

The Freethinker

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ON SUNDAY, September 29th, the Second Vatican Council resumed its interrupted sessions. Since its official suspension, the scene at Rome has changed, for the "revolutionary" pope, John XXIII, the original convener of the Council, has been gathered to his predecessors after a brief but memorable reign. His successor, Paul VI (the former Cardinal Montini, an ex-Vatican diplomat and a "popable" cardinal long before his accession, which Pius XII is reported to have predicted) has decided to reassemble the Council, despite the scarcely concealed hostility of Curia Cardinals like Ottaviani, Antornuti, etc. Indeed, if we are to judge from one very significant reform already effected by Pope Paul, it would appear that not only is Pope Paul going to carry on the at least general lines of Pope John's policy, but in at least one important respect, he intends to go further than his predecessor. Observers acquainted both with the current evolution of the Court of Rome and who have read Malachy's *Flos Florum*, that prophetic record of subsequent papal evolution inspired not by supernatural insight (as some extravagant admirers have claimed) but by a profound acquaintance with papal policy, will expect a long and brilliant pontificate from the present Pope, already long recognised by those in the inner circles of the Vatican, as a man of outstanding ability, with probably a much wider knowledge of the world than Pope John possessed.

General Councils and Papal Policy

As we have had occasion to note before, the Second Vatican Council has met under entirely different auspices to those which characterised its predecessors. For, prior to the declaration of papal infallibility (July 18th, 1870), the General Ecumenical Councils of the Church were *de jure*, and often *de facto*, independent of the papacy, the pope's equal, even sometimes (as at Constance—1415), his master (this Council deposed both the pope and two anti-popes simultaneously). However, since 1870, all the above is ancient history: infallibility is no longer vested in the Ecumenical Council collectively, but solely in the individual pope, as the infallibility decree states categorically.

Today, all that the Council can do is to "assent" to the infallible decrees promulgated with or without its assent by the reigning pope. In 1963, the Ecumenical Council is an advisory body only, and the pope is under no obligation to accept its advice, whereas conversely, the Council must willy-nilly, accept the infallible decisions of the pope or else incur the mortal guilt of heresy.

For since 1870, the Roman Catholic Church is the pope. It is now accepted canonically that (if we may employ such a Gilbertian paradox) if the pope leaves the Church it is the Church that leaves itself. This implies that the Second Vatican Council unlike its (pre-1870) predecessors is only an Ecumenical Council in name. It no longer has any infallibility of its own, it can no longer make dogmas canonically as at earlier General Councils like say, Nicaea

(325) or the Lateran (1215), but can only assent to those promulgated by Pope Paul. And in the last resort, its assent is obligatory under pain of heresy.

What then are the real functions of this Second Vatican Council? In general they are analogous to those of say, the Reichstag under Hitler or the Spanish Parliament under Franco: they all represent sounding boards for the current policy of the regime, though no doubt an experienced politician like Pope Paul will appreciate the reactions within the Church as exemplified by its representatives within the General Council. It is no doubt with this aim in view that he has just made an innovation unprecedented

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Ecumenical Council Reassembles

By F. A. RIDLEY

in the history of his Church by admitting laymen as observers of the Council, a perhaps epoch-making step in and for the Church herself as the beginning of a more democratic regime.

The Functions of the Vatican Council

It must never be forgotten that the decree of papal infallibility represents the first open expression of the *Fuhrer-principe*, the initial establishment of a fascist dictatorship and the effective prototype of its secular 20th century successors. However, like later secular dictatorships, the Vatican is keenly sensitive to public opinion and takes elaborate steps to keep *au fait* with it. In the cosmopolitan contemporary Catholic Church, whilst the last word lies with the pope, it is clear enough that Pope John in convoking the Ecumenical Council and Pope Paul in recalling it, regarded it as the ecclesiastical equivalent of the successive plebiscites held by secular dictatorships in order to test public reactions to their regimes. As such, the Vatican Council will, no doubt, be given every conceivable opportunity to discuss the major problems that at present confront the Catholic Church.

For the major purpose of Pope John in calling the Council and his success in continuing it, was to discover the reactions of Catholics all over the world—embracing the widest dissimilarity in race and divergence in culture—to the urgent problems of this fast-moving epoch and to "the winds of change" in all walks of human existence that so pre-eminently distinguish it. Much water has flowed under the bridges of the Tiber since the first Vatican Council was hastily prorogued in 1870 on the eve of the forcible suppression of the temporal power of the Pope by the occupation of Rome by the Italian army.

Major Problems Before the Council

In general perspective, it would probably be correct to state that the three most important, or at least urgent, problems before the Council are respectively administrative, political and theological in character. First there is the problem (which has so far received the most publicity) of Christian reunion under, of course, Vatican leadership. By extending the jurisdiction of Pope John's pet creation, the "Secretariat for Christian Unity" (still apparently under the chairmanship of the German

Jesuit, Cardinal Bea, whilst another of its leading personnel, Archbishop Heenan, has just been promoted to Westminster) to include non-Christian religions, Pope Paul now obviously intends to enlarge the scope of eventual "unity" from a Christian to a world scale.

The Vatican is not only out to protect and to prolong Christianity, but it is prepared apparently (and naturally on its own terms) to take even alien gods and cults under its protection against the fast-rising tides of atheism and materialism that threaten all the gods and cults impartially! It is accordingly extremely probable that Christian (and perhaps non-Christian) reunion on at least a common defensive platform against atheism, will continue to dominate the Council's deliberations.

But at least two other leading questions are sure to come up for discussion. One is the whole problem represented by the future relations of the Catholic Church *vis-a-vis* Communism and the Cold War; whilst the other—which is already stated to have provoked the liveliest discussion yet heard in the first session of the Council—is the now burning question of Christian evidence, Catholic apologetics. In brief, in an age which is intellectually dominated in every sphere by the concept of evolution (or "transformism" as it is known in Catholic theology)

how to substitute an apologetic that does at least recognise the ubiquitous fact of evolution for the old, now hopelessly outmoded pre-evolutionary Aristotelian scholasticism which hitherto has formed the basis for Catholic truth.

One of the most probable and important results of the Council will be, in my opinion the beginning of the decline of Thomas Aquinas and the rise of Teilhard de Chardin, at present frowned on by Rome (as Aquinas was in his day), but to date probably the most important Catholic thinker to reconcile traditional Catholicism with an evolutionary conception of the universe. For though as yet little publicised, this is a matter of life or death for at the present moribund theology of the Church.

The Hour of Decision

Certainly the above title (originally that of a book by Oswald Spengler), applies to the Vatican Council; for from Woolwich to the Vatican Council, Christianity is beset by problems, many of them entirely new to it. Certainly the answers given to them by the most powerful religious organisation in the contemporary world, cannot fail to be not only of great theoretical interest, but also of great practical importance in and for the survival of Christianity in our fast-changing and perilous age.

Freedom from Humbug

By DAVID SILLOC

LOOK AT YOUR WATCH and count the seconds and the babies being born. 180 a minute. Population increase 1.7% per annum. Already one third to half the present population suffering from either malnutrition or hunger. 6,000 more people on earth every hour. Children with hunger-swollen stomachs supported on sticks of spindly legs wandering nowhere in particular and doing nothing in particular other than starving to death. We must double our food supplies, clothing, housing, medical care, education, transport, double all this and more in less than forty years just to maintain our present standard of living. Fifty million more people a year and "freedom from hunger" campaigns to make sure that not too many of them die too quickly. And let us make it quite clear here that "freedom from hunger" campaigns without family planning campaigns are crazy. The former initially mitigates the effect, hunger, whilst aggravating the cause, overpopulation, whereas the latter decreases the cause and subsequently the effect.

Apart from Russia, the advanced Western countries give more help in the form of economic aid, food supplies and personnel to assist the victims of hunger than does the East. Within this Western bloc of assistance the greatest group of influence appears to be that of the Christians. If they were tackling the job properly I would not complain about this matter as much as I do. But you only need to look at the advertisements appealing to your emotions as they appeal for funds to see how Christian and idiotic some of these campaigns are. War on Want more or less has "INASMUCH" as its motto and we know who that is referring to. But where in all its copy does it point out the need to remove the cause of the want? Where does one read of its desire and intention to educate the hungry in birth control so that eventually there is less rather than more hunger? OXFAM has a superb reputation in the hunger stakes. But where does one read in its advertisements of family planning? One sees instead a picture of a skinny and blatantly hungry child holding an empty food bowl with the educating

observation "No child on earth should go hungry at Christmas". What a fatuous thing to say! No child should ever go hungry. And not even a child will get a prize from me for telling me of whom the "Christmas" blurb is supposed to remind us.

Lord McCorquodale of Newton, chairman of the campaign to be launched in Britain this month by the Family Planning Association, said "I firmly believe that without universal family planning 'freedom from hunger' is an empty ideal". And, may I add, is likely to result eventually in more empty stomachs than the great number we have at present.

A few governments—and note governments, not churches with contraceptive clinics in the vestry—have begun family planning campaigns, notably in India and China, two countries which have at the moment an approximate combined population increase of 26 million a year. But even there much more must be done than at present to overcome rampant population growth.

If family planning is at least part, and I think one may justifiably say a big part, of the real solution to the problem of too little food and too many people, why is it not being instituted everywhere and everytime it is needed? No prizes for the answer here either. I shall titillate the wrath of the faithful and say that, in my opinion, the Roman Catholic Church is proving the biggest barrier to the mass implementation of family planning and to the increase in human happiness which would thereby be realised. I will back up this statement and give evidence to send it in the minds of the convinced to the mental hell-fires of its own fabrication.

Ruth Inglis wrote in *Topic* (22/12/62): "Birth control schemes would be the most effective way of moderating the population explosion. But the UN, because of religious and social complications keeps its hands off, and leaves to the national governments themselves the question of initiating control".

Is it any wonder with the unfortunately powerful
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American Telepathy

By COLIN McCALL

A FORTNIGHT AGO I considered some newspaper reports of allegedly successful Russian experiments in telepathy over distances up to 1,700 miles. I urged scepticism. A story of thought-transference is, I said, no more likely to be valid because it is set in the USSR, than in the USA or here. There is just as much chance of illusion and collusion in Leningrad as in London. At the risk of boring readers I must now deal with some widely-publicised American telepathic experiments in connection with the nuclear submarine, *Nautilus*. And I must again, I am afraid, reprimand the *Daily Sketch* for its uncritical treatment of the subject.

On September 17th, the *Sketch* carried an article by Leslie Mallory, headlined, "Now science backs the mind-readers", dealing mainly with the claims of the Russian Professor Leonid Vasilyev, who "regularly put men and women to sleep by telepathy and awakened them at set intervals". But the Professor, we are told, "links these with the ones carried out in the US nuclear submarine *Nautilus*". And Mr. Mallory summarised these American experiments as follows:

An officer named only as "Lieutenant Jones" was locked in his cabin during the whole of a 16-day underwater cruise. Twice a day he handed the commander a sheet of paper marked with various combinations of a cross, a star, a circle, a square and three wavy lines. After the voyage the sheets were checked with similar ones completed at the same time each day by a researcher at Duke University, North Carolina. Seven times out of ten, Lieutenant Jones was right.

And, according to Mr. Mallory, Professor Vasilyev "urges scientists everywhere to stop thinking in terms of absolute proof, but to inquire and investigate".

This, of course, sounds reasonable enough. As critics of Extra-Sensory Perception will know, it is typical of the tolerant-sounding pleas of the telepathist. I have often had occasion to point out that the valuable attribute of scepticism has, in relation to ESP, been identified with dogmatism and intolerance. So many Humanists and Rationalists have accepted the validity of ESP uncritically, that its relatively few outspoken critics are treated as backwoodsmen. And Mr. Mallory presented a picture of intolerant and impatient scientists retorting "Irrational . . . unlikely . . . unproven", to the patient "researchers' efforts to vindicate telepathy".

Well, let us fill in a few more details of the *Nautilus* affair. It was on July 25th, 1959, that a "mysterious passenger" boarded the submarine, which immediately put to sea and cruised for the 16 days in the "depths of the Atlantic ocean". Once aboard, the nameless passenger shut himself up in his cabin and only the sailor who brought him his food and Captain Anderson "had ever seen his face".

Twice a day the passenger handed a slip of paper to Captain Anderson, bearing the five typical Zener card symbols: the cross (or plus sign), the star, the circle, the square, and the three wavy lines, five of each of which occur in the normal pack. Both the passenger and the captain signed each sheet, the captain then placing it in an envelope, which was closed and officially sealed with the date and the words: "Top secret, to be destroyed in case of imminent capture of submarine".

And one can't get much more official than that, can one?

However, to continue. On Monday, August 10th, 1959, the submarine landed at Croyton, and: "The passenger

entered an official car which, under military escort, led him off at the nearest airport. A few hours later his plane landed in the town of Friendship, Md. An automobile was standing by to pick up the traveller. It drove him to a building which bore this inscription: "Westinghouse Special Research Center. No admittance to unauthorised personnel." The passenger asked for Colonel William Bowers, Director of Biological Science at the USAF Research Office, and we read:

Colonel Bowers was waiting for him in his office. "Sit down, Lieutenant Jones", he said. "You have the envelope?"

Jones handed the envelope to the Colonel, who walked to a safe, opened it, and took out an envelope identical except that the seal it bore was not marked "Submarine" but "Research Center X, Friendship, Maryland".

Colonel Bowers opened the two envelopes and took out some packets of smaller envelopes which he proceeded to unseal. Then, silently, the two men matched the slips of paper that bore similar dates. Then they compared them. With more than 70 per cent accuracy, the symbols not only corresponded, but were placed in the same order on the two sheets bearing the same date.

"We've reached a turning point in history", said Colonel Bowers. "For the first time ever, under conditions that preclude trickery, and with a precision great enough to open the way to its practical application, human thought has been transmitted through space, without any physical intermediary, from one brain to another."

Alas, the two participants in this remarkable "experiment" are unable to enjoy the renown that is surely theirs. For the moment, at any rate, they must be referred to merely as "Lieutenant Jones", a naval officer, and "subject Smith", a student at Duke University, North Carolina, the university immortalised, one might almost say, by that doyen of ESP experimenters, Professor Joseph Banks Rhine.

But to return to our account.

During the 16 days that the experiment lasted, closed up in a room which he never left, Smith would sit twice a day before an automatic card-shuffling device. In a drum on the inside of this apparatus, thousands[!] of cards were shaken up . . . Twice a day the apparatus, operated by clockwork, would eject a card, completely at random, at one-minute intervals. Experimenter Smith fixed his gaze and tried to concentrate intensely on this card.

At precisely the same moment, 1,200 miles away and hundreds of feet under the ocean, Lieutenant Jones tried to guess which card Smith was looking at. He marked down the result and had the document countersigned by Captain Anderson. Seven times out of ten, Lieutenant Jones guessed right!

No deception was possible.

The study of parapsychology (ESP) had, we are told, "finally entered a scientific stage . . . under the pressure of military necessity". The Rand Company, engaged on secret research for the US Government, had reported to President Eisenhower in 1957, that it was impossible to keep in touch with nuclear submarines when they were submerged, and especially when they were under the polar ice-crust. Therefore, "All new methods should be tried out."

This widely-publicised story appeared in a French best seller, *Le Matin des Magiciens*, by Louis Pauwels and Jacques Bergier (Librairie Gallimard, 1960) and was summarised in the American magazine, *This Week*, for September 8th, 1963. Instead, however, of taking the story on its face value, as Mr. Mallory and a number of English journalists have done, *This Week* did a little private investigation.

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This Believing World

The Second Session of the Ecumenical Council to take place this month has invited Jewish, Buddhist, and Muslim observers to attend. But why? If any of these observers who has studied Christianity could not "wipe the floor" with a Catholic in argument, the proper place for him is in the Catholic Church. And God knows how hard that Church has tried to rope them in for centuries.

★

Here then is a chance for the new Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Dr. John Heenan. Either he can produce arguments in favour of Rome as the one true Church, or he can't. We have personally heard him numbers of times on the radio and TV, and have marvelled at the paucity of his knowledge of other religions, and particularly of course of Freethought. Is the real reason that, like the late Pope John, he avoids theology, and tries to be friendly and amiable to all people? Surely—again like Pope John—he will learn that merely being friendly will never gain him converts?

★

For many years the one cry to cure juvenile delinquency has been to instil more and more religion into children. Well, how has this worked? The answer is that the Home Secretary has now been forced to announce that he is to head a new committee "to consider and advise on the problems of juvenile delinquency and on measures of its reduction". The magical name of Jesus, which has always in the past been invoked as the one great deterrent, has thus completely failed, and in its stead we have that of our very prosaic Mr. Henry Brooke, and similar members of a committee.

★

The real difficulty which Christianity now has to face is that if you give up the Churches, or any one Church, and if you flood the market with new translations of the Bible which so awkwardly differ from each other, upon what can you base your "Faith"? The New English Bible has disturbed quite a number of the former wonderful teachings of God's Precious Word, and the innovators are now also having "a smack" (to use a vulgarism) at our world famous hymn-book. The *Daily Express* (September 20th) is very annoyed, for it objects to the "improvers" missing out of the new Anglican hymn book such "favourite old hymns" as "Lead Kindly Light" and "Gentle Jesus meek and mild".

★

The "improvers" consider that the first is "confused", while the second gives "a wrong impression of Christ". Yet we have all been told, especially when young and very susceptible, how very meek and mild Jesus always was, though all the Gospels clearly said he wasn't. The *Daily Express* is sure that "in these splendid tunes" with "their dear familiar words, generation after generation has praised God". This may be true, but no one ever troubled to find out what God himself thought. Perhaps he was as bored at hearing them as are the Anglican "improvers".

★

"I suppose you realise, Adolphus," said the vicar's wife in a recent Osbert Lancaster cartoon, "that this will be the sixteenth Sunday after Trinity on which you've fearlessly tackled the vexed problem of sex for the benefit of a congregation whose average age is seventy-four-and-a-half?"

SOS

THE PRIEST liked to sit in the evenings with the wireless operator. It was more discreet than drinking in the lounge, and the operator could be trusted to hold his tongue as he was not supposed to consume such large quantities of liquid refreshment while on duty. Besides, the priest liked to hear the Morse crackle. It made him feel in touch with the world, and the priest was very much on top of the world at the moment. He was hurrying home to the consecration of his new church, when photos of the Cardinal, the ceremony and, most important, of the priest, would be in all the local papers. It was a pleasant outlook, even if there was a nasty storm brewing at sea. The storm meant, of course, that the priest and the operator had to drink a little more than usual to keep a possible attack of seasickness at bay.

Then it came through: the SOS. Both the drinkers were gripped by the drama of a small sailing ship floundering in the mighty ocean. "But look here," said the priest, "this might mean going off course, and I might be late for the ceremony. You know what that means to me." Then his face lightened. "Have you ever thought," he said to the operator—a pious man who was a member of the priest's faith—"how beautiful that message is—Save Our Souls? They are not worried, you see, about their bodies. Yes, all you have to do is to send them back a message promising them that I give everyone aboard the wreck conditional absolution. They will be content, for their souls will be saved to the glory of God. Come, I think such an inspiring business calls for another bottle, don't you, my son? Let us be uplifted by this proof that Holy Mother Church knows best!"

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

AMERICAN TELEPATHY

(Concluded from page 315)

When asked for proof of the story for which they had been the "main source", Pauwels and Bergier told *This Week* "that they had elaborated on reports they had heard but not verified".

They had, for example, given the submarine a name. "It couldn't be just an 'atomic submarine'", wrote Pauwels in response to our questions, "but the *Nautilus*, which is best known to the French public".

This Week next showed the story to Captain William R. Anderson, first skipper of the *Nautilus*, and now retired from the US Navy. This was his comment:

"Although the *Nautilus* engaged in a very wide variety of activities, certainly these did not include experiments in mental telepathy. The report by Messrs. Pauwels and Bergier is completely false . . . On July 25th, 1959, the date these gentlemen allege the *Nautilus* put to sea . . . she was in fact high and dry in dock at Portsmouth, NH, undergoing her first major overhaul".

And—a mere incidental—the Commander at the time was not Captain Anderson, but Commander Lando W. Zech, Jr.

Colonel William Bowers of the US Air Force, whose participation in the experiment and whose remarks about the "turning point of history" are mentioned above, declared:

"The experiment in which I was alleged to have participated never took place . . . I have never been assigned to the Westinghouse Laboratory. In fact, on July 25th, 1959, I was assigned to duties at the Air University, Maxwell AFB, Alabama, which were in no way related to extrasensory investigations."

For good measure, another "quotation" from Ansel E. Talbert, a military writer, "turned out not to be his words, but the authors' interpretation".

In short, as *This Week* commendably makes clear, the *Nautilus* ESP story was a hoax. But that won't prevent it from staying around for quite a time.

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.
(Lower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday afternoon (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.
Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.
North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY
Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, October 6th, 6.45 p.m.: K. A. DAY, "To Touch on Black Magic".
Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Arnold House Hotel, Montpelier Terrace, Brighton), Sunday, October 6th, 5.30 p.m.: R. J. ANDERSON, "Life Worship of D. H. Lawrence".
Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, October 8th, 7.30 p.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, OBE, "Do We Need a New Morality?"
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 6th, 6.30 p.m.: CONCERT, "The Gaskell Follies".
Manchester Branch NSS (Wheatshaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, October 6th, 7.30 p.m.: A. WHITTAKER, FRAS, "Beginnings and Endings" (illustrated with slides).
Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, October 6th, 7.30 p.m.: RICHARD CLEMENTS, OBE, "Honest to God—and All That".
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, October 6th, 11 a.m.: REGINALD W. SORENSEN, MP, "World Religions and World Peace".

Notes and News

WE AGREE with John Woodforde in the *Sunday Telegraph* (22/9/63) that if the new Archbishop of Westminster "would give anything I possess not to be a bishop" and "would rather be back in Manor Park as a parish priest", it is a little hard on "those other candidates for the archbishopric whose consciences might have allowed them to find, and express a modest pleasure in the move". Bishop John Carmel Heenan made the quoted statements in a BBC Home Service talk which was recorded and submitted to him for alteration and cutting as he wished. So, said Mr. Woodforde, there is no doubt that Dr. Heenan meant to say these things. True, but how seriously did he mean them to be taken?

JUDGING FROM what we know of Dr. Heenan, we should say he is not a man who shuns the limelight. And even a eulogistic article by "Cassandra" (*Daily Mirror*, 23/9/63) recalled that, once when Dr. Heenan was giving

evidence in court, he was asked by counsel: "You are probably the most intelligent man in England". Dr. Heenan replied: "Yes, I suppose you could say that"; and later explained: "I didn't want to appear vain, but I had to remember that I was on oath". It is fair, then, to conclude that the Archbishop has "a good conceit of himself".



WHAT ABOUT the much more important question of Dr. Heenan's social attitude. He is under no illusions regarding Christian unity, despite all his talk about love and "spiritual bridges" linking Lambeth and Westminster. But he still believes it "necessary for Church leaders to sit down and talk with Communists in the interests of world peace" (*Daily Telegraph*, 24/9/63). Although Catholics could not agree with Communists who were atheists, he said, "that does not mean you cannot talk to a Communist if you are a Christian". This represents a considerable advance, by contrast with his predecessors, and reflects the more "liberal" attitude of many Roman Catholic leaders, like the Archbishop of Vienna, who has inaugurated talks between Catholics and Communists. But again, how seriously are we to take Dr. Heenan's liberalism? In a letter to the *New Statesman* (20/9/63), Bernard Bergonzi, while regarding the Archbishop as more open-minded than his predecessors, granted that he was "no progressive and that liberal Catholics have reasons to be suspicious of him". Perhaps the *New Statesman's* "Flavus" was right in regarding Dr. Heenan as a fence-sitter.



ANOTHER Roman Catholic who would seem to protest too much against involvement in leadership is Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu of South Vietnam (see *Views and Opinions*, 6/9/63). In a letter to *Time* (13/9/63) Mme. Nhu said that "if sometimes I have to step in the fray, becoming a target of most cruel blows, it is not at all by natural taste, for I loathe crowds and noise, but because someone must finally make up his or her mind to take a position, dangerous, maybe, but necessary to break the paralysing fear of others". For the umpteenth time, too, Mme. Nhu tried to explain her "barbecue" and "provocateurs in [Buddhist] monks' robes" remarks. Her instruction to "beat them three times harder" sprang, she said, "from my deep feeling of *noblesse oblige*".



IN A Correspondents' "survey of a Church at the Crossroads", *The Times* (9/9/63), after some criticisms, referred to the "major achievement" of the Roman Catholic Church—"so long despised as the church of ignorant and illiterate immigrants"—in attaining "respectability in English life". It is now accepted, the *Times* said, "by and large as being no longer foreign but native and indigenous, and in spite of the high official crime rate among the Catholic poor (which is recognised as being mainly due to certain accidental social conditions) it is everywhere well thought of". Not quite everywhere.



THE FIRST night of *The Representative* at the Aldwych Theatre, London, on Wednesday, September 25th, passed off without incident—or at least without the shouts and counter-shouts that apparently characterised the German productions. However, the Marble Arch Branch of the National Secular Society distributed a large number of handbills asking, "Do you know that the Roman Catholic Church has tried to censor this play?" The BBC commentator received one and referred to it in his report on *News Extra*. The play and the book (just published by Methuen) will be reviewed soon.

Freedom from Humbug

(Concluded from page 314)

Catholics whirling their halos of absolutism above their so angelic heads that the UN keeps its hands off? Frederick McMillan ("a psychologist and a Catholic") writing to *New Society* (13/6/63), said: "All recourse to birth control is psychologically harmful both for the individual and society . . . It is a retreat into expediency which is antipathetic to the highest evolutionary development of mankind".

This is typical of the highfalutin Catholic standpoint on birth control. It would be interesting to know if this illuminated man has ever heard of the Law of Diminishing Returns and the Law of Optimum Density. Presumably he is well acquainted with the Law of Controlled Sperm which states that as the control of sperm increases, so is there a proportionate decrease in the control of the Roman Catholic Church.

The latter is in the enviable position of possessing eternal truths and immutable laws of human conduct decreed by the unchangeable God who reveals his will in many mysterious ways, of which the greatest number and most mysterious are intimately connected with the One And Only Church Of The Almighty. Being in such a unique and highly responsible position She seeks, by fair means or foul, to execute the will of the Omnipotent. And here let Bishop Dwyer interpose on the subject of birth control or rather, something dearer to his heart, on the lack of it. In Leaflet No. 15 of the Catholic Enquiry Centre Course on *The Catholic Faith* this well-studied Right Reverend DD, PhD, declared: "And the law of God is bluntly this: To destroy, block or spill the seed deliberately, either by using anything or by interrupting the act of marriage, is a mortal sin".

The Church of Rome is wealthy and, according to conservative estimates, its wealth, in shareholdings alone, amounts to £5,000,000,000. It has a membership of about 500,000,000 souls in the flesh which it controls by a number of shrewd inventions such as the seven sacraments and its doctrine and dogma which give, as a means of procuring union dues, traumatic happiness on the one hand and, as a means of securing continued affiliation, ghoulish anxiety on the other. It has an emotional dynamo which, in certain intellectual respects, converts potential brilliance to definite dimness. The Roman Catholic Church, therefore, has the power in money, people and methods to impose its will where it is not particularly desirable.

A. M. Carr-Saunders, writing in 1925 in his book on *Population* (O.U.P. imp. 1931), said: "Let us suppose that the 1,800 millions of people now inhabiting the world were to continue to increase at the present rate, namely 1 per cent per annum, then in 500 years from now the population would amount to 246,114 millions". These are figures which will make the thoughtful think hard and they will think even harder when they realise that since 1925 the rate of increase itself has increased by 0.7 per cent per annum.

Professor Toynbee, giving a warning to the World Food Congress on June 6th, 1963, said: "Maximum welfare, not maximum population, is our human objective".

Hold on for the counter-move.

"Cardinal Wyszyński, Roman Catholic Primate of Poland, today described birth control as 'murder' in a sermon attacking Government policies to curb the population increase" (Reuter report in the *Daily Telegraph*, 1/4/63).

On the same day in the same paper J. P. Brander, in a letter to the editor, wrote: "The Colombo plan in 10 years' work in Asian countries has spent the vast sum of £4,285 millions but admits failure by reporting that 'galloping population' is making economic developments very difficult".

Archbishop Heenan put another spoke in the wheel. Addressing the Union of Catholic Mothers in London on June 5th, 1963, Dr. Heenan said: "Once you attempt to improve on the Law of God, once you tinker with the Eternal Law, there is no end and no more security".

I do not know whether by that he means no more security for the Roman Catholic Church if families are planned, children are born because they are wanted and not because sperm, when uncontrolled, induces a growth of the ovum and consequently of the population. I do not know whether he means that there is no more security for his Holy Church of God when people are happy because they have clothes on their back and food in their stomach and enough sense to live for themselves and for others and without the impediments of Christianity. But certainly, such statements from men who are cogs in the great machine of Roman Catholicism make things difficult for those who want to further the cause of humanity, as opposed to furthering the cause of an institution which pretends to be the mouthpiece of God at the same time as it condemns millions to wretchedness by obstructing the means of making them happy.

I have no hatred for any individual Catholic because I realise that he is a conditioned product of a centuries old system. Catholicism is like a science fiction monster which started from the seed of "For God so loved the world . . ." and has grown to terrifying proportions. Indeed Catholicism is obsessed with seed, both of the withholding and non-withholding varieties. Mary conceived Christ without the spermatic seed of her husband's love. Joseph withheld it, the celibates would have us believe. Virginity is better than marriage. Nuns and priests, withhold your seed from the world. But when it comes to those circumstances in which seed should be emitted to afford the beautiful climactic experience of sexual love yet be withheld from its natural end in order to increase the happiness of the products of nature, does the Catholic Church say—"Withhold from the end of pain"? No. It says, "Let it run amok. Let it flow with the love of God. Let the creatures of misery come forth into a world that cannot provide for their bodies, that will neglect their physical wants. Because we, the Holy (pity them as you fight them) Roman Catholic Church, God's Church, are here to care for their souls and for their spiritual needs and for their misery on earth for which man, in his disobedience to the will of God, is responsible. We shall go out to the four corners of the earth to minister to them, to bless them with the Grace of God that they may have the Light to withstand the powers of darkness and the Spirit of the Holy Ghost to guide them to death which is but the beginning of Eternal Life".

Who are they kidding? Too many people. I'm afraid. It's all very crazy, but remember that within the next twenty-four hours we shall have another 140,000 humans requiring the satisfaction of their animalistic wants—not least of all, hunger. So please, sort it all out. The problem is not all that complicated, although the implementation of the solution is. And when you've sorted it out, thank humanity that you are happy and give it something to make it happier in return.

Wagner

By PETER P. CROMMELIN

I HAVE BEEN, not for the first time, and I hope not for the last, to a performance of *Götterdämmerung*, "The Twilight of the Gods", at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. Regarded simply as great music for the human voice with full orchestra, *Götterdämmerung* is one of the major experiences of life. To an intelligent freethinking atheist there is far more in Wagner's great music drama of the *Ring* than can be seen or heard on the operatic stage. The words give meaning to the music, and the whole becomes a tremendous dramatic attack against all the conventional forms of religion and morality. The final destruction of the gods and their offspring causes no grief to the spectator. We depart with a feeling of great exhilaration, and a renewed sense that there is nothing better than reason and sanity. We cannot hope to control the world, or steer the course of human evolution by any kind of magic. There is no magic to "absolve" or "redeem" the evil which can be wrought by human guile or treachery. The thing can only be done, if at all, by the continuous development of the social sciences. But an important part or aspect of any true social or moral progress must be the elimination of religious credulities, bigotries and superstitions. As a contribution to this end, Wagner's great music drama has not been devoid of influence. It is quite certain that the "Worship of God" has produced no work of art comparable to "The Twilight of the Gods", during the ninety years since its completion. It ends with their complete destruction by fire and water.

Richard Wagner was born one hundred and fifty years ago. He ought to be remembered and honoured not only by all lovers of great music, but by all lovers of human liberty and by all who believe that true liberty can be enjoyed only by those who have achieved liberation from religious bondage. Wagner was a rebel in an age of revolutions. He narrowly escaped imprisonment for his part in a popular revolution against the "lawfully constituted authority" of Saxony. For many years he was an exile. He suffered extreme poverty. His revolutionary spirit and creative genius kept him alive and kept him working despite all difficulties.

It has been said that later on, long after his own death, Wagner's music was to feed and nourish the megalomania of Adolf Hitler, who forced his entourage to sit through performances of the *Ring* at Bayreuth which they found exceedingly wearisome and boring, for as we all know, the four parts of the long drama take a long time to perform in their entirety. The time only seems reasonable to those who are absorbed by the beauty of the music, and the dramatic unfolding of the story.

Hitler was mad and bad; Wagner was neither. As a human being he was certainly not an altogether pleasant character, yet anyone who has studied his life cannot fail to be impressed by the terrific courage of the man. And unpleasant as he may have been in some ways, the great composer won the utterly devoted love of one woman, who enabled him to become the father of a remarkably happy and talented family. It is actually the grandsons of Richard and Cosima Wagner, who have been so successful in infusing new life into the great post-war productions at Bayreuth.

The characters of the *Ring* drama, whether they are called dwarfs or giants or gods or heroes or heroines are all of them sub-human or semi-human. Yet they all help to bring home to us visibly, forcibly, dramatically, that the

figments of religious imagination still dominate a deplorably large proportion of the human race, and still threaten to bring the race to the very edge of total self-destruction even as the gods in the *Ring* are responsible for the events which eventually bring about their downfall.

It is quite possible, no doubt, to be a Freethinker and an Atheist, without feeling any enthusiasm for a Wagnerian music drama. It is scarcely possible to feel enthusiasm for Wagner without at the same time feeling some stimulation in the direction of freedom of thought and atheism. It is for this reason that I feel justified in commending the work of the great composer to the attention of readers of THE FREETHINKER. Wagner's music may have fed the madness of Hitler. It must certainly be accepted as one of the contributing factors to the making of modern humanism and socialism. We know that Wagner was a strong influence in the life of Bernard Shaw, and we know that Shaw contributed much to the growth of modern socialism.

Humanism and socialism are still very much in the making. The new philosophy, based on the possibilities revealed by physical science is still far from having conquered the world. There is still need of Wagnerian fire to burn away the surviving traces of theocracy which still obstruct the way to a sane and rational democracy, not least of all, here in England.

Atheism in Church

On Sunday, September 22nd, at Kingsway Hall Methodist Church, London, the usual evening service conducted by the Rev Donald Soper was followed by a half hour address by David Tribe, President of the National Secular Society. This revolutionary idea was conceived at one of Dr. Soper's midday meetings on Tower Hill, when a hostile member of his audience taunted him with the Church's unwillingness to allow an Atheist in a Christian pulpit. The challenge was taken up, and this well attended meeting was the result.

Mr. David Tribe criticised three categories common to most religions, which now existed side by side. They were: Fundamentalism, the idea of heaven and hell, the literal truth of the Bible, etc., which has now been abandoned by nearly all thinking Christians; Moderatism, the idea that God created the world and then endowed it with evolutionary potentialities, leaving the rest to man, a vague notion rejected by non-Christians; and Modernism, found in advanced societies and therefore more characteristic of Christianity than the other religions. Its supporters look on God as the intelligence which motivates the universe and inspires man who, after death, will pass into the "great consciousness".

Freethinkers, on the contrary, reject all religious ideas, for instance, the miracles of Jesus, which, in essence, are no less striking than a host of myths and legends. They assume that events in nature are predictable and follow a definite pattern, and feel that no knowledge of the universe can be gained by spiritual studies. Other points touched on by the speaker included various dilemmas for the Christian caused by Bible contradictions on divorce, non-violence, and confused ethics.

In the world of the future, he said, religious ideas would be less and less meaningful, all religions being bound by sectarianism and their origins. However, Atheists and Christians had certain basic aims in common, some of the teachings of Jesus being good, and some Humanist teachings being even better in terms of the contemporary situation. There was more willingness nowadays to understand each other's point of view and a realisation that Christians and Atheists are, after all, only human beings, living in the same world with the same set of problems to face and overcome. Questions followed, and Dr. Soper closed the meeting with an invitation to Mr. Tribe to return at some future date for another bout in this age old controversy.

CORRESPONDENCE

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

RUSSIAN COMMUNISM

As my friend Stuart Montague is well aware, the "blessed word", socialism, nowadays covers a multitude of meanings, as well as sins! The Tory leaders of my youth would undoubtedly describe the Tory party of today as a "socialist party". As far as present-day Russia is concerned, it can, I think, be best described as state-socialism (Mr. Montague may prefer the term, state-capitalism, but this surely implies the current existence of a capitalist class, which is absent in the Soviet Union).

Bernard Shaw was probably correct in describing the Fabian Society as the "godfather" of the present Russian regime, despite its Marxist phraseology. In any case, did not Karl Marx himself warn us against drawing up blue (or red!) prints for the future? "We cannot foretell the precise recipes for the cookshops of the Future." There can accordingly be no such thing as a Marxist social order.

F. A. RIDLEY.

INNOCENT(?) SPIES

Surely the really scandalous thing about "spy revelations" is not that secrets have been found out but that politicians in high places have plotted them? The real criminals who deserve sentence at the bar of public opinion are those who calmly plan the destruction of the world through atomic warfare.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

THE POPE'S CURIA REFORMS

Pope Paul has foreshadowed bold changes in the Roman Curia. He said amongst other things that "Rome has no need to defend herself by being deaf to suggestions which come to her from honest voices, and even less when these voices belong to priests and brethren".

He also said rather significantly that "Roman Curia will not be jealous of temporal prerogatives belonging to other times, neither of external forms no longer fitted to express true and high religious meaning".

It is transparent from these remarks that just as Khrushchev has been faced with resistance from the dyed-in-the-wool "Old Guard" to the reforms initiated by John XXIII and the Stalinists, so too the Roman Curia have acted as the Stalinist present Pope.

This does *not* alter the character of the Roman Church any more than Khrushchev's reforms alter the nature and aspirations of the Kremlin hierarchy. It only reflects a change in method of rule more appropriate to the second half of the 20th century.

"AKIBA"

SNEER NO MORE!

"Once upon a time, the freethinkers, who now call themselves the humanists, used to quote at us all: 'How you Christians love each other', meaning it as a sneer. But they cannot jeer any longer. For we *do* love each other."

"And we know, too, that we need each other . . ."

Archbishop Heenan talking to Godfrey Winn (*Daily Sketch*, 23/9/63).

OBITUARY

With the death of Max Brodman on September 19th, 1963, the National Secular Society has lost an old and loyal member. He was 82, and until his health failed, regularly attended meetings of Marble Arch Branch to which he belonged.

Mr. Brodman was born in Rumania, and lived in a number of European countries before settling in London at the turn of the century. He joined the National Secular Society and was well-known to leading Freethinkers of the time, including Chapman Cohen and J. W. Gott. He was also closely associated with the Anarchist movement, and was a personal friend of Kropotkin, Malatesta and Rocker.

Max Brodman is survived by his wife, son and four daughters to whom our deepest sympathy is extended.

W.J.McI.

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