

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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THE GREATEST dramatic sensation of recent years has probably been Rolf Hochhuth's powerful and controversial play, *The Representative*, which was received with a storm of protest from the Catholic press, in which Cardinal Montini (now Pope Paul VI) energetically joined. Indeed, so strong was the feeling aroused by the author's portrayal of the Vatican in wartime and in particular by his stage representation of Pope Pius XII, that riots broke out in several continental countries upon the play's initial appearance, and police protection was invoked several times in order to prevent the adherents of "the Church Militant" from wrecking the performance. If Pope Pius did not, as the play categorically charges, lift his voice on behalf of the persecuted Jews doomed to a living hell approaching that of theological fiction, this obviously "Holy Father" appears to have found no lack of voice upraised on his own behalf.

### Criminal Silence

It may be fair as well as relevant to recall that the fundamental aim of this undoubtedly powerful play was not, as seems to be assumed by some critics in both Catholic and non-Catholic quarters, to condemn the Roman Catholic Church. For, though the author is apparently a Protestant, this tremendous condemnation of Pope Pius XII for his criminal (as the play unmistakably depicts it) silence before one of the most terrible crimes in recorded human annals, is dedicated to two clerical victims of the Nazi terror, both of whom died in Auschwitz; and its actual hero is a Jesuit priest who condemns the Pope, not because he is a Catholic, but because he so conspicuously fails to live up to what the Jesuit regards as the divine mission of the Church.

### Pius XII Before History

It is also fair to add that an honourable minority of practising Catholics, including some members of the Jesuit order itself, have publicly endorsed a critical view of the failure of Christ's "representative" to raise his voice in order to prevent the physical elimination of the race, creed or cult to which Christ, Peter (the "first pope") and their disciples originally belonged. Moreover, other high-ranking Catholic prelates of the period (including Pius's eventual successor) were much more active than was the Pope. But whilst *The Representative* ("vicar" would surely be a more apt translation), ought not to be construed as an indictment of the Catholic Church, it is and will long remain a tremendous indictment of the policy of Pope Pius XII and of the Vatican hierarchy of which this pope was so typical a product. It is exclusively from this limited but effective point of view that, in my opinion, the whole matter should be considered. Had, for example, John XXIII (who as a papal legate in the Balkans during the war seems to have done quite a lot for Hitler's Jewish victims in that area) been pope at the time, no doubt there might have been a different story. But then, in such a case, *The Representative* would not have been written.

However—and presumably by the grace of God who infallibly delegates his own infallibility to his representative—Eugenio Pacelli was pope during the early 1940s when the Nazi death camps were in full spate; and it is this pope's persistent silence—his criminal silence as our dramatist charges—that has to be explained. Nor have such Vatican-inspired "apologies" been lacking. This is so even in respect to the British theatres in which Hochhuth's masterpiece has or will be shown. For by an incredible exercise of medieval prerogative, and an intervention on the part of the Vatican which would certainly have provoked a riot in Victorian days, the Lord Chamberlain in his

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

## The Pope and "The Representative"

By F. A. RIDLEY

outmoded role of arbitrary censor of the British drama, has ordered every programme or any relevant document connected with the play on sale in the theatre, to contain a letter written by the present pope immediately before his election to the papacy. In this he elaborately evolves a defence of his wartime predecessor and (whilst admitting that he has not seen or apparently even read the play) yet categorically condemns it as morally malevolent and as historically inaccurate. One might have thought that such a quasi-infallible statement made by Cardinal Montini at apparently the direct request of the English Catholic paper, *The Tablet*, might have settled the matter. But apparently not. The Catholic Truth Society has now issued a special pamphlet: *The Pope, the Jews and the Nazis*, by Sir Alex Randall, CMG, written expressly in order to exculpate Pope Pius XII from the specific criticisms made in *The Representative*. Evidently Rolf Hochhuth hits hard.

### The Lesser Evil

That master of unconscious humour (traditionally the most effective kind), King George III, once commented on Bishop Watson's *Apology for the Bible* (a "reply" to Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*): "Very good dear Bishop, very good indeed; but really I had no idea that the Bible needed apologising for!" One could perhaps say much the same about his late holiness, Pius XII, for actually both the now infallible Montini and the (presumably fallible) Randall both take the same line—not actually a very convincing one. Briefly, they are both constrained to admit the facts at issue, that the Jews were being murdered in millions; everyone knew this at the time (1942-44) including obviously the Pope, who notoriously has the best espionage system in the world, and yet the Holy Father never said one word. Our apologists, including Pius's present successor, have to admit this, for the word was never spoken. All that they can say in mitigation is that the Pope's silence represented "the lesser evil" since, had the Pope spoken out and condemned Hitler, he would have done no good to the persecuted Jews and would merely have brought down the wrath, and probably the active intervention of the Gestapo upon the Vatican itself.

This is the substance of all the "apologies", including

Montini's. But with all due respect, it doesn't seem to amount to much. For in the first place, how do they know that papal intervention would have been entirely useless, when it was never even attempted? Actually, Hitler only started to kill off the Jews *en masse* when the war was beginning to go badly after Stalingrad (at the end of 1942 when *The Representative* begins). At such a critical juncture in his fortunes, the Fuhrer had every reason to avoid a head-on clash with the Vatican. An open papal intervention on behalf of the Jews at that precise moment might have done a great deal to stop the appalling massacres then just getting under way. It might even have stopped them altogether. And even if the Pope's worst fears of an extension of the persecution from Jews to the Vatican itself had been realised, what has happened in this 20th century to the traditional glories of martyrdom? Was Pius not prepared to suffer for his beliefs under the modern "pagan", Hitler, as the founder of the papacy itself, St. Peter, had traditionally done under the ancient pagan persecutor, Nero? Evidently times have changed, and martyrdom is no longer fashionable at Rome!

## Religion in Germany

THE QUESTIONNAIRE of the German census of 1961 included a question on membership of religious bodies. Such a question is not surprising, as all Germans have to pay taxes to their selected religious communities as long as they have not opted out. The result of this inquiry shows the following results.

Of the 54 million inhabitants of Western Germany, excluding Berlin, there are 96.8% believers, of which 96.6% belong to Christian denominations and only 0.2% to other recognised World religions.

The 96.8% are made up of about 47% men and 53% women. The 96.6% are composed of:

- 49.6% Protestants
- 0.6% So-called free Protestants such as Methodists, Salvation Army, etc.
- 45.5% Roman Catholics
- 0.9% Other Christians, e.g. Jehovah's Witnesses and Eastern Churches.

The remaining 3.2% are split into 3 groups:

- 0.2% Freethinkers of various organisations
- 2.4% Non-committed
- 0.6% Persons of unknown attachments.

In these groups there are on average 59% men and 41% women.

Since the census in 1871 the percentages of Protestants and Roman Catholics have continuously decreased—the latter to a greater extent than the former—as a whole by 3%.

It is interesting to note that the others, i.e. non-Protestants and non-Catholics, form a high proportion of the population, in Hamburg 15.1%, in Berlin (West) 14.4%, in Sleswig-Holstein 5.6%, Bremen 5.1%, Lower Silesia 3.6%, North Rhine-Westphalia 3.5%, in Baden-Württemberg 2.7%, in Bavaria 1.8% and in the Rhenish Palatinate 1.4% and in the Saar District 1.1%. But in Hamburg and Berlin (West) the number of unattached is 12.4% and 12.5% respectively.

These statistics unfortunately show that even in the country of Goethe, Humboldt, Haeckel and Ostwald free thought never plays any very important part. Actually the number of godless appeared to be highest during the census of 1939.

[Extracted by L. J. Fischer from the *Bulletin of the German Federal Government*, No. 6, 1964.]

Actually there is no real difficulty in explaining the papal reasons for remaining silent during the most terrible era in modern history since the Vatican itself launched the Thirty Years War. Only first one must abandon fictitious premises and try to study the facts as they really were. To do so we must shed definitively the basic premise of the Catholic apologists themselves, that the Church of Rome and the papacy are primarily *religious and ethical* institutions concerned with human betterment. What we have to realise is that the Vatican is primarily a political or, more accurately, a *totalitarian* institution, concerned primarily with its own preservation and its own power. When viewed from this correct angle, Pope Pius could and no doubt subjectively did adopt the politically plausible plea that the lesser evil was to throw the Jews into the gas chambers rather than to allow his own Church to perish, either at the hands of Hitler or of his Bolshevik conquerors. In so acting he demonstrated that papal statecraft, which in the days of the Borgias elicited the special praise of Machiavelli. But also in so doing, from any moral point of view, he branded himself as a criminal before the impartial bar of history.

## Catholic Archbishops on South Africa

THE MOST REV. William Whelan, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Bloemfontein, issued a statement on February 18th (reported by Reuter) which defined what he said was the Catholic Church's attitude on South Africa's racial policy.

There was, he said, no teaching of the Church "in opposition to the idea of a State composed of a number of national or racial groups, maintained in their separate and distinct identity by the State, of which they form a part".

The Church had often declared that "public authorities have an obligation to assist the cultural and racial groups in a pluralistic State in their distinctive development". The Archbishop added that "the Church regards as immoral any policy aimed at levelling such ethnic groups into an amorphous cosmopolitan mass".

In reply to a question as to whether aspects of the present Government's policy could be considered immoral, Archbishop Whelan said it was common knowledge that several provisions of the racial legislation, including residential and employment restrictions on Bantus (Africans), "involve hardship and injustice".

Another question was: "Surely apartheid, which denies the democratic principle of 'one man, one vote', by excluding 80 per cent of the population from the electorate, cannot be reconciled with Christianity?" The reply was:

The Church has never considered democracy to be the only form of government compatible with Christianity. Even in a State which is democratic in structure, the "one man, one vote" principle is not always desirable . . .

Archbishop Whelan said he was not disturbed by the present situation in South Africa because it was clear that the situation, "in spite of its defects, is stable, secure, and full of prospects for future development".

He was disturbed "in so far as South Africa has been made the object of criticism that is largely prejudiced or to say the least uninformed . . ."

The following day, Archbishop Dennis Hurley of Durban and Archbishop Owen McCann of Cape Town contested Archbishop Whelan's views, and denied that they represented the "official" view of the Church. He was, they said, speaking in a purely personal capacity.

Archbishop Hurley said: "Any reports that this is the official attitude of the Roman Catholic Church are com-

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# Religion versus Secularism

By G. L. SIMONS

RELIGION, AS EVERYONE KNOWS, has been with man since the earliest times. It was born in the fuddled mind of the early savage. Conceived by fear and sired by ignorance, religion was and is the largest systematised superstition. It is opposed to change since knowledge is hostile to it; it is opposed to thought since only blind acceptance can perpetuate it. Religion is most at home in the ignorant, primitive community; rite and ceremony can be performed with unquestioning orthodoxy, and taboo and superstitious dread reign supreme. In the Middle Ages also, religion had a happy time; then (as later where possible) religious fervour was accompanied by grand use of rack and pillory, faggot and dungeon. Heretics were imprisoned, mutilated, burned; the pious in their righteousness prayed that the wrath of God would visit the unbeliever, and, as if doubting his ability, assisted him with pogrom and persecution.

While a few noble men tried to understand disease and illness, the Church ranted about sin and "possession by devils". While a few reformers tried to put bread in the mouths of the hungry, the Church wondered whether the Holy Communion bread was digested in the usual way. While a few practical men tried to improve sanitation, the Church debated about the number of angels that could dance on the head of a pin. Until recent times, the Church has been self-satisfied in its security, complacent in its pomp, happy in its power. Ruling the lives of men with scant humanity, concerned only with the unthinking orthodoxy that consolidated its position, the Church has imposed a moral and intellectual tyranny which has few parallels in history.

But today its position is changing. No longer can it bask in bigotry and ignorance. No longer can it rely on apathy and blind obedience. No longer can it assume that people will acknowledge its self-styled sanctity. Knowledge and religion are incompatible if men are honest. Religion is degenerate, riddled with nonsense and pagan left-overs, imbued with outmoded dogma and cruel prohibitions. Were it not for science and the courage of a few isolated freethinkers religion would today be as despicable and perverse as it was in Protestant Germany and Catholic Spain. It was not the cruel priests who thought it wrong to sacrifice children to Moloch or Baal, but their opponents from within their own society or from without. Religion and cruelty have almost always gone hand in hand.

Of course religion has changed—it has been forced to by heretics and freethinkers. Had it not changed it would have become extinct, and it would prefer to exist in an effete and decaying form rather than not to exist at all. Religion has changed, and is changing still, as it has to in competition with the superior philosophy of Humanism and Secularism. Indeed religion has changed, but it has been changed by atheists and rebels, not by theologians and conformists. And freethinkers will not be satisfied until religion is changed so much that it is no longer ecclesiastical authority—persecution, suppression, censorship—until the Church's social and moral influence is crippled, not by the techniques so often employed by the Church but by open and fair ideological competition. The Church may well tremble; its days are numbered. How can medieval mystery-mongering compete with modern science? Who really believes that faith is more likely than an atom-bomb to move a mountain?

A few sad thinkers try to prop up the Church's decaying authority by devising fallacious arguments to mislead the masses. Always claiming to be intellectually respectable, the Church with a sophisticated technique perfected over the centuries, teaches that belief in God is reasonable, and quite compatible with the findings of modern science. The emphasis has changed; no longer are scientists said to be wicked (as they were so-called when lightning-conductors, steam-engines, anaesthetics, etc., were invented); no longer are scientists dismissed as wayward children, lost and confused; no longer can the Church sneer at evolution, psycho-analysis and hypnosis; no longer can priests assume that confident air of patronising superiority which characterises them in what they consider to be their secure moments. Science is progressing, ever achieving new victories over taboo and superstition. The Church can no longer argue that religion and science are incompatible—if it did, too many people would choose science. Instead a different tack is adopted.

Theologians can no longer deny science but welcome it, suggesting that a grand scientific/religious synthesis is not merely possible but necessary in the modern world. But now that even the Church admits the respectability of science, the superfluous nature of religion is clearly revealed for the first time to the broad mass of educated mankind, including religious believers. Religion occurred because man was not the master of his destiny, his environment being too capricious. But science gives man the power he formerly lacked, and his environment can be controlled more and more. At a time when astronomers and biologists give no support to the creation story, when psychologists give no support to the soul theory, when independent historians give no support to the idea of Christ's divinity, when philosophers are hostile to metaphysics, religion is seen to be an anachronistic concept totally unsuited to life in the modern world.

By contrast the rationalist offers Secularism as a modern philosophy suited to the needs of man in a scientific age. With Bertrand Russell, the rationalist affirms that the good life is based on love and knowledge. The Secularist believes that no knowledge is absolutely certain, but that science is the best way known to man of approaching the truth. Morality he regards as a relative thing, varying (quite rightly) from society to society, and being changed when social circumstances change or when science makes new advances. The Secularist affirms that human intelligence should be devoted to enriching human life, making it fuller, more enjoyable and more complete; ancient taboo should not impede this approach, nor should the ramblings of ill-read priests who seek to carry man back to the Dark Ages. The Secularist looks to the humane psychologist and biologist for his ethical theory, to the scientist and empirical philosopher for his theory of knowledge.

For the Secularist, man is important above all else, and human happiness should never be restricted by ancient texts written by ignorant men. Today we know more about man, his body and his mind. We realise that life can be approached rationally and with courage; no longer do we need supernatural props, designed to keep us as children, afraid of dark places and independent thought.

People should sweep away the trivial religious epithets that take the place of wisdom, and organise their lives  
(Concluded on page 68)

## This Believing World

We seem to be a most desirable target to be saved, for we continue to get all sorts and conditions of evangelic tracts. Now before us, emanating from Canada, is *An Answer to Atheism*, a reprint of one by the notorious D. L. Moody who is designated "a Champion Soul Winner". It deals with a meeting that the saintly winner of souls had in London in 1883 in which Bradlaugh gathered 5,000 of his supporters to crush the great Moody. But so telling was Moody's oration, so packed with God's answers to the blatant infidels there, that "reluctant tears were wrung from many an eye", and this was capped by all the 5,000 joining the believers in singing the conquering hymn, *Only Trust Him*.

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After such a triumphant victory, it was easy all the way. "The Holy Spirit" burst among these one time enemies of Jesus, and "the battle was won". Bradlaugh's followers switched right over to God — "they heard his voice and they followed Him". Moody and God between them converted 5,000 infidels! We hope that our readers are now suitably impressed with the divine resurrection of this sheer twaddle 80 years after it took place in the vivid Christian imagination of a great Christian "soul winner".

★

In Canterbury, the city of so much genuine Christianity, where, indeed, there ought never to be a soul to save, some of the choirboys who help in the business now prefer to take Sunday newspapers around rather than sing in the choir. The Rev. D. I. Hill, vicar of St. Gregory's sadly admits that "once they drop out of the habit of coming to church at such an age, they seldom return", a calamity enough to make an angel weep. But it does show how illusory is the divine impact of "our Lord" on Christian boys. Perhaps it soon will have to be choirgirls only.

★

Boxers are often called "punch drunk" after having taken severe punishment in the ring for a number of years, but it was in the *Daily Mail* that we came across the caption "Punch drunk with TV Religion". How true! It appears that all denominations are catered for on TV, but the Methodist director, the Rev. C. Thomas, had to stop eleven Presbyterians who were taking turns "on closed circuit", from "waffling on about redemption and salvation".

★

But for heaven's sake, what else can Presbyterians talk about? The two Johns, Calvin and Knox, perpetually talked about salvation, which only a very few Christians would ever attain, and redemption which neither ever succeeded in expounding intelligibly. Poor Mr. Thomas complained that he was getting "punch drunk with religion" at the Churches Television Training Centre. But one can get punch drunk with religion without going to a training centre. Just listen to the radio and TV every day.

★

It is interesting as Henry Fielding of the "Daily Herald" noted (February 17th), that emerging African states may reject Western ideology but find it less easy to throw off the influence of Christianity. "God and the devil are intimates of the Africans' political philosophy", said Mr. Fielding. "Their language is marked with Old Testament rhetoric and Prayerbook responses". When John Okello addressed a mass parade to celebrate Zanzibar's revolution, he called the Sultan "a devil of the imperialists" and asked: "Do you reject these devils?" Back came the response: "We reject them, amen". Just like a revivalist meeting.

## American Religion

ACCORDING to the National Council of Churches' annual survey, 63.4 per cent of Americans are members of churches, synagogues and other places of worship. This is slightly less than the record 63.6 per cent in 1960 but is as *The Guardian* remarked (17/2/64), still a formidable total of 117,946,002. Out of 252 bodies who sent in returns, 222 were Protestant, with more than 64 million adherents, but they are being overtaken by the Roman Catholics, whose total was given as 43 million. The Jewish community was numbered at 5,509,000, the Eastern Orthodox Church at over three million, and the Methodists over ten million. But the fastest growing Church was the Southern Baptists with a membership of 11 million. There were, incidentally, 60,000 Buddhists, and President Johnson's Church, the Disciples of Christ numbered 1,779,046.

### CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOPS ON SOUTH AFRICA

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pletely erroneous". And Archbishop McCann, chairman of the South African (Roman Catholic) Bishops' conference said that Archbishop Whelan's statement had not been issued by the conference.

Reuter was unable to obtain a comment from the Apostolic Delegate in South Africa, Archbishop Joseph McGeough, but it was stated that he was conferring with Archbishop McCann in Cape Town.

Whatever "official" or unofficial statements may be issued, however, one at least of Archbishop Whelan's remarks deserves emphasising, that the Roman Catholic Church has never considered democracy to be the only form of government compatible with Christianity.

### RELIGION VERSUS SECULARISM

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according to humanity and science; we need no other criteria for our philosophy. If we are concerned with reducing cruelty and suffering, and we are prepared to accept science with its logical implications then we are Secularists, and should rightly be interested in spreading a rational view of things. There are many trained tricksters and charlatans in the way, and many other people who unconsciously support a conservative indifference to stupidity, injustice and unhappiness. All these people must be opposed, stirred out of their apathetic indolence, attacked for their complacency and insensitivity, and made to realise that self-satisfaction merely indicates irre-

possibility. Life on earth is the only life we know. It can be tedious, cluttered with sanctimonious claptrap, and inhibited by archaic moral imperatives, or it can be exciting and virile, liberating men from a bestial origin, awakening them to beauty, truth and love. Life can restrict man and cripple his imagination, or it can stimulate him and help him to be more fully human. Which it does depends in large part upon the philosophy he adopts. He can choose a hackneyed, old-fashioned creed, supported by the weak-minded, the celibate and the unimaginative or a modern progressive rationalism, based on science and humanity, and supported by the greatest intellects in the world. For the healthy, uninhibited mind this should be a very easy choice.

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.  
London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. A. MILLAR.  
(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: MESSRS. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.  
Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street,) Sunday Evenings  
Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.  
North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.  
Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Arnold House Hotel, Montpelier Terrace), Sunday, March 1st, 5.30 p.m.: MARTIN ENNALS, "Civil Liberty".  
Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, March 3rd, 7.30 p.m.: CHARLES MARSHALL, "Do We Need an International University?"  
Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, March 1st, 6.30 p.m.: 83rd Anniversary Meeting. Guest Speaker: RICHARD CLEMENTS, OBE, JP.  
Marble Arch Branch NSS (The Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, March 1st, 7.30 p.m.: HECTOR HAWTON, Editor, *The Humanist*, "The Humanist Revolution".  
North Staffordshire Humanist Group (Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, February 28th, 7.15 p.m.: A MEETING.  
Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group (Community Centre, The Quadrant), Friday, February 28th, 8 p.m.: Debate "Modern Society Has No Need of Religion".  
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, March 1st, 11 a.m.: Professor T. H. PEAR, "Qualities Desirable in a Social Psychologist".

## Notes and News

THE Guest of Honour at the 58th Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society will be F. A. Ridley, a former President of the Society, who needs no introduction to FREETHINKER readers. The Dinner will take place at the Pavilions Arms, Page Street, London, S.W.1, on Saturday, March 14th. Tickets are available (21s. each) from the Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

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TURNING AGAIN this week to Rolf Hochhuth's *The Representative*, which he aptly calls the "greatest dramatic sensation of recent years". Mr. Ridley refers to Pope Paul VI's attack on a play he hadn't seen. It was, Pope Paul said, "a wildly imaginative reconstruction of history", and: "It would be as well if the creative imagination of playwrights, insufficiently endowed with historical discernment (and possibly, though please God it is not so, with ordinary human integrity), would forbear from trifling with subjects of this kind . . ." It is worth recalling

Tony Geraghty's comment on the above in a *Guardian* (7/2/64) review of the biography of Pope Paul, *Apostle for Our Time* by John G. Clancy. The Pope's rejection of the play's historical accuracy, Mr. Geraghty said, "is unlikely to be shared by at least one historian who has seen and reported upon the play—Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper . . .". Mr. Geraghty even doubted if the Jesuit Father Corbishley (who had publicly discussed the play with Professor Trevor-Roper) supported Pope Paul in his attack on *The Representative*.

★

RONALD FLETCHER'S "A Humanist's Decalogue", which first appeared in *New Society* and then (slightly lengthened) in THE FREETHINKER last year, has now been published in expanded and attractive pamphlet form by the Pioneer Press under the title, *Ten Non-Commandments*. "In the era of the Beatles and when all the press exploits teenagers and their doings with big headlines, it is refreshing to read sense on the subject", said *Tribune* (14/2/64). And, it added, Dr. Fletcher's Humanist approach to problems of morality "deserves great praise". Margaret McLroy reviews the pamphlet on page 71. And we know that readers will join us in offering our congratulations to Dr. Fletcher on his recent appointment as Professor of Sociology in the University of York.

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ARCHBISHOP Michael Gonzi is gathering his forces to resist any attempt in the new Maltese independence constitution to curb the powers of the Roman Catholic Church. Thousands gathered outside Valletta on February 16th in response to an appeal by the island's fifty priests and Catholic lay organisations, and passed a resolution "solemnly" refusing to accept any clause which would "reduce the rights and liberty of the Church" (*Daily Telegraph*, 17/2/64). Then they sang the Creed.

★

IT WAS "a season of unheard-of mortification" for the Rev. Francesco Angelicchio and other members of the Catholic Film Centre, who for reasons of their office had to view over five hundred films shown in Italy last year. Writing in the Vatican newspaper *Osservatore Romano* (18/2/64), Father Angelicchio referred to "a vast collection of shame and wickedness such as had never been seen in the history of the cinema". The percentage of "positive" films in the Catholic Film Centre's classification dropped from 67.81 in 1962 to 65.94 in 1963 and, among the "negative" films, those classified as "excluded" for Catholics rose from 17.91 to 19.92 per cent.

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SO MRS. LEE RADZIWILL, sister of Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy, is now free to marry her husband, Prince Stanislaus Radziwill, Polish nobleman and London businessman. They have, of course, been legally married since March 1959, and they have two children, but the Vatican Tribunal has only just confirmed the annulment of Mrs. Radziwill's previous (Roman Catholic) marriage to American publisher Mr. Michael Canfield, which took place in Washington in 1953, a marriage that (legally) ended in divorce. The Vatican annulment was granted on the grounds that Mr. Canfield, who is not a Roman Catholic, "had no intention of having children when he married" (*Daily Telegraph*, 17/2/64).

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ON MARCH 1ST, Leicester Secular Society will celebrate its 83rd Anniversary with a lecture by Mr. Richard Clements of South Place Ethical Society. This will be preceded by the half-yearly general meeting, at 3 p.m., and tea at 5 p.m.

# M R A

By DENIS COBELL

THE ORGANISATION now known as Moral Re-Armament, was founded by the late Dr. Frank Buchman. In the 1920s it was known as the Oxford Group Movement (not to be confused with the Oxford Movement of 1833 which sought to protect the Church of England from disestablishment and "liberalism") and only changed to its present name just before the outbreak of World War II, in an attempt to attract a larger section of the Christian congregation, notably the Roman Catholic. Ideologically it has three fundamental principles, God-guidance, moral absolutes and "life changing" of individuals through personal work. Many churchmen have criticised its theology, particularly its lack of a Christological basis.

During the '20s and '30s MRA received wide publicity and much popular support; it held large rallies in the Albert Hall and similar buildings throughout Europe, America and South Africa. After the war its international headquarters were set up in luxurious surroundings at Caux-sur-Montreux, Switzerland, but its influence has lessened. Nevertheless, the Swiss Government's recent order to the movement to reveal its sources of income for tax purposes has not met with enthusiasm!

MRA has frequently employed the media of film and stage to propagate its ideas, and Peter Howard, at present its most prominent exponent in Britain, has written several plays to explain its mission. In pursuit of its aim to "clean up" the theatre, MRA erupted once again into the newspapers last year, and provided the initiative for my protest. A nude—a moving one—would, of course, create some sort of a stir in the minds of a British nation attuned to acceptance of hypocrisy, but it is a little astonishing that such a small movement as MRA should cause such a furore and reaction to the "happening" in the McEwan Hall on the final day of the Edinburgh Festival Drama Conference. Although the prosecution was unsuccessful, there can be little doubt that this misguided organisation has played a part in the cancellation of the proposed 1964 Poetry Conference.

To find out what makes MRA "tick", it is necessary to unravel a little of the past life of its originator, Frank N. D. Buchman. He was born of pietistic Pennsylvania-German parents in 1878. He lectured as a Lutheran in Personal Evangelism at Hartford Seminary until he resigned in 1922 and decided to "live by faith". This faith which he acquired from listening to a sermon at Keswick, obviously paid him well, for he never received a salary for the last forty years of his life, yet always managed to live in a grand style.

Buchman thought in a grand manner as well. MRA's protest at Edinburgh followed naturally the cliché-ridden declaration he made in 1934: "The Oxford group's aim is a new social order under the dictatorship of the Spirit of God, making for better human relationships, for unselfish co-operation, for cleaner business and cleaner politics." It is from this sort of statement that his movement also gained a reputation for alleged Nazi sympathies. Just before his death in 1961 he declared, "I want to see the world governed by men of God. Why not let God run the whole world?" Buchman was the victim of much hero worship; in Madras a man who had not seen him for twenty years embraced the feet of one of his friends and inquired, "Where is the master?" His vision was often false. One official remarked, "Dr. Buchman's visit to South Africa in 1929 was of national significance. It started a major and continuing influence for racial reconciliation

throughout the whole country."! His humility can best be summed up in his own phrase, "I have been wonderfully led".

Frank Buchman's activities have been a veiled support for capitalists over the years. He maintained close friendships with Ford, Firestone and Edison. Although he has encouraged the manipulation of populaces by governments, the bulk of his invective during the last years of his life is most directed against Communism — the organisation that is most successful in using his methods. His bitter disagreement with Communism stems from Lenin's statement concerning its future: "It can never succeed until the myth of God is removed the mind of man." In its heyday, the Oxford Group attracted much support from the upper middle-classes and often featured in the settlement of industrial disputes to the advantage of the working-classes and, therefore, somewhat justified the comments of Marx and Lenin on God.

Buchman failed to see that the evil in Communism emanated from a similar source as the evil in his own ideology. He did not recognise that this was because they both wished to close man's mind — the one under the dictatorship of God and the other under a dictatorship of the proletariat. He claimed to have thwarted the Communist movement in Japan and, in Brazil, muted a pro-Castro demonstration on Cuba's National Day by holding his own meeting in a nearby arena. MRA issued a pamphlet five years ago, *Ideology and Coexistence*, to combat the rising tide of Communism. However the emphasis was placed upon the superior ideology possessed by MRA as opposed to a dispassionate consideration of co-existence, the most important factor if mankind is to be preserved.

The "absolute standards" adopted by MRA, apart from philosophical invalidity, render it hopeless as "an indispensable foundation for the reconstruction and peace of Europe and the world" that Buchman suggested in 1948. The alarming proposal of "God-control" leads far from the responsible society of Humanism. I am not a foolish agnostic who believes in the progressive goodness of man as a perfectible ideal; such a dénouement is unattainable. Man has reached his exalted place in the animal kingdom by measures of extreme brutality and coercion in his dealings with members of his own and other species, and the hope of "changing" the innate nature of man by any method, let alone the appeal to a mythical God, is beyond our wildest dreams. The very existence of MRA is a prime example of man's urge to dominate. Meagre hopes that the most optimistic can entertain for survival and happiness depend, not on God-guidance and ignorance, but rather, on an unbiased, thoughtful and educated outlook, built upon a knowledge of man's origin and history.

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# A Guide for Living

By MARGARET McILROY

*Ten Non-Commandments—A Humanist's Decalogue*, by Ronald Fletcher (Pioneer Press, 2s. 6d.) is an enlarged version of an essay that has already been published in *New Society* and *THE FREETHINKER*. It deserves the warmest of welcomes in its present form, for it is the perfect answer to those apologists who insist that their religion is the only basis for morality, and that without God, there would be no way of understanding what it is right to do, and no motive for doing it.

The decalogue is of the widest interest, although Dr. Fletcher addresses himself primarily to young people, to whom he dedicates the booklet "warmly and with confidence". He writes scathingly of those who condemn modern youth, and he insists that "young people of today are no worse in character than people of earlier times". His decalogue consists of ten items of advice to guide young people in the modern world. His first principle is "Never accept authority . . . unless in your own seriously considered view, there are good grounds for it".

Religion he deals with summarily: "You are right to reject orthodox religions; at present (as our clergymen insist) orthodox religions are a shambles". Conduct should be based on "simple human principles". There are, Dr. Fletcher says, "three possibilities about God. Either (1) He does not exist, in which case nothing is altered . . . Or (2) He does exist, and the moral rules he lays down are in accordance with those we find good in our human experience . . . Or (3) He does exist, and his moral rules and exhortations are not those we find good in our human experience, . . . and in this case we should have no option but to disagree with him . . . In all cases then, God is superfluous for human morality".

Naturally a large section of *Ten Non-Commandments* deals with sex. "In sexual behaviour—use your brains as well as your genitals, and always in that order. But remember too that love involves more than both". Dr. Fletcher points out that, though there is nothing wrong about sex, young people ought to exercise self-control over their sexual conduct. "It is very doubtful whether many adolescents can enter easily into casual sexual adventures". A sexual relationship "needs the exercise of much forethought, lest something that begins lightly should end in suffering". I would only question whether Dr. Fletcher deals seriously enough with the risk of pregnancy from casual relationships. He says that young people "should be given a thorough knowledge of contraceptive techniques", but until the reliability of contraception is improved, the danger is not negligible.

"Do not be a snob" is a particularly timely "commandment". "Treat people as human beings and not as competitors. Use material possessions for enjoyment and for enriching you own experience; not as an insignia of status for competitive snobbery". Perhaps status-seeking is one of the nastiest of modern vices, and it is good to see it exposed in all its shabbiness.

Many of Dr. Fletcher's "commandments" urge young people to an active concern with social issues. They are advised to "strive to eliminate war", to "seek to preserve certain fundamental human rights", to "strive to eliminate poverty, and work for greater material prosperity for all" and to commit themselves to active citizenship. His final dictum is, "Have confidence in the modern world and in your powers to improve it", and he insists that "the present age is . . . full of the promise of great achieve-

ments in which each person can play a significant and important part".

The study of Dr. Fletcher's pamphlet will certainly assist young people to look confidently and intelligently at the world they are growing up into, and will guide them to distinguish true values from the false or trivial ones they are so often offered. This booklet may become a real formative influence in the lives of many of its younger readers. In writing it Dr. Fletcher has done a great service to freethought, and it is to be hoped that freethinkers will ensure it a wide circulation.

## Portugal

By DAVE SHIPPER

THE PAMPHLET, *Portugal: The Price of Opposition*, by Mrs. Helen Ward (British Committee for Portuguese Amnesty, 30 Benson Road, London, S.E.23, 1s., plus postage), contains a mass of information in compact form. Among interesting statistics given are the facts that the average weekly wage in Portugal in 1962 was £2 12s. 6d. (*Diario de Lisboa*, 17/5/63), that more than 40% of the population is illiterate (*World Illiteracy, Mid-Century*—a UNESCO publication), that Portugal has Europe's highest rate of tuberculosis (WHO *Vital Statistics*, Vol. 13) and the second highest rate of infantile mortality (WHO *Vital Statistics*, Vol. 15).

"I do not believe in universal suffrage . . . I do not believe in equality. I believe in hierarchy", said Dr. Salazar, and Mrs. Ward shows what a sorry mess Portugal is in after 37 years of Salazar. The Portuguese Constitution is itself not responsible for the denial of democratic rights and is frequently shown to critics of the regime who question the denial of elementary human rights. These rights are however actually destroyed by special laws and police practices which make the promises of the Constitution a shallow mockery.

Mrs. Ward explains the differences between the various brands of police and how political repression has been legalised. She shows how the application of "Security Measures" may lead to indefinite imprisonment for opponents of the regime. Examples given are Manuel Guedes, arrested on May 17th, 1952 and sentenced to four years plus Security Measures, and Manuel Rodrigues Da Silva, sentenced to eight years plus Security Measures in 1950. Both these prisoners are still in gaol. (Da Silva had earlier spent ten years in the notorious Tarrafal concentration camp, having been sent there without trial.)

Torture, horrific prison conditions, the intimidation of defence lawyers, the denial of adequate medical treatment, are all dealt with in turn, and an appendix deals with Lord Russell of Liverpool's *An Independent Investigation on Prisons and Prisoners in Portugal*.

Lord Russell's visit was at the invitation of the Portuguese government and he endeavoured to show that reports of torture and ill-treatment were unfounded. Although he made criticisms of certain cell facilities he did not apparently question why the prisoners should be detained. Perhaps Lord Russell—who does not speak Portuguese—leaned too heavily on the services of a government interpreter?

The best answer, from ex-prisoner Dr. Maria Luisa

Dias Soares, was written to Lord Russell and is given at the end:—

There are no words to express the pain and indignant surprise these people [families and prisoners] expressed when they spoke of the inaccuracy of the picture of the general conditions in which Portuguese political prisoners live. I am well acquainted with the PIDE's private prisons in Oporto, the Forte De Caxias where I spent four-and-a-half years, and with Aljube and Peniche where some very close relatives were imprisoned for many years. It is impossible for us, and for thousands of Portuguese from every social strata who have passed through the PIDE prisons, to identify your report with the painful reality we know so well.

This detailed analysis is a "must" for students of the Portuguese scene.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### THE HUMANIST REVOLUTION

Having just completed a slow, careful, but very contented reading of *The Humanist Revolution* by Hector Hawton, my desire to see final achievement of this revolution has been greatly intensified. Yet here in England it seems scarcely to have begun. Certainly a few Humanist books and periodicals are regularly published, a few Humanist lectures are delivered, but we see no sign or indication that national policy in any direction has begun to be dictated by the kind of thinking which makes a Humanist. Many professed Christians desire that England should continue to be governed as though it were a Christian country, although they must know that all the observable and verifiable facts are dead against them.

I imagine and suspect that the Humanist revolution is more advanced in China and far more advanced in Russia than it is, here in England. I suspect that the present differences between China and Russia are due to the fact that China has not yet been able to catch up with Russia in the Humanist direction. Yet there is probably more unity of thought and feeling between Russia and China than there is between all the rivals of the Free World. I should imagine that there is general agreement between leaders of thought in Russia and China that the whole human world must eventually yield to the logical force and power of some form of authoritarian communism.

The main obstacle to the Humanist revolution is human nature itself. All the religions of mankind have tried in vain to produce the perfect type of *Homo sapiens*. Science has already in a very short space of time revolutionised the actual physical conditions of human existence, but has not up to the present, produced any vast corresponding ethical change in human nature. Christianity was certainly intended to be a revolutionary change in human nature to be achieved with the aid of divine supernatural grace.

Since in actual fact there is no such thing as divine supernatural grace, Christianity was bound to fail, and is bound to fail more and more completely as time goes on.

The modern secular scientific Humanist revolution aims at repairing the damage done by the downfall of the gods, and our hopes of ultimate success are not nullified at source by a contradictory belief in original sin or the ineradicable wickedness of human nature. The animal part of human nature may continue to obstruct the course of the Humanist revolution, but everything points to the conclusion that man can and eventually will become a rational animal.

PETER P. CROMMELIN.

### SPIRIT

If it is the function or object of psychical research to establish the factual existence of spirit, will Mr. G. L. Simons kindly suggest what method should be adopted for doing so? Can he suggest any scientific test which could be adopted to achieve this end? Can he define "spirit" or state what exactly is the difference between spiritual and material? In other words even if spirit existed, how would it be possible for anyone ever to know anything about it?

J. R. DUNCANSON.

### VIOLENT INDIGNATION

Indignation is an emotion, generally a very violent one, and though emotion may be good for poetry writing, it tends to blind one's reasoning powers when one enters the field of controversy. This emotional state seems to have so far blinded your "Indignant Catholic" correspondent as to make him (or her) forget his (or her) name. I feel like a person challenged to a duel and then shot at from behind a bush. This emotional blindness seems to be the cause, too, of the first shot going widely beside the mark. I did not speak of mixed marriages being invalid for Roman Catholics, but said those between non-Catholics are certainly considered invalid by the Roman Catholic Church. The second answer suffers too from emotional blindness as it merely confirms what I had written instead of confuting it, as an "enemy" should surely try to do. As to the third, I am sure that many good people will gratefully receive the indignant information supplied, unless of course, being Roman Catholics, they bring the matter before their confessors.

I should, however, like to reply to a logical conclusion drawn by another reader, that the use of so-called "safe period" is hypocrisy on the part of Roman Catholics. I think the answer is that this use is allowed by the Catholic Church because it is always possible to have children, although using such periods is this objectively. Subjectively, it is difficult to reconcile a sincere intention of having children with the deliberate use of a safe period not to have them.

Isn't the term "enemy's camp" rather inconsistent with the separated brethren movement? According to Rome even you and I are children of God.

MARY C. BLAKISTON (Padua).

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