

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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ON WHIT MONDAY, June 3rd, 1963, John XXIII, Pope since October 28th, 1958, ended his short but undoubtedly memorable, and on the whole, progressive reign. On June 19th, the cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church to whom collectively the right to elect the pope has been confined since the middle of the 11th century, will meet in the Vatican to decide upon Pope John's successor to the most important and influential position in the religious world: a post which also constitutes its holder as a potent figure in world affairs and even in international politics. In theory, any baptised Christian is eligible except "heretics, women, lunatics and the physically deformed", but in practice, only cardinals have been eligible at least since the Reformation. Also, again since the Reformation, only Italians have been eligible in fact. But there appears to be a growing cosmopolitan movement within their Church itself to put an end to this Italian monopoly and to revert to the more cosmopolitan practice of the Middle Ages, when most European and even some Asiatic nations had representatives upon the Chair of St. Peter.

"Habemus Papam"

A pope, to be canonically elected, must have a two-thirds majority of the assembled cardinals and, a significant addition! his own vote for himself would invalidate the election. (The infamous Rodrigo Borgia, Alexander VI, 1492-1503) voted for himself in this way.) The announcement of the election is made from the Vatican balcony in the traditional phrase: "*Habemus Papam*" ("We have a Pope"). Once elected, the pope owes nothing to the cardinals who elect him, but assumes from the moment of his accession, all the traditional prerogatives of the papal see. His official title is announced immediately upon his accession, and his choice of a pontifical name often indicates which of his predecessors he admires and which papal tradition he intends to pursue. Thus, the numerous Pruses during the past two centuries, have all signified extreme conservatism in most fields of papal policy.

Formerly it was a moot point in canon law whether the jurisdiction of the individual pope was, or was not, superior to that of a general (Ecumenical) council, but since the decree of papal infallibility passed on July 18th 1870, by the Vatican Council, this long and bitterly controverted issue has been definitely decided in favour of the pope. Papal infallibility has, in practice, reduced the recent so-called Ecumenical Council to the modest role of a papal rubber stamp! For the Pope is in 1963 perhaps the last surviving autocratic ruler of a world-wide theocracy. It is one of the most curious anomalies of our age that in this self-styled "Century of the Common Man", the Papacy has not only retained its medieval power and prestige, but is today in some ways more powerful and respected than ever before.

About the time of Queen Victoria's accession (1837), Thomas Arnold publicly declared that he "would rather believe in Jupiter than in the Pope", and that staunch

defender of the (Protestant) faith, Queen Victoria, would unquestionably have thrown a fit had she foreseen the spectacle of her spiritual coadjutor, the Archbishop of Canterbury, going to call in person to pay his respects to the "Antichrist" of Rome, as ex-Archbishop Fisher did to the late Pope John. The reasons for this spectacular rise in the power of the Papacy are intriguing and complex: any serious attempt to analyse them here would take us far afield and also far beyond the technical boundaries of theology into domains of sociology and even politics.

Rome After Pope John

Everything at present would appear to indicate that the forthcoming con-

clave for the election of a new pope, will be stormy and quite possibly long. For Rome after John presents a curious spectacle; that of a world-wide Church, left so to speak, in mid-stream, with an unfinished general council and in the middle of an also unfinished series of reforms initiated, but by no means completed. The late Pope left behind, not only his Council, but also his entire policy of Christian reunion and general modernisation, hanging so to speak, in the void. At present, Pope John's entire policy (as well as presumably his Secretariat of Christian Unity) lies in the lap of the gods—or more precisely, of the new pope.

Autocracy

For one must again repeat, the Papacy since 1870, represents an autocracy. The days when a general council (as at Constance in 1415), actually deposed the pope are now over for ever. If the traditionalist, or die-hard right wing of the College of Cardinals (said to be predominant amongst the resident cardinals at Vatican City) can succeed in getting a pope of their way of thinking elected, all Pope John's reforms will presumably soon be consigned to the dustbin—or more politely, to the Vatican archives. The resulting situation in this by no means unlikely event, would then be rather similar to the sensational swing to the extreme right which followed the death of Leo XIII, a relatively liberal pope who issued *Rerum Novarum* and continuously refrained from taking action against Alfred Loisy and his fellow modernists.

When, after a prolonged deadlock, the conclave in 1903 finally elected a dark horse, Cardinal Sarto of Venice, the new pope launched perhaps the biggest witch hunt since the Middle Ages and threw every trace of liberalism, lock stock and barrel, out of the Church. It was certainly then this pope's lack of temporal power alone that prevented more heretical Brunos feeding the flames at Rome during the decade of black reaction (1903-14) that followed. (There is a pleasant story that when unexpectedly elected, Sarto replied: "I cannot accept it; I have a return ticket to Venice. Bentravato at least.") The election of a reactionary cardinal of the type of Siri (of Genoa)—or the redoubtable Spellman of New York, if the cardinals should decide this time to end the Italian monopoly—could easily lead to similar reaction. Incidentally—or so at least I

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

"We Have a Pope!"

By F. A. RIDLEY

am informed by a French Canadian acquaintance—the Montreal Cardinal Leger, whom de Gaulle is supposed to be backing is reputedly amongst the most reactionary cardinals.

The fact that this reactionary alternative undoubtedly exists, makes this conclave an event of cosmopolitan importance, since no one except an unrealistic sectarian can possibly deny that the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards both the major intellectual and political problems of our age is of immense importance in this age of unprecedented opportunities and danger. If one can cite an apposite parallel from the history of the Papacy itself, the final outcome of the bitterly contested papal election of 1555 between the partisans of compromise with the Reformation led by the English Cardinal Pole and of the advocates of the Counter-Reformation led by Cardinal Caraffa (elected Paul IV—1555-9) had immense influence on subsequent European secular, as well as religious history. For the victory of the Counter-Reformation led directly to the century of the wars of religion that included the massacre of St. Bartholomew, the Spanish Armada and finally the Thirty Years War that reduced central Europe to a cannibalistic desert.

Today, in a period of still intense, if relaxing international tension, the election of another pope, the type of say, Pacelli and the return of Rome to its former intransigent advocacy of a Holy War against Bolshevism, could only be regarded—quite apart from any specially religious issues—as a major misfortune for mankind at

large. Much more than merely the reform of an archaic church and an outmoded theology depends upon the election of a liberally-minded successor to the liberal Pope John XXIII. Not only Catholics will await, then, with keen interest the announcement from Vatican City: "*Habemus Papam*".

"Go in Pope—Come Out Cardinal"

The above Roman proverb reminds us that prediction is a risky matter in Vatican City as in more mundane elections. In any case, THE FREETHINKER is not *Old Moore's Almanack*. But some intriguing problems certainly present themselves. Did the late pope overplay his liberalising hand, and will the Black International react sharply to the right? Or conversely, will the apparently more liberal foreign cardinals (from whom Pope John got most support for his reforms), tired of the blind reaction of the Roman cardinals bring in at last a non-Italian? They have now a non-Italian very large majority. Personally, and without trespassing on the domain of *Psychic News*, I would be inclined to the view that Pope John's reforms have now gone too far to be reversed, and that consequently his successor will be a similarly liberal cardinal, most probably Cardinal Montini of Milan. But only God knows, and as the Holy Ghost is presumably now *en route* for Vatican City to guide the cardinals in their holy task, it is unlikely that he will be able to call at the offices of THE FREETHINKER. Like the rest of the world we shall have to wait for Vatican Radio to announce: "*Habemus Papam*".

Thomas Paine Statue at Thetford

The Debate Continues

THE TWO LETTERS reprinted below appeared in the same issue of the *Eastern Daily Press*, that of 1st June, 1963, under the heading, "Tom Paine, Renegade?". An editorial note informed readers that, "Professor Catlin, political scientist and philosopher, is the author of many works on political subjects". We confess that his letter doesn't impel us to seek them out. At the same time, it can be regarded as a tribute to Thomas Paine's greatness—and living influence—that he should still stir such violent feelings in reactionary breasts.

SIR—I have read with astonishment a report of the opposition to the erection in Thetford of a statue to Tom Paine. This man, one of the best representatives of the 18th century Enlightenment, should be honoured by his native town. To describe him as a renegade is a gross absurdity; there were numerous eminent men in England either hostile to or very uneasy about the policy of George III's servile government towards the American colonies. Any competent historian recognises that, whatever the legal rights and wrongs of this policy, the blundering incapacity of the British government greatly exacerbated the conflict. Because Paine stated the issues in the clearest terms, he is denounced as a renegade.

Among Paine's ideas were proposals for universal education, for health and maternity benefits, for what we call now the Welfare State which is probably the reason for some people to denigrate him. He was generations ahead of his time. To malign him, to cast vile aspersions upon his private life are the actions of bigoted ignorance and prejudice.

May I suggest that if Thetford decides to turn him away or push his image into some obscure corner, Norwich could find an honourable place for one statue of a democrat in the capital of Paine's native county?

Yours sincerely,

ALEX. A. RUDLING.

SIR—A gilded statue of Tom Paine is projected in Thetford. This man was a plausible but deplorable scoundrel, with whom most of the Fathers of the American Revolution declined to associate and who contributed not a little to prevent that negotiation between London and the Colonists which many wanted.

Recently, there was an attempt to get a Magna Carta Day celebration agreed upon, which would be a bond between the two countries. Since it was only supported by sensible men and not by partisan propagandists, little came of it. The Paine statue, on the contrary, commemorates nothing that Thetford should wish to remember. If it is erected, I hope the citizens of Thetford will have the moral courage to blow it up. It will be better if, beforehand, Lord Fisher (not, I presume, Lord Fisher of Lambeth) will have the wisdom to drop this foolish scheme of commemorating a foul-mouthed rogue, an inveterate enemy, whether in America or France, of this country.

Yours cordially,

GEORGE E. GORDON CATLIN.

Readers are also referred to "Paine Still" Libelled" by Christopher Brunel on page 196.

OBITUARY

WILLIAM KENT

READERS WILL be very sorry to hear of the death of our occasional, and very welcome contributor, William Kent, author of numerous books on London (on which his knowledge was unrivalled) and on literature, and compiler of the very useful Pioneer Press anthology, *Lift Up Your Heads*. A tribute by Mr. Kent's personal friend, Herbert Cutner, will appear next week.

“Man’s Place in Nature”

(A Centenary Review)

By EDWARD ROUX

[Evidence as to Man’s Place in Nature, by Thomas Henry Huxley, London: Williams and Norgate, 1863.]

LOOKING BACK one hundred years to the publication of this little volume of 159 pages, one marvels at the tremendous impact it made on the mid-Victorians and how epoch-making its simple illustrations and even simpler text were. A description of certain apes, a comparison of their bones, and certain other anatomical features, with those of man—this was enough to put the Victorian world in an uproar, because the implication was that man was genetically related to these “lower animals”.

Darwin’s *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* had appeared in 1859 and had convinced a large number of biologists that “descent with modification” could account for the amazing variety of living forms on the surface of the earth. But Darwin had preserved an almost complete silence on the subject of man. It was implicit, though, in his writing that man would have to be included among the animals that had evolved from simpler beginnings. Huxley’s little book, appearing four years later, was the first attempt in popular language to discuss the problem of man’s immediate ancestry. Its production appears to have been quite casual. It was a collection of three essays, the second comprising the substance of a series of lectures to working men, delivered in 1860. However, Huxley assures us in his preface that his conclusions “be they, right or wrong” had not been formed hastily.

The first essay, “On the Natural History of the Man-like Apes”, makes it clear that the gibbon, orang-utan, chimpanzee and gorilla were scarcely known to Europeans at the beginning of the seventeenth century and had only been studied by zoologists during Huxley’s own generation. One of them, the gorilla, is in fact incompletely known, as far as its social habits are concerned, even in this mid-twentieth century; and it is possible that it may be exterminated before it has been adequately studied.

The second essay “On the Relations of Man to the Lower Animals”, with its brief 56 pages contains all that is vital to the book. In a preamble Huxley declares that “some knowledge of man’s position in the animate world is an indispensable preliminary to the proper understanding of his relations to the Universe—and this again resolves itself, in the long run, into an inquiry into the nature and the closeness of the ties which connect him with those singular creatures” whose history had been sketched in the first essay.

What Huxley then attempted to show was that man more closely resembles the chimpanzee and the gorilla than any other animals, and the anatomical differences between him and them are less pronounced than the differences between them and other ape-like creatures such as monkeys and baboons. The first demonstration of this near relationship is derived from comparative embryology. The so-called “biogenetic law”, that ontogeny repeats phylogeny, as formulated in an extreme form subsequently by Ernst Haeckel, came into disrepute later. The simple facts stated by Huxley were convincing enough to the Victorian zoologists, and their modern followers would not query them. “It is only in the later stages of lemnibryonic development that the young human presents marked differences from the young ape, while the latter departs as much from the dog in its development, as the man does . . . And it alone appears to me sufficient to

place beyond all doubt the structural unity of man with the rest of the animal world, and more particularly and closely with the apes.”

There follow discussions on the backbones, pelvic girdles, skulls, teeth, hands, feet and brains of man and the higher apes, in which it is conclusively demonstrated that man differs markedly from these creatures in certain respects and yet closely resembles them in others. And that really is the quintessence of evolution. Inasmuch as he is different, man has evolved otherwise than the apes; inasmuch as he is similar, he demonstrates his relationship with them. Huxley in fact was one of the initiators of that amazing development of the science of comparative anatomy which had its hey-day in the second half of the nineteenth century and which placed beyond doubt or cavil the principle of evolution (Huxley called it “progressionism”) as the guiding and illuminating theme throughout the whole of biology.

In the third and final essay, Huxley summarises the state of knowledge at that time concerning the fossil evidence of man’s ancestry, linking him with his nearest relations, the gorilla and the chimpanzee. That man is more closely related to the large apes than to any other living creatures is now conceded by all modern physical anthropologists. How sparse the fossil evidence was in Huxley’s time is indicated by the fact that he could quote only one satisfactory instance of a fossil representing a man more “primitive” than any living type. The first fossil skull of *Homo neanderthalensis* had been unearthed in 1857, six years before, and Huxley, had to make the most of it. It is typical however of his integrity and of his ability as a comparative anatomist, that he did not exaggerate the importance of this find. “In no sense,” he wrote, “can the Neanderthal bones be regarded as the remains of a human being intermediate between Men and Apes. At most, they demonstrate the existence of a Man whose skull may be said to revert somewhat towards the pithecoïd type”. This judgment has been very fully endorsed by modern anthropologists.

One of the tragedies that the irreligious deplore but must accept is that men cannot come back from the dead to discover what history has in store. In his penultimate paragraph Huxley wrote: “Where, then, must we look for primaevial Man? Was the oldest *Homo sapiens* pliocene or miocene, or yet more ancient? In still older strata do the fossilized bones of an Ape more anthropoid, or a Man more pithecoïd, than any yet known await the researches of some unborn palaeontologist? Time will show”.

If Huxley could come back he would be thrilled to know that dozens of fossil primates have been unearthed in the century that has passed since these words were penned. We can now say with some assurance that both the great apes and man are derived from gibbon-like ancestors that lived before the miocene. In the miocene the Proconsul skull represents a plausible ancestor of our nearest relatives who remained in the tree and of ourselves who came down to walk always on the earth. In the australopithecines of the lower pleistocene we find man-apes very similar to ourselves except for their smaller brains. A little later, Pithecanthropus (Java and China) provides evidence of a common ancestor for both modern

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

Why, oh why, did Canon Pearce-Higgins make his public protest last month against the beloved 39 Articles? He told the *Daily Mirror* (May 27th), that it was "because of the dishonesty of it all . . . because one just cannot accept that Christ could go back in His physical body", and "because he objects when an Article says only a few people are destined for everlasting salvation . . .". A Church of England spokesman admitted, "Many clergymen feel that the 39 Articles are no longer relevant". And the result? Simply that the worthy Canon has now "assented to the Articles".

★

We greatly regret to record that twelve children actually played a gambling game with dice on a church altar; not it is true, for money or even for monkey-nuts, but for Bibles. This encouragement to gamble will no doubt lead them on to cards, and later make them feel that a little flutter on a horse might not matter—and all this may eventually lead to continental gaming casinos. We ask in all humility—did Jesus ever play poker or with dice on a sacred altar?

★

We admit with the vicar, the Rev. R. Jennings, that in 1675 Dr. Robert Wilde left £50 to buy Bibles for children, and the lucky kiddies were to be chosen by throwing dice on the altar. For this reason Mr. Jennings is quite sure no one will be upset, and certainly not the children who get a Bible—though we have an idea they will never read it. They wouldn't understand it for most of it they did! The dreadful *sin* is the introduction to gambling. What has the Moderator of the Free Churches to say?

★

On the other hand, we have the Rev. A. Auckland, Rural Dean of Deptford, terribly upset that "Sunday school is a tradition which is falling away". And why? "Parents regard religious education not as a necessary and vital part of a child's training for life, but as an optional extra . . .". In fact, "children get tired of Sunday if not made to stick to it". (London *Evening Standard*, May 25th). Two things in particular are responsible—Sunday afternoon TV, and outings in the family car. Some "new way" must, therefore, be found for "teaching religious doctrine". Anyone who can find a new way of teaching religious doctrine fully deserves a golden crown set with diamonds—in heaven!

★

Will it be believed that a vicar had the impudence to laugh at his Mothers' Union! In his parish magazine, the Rev. A. Hart-Synnot of St. Stephen's Church, St. Albans, noted that the pious ladies of another church had "discarded the traditional veils", and he hoped that "this kind of striptease act would continue" (*Daily Mirror*, May 27th). He added—horror of horrors!—"We may even see the Mothers' Union wearing only G strings, or in their birthday suits". Could anything more horrid be written against such an august body of holy matrons than this kind of "joke"? Perhaps the outraged Mothers would have liked to lash back, but as perfect Christians, they turned the other cheek, and called this little joke "bad taste". The vicar apologised, so everything now reigns in wonderful Christian harmony again.

★

In the "Daily Sketch" (May 27th), Mr. Godfrey Winn, who is, according to unkind critics, a master of "slush" let himself go over the wonderful spiritual healing of Mr. Harry Edwards, now 70 years of age. For many years,

Mr. Edwards has been curing "incurable" patients with his "healing" hands, and Mr. Winn devoted nearly two pages to him, admitting at the same time that the great healer often completely fails to heal in spite of the fact that he is aided by "a picture of Our Lord over the mantelpiece".

★

On TV some years ago two doctors gave Mr. Edwards a great chance of telling viewers all about his successes with names of grateful patients who remained completely cured after the "healing" hands had done their job. Mr. Edwards failed to produce one patient who could be examined by the doctors. Out of the tens of thousands of grateful people he has cured, could he now produce, say a dozen who have never had a relapse? Or could Mr. Winn?

Paine Still Libelled

In his defence of Thomas Paine, "Paine Still Libelled"—a brilliant exposure of the dirty methods of those who through the ages smear this great man—Mr. H. Cutner mentions Dr. Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, and his *Apology for the Bible*. Of the many attacks on Paine's *The Age of Reason* this was the only one, as Mr. Cutner indicates, that had any kind of survival.

Watson wrote in his autobiographical *Anecdotes*:

"In the beginning of the year 1796, I published *An Apology for the Bible*, being a defence of that Holy Book against the scurrilous abuse of Thomas Paine. This little book, I have reason to believe, was of singular service in stopping that torrent of irreligion which had been excited by his writings. David Dale of Paisley (I mention his name to his honour, my person I never saw), asked my permission, which was most readily granted, to print three thousand copies, to be distributed amongst his own workmen; many thousands were printed also at Dundee, and in other places of Scotland and England at a small price, without any profit or wish of profit to myself".

Later in this autobiography Watson repeats that he permitted "many thousand" copies to be printed without profit to himself, "and yet I cleared above a thousand pounds by its publication . . .".

Clearly, the ruling class of the 1790s wanted to be sure that their arguments be widely distributed among the workers to counteract Paine's, and, if need be, they were prepared to subsidise their publication—things have not yet changed much in this respect since then!

To me this emphasises the continued need to spot the libels against Paine, and to answer them. This is not only that a great man may receive some of the honour long overdue to him, but that his works may be read again and carry forward the good that they started over 150 years ago. Joseph Lewis's Paine statue in Thetford, about which the current *furor* revolves, will be a milestone in this process of restoration of Thomas Paine.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL.

FLAW

His Great Name be
praised; from
nothing He raised
Creation. Mankind's in
His debt;
In His workroom above,
He blue-printed: "Love"—
The one thing
that hasn't worked
yet!
—A.E.C.

"MAN'S PLACE IN NATURE"

(Concluded from page 195)

and Neanderthal man. The first remains of *Homo sapiens* (Cromagnon) appear only about 100 thousand years ago, since when the modern races of man appear to have evolved.

The story is incomplete but vastly more detailed than Huxley could have expected one hundred years ago. Like him, but with greater assurance, we can expect further revelations in time to come.

THE FREETHINKER

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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 Humanist Group (Arden Hotel, New Street), Wednesday, June 26th, 7.30 p.m.: JOHN ENGLISH (Director, Cannon Hill Trust), "Art and Society".

Homechurch Humanist Society (Harold Wood Social Centre, corner of Gubbin's Lane and Squirrels Heath Road), Tuesday, June 25th, 8 p.m.: PROFESSOR LIONEL ELVIN, "Moral Education and Religious Instruction".

North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, June 21st, 7.15 p.m.: A Meeting.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, June 23rd, 11 a.m.: PROFESSOR D. G. MACRAE, "Rousseau-Primitivism and Progress".

Notes and News

BY THE time this FREETHINKER arrives you may know the name of the new pope. If so, present predictions of a short conclave will have been borne out. But who will be elected? Answering that is rather like trying to pick the Derby winner, with the Roman correspondents as tipsters. Cardinal Montini of Milan was made favourite at the first "call over", and has remained so, with Cardinal Siri of Genoa as the "dark horse". But in conclaves, as in the Derby, the favourite doesn't always win, and the tipsters mention so many others with "chances" that it all proves very confusing. To cap it all, it might be an outsider!

★

WE UNDERSTAND that the BBC received a number of protests when it cancelled the televising of test cricket and showed instead the funeral of the Pope. Rather a different cancellation was made by the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation on June 2nd. The "nature and content" of a talk on *A Material Basis for Mind* by Professor D. F. Lawden of Canterbury University, were considered (said the acting Director-General) "inappropriate at this time, because of the impending death of the head of the Roman Catholic Church" (Wellington Star, 3/6/63).

★

PROFESSOR LAWDEN, who calls himself a scientific humanist (but is a member of a liberal Unitarian Church) was

told at 5.30 p.m. on June 2nd, that his talk scheduled to follow the 9 p.m. news would be postponed until June 23rd, because it "contained opinions inconsistent with those held by Roman Catholics and that in view of the Pope's illness it would be offensive to Roman Catholics". The talk, he said, contained no direct criticisms of Christian ideals, and there was nothing in it that would be offensive to the Pope or any of his followers. It dealt with recent discoveries in the United Kingdom and the United States about the foundations of life.

★

"IT IS OBVIOUS," Professor Lawden commented to the Wellington Star, "that if a world-famous scientist and rationalist such as Bertrand Russell were to die on Sunday, the broadcast of Roman Catholic church services would not be suspended to avoid offending the feelings of rationalists in New Zealand. There has accordingly been a clear discrimination by the Broadcasting Corporation in favour of one particular group of this nation and, whatever their opinions, I believe this act will be condemned by the majority of New Zealanders". "Why the Roman Catholic community should be selected for such delicate treatment I am at a loss to understand", he continued pointedly, "unless it is felt that they are particularly vulnerable to scientific truth". Our colleagues of the New Zealand Rationalist Association will no doubt follow up the matter.

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WHEN THE *Daily Telegraph's* "Peter Simple" accuses somebody of "a really superb display of modish pseudo-Freudian balderdash", it is a fair guess that he has said something significant. And, sure enough, on June 11th the complaint was against Mr. Leo Abse's response to Dr. John Heenan, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool on the subject of divorce. Mr. Abse had asked if the antagonism against ending the doctrine of the "matrimonial offence" in favour of consideration of the breakdown of marriage was "due in some measure to the repressed promiscuous wishes" of the opponents of the reform. "Are they fearful", he went on, "having failed to come to terms with their own sexuality, that without the fence of the law their forbidden wishes will burst outside their existing monogamous relationships?" And: "Are the apprehensions expressed for society really rather symptoms of their own personal deep-seated anxieties?" "Peter Simple" may consider these questions "absurd and offensive": we find them very much to the point.

★

AND IT is no good saying—as "Peter Simple" does—that this kind of argument works both ways: that if Mr. Abse can suggest that his opponents' "zeal to protect society is a projection of their uneasy sexuality", they might suggest that "his zeal to reform it is a projection of his own uneasiness as a decidedly exotic member of that society". The plain and simple truth, in Dr. Heenan's case at any rate, is that he is celibate. It is time someone told him plainly that he is unqualified to pronounce on sex, marriage and divorce. It is time, indeed, that someone told all the the Christian Churches that these are secular matters outside their jurisdiction.

★

THE ANARCHIST weekly, *Freedom* (8/6/63) gave front-page prominence to Edd Doerr's consideration of Pope John's encyclical, *Pacem in Terris*, in our issue of May 31st. *Freedom* agreed with Mr. Doerr that in Pope John's short caretaker "government", 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 . . .".

Objections Unanswered

By COLIN McCALL

IN FEBRUARY 1963, four members of the Faculty of Divinity of the University of Cambridge gave a series of "open" lectures, which were subsequently published in book form and proved a religious best seller second only to *Honest to God*. *Objections to Christian Belief* (Constable 12s. 6d.) is edited by A. R. Vidler, Dean of King's College, who considers historical objections to Christianity, and the other contributors are D. M. MacKinnon, Norris-Hulse Professor of Divinity, H. A. Williams, Dean of Trinity, and J. S. Bezzant, Dean of St. John's.

The aim, as Dr. Vidler makes clear in his introduction, "was not to provide answers to objections to Christian beliefs", but "to try to plumb the depths of the objections, without assuming that answers are readily available" (I like that "readily"!). The intention was "to be disturbing rather than reassuring". In this, I am sure, the book will succeed. For, like *Honest to God*, *Objections to Christian Belief* is an indication of widespread doubt in nominally Christian quarters. Setting out "neither to substantiate nor to refute *objections* to Christian belief" (my italics), it certainly doesn't substantiate the belief itself.

Indeed, Dr. Bezzant, who deals with intellectual objections, outlines "traditional" Christianity with its "scheme of salvation", and then comments:

This outline has been so shattered that the bare recital of it has the aspect of a malicious travesty. Known facts of astronomy, geology, biological evolution, anthropology, the comparative study of religions, race and genetical and analytical psychology, the literary and historical criticism of the Bible, with the teaching of Jesus and the moral conscience of mankind, have banished this scheme beyond the range of credibility.

Though "it can no longer be taken seriously", Dr. Bezzant continues, "certain doctrines vital in the Christian gospel of salvation are still taught in forms which derive from the vanished scheme and from nothing else"; and this, he thinks, "hinders the effective presentation of Christianity today".

The error here, of course, is the one that is implicit in all modern theology: that it is the form and not the content of Christianity that matters; that a lie can somehow be "true" when differently presented. I don't want to suggest that modern theologians are deliberately dishonest. I don't think that. I certainly don't think it of men like the Bishop of Woolwich or the contributors to the present book. What I believe is that they have an unbreakable emotional attachment to Christianity which they vainly try to bolster intellectually. They want to banish their "scheme" yet keep it.

They recognise—as the quotation from Dr. Bezzant exemplifies—that Christianity is pre-scientific and discredited; that the Creation, the Fall and the Redemption are myths, yet they cannot relinquish it. *Objections to Christian Belief* strikes me as a sort of purgation. The very act of acknowledging the objections gives psychological satisfaction. And although it doesn't—as Dr. Vidler says—refute the objections, it seems to be regarded as a means of stilling them.

From my experience, this is a common phenomenon. How often have I heard Christian apologists admit, for instance, that the problem of evil is unanswerable, and then smile benignly as though the problem were thereby disposed of! (It happened only a few weeks ago when I had a friendly discussion with two eminent modern Christians following a debate at Southampton University.) But while this may in some way satisfy the speaker, it in no

way satisfies the listener—not, at any rate, if he is at all sceptical.

And, though all the lectures in *Objections to Christian Belief* are interesting and enlightening, they are fundamentally disappointing. Like all avowedly frank religious writings, they raise hopes that they never fulfil. Sometimes, in fact, they just peter out. But not before they have said something of significance.

In dealing with moral objections, for instance, Professor MacKinnon praises the humanist ethic and deplors "the pervasive cruelty of the servants of God". He also rightly calls the posthumous publication of Dame Rose Macaulay's private letter to her spiritual adviser an "outrage", and refers (Members of Parliament please note!) to "obsessional preoccupation with the 'evils of divorce' to the exclusion of effective concern for the victims of broken marriages".

The title of Dr. Williams's lecture, "Psychological Objections to Christian Belief" might, as he says, suggest that "my purpose is to criticise one orthodoxy, Christianity, by the dogmas of another orthodoxy, Psychology". But this would be impossible because, "On each side there is a variety of species". Instead, Dr. Williams talks of his own inner conflict between what he once believed to be the "essential elements" of Christianity and "what I have discovered about the way I work as a human person". In his "Historical Objections", Dr. Vidler tells us that he can accept neither an infallible book nor an infallible pope; Dr. Williams has previously admitted that we must sometimes "reject as untrue and unworthy" a sentiment Jesus is "reported to have held".

Finally there is Dr. Bezzant's treatment of intellectual objections to Christianity, from which I have already quoted. No thoughtful person, Dr. Bezzant says, "can ignore the fact that the universe, as modern astronomy reveals it, reveals no sign of *personal* activity" (his italics). But he says later, in an atrocious passage, that, "as personality is the highest category we know which the world-ground has produced, the possibility of which must have been present in the primary collocations of the universe whatever they were, there is good ground for ascribing personality to its originator, provided we remember not to overpersonalise the world-ground, or God".

Now what exactly is meant by calling "personality" a category? We may talk about the category of animals or "things" that we call "man", and say that man is the "highest" animal of whose existence we are aware. We might then say that, "man is the highest category we know that the world-ground has produced". However undesirable such a statement might be, at least it would dispel Dr. Bezzant's "personality cult". For it is his wrong use of "personality" instead of "man" (his confusion of the quality with the thing) that enables him to ascribe personality to the "world-ground".

Dr. Bezzant also confuses the *possibility* of something being "present" with the "something" itself being present. It may be said (reluctantly adopting Dr. Bezzant's phraseology) that the "possibility" of man "must have been present in the primary collocations of the universe", assuming that there ever were any "primary collocations". That man and other "things" now exist, may be taken as proving the possibility of their existence. But this in no way implies that the alleged "primary collocations of the universe" were characterised by such human qualities

as, for instance, being able to see, hear, speak, touch, smell or think, any more than it implies that those "collocations" were characterised by the qualities of, say, a tree or a volcano. As things evolve, new qualities emerge.

Grasp that simple fact and there is no need to worry about over-personalising the "world-ground": one doesn't personalise it at all.

Tragedy in Relation to the Bible and Marxism

By R. SMITH

(Concluded from page 191)

The Christian religion is also inimical to tragedy. In Karl Jasper's words; "Every one of man's basic experiences ceases to be tragic in a Christian context. Guilt becomes *felix culpa*, the 'happy fault'—the guilt without which no salvation is possible. Judas's betrayal was necessary for Christ's sacrifice and death, the source of salvation for all believers. Christ is the deepest symbol of failure in the world, yet he is in no sense tragic. In every failure he knows, fulfils and consummates".

From this it necessarily follows that Christianity is incompatible with tragedy, as it ceases to have any meaning when apprehended against a background of faith, redemption and salvation. Evil and suffering are transcended in man's approach to God. A man can become a tragic hero by his own powers, but once any form of salvation enters the picture, it means death to tragedy. And once you justify moral evil as a means to bringing about greater good, tragedy ceases. In theory this may be all very well, but we all know by experience it is not wholly true.

The last words of Christ on the cross at Calvary were those of despair—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—yet the story of Jesus told in the Gospels is not tragic, precisely because of the supernatural interpretation of the purpose and passion. That is why it is impossible to make a tragedy out of the life of Christ. Christian salvation opposes tragic knowledge. The chance of being saved destroys the tragic sense of being trapped without chance of escape. Therefore no genuinely Christian tragedy exists.

Goethe's *Faust* is not a Christian tragedy. In the strict sense of the word it is not an authentic tragedy at all. Faust receives his salvation in the end. God wins the wager against Mephistopheles. It is even suggested at the beginning that the wager cannot be won by Mephistopheles, and that Mephistopheles can only serve God in meddling with God's work. God therefore remains the master of the situation at all times. When Mephistopheles opens his attack on Faust, he introduces himself to his victim as,

"Part of that power which still
Produceth good whilst ever scheming ill."
Notwithstanding all the wickedness and misery
he is still playing into God's hands. And this
out in the Prologue by the Lord himself:

"I ne'er have cherished hate for such as thee,
Of all the spirits who deny,
The scoffer is least weariness to me."
Mephistopheles is given to Faust as a companion because

"Who works, excites and must create, as Devil."
All the temporary setbacks that God has are only in reality
the means of bringing about His ultimate victory over
Mephistopheles, and as all the setbacks are necessary
for Faust's salvation, they cannot be classed as tragic.

Considering what I have said, I don't think I should
be far wrong in adding that it would be as difficult for a
Marxist to write a tragedy as it would be for a devout
Christian. Marxism contains much the same optimism
and anti-tragic attitude as that of the Bible. In Historical

Materialism the workers or socialists are theoretically assured of ultimate victory. History is explained scientifically, leaving no room for gloom, puzzlement, despair, or tragedy. Once you begin to doubt, you cease to be a Marxist. Despair is as big a crime against Marxism as it is against Christianity.

The Marxist conception of history gives us an economic interpretation of the fall of man, claiming that all man's weakness and misery lies in his corruption by the class struggle. The breakaway from primitive communism is, of course, as necessary to the working out of Historical Materialism as the Fall is to the Christian redemption. What is explained in mythical terms by Christians, is explained in materialistic terms by Marxists. Both their world views are anti-tragic and both believe that no amount of set-backs can ward off final victory. The Christian god is not a hard taskmaster at all, but only appears so to those who do not believe and understand his divine purpose. Once you realise this, all gloom, despair, and idle questioning ceases.

Capitalism with all its contradictions and wage slavery is but a passing phase in the Marxist plan of history, just as all the evil and suffering and pain is a passing phase in God's divine plan for the salvation of man. Capitalism is progressive according to Marxists, not tragic at all. Marxism is primarily a guide to thought and action, and has therefore nothing to do with tragedy. It is based on a false understanding of the nature of man and history. The best answer lies in the works of Schopenhauer, who said:

Whoever supposes that the inner nature of the world can in any way, however plausibly disguised, be historically comprehended, is infinitely far from a philosophical knowledge of the world.

History only narrates the long, heavy, and confused dream of humanity. There is no purpose in history, because there is absolute purpose in human life. The best, therefore, that Marxism can accomplish for the vast majority, is to lift them from the plane of the pitiful to that of the tragic.

CORRESPONDENCE

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

THANK YOU

My wife and I are grateful and a little overwhelmed at the prompt and generous financial help given by fellow National Secular Society members and FREETHINKER readers towards meeting my loss of earnings, fine, etc., following arrest during the demonstration at Marham V-bomber Base, on May 11th.

Sincere thanks to all concerned.

NORMAN BURNS.

May I though your columns thank all who contributed so generously to my appeal on behalf of Norman Burns.

W. MILLER,

Chairman, Birmingham Branch, National Secular Society.

ATHEISM AND MORALITY

At the risk of becoming tedious, I must again point out that the letters of Messrs. Dickinson, Dent and Crommelin like most

of the previous ones, assume that the problem I posed has been solved.

Thus, Mr. Dickinson's statement that "we are justified in calling an action good when we observe that its effect is character-building, or just, or kindly", is tautologous, for all that he is saying is that we are justified in calling an action good when we observe that its effects are good. The original question of the *definition* of good remains unanswered.

Similarly, when Mr. Dent talks of the "humanitarian tradition" involved in making moral judgments, he is assuming that this tradition is necessarily good. But his assumption whether he likes it or not, boils down to his own personal opinion. There is also a non-humanitarian tradition, and Mr. Dent could have no rational answer to someone who asserted that in his view it was superior to the humanitarian one.

Mr. Crommelin, so far as I understand him, is merely stating that the practice of good actions leads to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. No doubt this is true, but *why* should we promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number? Once again the original question is begged.

As Mr. Simons points out, morality for the atheist, must ultimately be resolved into considerations of individual taste, opinion or feeling. His own explanation of the basis from which he forms his moral judgments does not wholly satisfy me. Nevertheless, I believe it is the only possible position which we free-thinkers can adopt, and I am grateful to him for putting it so succinctly.

This will be my final word on the matter, but in conclusion I would like to thank all those readers who have replied to me, and also you sir, for your generosity in granting me so much of your precious space in which to air my dilemma.

JOHN L. BROOM.

P.S. I have sent Mr. Simons's quotations regarding Catholicism and the existence of God to the Jesuit priest, and await his reply with interest. Mr. Simons certainly seems to have a strong case here. However, as this question is perhaps not one of general interest, I shall be communicating with Mr. Simons privately about the result.

[This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.]

PASSING OF THE POPE

It is no insult to the memory of the late Pope John, to express the hope that the passing of each successive pope may bring us one step nearer to the final extinction of the Papacy, and to the replacement of the "Catholic" Church by a universal Humanism, regulated by general voluntary acceptance of a rational and secular world government, based on the actual and physical requirements of human social evolution.

P. P. CROMMELIN.

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