

The Freethinker

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IN RECENT MONTHS I have made a habit of reading the *Sunday Review* (published in Dublin), and have found this weekly paper extremely interesting and instructive, the more so as, whilst a secular paper in its predominating contents, it embodies an intellectual Catholicism very different in mental calibre from the crude superstitions that disfigure so much contemporary popular Catholic literature. Undoubtedly it is this type of subtle philosophically-reasoned Catholicism that, at any rate in the long run, represents more danger to Rationalism and to the Humanist outlook in general than do such past and present crudities as hell-fire and the current extravagances associated with Lourdes and Fatima. It would after all, take something rather more than peripatetic virgins and the smell of hypothetical brimstone to keep modern Catholic intellectuals like President Kennedy, Graham Greene and George Woodcock within the confines of Holy Mother Church.

A Theologian Surveys the Universe

We have already referred in these columns to our Irish contemporary's interest in current problems of space travel and the more specific problems represented by life in the universe. As has already been noted here, the Catholic Church (like the heliocentric astronomy) has moved quite a distance since the Roman Inquisition in 1600 burned Giordano Bruno for his marvellous premonitions of the scientific attitudes only arrived at empirically during the second half of this present century. From the days of Jules Verne, who was received in audience by Pope Leo XIII, the Vatican has obviously been having second thoughts about this question; for as far back as 1922, a Dutch theologian, Fr. George Van Noort, made the categorical statement that "one would not controvert the Catholic faith if one were to assert the existence of rational beings upon other worlds".

Now however (according to a recent issue of the *Sunday Review* which reproduces his views in some detail) an Irish theologian (writing very appropriately in a Dominican journal run by the Order to which St. Thomas Aquinas belonged) has turned his spiritual glasses skyward and has gone into much greater detail than did either Bruno or Van Noort. In point of fact, this far-sighted Irish theologian has produced from the recesses of his own mentality, working upon the traditional theology of the Catholic Church, what actually amounts to a complete theological map of the universe, in which every hypothetical form of life that may conceivably exist anywhere in outer space is analysed and then categorised in appropriate detail with a rigorous logic, a scholastic logic, which would, we are sure, have delighted the heart of the "Angelic Doctor". This notable pioneer study in what is surely an entirely new branch of theology by the Very Rev. Dr. P. J. McLaughlin of County Donegal, appeared in the Irish Dominican journal, *Spotlight*, but the following paragraphs are based on an article in the *Sunday*

Review of September 8th, 1963.

Life in the Universe

Like a good scientist, Dr. McLaughlin begins by arguing—quite convincingly we should say—that with the aid of lens and prism and electronics, science can tell about the physical conditions of other celestial orbs, the degree of heat or cold on them, if there is an atmosphere (and if so what it is made of) and the likelihood of plant-life on Mars. After that there is a wide field for the imagination to work on. There may be worlds with strange forms of plant or animal life. There may be worlds in space inhabited by intelligent beings that do not resemble us in any way,

either in form or organic structure.

So far, so good; contemporary astronomers like Sir Bernard Lovell have arrived at similar conclusions. However, our "eminent priest-scientist" (as the *Sunday Review* describes Dr. McLaughlin) then allows his imagination to run into at least very hypothetical (if not exactly unscientific) realms. For he argues there "may be worlds where rational creatures possess other senses—an electric or a magnetic sense; a sense of orientation in space, an organ which is sensitive to infra-red or ultra-violet rays or sees through walls like an X-ray, or sees the thoughts of others without sensations." "There may be" he surmises, "worlds where there is a nutritive atmosphere taking the place of food". Our clerical scientist concludes this section of his argument with the confident assertion that "science rules out none of these possibilities".

The Universe Through Theological Glasses

However, all the above is obviously a mere preliminary before coming to what is really important. For now we get to the root of the matter: for "creatures with souls may well live on other worlds" according to Dr. McLaughlin. There is nothing in theology against such a view; in fact, he says, theologians agree that God may have placed rational life within the universe. What a pity Bruno's judges did not know this in 1600!

Now, like a good Thomist our Irish authority, having established his premises by the exclusive use of "natural reason", proceeds to advance into the more rarified domain of theology. Having established—to his own satisfaction at any rate—the fact (or strong probability) that life external to our planet does indeed exist, he then proceeds to draw a detailed theological map of the spiritual state of all hypothetical living beings who may be found anywhere in the illimitable universe—a master-stroke of intellectual audacity far surpassing the merely mundane speculations of a Galileo, or even of contemporary radio astronomy at Jodrell Bank, etc.

Four Spiritual States

According to our reverend expert, all and any hypothetical forms of life that may (and in his opinion probably do) exist in the universe, must logically conform to one of four general spiritual types or species. We subjoin them *seriatim* for greater convenience under successive headings:

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A Modern Theological Map of the Universe

By F. A. RIDLEY

(a) Races like ours created sinless (in presumably celestial Edens) but who, like Adam and Eve, fell from their aboriginal, sinless state. In this case, argues our author, "if they sinned then the merits of Christ could have been extended to them and made known by a particular form of revelation, or God could have arranged for their Redemption in quite a different way". (b) A second possibility in Dr. McLaughlin's reasoning is that God may have created, on other orbs, a race of beings who exist in a purely natural state without any hyper-natural gifts or graces and with merely a natural but everlasting destiny. Such creatures, he thinks, could expect after death nothing but a mere natural happiness with no possibility of seeing God face to face, though their happiness would be eternal. Their condition would be like that of infants dying unbaptised (Limbo?—F.A.R.). (c) Thirdly, there could be creatures who would be both physically and intellectually our superiors. They would ceaselessly enjoy a paradise of happiness such as our first parents had before they fell. "With their lightsome minds and with wills adhering always to their Maker's will, such beings would never engage in war or destruction or invent destroying weapons.

They would be the cosmic saints and their earth would be a heaven. They would be truly immortal and unkillable". (d) A fourth and dread possibility discussed by Dr. McLaughlin, is an orb inhabited by rational beings who, like the fallen angels, sinned once and were never given another chance.

"Here we would have a world of man-devils, literally creatures with superior minds and wills directed always to evil. [THE FREETHINKER should sell well there, once space travel had made contact!] They would be unlikely to do us any good even if they could not do us any harm".

"So", our Irish Divine concludes, relapsing again from theological speculation into scientific probability, "we could be one of a thousand races on a million worlds scattered throughout the universe".

The only comment we feel like making upon this masterpiece of ingenious metaphysical logic, is that the unchanging Church of Rome has evidently changed quite a lot since it burned Bruno in 1600 for very similar reasoning. As for Dr. McLaughlin, either he is a master-thinker or else he has invented a quite new type of science fiction.

Sweetness and Light

By D.W.

I HAVE BECOME weary of the smiling benevolence of the personnel of the Church of Rome. Their cherubic, butter-wouldn't-melt-in-their-mouth expressions are rapidly becoming their trade mark. In the papers, at the cinema and on television their ubiquitous smiling countenances shine forth. Blandly they smile, all sweetness and light, and never so much as a trace of a faggot being lit in anger. The personality priests have become all things to all men. Even when confronted with situations which, at one time, they would have damned at the drop of a hat they do not succumb. Instead they adopt an attitude of more in sorrow than in anger.

Their predilection for this simpering facade appears to be increasing rapidly. Perhaps it is so successful. Instead of making any move towards compromise they merely smile blandly when confronted with anything at variance with their beliefs and continue on their own sweet way. Therefore, instead of arousing the ire of criticised heretics, they attract praise for their liberality, compassionate outlook and understanding. The cup of compassion overflows; even Freethinkers have been caught in the deluge.

The heretics have been changed into separated brethren and everyone holds hands in paroxysms of wishful thinking. Separated is the word. And in what direction will the separated parties move? Quite simply, the Roman Catholic Church will remain more or less where it is while the rest of the world takes time to realise how much in error it has been. The "come-and-join-us" attitude, which seems to exert a powerful influence, smacks rather of the spider and the flies situation, smiling assurance having to substitute for the web.

And towards what repository of compassion and mine of wisdom are the separated brethren being lured? There would be no point in elaborating the unfortunate attitudes and dogmas embraced by Roman Catholics. Suffice to say that it is difficult to imagine how adult men and women, often intelligent and kindly, can adhere to such a heap of anachronistic, discredited and harmful rubbish. Children are counselled by "fathers" who will never become fathers, husbands and wives by celibates and the

wayward have the unhappy doctrine of original sin with which to contend. The situation cannot even be said to be a case of the blind leading the blind, for that assumes parity of experience.

Is it not amazing that these people are taken seriously, listened to with respect and weight given to their opinions? What sort of colossal double-think is required to allow them to peddle their magic in the age of sputniks? Millions of people accept the Roman Catholic faith and model their lives on the advice which comes from its priests. The difficulties, the restrictions and the deprivations of a Roman Catholic are such that, to a non-Catholic at least, they appear seriously to interfere with individual and collective happiness. Yet they are accepted. The darkness must be very warm and comforting to make the faithful so desperately eschew the light.

But perhaps this is a harsh view I take. My heart has not been stirred by the overtures, and new benevolence, of the Roman Catholic Church. Perhaps I am lacking in sophistication. When I see something causing great misery I think this ought to be removed if it is possible, and I do not think, therefore, that a marriage should be indissoluble. Hunger seems to me to be such an undesirable state that it is better not to be born at all than to be born into it. When a person's life must forever be poisoned by great pain I do not think it beyond the wit of man to decide that it should be terminated.

Alas, there are other considerations beyond simple happiness or misery. There are God's wishes to be considered although they are difficult to discern and known only to a select few who appear to interpret them in peculiar ways. If these wishes seem to cause misery rather than to mitigate it then this merely indicates the lack of perception in one who sees them in such a light. So, as I cannot see beyond the point of wishing that a person should be happy, while not adversely affecting anyone else, I am afraid that I am a long way from a state of grace. And I am afraid that the current onslaught of sweetness and light is not helping me towards that state.

Vatican-Kremlin Relations

By FRANCIS J. KIEDA

NOT LONG AFTER the Bolshevik Revolution came to an end during World War I, the Russians made several abortive attempts to establish diplomatic contacts with the Vatican.

Msgr. Achille Ratti, who later became Pope Pius XI, was named Apostolic Visitor for Poland, Lithuania, Estonia, and Russia, with headquarters in Warsaw, Poland. At the outset of his political career, the papal delegate, after accepting an invitation to Moscow from Soviet Foreign Minister Chicherin, sent a telegram to the Russian authorities demanding freedom to contact bishops in Russia and the right of diplomatic correspondence with the Vatican. Since the telegram remained unanswered, Msgr. Ratti's visit to Moscow did not take place.

According to a National Catholic Welfare Council release, "The Soviet government was only interested in the visit of a delegate of the Vatican to Moscow, which could be interpreted as recognition of that government by the Vatican without any guarantees of liberty for the Catholic Church on the part of the government" (*The Tablet*, April 4th, 1963).

During the Genoa Conference when the recognition of the Soviet Government was being negotiated, Msgr. Pizzardo (later Cardinal) contacted Russian Foreign Minister Chicherin several times. A papal document was presented in which complete religious freedom and the restitution of confiscated church property to the various denominations were demanded as part of the conditions for recognition of the Communist regime in Russia by the Western powers. The negotiations between Msgr. Pizzardo and Chicherin ended in failure.

In September, 1924, while visiting Berlin, Maxim Litvinov met Archbishop Eugenio Pacelli, the Papal Nuncio, to consider a *modus vivendi* between the Vatican and the Kremlin. These talks likewise produced no results, failing chiefly on the question of religious indoctrination of youth and the education of the clergy in the Soviet Union.

Joseph Stalin, too, in 1944, presumably sought an understanding with the Vatican. In May of that year, the Rev. Stanislaw Orlemanski, an American priest of Polish descent, during a meeting with Stalin, was assured by the latter that a *rapprochement* between the Kremlin and the Vatican was a possibility. The Soviet Premier desired to diminish the resistance of millions of Christians to Communist rule by achieving some measure of understanding with the Church of Rome.

Secret talks regarding "peace with the Vatican" were also conducted from 1945 to 1947, between Ambassador Pushkin, Ossuhin, the NKVD agent, and two Roman Catholic priests, who reported the discussions to the Vatican. No positive results followed.

To maintain political contacts with the Vatican, Soviet authorities themselves have undertaken the initiative. In 1956 the Russian chargé d'affaires in Rome handed the papal nuncio there a memorandum on disarmament, which was forwarded to Pope Pius XII. Losing no time, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko declared that his government was favourably disposed to enter into diplomatic relations with the Vatican.

Within the past two years Premier Khrushchev has made several friendly overtures to the Pope, apparently with a view to establishing some contact between Communist rulers and the centre of Roman Catholicism. Among the

amicable gestures were Premier Khrushchev's favourable comment on one of Pope John's addresses delivered in 1961, birthday greetings to the Pope in the same year, and New Year's greetings in 1962, to which the Pontiff responded courteously.

In quick succession there followed a few important actions on the part of the Russians. First, three Roman Catholic bishops from satellite Lithuania and two observers from the Russian Orthodox Church were allowed to attend the first session of the Second Vatican Council in October, 1962. Then last December, Ukrainian Archbishop Josyf Slipyi was released from prison after eighteen years of incarceration by the Communists.

Negotiations for the release of Cardinal Mindszenty from virtual imprisonment at the American legation in Budapest, Hungary, have been going on for many months. From excellent sources (according to the *New York Herald Tribune*, May 13th, 1963), it can be stated that the United States played a leading role to improve Roman Catholic Church-Hungarian relations, to improve Vatican-Kremlin relations, and to effect Cardinal Mindszenty's freedom. In the beginning of May, the State Department quietly handed a memorandum to members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee, seeking the support of these powerful groups for restoration of complete diplomatic relations with Hungary.

On May 15th, an agreement was reached by the United States, the Hungarian Communist government, and the Vatican, permitting Josef Cardinal Mindszenty to depart from Hungary for Rome at any time.

An impetus toward better Vatican-Kremlin relations was given by Alexei Adzhubei's (Khrushchev's son-in-law) visit to the Pope last March and Premier Khrushchev's hearty approval of the awarding of the Swiss-Italian Balzan Foundation peace prize of \$51,000 to Pope John.

Immediately after his visit with the Roman Pontiff, Adzhubei was asked by a journalist, "Do you consider an understanding possible between the Holy See and an atheistic state such as the Soviet Union?" In his reply, which is quite significant, Adzhubei stated that coexistence refers to nations, not ideas: "Ideological controversies must not be solved by war. It would be a mistake to conceive the problems of relations with the Catholic Church as exclusively ideological. The Vatican is a state with its own political organisation. It has a great influence over many countries".

Remarking that the Pontiff is not only a religious leader but also a civil ruler, the editor of *Izvestia*, a Moscow daily, declared that the Pope in his capacity as head of state last fall urged the solution of international problems by peaceful means.

In this connection, Otto B. Roegele, chief editor of *Rheinischer Merkur* and chairman of the Association of German Catholic Journalists, expressed concern with regard to the Pope's "de facto recognition of the Communist coexistence theory".

In Rome, the weekly magazine *L'Espresso* indicated that the Pope was drifting "too far to the left" in granting an audience to Adzhubei. Without delay, the Vatican Radio attempted to disprove all charges directed against the papal action.

About the same time, the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) Service in Washington, DC, revealed

(Concluded on page 344)

This Believing World

A religious service was held the other day for the late Lord Nuffield but, though hymns were sung, there was no address on his career, or about the millions he gave to charity. Had he been a practising Roman Catholic, the papers would have filled columns with the story—even more so if Dr. Heenan had conducted the funeral service. Perhaps it was discovered that the late Lord had no religion, but we could find nothing definite about this. Can anyone tell us exactly what were Lord Nuffield's views on religion?

★

Those of us who have been intensely interested in the problem of the Plays of Shakespeare—even John M. Robertson wrote over a dozen learned volumes on the "canon" of Shakespeare—will be pleased to learn that it has been solved. Or, at least, "seances throw strange new light on his 'authorship'" as the headlines in *Psychic News* (October 12th) announce. Shakespeare, it appears, was actually "an advanced Elizabethan adept in white magic" and so he could enter "into nightly communion with the higher minds of the sleeping scientist-philosopher Francis Bacon and the poet Earl of Oxford". The three had the "same group soul". In fact, Shakespeare was the greatest literary medium that ever lived!

★

If it were not for the fact that even his greatest admirers cannot call Jesus exactly "literary", Shakespeare would be thus usurping the place of "our Lord" as the greatest of all mediums. However, his wonderful "mediumship" comes out in the plays, though alas he went "off his head" through it—in fact, "he nearly had a mental breakdown". He had to stop his white magic and take a holiday, and thus he got the plot of *King Lear*. Multiply this kind of revelation to fill almost three columns of *Psychic News* and you will be ready to believe anything whatever about our famous bard.

★

The Spiritualist responsible for this farrago of drivel is Miss Geraldine Cummins, who made a name with her *Scripts of Cleopas* in which Jewish rabbis living over 1900 years ago are made to speak perfect English as known to the translators of the Authorised Version of the Bible. The book is naturally for this reason a Spiritualistic "classic".

★

One thing always stands out in contrast to the Jewish and Christian "harvest festivals" in which the Lord is reverently thanked for any abundant food the autumn brings, or hopefully thanked for better harvests if they have not come up to expectations. It is that hundreds of millions of people, mostly Asiatics and Africans, are literally dying of starvation. God in his bountiful mercy seems to remember only good white Europeans, particularly believers in his Holy Word. He does nothing for the starving. He never has.

★

Both the Church of England and the Church of Rome were faced this year with a couple of problems insoluble at first, but now almost solved because they had to give in. Women have long clamoured for the right to hold services in church, and priests for the right to marry. The English Church has now given in and women can take a service; and Rome is going to allow lay preachers to marry if they choose. One day, perhaps, women may occupy the sees of Canterbury and York and even, like the (mythical?) Joan become a pope. Why not? After all in some priestly circles "Our Lady" is more revered than even "our Lord".

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Fountains of Blood

By A. O. SNOOK

BETWEEN THE YEARS 1914-18, when the world's leading Christian nations were engaged in mass murder and suicide, the present writer was a small boy who regularly attended a Nonconformist Sunday school. It was in this Sunday school that I first became aware of the Christian obsession with blood.

I recall to this day my childish horror when I first heard the words,

There is a fountain filled with Blood.

In my boyhood's adventure books I had read of "natives" drinking their defeated enemies' blood out of a thing called a calabash. But I was quite unprepared for the idea of good and kind white people plunging head first into a fountain filled with the gory liquid, a "flood" of blood, as the hymn so nicely puts it. In one of my missionary adventure books, the men of God took a pretty dim view of savages drinking blood out of a calabash, yet here was I being introduced to fountains of the stuff. Clearly, Darkest Africa had nothing on Christian England, or Europe, that "most Christian Continent", as Thomas Hardy sarcastically called it, during the war to end war.

I was further nonplussed by reason of the fact that all the blood in the fountain in which I was invited to bathe had been "drawn from Emmanuel's veins". Who was Emmanuel? And why had some person or persons unknown sucked the poor fellow dry? Thus my childish mind questioned my tutors. I was horrified, sickened and actually frightened, but fortunately had the temerity to doubt the whole thing.

As I progressed in Holy Writ and hymns, I was to be given further evidence of the Christian preoccupation with blood.

Wine His Blood; which whoso taketh
Must from carnal thoughts be free.

Perhaps I erred in taking these hymns literally. My stomach certainly revolted when I read—

For Thy Flesh is meat indeed
Draw nigh and take the Body of the Lord,
And drink the holy Blood for you out-pour'd.

Christians may be speaking symbolically, but when they pretend to "feast on heavenly Food",

Our meat the Body of the Lord,
Our drink His precious Blood,

I, for one, suggest that the fanciful imagery they employ is more akin to the Pacific Islands in the days of Captain Cook.

Dipping casually into a Christian hymn book, unbelievers cannot but be amazed at the things Christians say, or sing, to the Unknown God of the Athenians. That god must certainly smile a grim little smile when his ears are assailed by a gem like the following:

My God, I love Thee; not because
I hope for heaven thereby.

And the little smile assuredly broadens into a grin when many voices in sweet—if temporary—unison, float up to Olympus with thoughts like these:

Whatever, Lord, we lend to Thee,
Repaid a thousandfold will be;
Then gladly will we give to Thee!

PART PAYMENT

For my Pools coupons I have used numbers formed from those on the hymn board at church. I have had five minor dividends. I put part of my winnings in the collection plate.—Mrs. B. H., Manchester. (Letter to *Daily Herald*, 10/10/63.)

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Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Inquiries regarding Bequests and Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.**OUTDOOR**

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

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

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

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

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, October 29th, 7.30 p.m.: J. M. ALEXANDER, "Black Magic and Witchcraft, A Modern Revival?"

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 27th, 6.30 p.m.: F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLE-WRIGHT, MA, "Mr. Abse, the Churches and Divorce".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenter's Aims, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, October 27th, 7.30 p.m.: PROFESSOR H. LEVY, "The Role of Art in Society".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, October 27th, 11 a.m.: MAURICE CRANSTON, MA, "Public Law and Private Morals".

Notes and News

D. H. TRIBE, President of the National Secular Society, will appear on television on Sunday, October 27th, in the ITV *Sunday Break* programme. Mr. Tribe will be one of a panel of three, who will discuss the question of "Life after Death" with a group of young people. The other members of the panel will be a Roman Catholic priest and a Spiritualist. Mr. Tribe also expected to appear on the BBC Northern Ireland TV on October 15th, prior to a debate on Euthanasia at Queen's University, Belfast, but that privilege was reserved for the opposer of the motion only, Dr. Letitia Fairfield, a Roman Catholic.

★
ON SUNDAY, September 29th, under the heading "A gang leader goes to church", the *Sunday Telegraph* front page was "embellished" with a photograph of "regular church-goer" Joseph Magliocco, head of the *Cosa Nostra*, the American Mafia in New York, walking home after Mass, with his wife and daughters. On October 7th, the *Daily Express* featured an art show by double-killer Donald Hume, now imprisoned for life in Zurich. Hume, who is a Roman Catholic convert is offering a painting of the Virgin Mary to an English church in Zurich.

★
The World Council of Churches might have become a most frightful nuisance if it had become a "bossy, super-church organisation", said the Archbishop of Canterbury at a British Council meeting in Bristol (*The Guardian*, 16/10/63). That had not happened, and there was not the slightest risk of it happening, Dr. Ramsey added. But what about the Christian reunion prospect? Might it

not become a "bossy super-church organisation"? Perhaps the Archbishop regards it as too remote to worry about.

★

THE ECUMENICAL COUNCIL decided by 2,143 votes to 35 to change the name of the sacrament of extreme unction, commonly called "the last rites", to "the sacrament of the anointing of the sick" (BUP, 15/10/63). This, it was explained, was to make it clear that the sacrament is not intended merely for those who are dying, but is part of the Church's "ministry of healing", to be used "as soon and as often as a person is gravely ill". So the effect remains the same: if you receive it, you can be sure you're in a pretty bad way!

★

THE REV. Edward Ward of St. Gabriel's Church, Huyton Quarry, near Liverpool, is boycotting a talk by the Bishop of Woolwich in Liverpool Cathedral on October 31st, because Dr. Robinson's evidence in the *Lady Chatterley's Lover* case, helped prevent "this dreadful book" being banned. Mr. Ward, who was for 25 years a constable in Liverpool City Police Anti-Vice Squad, has also refused to display a poster of the lecture on his church's notice board. "In fact I burned it in disgust," he said (*Daily Telegraph*, 14/10/63). Dr. Robinson's subject will be "Christian Morals Today".

★

ON OCTOBER 23RD, the Mermaid Theatre, London, will present the British premiere of *The Possessed* (or *The Devils*), Dostoevsky's novel, adapted for the stage by Albert Camus. When the play was first presented in Paris, twelve months before Camus's death in a motor accident, Gabriel Marcel described the night as "one of the most beautiful and the most rewarding that I have spent in the theatre for a very long-time".

★

WE ARE never quite sure how seriously to take that reputed satirist Peter Simple of the *Daily Telegraph*. For the most part he strikes us as too bad to be true. On October 11th, however, he returned to the subject of Thomas Paine, quoting Dr. George Catlin's hope that the people of Thetford will have "the good sense to blow up" the statue that is to be erected next year. Mr. Simple then went on to describe Paine as "this repellent atheist". A glance at the very first page of *The Age of Reason* would (as we informed Mr. Simple by letter) suffice to show that Paine was a deist, not an atheist. "I believe in one God, and no more"; he wrote, "and I hope for happiness beyond this life". We don't doubt, though, that Peter Simple would find Thomas Paine, "the radical and traitor", "repellent"; but the feeling would probably be mutual.

★

IN HER letter on Telepathy (11/10/63), Anita Kohsen, Director of the Institute for the Study of Mental Images, asked if we could give her "a single good reason" why she should send us a review copy of Professor L. L. Vasiliev's *Experiments in Mental Suggestion*. We are pleased to say that Miss Kohsen (Mrs. C. C. L. Gregory) thinks that our printing of her letter constitutes one "good reason". The book has now been received and will be reviewed in due course.

★

THE *Daily Express* was right (1/10/63) to draw attention to the rejection of an application by the Mormons to build a church in Newton Abbot, Devon. The same thing recently happened in Watford, Herts, where the Council virtually admitted it had no valid reason for rejecting the application. We have no liking for Mormonism but we have less for religious prejudice.

The White Bones of the Dead Rat

By NAN FLANAGAN

SHE HAD JUST managed to reach the door of her home, then she had fallen down, too hurt, too tired, too spent, to continue; and there she lay a dead rat, blood bespattered, the earth around her a deep purple, a leaf pressed down under her body. She had stretched out her legs and claws to take a last grip, make a last struggle for life, for home, live just another few seconds, linger in the sunshine; but no: she was dead; the warmth had changed into a cruel force squeezing out the last drop of life.

The hawk had come down on her as quick as lightning, as swift as the wind from the blue sky. She had felt a sudden pain, then a faint unconsciousness as she was lifted up over the earth; and then she awoke. With aching muscles she heaved herself up and with a last effort dug her sharp teeth into the hawk's leg. He dropped her and she fell with a bang to the ground.

Slowly she came to life, slowly she recovered her senses and began the long journey home, leaving a trail of blood where she dragged her wounded body along. Her life had slowly ebbed away, and as the blood left the body she no longer felt pain, instead she felt sleepy as in the long hot days of summer, and she so wanted to lie down and rest. But no, she would rest when she came home, yes, when she came home she would sleep deep and heavy. And there she lay on her doorstep—dead.

I had often seen her, a busy little field rat, always about, always looking for food. As I passed her body I thought of throwing it over the wall but somehow, I always forgot, and every day I saw it fade into nothing. The ants came and smelt it and then went to get help; the next few days they worked busily round it, carrying away with them delicious bits of stinking flesh on which they grew fat. Then came the worms to finish off what was left, their slim forms getting fatter and fatter, and soon only a few bones were left to wither in the burning sun.

One evening, as I was watching the sun go down amongst heavy clouds, colouring them into fantastic riddles of mystery and beauty, my eyes fell on something glittering on the ground. Thinking it was something of value, I walked over to look. How stupid! it was only the few white bones of the field rat. As rain had fallen earlier in the day, a few drops lingered on them and made them glitter in a last glamorous splendour. Tomorrow they would be gone—I was reading the *Rabaiyat of Omar Khayyam* and came across these lines:

And if the wine you drink, the lips you press,
End in Nothing, all Things end in Yes.
Then fancy while thou art, thou art but what
Thou shalt be nothing—Thou shalt not be less.

Yes, less than Nothing the dead rat would never be, but would she come to something more? Her body was gone, her flesh eaten and rotted away, her bones would soon be crumbled and gone, leaving for you and me nothing: but millions of baccilli would be swarming over the spot humming in tones undistinguishable to our ears. The seed of a plant would be borne on unseen wings, land on the spot, get nourishment from the remains now turning into manure, grow, blossom, germinate and be gone, another to take its place; and without knowing it, the dead rat would sleep its last sleep under the shadows of a wild rose or perhaps a sparkling blue violet. Or was she going to continue in a rat heaven? Was she going to be a little rat angel, dressed in white gauze, busy flying round on silvery wings; a lost soul in a lost heaven? Or perhaps she had done a bad deed and she was now slowly roasting

in hell fire, cleansing her sinful soul on the purifying coals of a burning altar? Or was she marching round in saintly style in a virgin beauty she had never possessed? She was but a dead rat, now good strong manure. Slowly created by nature, she had faded into Something which was Nothing. She had been born out of pain, a product of two lovesick rats, joining their flesh in a rhythmic movement of sweetness and delight, of burning passion and magic power; she had been the product of the piston-like movement of their flesh, and for the first time she had opened her eyes, closed them against the strong sun, opened them again to look full of wonder at the world around her. She had experienced the pleasure and security of a mother's love, defending her, giving her good advice, which she followed without questioning, as was her nature.

She had gone through the sweet sin of her first love, her young body had swayed to and fro under that glowing act of mysterious beauty, she had felt the pain of bringing the natural conclusion of that first love into the world, she had been busy feeding and defending her young as she had been fed and defended. She had felt a pang of sorrow at the same time as a great pleasure when they were all gone from her and making their way in life. She had chatted and gossiped with nearby neighbours; she had hated one more than she loved the next. She had seen birth and death; in fact, she had gone through life much as you and I, only on a much lower—or shall we say, on a different scale. She had had no machines in whose deadly splendour she could find new power; she had had no books from whose neatly printed pages she could learn more than it was good for her to know; she had had no golden peaks calling her to their dizzy uncertainties, high up among the clouds of wealth and glory. She had had nothing of our splendid civilisation; she had had no dead rat crucified by the world's mob, whom she must worship, whose doctrines she must follow, at whose words she must tremble and whose teaching would deprive her of the short pleasure life had to offer; she had had no image to which she knelt down to pray—she was just a poor little rat with no civilisation, no mustard gas, sweet smelling, killing, torturing, no guns, no shells, to destroy a block of buildings and a block of human beings at the same time. Even after one thousand nine hundred and sixty years she had not managed to reach that peak.

But we in the shadow of Christianity and Christian Morality, we had—but then we are civilised beings and not rats.

And now those white bones lie glittering in the sunshine, saying in their own quiet way a last farewell to this world before Nature does away with them. They will be gone and still be there.

And all those birds singing their evening song, all those small insects, in fact all of you who live and are born to live, will, within a short time be gone. All! All! Millions and millions of bones will rot away; the sun will come slanting down on them, some old, some young; there are the bones of a rat, there the bones of a twentieth century human being, all crumbling and rotting together; the first had lain down to die in a natural fashion, the other with fear and horror; the one had worshipped a dead uncertainty, the other Nature, and now they both sleep their last sleep together in the soft mould of the breast of their first mother—how extraordinary if the rat was right?

The sun sank down amongst a haze of dark clouds, the last streams of light increasing, lingering, only to be gone the next minute, leaving darkness in charge. The bones glittered no more, their dead, borrowed splendour was gone, swallowed up in a night. Tomorrow, the day after, or some other day, they would be gone forever; yes the bones of a dead rat would be gone forever, the remains of the dead rat would be next to Nothing.

Papias

By C. BRADLAUGH BONNER

OCCASIONAL REFERENCES in these columns to the writings of those often called Early Fathers (a misleading title) suggests that a few notes on some of them may be of interest and I feel I cannot do better than resume articles on the patristic writings by M. Georges Ory, the erudite president of the Cercle Ernest Renan of Paris. We will begin with that on Papias which appeared in March of this year.

A careful study of these Early Fathers and comparison of their writings with the Gospels such as we have them today give no indication that the present texts were known to them. Nor can an exception be made in favour of Papias, for it is quite clear that the compositions to which he refers as by Matthew and Mark were not the Gospels we know. Nevertheless Papias is of great interest in that he was the first to mention a tradition according to which Matthew and Mark wrote works based on the life and teachings of Jesus.

Papias was Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia some time in the first half of the second century and is said to have been martyred about 164-167 AD, in the days when Marcus Aurelius was Emperor. Papias wrote an *Exposition of the Lord's Oracles*, which has been largely lost, apart from extracts quoted by Eusebius and Irenaeus. In a foreword to this Exposition he is reported by Eusebius to have written, "I took great care to find out what was said by the Elders, Andrew or Peter, or Philip, or Thomas, or James, or John, or Matthew, or any other of the Lord's disciples, and as to what was said by Aristion and the Elder John, the disciples of the Lord. For I held that what was to be found in books was of less profit to me than the living and lasting word".

Papias, then, preferred tradition to the written word; and his own book was intended to offer a collection of the sayings of Jesus commented on according to oral tradition. Eusebius remarks that in the above-quoted passage John is mentioned twice and is preceded by Aristion as a disciple of Jesus. He goes on to quote, "Now John the Elder [Presbyter] used to say that Mark was Peter's interpreter writing exactly, as best he could remember, though not in order, just what Jesus said and did; for he had never heard the Lord, not been with him; he had been only with Peter". The Gospel according to Mark should then be as Mark heard it from Peter. If so Peter was a modest man, for the references in Matthew and in Luke to Peter are largely missing from Mark.

The references to a gospel by Mark given in Eusebius suggest more the Clementine Homelies than the Evangel of Mark as we have it today. Papias, basing his statement apparently on the word of Presbyter John, refers to an unknown work as by Mark. Eusebius makes Papias also say that "Matthew gathered together the oracles in Hebrew and everyone translated them as best he could". These oracles were to all appearances the sayings of Jesus, and such a description does not fit the present gospel of Matthew, which moreover was in Greek, and not in Aramaic; and in Greek which does not bear marks of

translation. Eusebius also pretends that the gospel of Matthew had been found in India (S. Arabia?) in Hebrew. Papias, as far as we can judge, knew of no Greek translation of Matthew nor did Jerome.

Again, in a fragment of Papias's Exposition preserved by Oecumenius and Theophylactes, the death of Judas Iscariot is told in a very different way from the story in Matthew, to such a point that the reader cannot believe that he was acquainted with the text which has been handed down to us.

In short Papias is a very unsound foundation on which to base arguments concerning the present gospels.

Lastly perhaps Papias was never a bishop and was never martyred.

Points From Recent Books

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

PORTUGAL TOOK little interest in Brazil until the rumour went around that gold had been discovered. Then "the first governor-general went south like a shot and in March, 1549, sailed into a most splendid, immense bay", that of Salvador. With the military came the Jesuits to claim their share of the spoils and, in many cases, to act as agents in the slave trade. Robin Bryans, in *Fanfare for Brazil* (Faber, 30s.), says that "The Society presumably foresaw considerable losses to its own treasury should its own slaves learn the arts of freedom"; so the missions, although consenting to be "much involved in slave traffic", banned the negro from their schools.

Brazil was haunted by she-mules without heads and men with their feet turned backwards; and consequently the missionaries declared that Salvador needed three hundred churches to keep all the hob goblins at bay. At the same time the Church was not above exploiting witchcraft through the acceptance of *ex-votos* accompanied by a gift of money. The *ex-voto* took the form of a human member (an eye like a castenet, a kidney or bladder, etc.) cast in wax, and it was hung in the walls of a church. It was not a commemoration of a miraculous cure, but an attempt to transfer the illness to the waxen votive image in the true witchcraft style. It is, Mr. Bryans remarks, significant that with the decline of Catholic power in Brazil, the power of goblins seems also to have declined, and even the priests' belief in the virtue of *ex-votos* although plastic ones are still sold in some repositories.

Certainly the Brazilian peasant today has freed himself from some of the shackles. Mr. Bryans saw a farmer riding home from the Palm Sunday Service and flogging his ass with the holy palm branch. Then he saw the wreck of a lorry on which the driver had painted a motto: "Driven by Manoel and guided by God". Maybe Manoel had even patronised the garage called "The Good Jesus for spare auto parts"; but one feels he will not put so much trust in divine guidance in the future!

However, to return to yesterday: how did they live, the priests who manned the three hundred churches in Salvador? They filled their sacristies and churches with gold-embroidered vestments and bejewelled carvings which had wardrobes of dresses. When Mr. Bryans inspected the treasures of a convent, he was overwhelmed by the wardrobes for statues. He writes: "Not since the time when I worked with the Fol-de-Rols had I discovered such a collection of wigs as those for the statues". Yet a native hunchback genius, who helped to fill the churches with his art, was paid by the priests in fake gold and allowed to die in poverty.

The real gold went to line the churches, such as St. Francis's gilded cage in Salvador, while countless thou-

sands died of starvation. No doubt the priests felt that their churches were so dazzling that the poor would not reckon on the priests being subject themselves to the moral law they preached. Anyway, it seems that sometimes the priests allowed some souvenirs of their own hearty revels to creep into scenes depicted in the illustrative tiles, the *azulejos*; for there is one church in Salvador where today only male visitors are admitted to see the fun and games in the cloister pictures worked out in ceramics.

How that witty humourist and traveller, Anthony Carson, would appreciate such diversions. In his recent book, *Carson Was Here* (Methuen, 15s.), he writes: "To Mass. When had I last been to church? To the cold walls, the creaking, the sneezing, the chanting, the sacrifice wrapped in cough-mixture and moth balls, the unseen, unfelt, unheard, prophylactic rite?"

Ah well, in Brazil yesterday the devout women would throw off their clothes in church to embrace the legs of the statue of the pregnant Our Lady of Expectation. Today, at a fashionable wedding, Mr. Bryans observed the devout cooling themselves with fans decorated with amorous scenes.

VATICAN-KREMLIN RELATIONS

(Concluded from page 339)

from reliable sources that during Adzhubei's visit to the Vatican, Pope John said that he was willing to receive Soviet Premier Khrushchev if he visits Rome.

Roman Catholic authorities maintain that the Vatican never takes the first step in setting up diplomatic relations with other countries.

At the time of the first session of Vatican Council II, Msgr. Igino Cardinale, chief of protocol in the Vatican Secretariat of State, was asked during a press conference in the Vatican Press Office whether the Pope would initiate diplomatic relations with the Kremlin. He replied that although the Holy See never takes the initiative in instituting or breaking off diplomatic relations, it "is prepared to enter into diplomatic relations with any state that is ready to respect human rights and which will give reasonable freedom to exercise its apostolic ministry".

Concerning relations between Church and State, Msgr. Cardinale said that a proposal to that effect will be submitted to the Council Fathers at the second session of the Council.

[Francis J. Kieda is an ex-Roman Catholic priest on the staff of the American Protestant monthly, *Christian Heritage*, from which this article is reprinted.]

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THE THOMAS PAINE SOCIETY

Over fifty people attended the inaugural meeting of the Thomas Paine Society in Conway Hall, London, on October 6th. The meeting formally brought into being the Society electing as its Honorary President, Mr. Michael Foot, MP. Four Vice-Presidents were also elected—Bertrand Russell, OM, FRS, Herbert Cutner, G. R. Blyden (a former Mayor and town clerk of Thetford) and Joseph Lewis.

On the motion of Councillor J. G. Hoile of Lewes, the meeting adopted the following as the objectives of the Society:

To promote the recognition of Thomas Paine's contribution to the cause of freedom.

To spread a knowledge of his works and activities with a view to encouraging the growth of a similar spirit of constructive criticism in every aspect of public life.

Joseph Lewis of the American Thomas Paine Foundation, who attended the meeting, was invited to address it, and gave a short but stimulating account of the difficulties involved in getting permission to erect a statue of Paine in London. Eventually it was decided that the statue should be erected in Thetford, Paine's birthplace, and Mr. Lewis announced that it would be in front of King's House, the local government offices, and that the unveiling would take place on Sunday, June 7th, 1964.

The meeting has received good publicity in national as well as local press, and the BBC took a recording for possible use in a broadcast feature. On the Monday after the meeting Mr. A. J. Statham, a member of the Society's Council, appeared on BBC television for an interview on Paine and the Society.

R.W.M.

CORRESPONDENCE

WAT TYLER AND THE LOLLARDS

I was interested by Mr. Ridley's suggestion that the Petition made to Richard II by Wat Tyler was of Lollard origin. The seizure of Church lands came up time and again. Charles Martel did it tactfully(?) six centuries before Wat Tyler and was consigned to the infernal regions in return. Little is known of Wat Tyler, and the Lollard movement is wrapped in mystery. Wyclif gave it a University gloss, the Earl of Salisbury a noble one and Oldcastle a Parliamentary tint; yet it remained a popular movement till absorbed in the Puritan stream two centuries later.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

ALBANY TRUST

Your readers may be interested to know that the next series of Albany Trust Winter Talks will be held at the Alliance Hall, 12 Caxton Street, S.W.1, on the following dates: Tuesday, November 19th, 1963; Monday, December 9th, 1963; Thursday, January 9th, 1964; Monday, February 10th, 1964; Thursday, March 12th, 1964, and Thursday April 9th, 1964. Speakers will include Mr. Leo Abse, MP, Mr. Kingsley Martin, The Rev. J. G. Nicholls, The Rev. A. Hallidie Smith, and Mr. Colin Smart. Among the subjects covered will be "Sex and Politics"; "Legislation by Private Member's Bill"; "Twentieth Century Samaritanism" (the social helping work of the Camberwell Samaritans and similar organisations); "Prison Reform"; and "Christian Morality, Old and New".

All the talks will take place at 8 p.m., and admission will be by ticket obtainable at the door, price four shillings.

ANTONY GREY,

Secretary, Albany Trust (32 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, W.1.)

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