarks against the rising tide of juvenile delinquency. "We don't of course, share the view of those "many", whether they are "in a position to judge" or not, and we would ask the Chief Constable of Bolton to supply statistics to support it. But that apart, what harm does Mr. Craston think one Sunday afternoon football match will do to his pupils? Make them want more?"

## CORRESPONDENCE

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

## DR. J. V. DUHIG

I should like, as one who had the pleasure of corresponding with Dr. J. V. Duhig over a number of years, to pay a brief tribute to him in THE FREETHINKER, where I know he gained quite a personal following.

He was honest and forthright, with no subterfuge. He never pretended to enjoy something he didn't enjoy. Yet he was a sensitive man and an affectionate father who always spoke of his family with unconcealed pride and affection. And it is significant that both his sons followed in his footsteps and became pathologists, whereas sons often react against their fathers.

He was, too, a man of practical compassion, but if I had to summarise I should say that he was personally incapable of insincerity and couldn't understand insincerity in others.

D. J. MCCONALOGUE.

I was extremely sorry to read that Dr. J. V. Duhig was dead. I admired his hard-hitting style, especially when he wrote about the Roman Catholic Church. He will be a great loss to Australian (and world) Freethought.

JOHN W. TELFER.

I was shocked to read about Dr. Duhig. It was like losing an old friend.

REGINALD UNDERWOOD

It was with sincere regret that I read of the death of Dr. Duhig. We have lost a faithful champion of the cause of Freethought.

MARTIN MCCALPIN.

## SECULARIST FINED £25

Norman Burns, a member of the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society was fined £25 and 3 guineas costs on Saturday, May 25th, for taking part in the Nuclear Disarmament demonstration at Marham Air Base, Norfolk.

Some may question the methods adopted on these occasions, but no one can doubt Mr. Burns's sincerity or the integrity with which he has constantly worked for the furtherance of his ideals. He is a member of whom the Society can be justly proud.

Norman is a married man with two young daughters; his wife has loyally supported him in his activities.

W. MILLER (Chairman, Birmingham Branch, NSS).

## ATHEISM AND MORALITY

Mr. Dickinson defines "moral good" according to the observed effects of actions. But it is only because of his *emotional* reactions to these effects that he defines "good" as he does. If his emotional reaction to justice, kindness, etc., were different his concept of moral good would be different.

Mr. Dickinson should ask himself why it is good to be kind. If his answer does not contain an emotional value judgment he should again seek a justification. Sooner or later he will arrive at a statement which merely expresses a feeling.

Many people can *observe* the effects of particular actions. This does not entail their having identical moralities, even when their observations are identical. Personal emotional reactions are various and so moralities differ. Observation merely makes us aware of moral issues which we then judge according to different criteria—those derived from our *emotional* natures.

G. L. SIMONS.

## NEW PAPERBACKS

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## WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS

International Congress, July 26th-29th, 1963,  
at Duisburg, Germany.

(The following message has been received from the German Organising Committee, under K. Dielitzsch, 4600 Dortmund-Asseln, Hellweg 2191, West Germany).

The preparations for the Congress are now complete in every way. The meetings will be held in Duisburg at the Mercator Hall, a new building of international importance, named after the famous cartographer. We have taken the Hall for the whole period of the Congress. Besides the large hall which we shall use for the public demonstration on the Saturday evening, we shall have a smaller hall for the other sessions seating up to 2200. These halls are fitted for simultaneous interpretation.

The programme will be:—

## FRIDAY, JULY 26th

9.30—12.00—Business Meeting of Representative delegates.

14.30—18.00—First Session: Opening in the presence of the Mayor and other dignitaries. Recorded address by Bertrand Russell, followed by speeches by Hubert Freistühler, President of the German Federation and by the leaders of the national delegations.

19.30—Social Evening: Reception by the German Federation.

## SATURDAY, JULY 27th

9.30—12.00—Second Session: "How Freethought can profit by the widespread interest in Scientific Developments". Speakers: Professor Hyman Levy, Professor Hollitscher, M. Koekelenberg, et. al.

14.30—17.00—Third Session: First subject concluded. Second Subject: The Defence of Lay Freedoms. Speakers: W. Hoops, M. Rousseau, J. Cotereau, C. McCall, et. al.

19.00—Public Meeting: "Freethought in the World Today". Speakers: C. Bradlaugh Bonner, Hubert Freistühler, Professor Hollitscher, Dr. Rigler, W. Hoops, et. al. (For this meeting we expect to have 1,500 or more present.)

## SUNDAY, JULY 28th

9.30—12.30—Fourth Session: Second Subject concluded. Third Subject: The Vatican Council. Speakers: F. A. Ridley, et. al.

Afternoon Steamer Excursion on the Rhine.

## MONDAY, JULY 29th

9.30—12.00—Fifth and Last Session: Conclusion of discussions; Resolutions and Elections of General Committee and Officers.

Afternoon. Sightseeing in the Town and neighbourhood.

NOTE.—The non-German congressists will be lodged at the Prinzregent Hotel, Universitätstrasse, which is close to the Mercator Hall and central. For those who find the charge for bed and breakfast of 17 D. Marks beyond their means the German Federation will make an allowance. In other hotels in Duisburg, nothing under 12 Marks is obtainable.

As the halls are fitted with the necessary microphones for simultaneous translation, this method of interpretation seems the best and we have engaged professional interpreters.

Moreover we have arranged for the individual delegations to provide them with interpreters. We should be glad if those who propose to attend would let Mr. K. Dielitzsch know by the end of June at the latest, giving name, country, day of arrival and time of arrival, if possible, length of stay, whether single or double room required. There should be enough single rooms available. On arriving the congressist should report at the bureau.

For the period of the Congress an exhibition will be held in Mercator Hall of documents, pictures, etc., of interest to Freethinkers. We should be grateful if those who can provide such material would either bring it with them or send to Wilhelm Bruckmann, 41 Duisburg, Karle Jarrsstr. 183. We shall arrange a reception party at Duisburg station and members, if the time of their arrival is known, will be accompanied to the hotel.

## HAVE YOU READ IT?

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by the Bishop of Woolwich

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