

The Freethinker

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Nehru: An Assessment

By GOVIND N. DEODHEKAR

WHAT does it feel like — to be an Indian resident in London and to hear of the death of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru? A sense of shock though not of surprise; a sense of personal loss, of the death of one's father or a beloved uncle. One has the sense of witnessing the uprooting of a mighty banyan tree, the sinking of a Titanic before one's eyes.

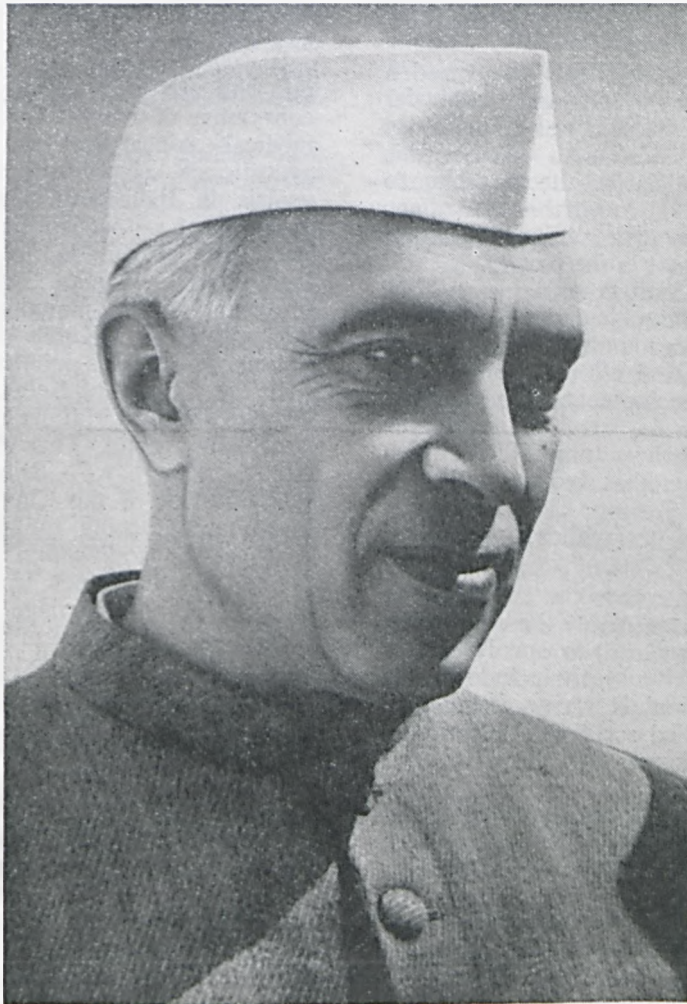
During the struggle for independence, while the mass of the people revered Gandhi, the radical, scientifically-inclined intelligentsia had little patience with his prayer meetings, and his spinning wheel or with his old-fashioned views on many other matters like family planning. We recognised his key role in the national movement — the fact that he above all mobilised the people and made them fearless in the face of repression. But our hearts and heads were with Pandit Nehru.

For Gandhi and for that matter, for the rest of the leading members of the Congress leadership, the liberation of India was a sufficient end in itself. The one task before a subject people was to liberate itself, and it could not afford to waste its energies in both-ering about international matters, they argued. Internationalism was a "fad" of Nehru's and they were content to leave it to him. Nehru, thus, was the only one of the national leaders to realise that the struggle for freedom and democracy in India was a part of the world-wide struggle against imperialism and Fascism. He was the only national leader who was truly outraged by the excesses of Hitler, Mussolini and Franco. Thus it was that under his inspiration, we collected funds in the streets of Bombay for the Republican Government in Spain, and for a Medical Mission to China, then struggling alone against an unprovoked and shameless Japanese aggression.

And yet, during the war he could not bring himself to

support wholeheartedly, the mighty United front formed by Britain, America, the Soviet Union and China, against the Fascist powers, while India remained unfree. He and

the Congress took every care to emphasise that they would vigorously oppose Japanese aggression in India and that they had no sympathy with the line taken by Subhash Bose, that we should use the Japanese as our "enemy's enemy". But they could not bring themselves to abandon or postpone their struggle for freedom, which was also the mood of the national movement. In our eyes, co-operation in the first world war had been rewarded by repression in the Punjab and the supreme tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh. The national movement could not contemplate co-operation in the war effort again. Nehru the internationalist could not have triumphed single-handed against Nehru the nationalist surrounded by other non-internationalist leaders. Had Nehru and Gandhi *both* decided to support the Allies unconditionally during the war, it may very well be that the British Government would have firmly curbed the separatist activities of the Muslim league and, astute politician that Jinnah was, he might have settled for a United Federal India with



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a larger autonomy for the constituent units.

This of course is speculation of what might have been; normally, a fruitless activity. However, I am in good company here. Kingsley Martin in the *New Statesman* of May 29th, expresses the belief that, after Independence, Nehru was mistaken in not dividing the Congress, "allowing Sardar Patel to lead the Capitalist camp, while he led India to Socialism". This reading of the situation at the time of Independence in 1947, seriously underestimates the tremendous influence of the right wing, including Gandhi, within the Congress. Even with Nehru to lead

them, the left wing in the Congress would have been in a minority, so that the organisation would have passed into the hands of the right wing. The prestige, the power and the organisation behind the Indian National Congress could not be challenged from outside even by Nehru, and Sardar Patel would have been the Prime Minister with Nehru in the opposition.

As it happened, Nehru stayed in the Congress to lead a body which was much more to his right politically and socially. The policy of non-alignment must be regarded very much as Nehru's individual contribution, sustained undoubtedly by the militant anti-imperialism of the people. But for Nehru, the rest of the Congress leaders would hardly have chosen such an idealistic and difficult path. Suspicion of the Soviet Union, of Socialism, of planned economy would have come very naturally to them and they would have fitted quite well into a Western Alliance led by America — not by a European imperial power but by a former colony which had also struggled for freedom from the same British masters.

However, under Nehru's leadership, India has trodden this difficult path, and a number of Afro-Asian countries have taken a similar position in the cold war. Time alone will enable a judgment to be made as to whether this policy of non-alignment is beneficial to the world or to the countries professing it; and also whether non-alignment, real or feigned, is a failure or a success. While the rest of the world recognises, at least in the post-Dulles era, that the non-alignment of important countries may be a valuable asset to world peace, doubts have been sown about the policy on its home ground by the Chinese action in 1962. Can a weak nation afford the luxury of non-alignment? Subsequent developments have shown however, that the Chinese have a quarrel even with the Soviet Union who should be their natural allies, which gives added strength to the idea that India should not join the Soviet or the American camp. One would not therefore expect non-alignment to wither away after Nehru.

Many Secularists might wonder how the secular state would fare after Nehru, who was probably the only Prime Minister (outside the Communist world) to openly profess his agnostic or rationalist views—and to include in his will a specific rejection of religion. However, it must be understood, first that the so-called secular state in India is not secular in the western sense: it is secular in a Gandhian sense. It has not emerged from an era of clerical dominance (terrorism is a better word) as existed in Europe before the French Revolution. It is therefore not anti-clerical or suspicious of religious organisations. In any case there is no organised Hindu hierarchy or clergy, and the priests are merely anonymous persons used mainly for ritual purposes and devoid of much authority or influence. The state is secular only in the sense that the leadership does not want to establish the Hindu faith as a state religion, and it wants all religions to flourish in peaceful co-existence, thus giving a sense of security to religious minorities.

It is thus not a secular state but an all-religious state based on the Gandhian doctrine of Sarvadharmasamabhar (equality of all religions). This accords well with the non-dogmatic, non-evangelistic nature of Hindu ideas, which do not claim the exclusive possession of the key to salvation for their religion. It also stems from the fact that in pre-partition India, the Muslims formed about 20 per cent of the population, and that the National Congress aimed at a united secular modern democratic state which would relegate religions to their proper sphere and treat them equally. Despite this attempt, Pakistan had to be

conceded in 1947, leaving the Vale of Kashmir as the only Muslim-majority area in India.

After Nehru, there will be some pressure from right-wing Hindu sources to accord some preference to the majority religion. This will be successfully resisted by the successors of Nehru. But the real decision lies in the hands of the Muslims of the Valley of Kashmir. Before 1947 they stood within the national democratic movement and received the wholehearted support of the Congress in their struggle against the Hindu Maharaja of Kashmir, for self-government. If they are now persuaded to repudiate a secular democracy, or perhaps even go a step further and exhibit a preference to be a part of an Islamic state under a military ruler, they would certainly deliver a severe blow to secular democracy in India.

Another source of irritation, which tends to undermine the faith of the mass of Hindus in secularism, is the unscrupulous and divisive activities of Christian, and especially Roman Catholic missionaries, particularly in aboriginal and backward areas.

It really is time that Western Christianity grew out of the 18th and 19th century idea that it must secure the conversion of the followers of other religions, by using medical, educational and similar other services. The agnostic or scientifically minded sections of the intelligentsia in India are unaware of the Roman Catholic methods of indoctrination and organisation with which Secularists in Europe are familiar. When they are confronted with Roman Catholic obduracy on so vital a problem as family-planning, or Roman Catholic incursion into politics as in Kerala, they are liable to be bewildered in their search for a solution.

In the absence of Nehru, the simple short-cut of establishing Hinduism in India as Buddhism has been in Burma, may gain ground. This would not necessarily mean the fall of democracy — Britain is a democracy despite the establishment of the Church of England — but it may mean strengthening the forces of orthodox Hinduism. And yet the codification of Hindu Law and the liberation of Hindu women from polygamy and the indissolubility of Hindu marriage — a divorce law having been passed — are achievements of the Nehru era in India which cannot now be undone.

An English View

"A SENSE of shock, though not of surprise; a sense of personal loss, of the death of one's father or a beloved uncle". We can appreciate Govind Deodhekar's poignant description of his feelings on hearing of the death of Pandit Nehru. We know how we, as an English admirer, felt; how much deeper, then, must the shock have been to an Indian! To Mr. Deodhekar's perceptive assessment of Nehru we would only like to add these few words. The world has, it seems to us, lost its sanest statesman. To him, we believe, must go a great deal of the credit for our very existence today. John Foster Dulles condemned non-alignment as "immoral". Thanks very largely to Nehru, mankind scrambled back from the brink.

John Grigg in *The Guardian* (28/5/64) rightly reminded us of the "lukewarmness" with which the Western leaders had supported Nehru's heroic struggle to maintain a "secular democratic state against all the odds". They were just as ready, "if not more ready" to give "their blessing and their practical aid to a theocratic dictatorship". But we hope, with Mr. Grigg, that Jawaharlal Nehru may have "felt some inkling, some premonition, of the gratitude which free men will feel for him in ages to come".

Shepherds on the Loose

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

WHEN the Freethinker surveys Christendom, he usually confines himself to the major division of Catholic and Protestant. Rome may be known, Anglicanism may be a familiar state cultus, the more initiated will be able to describe the difference between Baptists and Unitarians. But what are the Ancient Catholic Church, the Independent Old Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Catholic Church, the Agnostic Catholic Church and a hundred and one others? What is intended when an Archbishop in full regalia consecrates for Catholic worship the converted waiting-room of a railway station, using the former ladies' cloakroom as a vestry? Copes and mitres abound to the puzzlement of the uninitiated! Ecclesiastical dignitaries stand at the altar and perform before a congregation of two or three! A curious bypath of church life raises its head above the surface and suggests that, ecclesiastically speaking, there is a vast underworld of churches thrown up by the apostolic succession.

The subject is intriguing, and various studies have been published from time to time. Not a few people know of the strange figure of Dr. Lee, Vicar of All Saints', Lambeth, at the close of the last century, antiquary and pro-Roman apologist, who obtained clandestine episcopal orders to maintain his Order of Corporate Reunion and effect reunion with Rome by validly ordaining any Anglican clergy who consented to the process. But few will know of Archbishops of Waltham and Patriarchs of Glastonbury, of Englishmen possessing the Eastern title of "Mar" or of other bishops *in partibus*. A lengthy work has now been written by the Roman Catholic layman, Peter Anson, entitled *Bishops at Large* (Faber and Faber, London, 1964, 3 guineas), and it is to be commended, not only to all for whom ecclesiastical byways have a strange attraction, but to all students of human credulity. It is nothing less than a fully documented history of these strange potentates, known to the academic as *episcopi vagantes* and to the irreverent as "shepherds on the loose." Wandering stars, they own allegiance to none of the historic sees of Christendom and rule over followings of microscopic proportions. At the same time, they spawn their clergy over the face of the earth by numerous ordinations and seem to spend not a little of their efforts in reconsecrating each other that, one and all, they may possess every valid line of apostolic succession which chances to be available. It is a curious and somewhat pathetic story which has a habit of reappearing in strange places. For example, it will be recalled that the curate-witness in the case of Dr. Bryn Thomas, the Rev. George Neely, had previously been ordained by more than one of these wandering bishops before he finally sought the Bishop of Southwark as a further means of conveying to him the grace of regular ministry.

The story commenced about a century ago with the arrival in this country of Julius, Bishop of Iona, a gentleman named Ferrette who, on somewhat questionable grounds, claimed to possess Eastern orders, and who sought to organise a British Church founded upon this oriental source. It would be rather curious to ask how much far-off Eastern ecclesiastics knew of the Scottish island of Iona! From the laying-on of hands by the self-styled bishop, numerous progeny have spawned. Through the years, the succession has been maintained until it emerged into the Free Catholic Church of Archbishop Hayman, an ex-Anglican cleric who alternated his epis-

copal duties with spells in gaol for fraud. Ferrette had his great rival, Arnold Harries Mathew, a former Anglican layman and Roman Catholic priest of some scholarship who passed an unhappy life fluctuating between the claims of Rome and Canterbury with side-glances at Unitarianism, lay communion and the like. Mathew succeeded in 1907 in obtaining the episcopate from the Dutch Old Catholic Archbishop of Utrecht, and at once sought to establish Old Catholicism as an English rite with himself as Archbishop of London. Having collected around him a somewhat exotic following, Mathew was disowned by the Dutch bishops in 1910, and afterwards lived the life of a freelance archbishop pure and simple; ordinations and consecrations following with alarming rapidity when the smallness of his flock is recalled. Some of his clergy reverted to the Church of England including his dean, the Rev. Noel Lambert, who took his cathedral with him, as well as his titular Bishop of Durham, the Rev. Francis Bacon, who later achieved notoriety as an Anglican incumbent by being sent to gaol for conspiring to procure abortions. Some of the so-called Old Roman Catholics of to-day derive from Mathew and his following.

The Liberal Catholic Church, a theosophical body, derives its orders through F. S. Willoughby, an unfrocked Anglican clergyman whom Mathew had raised to episcopal orders. One branch of the succession from Mathew through numerous intermediate hands has recently been prominent in opening up various oratories for worship. Unfortunately for it, these activities attracted the attention of the Sunday newspaper, the *People*, which was able to tell its readers with great glee that four out of seven clergy who had attracted public attention were gentlemen who had served gaol sentences. Yet a further succession was introduced into this country at the beginning of this century by one Vilatte, a Frenchman, who emulated his successors by leaving various episcopal progeny scattered around. Others, too, have arisen, with the result that the whole chart is a complicated picture of dubious episcopal enterprise, much ado signifying nothing at all save that some people have been left wiser and poorer by these varied efforts to spread a catholicism free of Rome or Canterbury. Indeed, time is lacking to tell the story of the spiritual duke, the Lord Patriarch Banks, Patriarch of Windsor, of Mar Frederic, of Archbishop Needham and the University of Sulgrave, or of a dozen others who flit across Anson's pages.

The year 1943 seems to have been a key year, for then was held the Council of London and a strange ceremony on Whitsunday, when the heirs to the various successions merged their orders by a process of conditional reconsecration. Out of this reunion of Christendom in miniature arose the Lord Patriarch of Glastonbury and the Catholicate of the West. For a while, there was a grand meeting of highly Catholic ecclesiastics and others of less pronounced views such as the more Protestant Bishop Saul. One recalls from the past the Archdeacon of Preston of the Evangelical Church of England, a gentleman who had not only assumed an Anglican designation but also begaitered legs, a silken apron and a rosette in his shovel hat! Likewise, there was the Archbishop of Karim of the Cathedral of the Good Shepherd in Lower Sloane Street, well-known some ten years ago for its animal and healing services. The Catholicate seems to have come to an

(Concluded on page 188)

This Believing World

Many notices of the death of Mr. Nehru omitted any reference to his non-religious beliefs. Victor Anant in *The Guardian* (May 28th) pointed out that "the last rites for this agnostic will be administered by Hindu priests", apparently contrary to his expressed wishes. The London letter in the same paper on June 2nd, announcing the Memorial meeting in the Royal Albert Hall, said: "Mr. Nehru, while declaring himself to be an agnostic, embodied the principle of religious toleration, and at this meeting in his memory there will be readings from the scriptures of all the main religions to be found in India", in addition to personal tributes, Dr. Jivraj N. Mehta, the Indian High Commissioner in London, expressed the hope that the meeting would "serve to forward the concept of religious tolerance throughout the world". We hope so too. At the same time, we feel that a little more emphasis should be given to the fact that it was an Agnostic who "embodied" this concept.

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The Bishop of Chester obviously does not like "ton-up" boys, accusing them of "worshipping" their machines (*Daily Mail*, May 27th) as devoutly as any worshipper in church, but with one difference. They are "worshipping the wrong God". But surely, when it comes to results, the bike-worshipper does at least get some material pleasure from it, the joy of going through a beautiful countryside, for example; and the benefit of fresh air. What response does a worshipper of God get?

★

How Christians hate competition! There is going to be an investigation into "the issues involved when its members are Freemasons" by the Church of Scotland (*Daily Express*, May 28th) for, as the Rev. J. L. Scott said, it is odd that Masons in "their strange rites" should "deliberately exclude the name of Christ". And there is even something more horrifying than that. Churchmen who are also Freemasons actually feel their Masonic vows "more binding than the Church's". And all this after some 1900 years of the simple message of gentle Jesus! No wonder Mr. Scott and his confreres are so hot and bothered.

★

We sincerely hope that the fears of a Methodist minister are right; that all he faces is mere expulsion on the charge of heresy. Had he lived a little earlier he might have had to serve a severe sentence in prison. Heresy was at one time a fearful sin and had to be rigorously and painfully punished. He is the Rev. W. Gill, and his heresy is that he said, "the word is made flesh, as far as it can be, in any baby, at the birth of every child", meaning of course that in any child, the "word" can be made flesh. Jesus therefore wasn't any better or worse than any other babe.

★

Mr. Gill obstinately won't retract and we can well believe that for most of his fellow ministers to equate any child with "our blessed Lord" (as Dr. Soper would say) is enough to cause all his fellow Methodists to have convulsions. But Mr. Gill need not fear. Burning alive at the stake is no longer allowed in this country.

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That distinguished actress, Miss Margaret Rutherford, told the 450 guests at a Spiritualist Dinner the other evening that "she was proud to be associated with mediums", and like all other speakers, declared her deep faith in Spiritualism—no doubt including as they did—unshaken belief in "guides" like White Eagle. Needless to say, in addition to the visible guests there were scores unseen by

those ordinary people who were not mediums. What a pity that such a glorious opportunity to convince sceptics all over the world is never taken. What a sensation it would be to produce a definite materialisation before such a celebrated audience. And think of the increased sensation that would be caused by bringing back Jesus Christ himself!

SHEPHERDS ON THE LOOSE

(Concluded from page 187)

end. Some of its children have gone off in different directions. Bishop Boltwood relapsed into Protestantism to the chagrin of the Patriarch, whilst the Archbishop of Karim still seems to continue in Clapton at the former shrine of the Abode of Love. Yet it all still goes on in spirit and doubtless the Lord Patriarch still sees visions and dreams dreams of a worldwide Catholicate with himself as its Pope or at least its Primate of All England.

Academic in its aspirations, the movement has always sought to promote education through the granting of degrees. Time is lacking to tell the story of the International University or of the Western Orthodox Academy, neither of which seems to have been recognised by the Universities Grants Commission. Nor can space be found for St. Andrew's College, Tottenham, whose degrees landed the unfortunate Bishop Boltwood with a heavy fine imposed by the Tottenham magistrates for breaches of the Trade Marks Act. Again, in an age of rough equalitarianism, it is essential to maintain chivalry, and it is all but impossible to understand the various orders and titles of foreign origin which seem to adhere to the fringes of these movements in freelance episcopacy. One can only refer the curious to Mr. Anson and his well-documented pages.

But what conclusions are to be drawn? The episcopal wanderers would seem to have achieved one result. They have provided the *reductio ad absurdum* of the legend of the apostolic succession. Shrouded in legendary mists in its origins, it seems to have provided for England and Wales, not to mention the Americas, as many bishops as there are reputed descendants of the Plantagenet Kings. The abstract theory consolidates itself into a mass of practical nonsense. But it likewise raises the question of the Anglican post-Reformation episcopate. How far were they vagrant when measured by the abstract theory? Are the Anglican-Protestant bishops of the reunited Church of South India *episcopi vagantes* in Anglo-Catholic eyes? The basic ministerial conceptions of orthodox Catholicism have to answer questions which are inevitable when exposed to the ridicule occasioned by these strange gentry.

Again, it would be ungenerous to say that these enterprising bishops are one and all unscrupulous adventurers, even though an unkind American journalist once described them as "phoney." Many must believe in their curious and esoteric claims. Some are orthodox in theology, others go in for occultism, spiritualism, theosophy and similar wayward cults. Looked at as so many specimens exhibited upon Anson's dissecting table, one is forced to remark upon the breadth of credulity when this credulity is inspired by religious motivations. For the freethinker, a minor chapter will be added to his knowledge of the psychopathic states induced by certain types of religious belief as well as the part played by organised Christianity in nurturing adventurers pure and simple. After all, even though he may not always lay claim to episcopal orders, the ecclesiastical adventurer has had his representation in every age of church history.

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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 and J. A. MILLAR.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street,) Sunday Evenings

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

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.

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

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street, Birmingham), Sunday, June 14th, 6.45 p.m.: MARGARET McILROY, "A Humanist Approach to Family Life".

South Place Ethical Society, (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, June 14th, 11 a.m.: V. V. ALEXANDER, "The Psychology of Jung".

Notes and News

A YEAR ago, Canon John Pierce-Higgins, the Vice-Provost of Southwark Cathedral, made his much-publicised protest against the Thirty-Nine Articles. Since then the press seems to have listened regularly to his sermons — and picked up some good stories. On Sunday, May 31st, the Canon renewed his criticism of Church of England organisation. Since his protest a "sea of ink" had been used to criticise and to support him, he said, but nothing had been done (*The Guardian*, 1/6/64). The Church was trying hard to make progress, the Canon continued, but new thinking was being held back by extremists who constituted, at most, about 10 per cent of the clergy and the laity. At the moment, no bishop dared tackle the Thirty-Nine Articles for fear of exposing the cracks in the structure of the Church of England, and behind the cracks was dry rot.

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THREE hundred prisoners, prison officers, priests and nuns, packed the chapel at Wormwood Scrubs Prison on May 26th, when Dr. John Heenan, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, confirmed John Vassal and six other prisoners. Speaking of the power of prayer, the Archbishop told the prisoners that if they recited "Our Father", "Hail Mary", the Creed and the Act of Contrition, there would be "very little chance of them going back inside" (*Daily Sketch*, 27/5/64). When he visited a prison in Liverpool Dr. Heenan continued, he asked the prisoners to pray for his mother, who wasn't expected to live much longer. "They prayed very hard", he said, and my mother lived long enough for me to see her again". Vassali, who is serving an 18 years' sentence for selling naval secrets,

apparently also prays hard. He became a Roman Catholic five years ago, and was described by the prison organist as "devout" as well as a good singer in the choir.

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ANY MENTION of Dr. Heenan these days brings to mind the birth-control pill. And the Archbishop should be feeling contrite after virtual reprimands from two Vatican theologians, Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani and Father Bernard Häring. That the progressive Father Häring — a German professor of moral and social theology at the Alfonsian Academy and the Lateran University in Rome — should consider Dr. Heenan outdated is hardly surprising. Cardinal Ottaviani, however, epitomises Catholic conservatism. All the more significant, therefore, that he should say, on May 27th, that "single parties must abstain from taking any position, and from creating confusion, until the problem has been discussed by the competent authorities" (*The Guardian*, 28/5/64). "On any question so seriously and widely debated as this", said Father Häring, "the final word should be left to the supreme magistracy and not to any single party, be he cardinal or bishop". For an echo of our own often—expressed view—we turn to American comedian Groucho Marx. Sex attitudes are much healthier today, he told a press conference, "and even the Roman Catholic Church will come eventually to approve the use of contraceptives". It will have to!

★

"FIGURES today show that the Unitarian Church is the fastest growing in America", the *Daily Express* reported (20/5/64). Membership increases by six per cent every year—seven times as fast as the Protestants, and twice as fast as the Roman Catholics. And the *Express'* description of the Unitarians as praying "to whom it may concern" is not exaggerated. In fact "Unitarian", in the USA, is virtually a synonym for Humanist. A former editor of the *American Rationalist* told us that he had attended a Unitarian Church for twenty years and had never been called upon to pray!

★

M. J. K. STANWORTH, author of "Free Verse" on page 191, is a student at Birmingham College of Advanced Technology, and a sub-editor of the students' newspaper, *The Sun*, where the poem originally appeared. In the April 29th issue of the newspaper, Mr. Stanworth joined with B. J. Yapp, in an article, "In the Beginning", which we hope to print next week. He was also partly responsible for an editorial which called for severance of Church connection with education, the abolition of Church schools, and the replacement of religious instruction by "liberal studies". We have, the editorial said, come a long way since 1807 when a House of Commons Bill for a state educational system was "crushed by the insistence that 'all education should be under the auspices of the Church' . . . but Church schools still exist to violate the basic concepts of 'free' education".

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ON Friday, June 19th, the Chairman of the Thomas Paine Society, Christopher Brunel, will be speaking to the Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group on "Thomas Paine — Mr. Common Sense". The meeting will be held in the Community Centre, Sheen Road, Richmond.

★

THE second of the Ethical Union Housing Association's houses, named Blackham House after the Ethical Union's Secretary, will be formally opened by Lord Willis — Ted Willis, playwright and television writer — at a Garden Party to be held on Sunday, June 28th, from 3 to 6 p.m.

The Spanish Inquisition versus the Nun of Lisbon

By F. A. RIDLEY

In 1588, interest in Spain — then the leading European power and the centre of the first world-empire upon which the sun never set — was distracted by two outstanding events, the sailing of the “invincible” Armada against England, and an alleged supernatural occurrence in a Lisbon convent. The disastrous outcome of the Armada is history, but the affair of the nun of Lisbon has long since sunk into well-deserved oblivion. As however, it casts a vivid light on both the current mentality of Spain and on the procedure of the Spanish Inquisition, I reproduce below a contemporary account from diplomatic documents.

First, however, a word may be usefully prefixed with regard to this bizarre miracle in which political intrigue found a willing auxiliary in religious superstition. Spain, under Philip II, had recently acquired by force, the neighbouring kingdom of Portugal (1580). A pretender to the crown of Portugal, a Portuguese prince, Don Antonio, had staged an unsuccessful revolt, and after his defeat he had fled to England, then Spain's major enemy. With English support given by Queen Elizabeth, the Portuguese pretender continually stirred up trouble for the Spanish crown, culminating in a large scale English invasion led by Don Antonio himself and Sir Francis Drake in 1589, an invasion which proved to be nearly as disastrous for England as the Armada had been for Spain the preceding year; no doubt for which reason it is seldom mentioned by English historians!

The affair of the nun of Lisbon, as her contemporaries described her, seems to have been part of the political intrigues carried on by Don Antonio and his supporters in Portugal. For in 1588 the prioress of the Convent of the Annunciation in Lisbon, known as Mary of the Visitation, announced that the stigmata, the miraculous reproduction of the wounds of Christ, had suddenly appeared on her body. The announcement of this miracle naturally caused a tremendous sensation in the fanatically Roman Catholic Spain of this era. However, the contemporary Spanish authorities in church and state, were not so credulous as their modern successors at Lourdes, Fatima, etc. This fact was clearly disclosed by the sequel which I reproduce *verbatim* from contemporary diplomatic despatches to the Doge and Senate of Venice from their Ambassador to Spain.

February 13th, 1588. “Evil persons having spread a rumour that the stigmata of the holy nun are spurious, the general of her order has made a new examination with many tests and sent the results to His Majesty [i.e. Philip II of Spain]. They find that beyond all doubt the stigmata are genuine and miraculous. Fra Luigi de Granada has written a book describing her divine operations”.

December 14th, 1588 [after the failure of the Armada]. “The nun of Portugal who was universally held for a saint, has been found out at last. The stigmata are proved to be artificial and the whole trick invented to gain credit in the world. She was induced to act thus by two friars of the Order of St. Dominic with a view to being able to tell the King that unless he handed Portugal over to Don Antonio, he would be damned for ever; and with the further object of raising a rebellion against the King. The friars are in the prisons of the Inquisition, the nun in a convent awaiting sentence”.

December 31st, 1588:

“I enclose the sentence on the nun of Portugal who was

held for a saint. They found that she had received presents in jewels and gold to the value of forty thousand crowns and upwards, and several letters in the King's own hand, one of them commending his actions to her prayers and declaring that he desired to come to Portugal to visit her and kiss her hand. It is not clear yet who prompted her conduct”.

[Enclosed in preceding despatch, same date]:

“Summary of the sentence pronounced in Lisbon on the 8th December, 1588, by the Archbishops of Braga and Lisbon, and the Bishop of Guardia, Inquisitors of Lisbon, against the Prioress of the Convent of the Annunciation in Lisbon, by name, Mary of the Visitation, for feigning to be a saint and to possess the stigmata and wounds of Christ our Lord on her body, which stigmata were painted without intervention of the Devil and on other charges of deception:

“First she is condemned to perpetual prison in a convent not of her own order, outside the city.

“She may not receive the Sacrament for five years except on the three Easters or in *articulo mortis* [on her deathbed], or on a Papal Jubilee.

“Every Wednesday and Friday in public in the nun's chapter house, she shall receive discipline [i.e. be publicly whipped] as long as it takes to chant the *miserere*.

“She shall eat in the refectory in public, on the ground, and no one may eat what she leaves, she shall lie on the ground at the door of the refectory and all the nuns shall walk over her as they come in and go out.

“She shall fast perpetually; she may not be elected to any office but shall be counted below the meanest nun in the convent.

“She may speak to no one of the nuns nor to anyone else without leave of the Prioress.

“The bread she uses, the tumblers and all else shall be given to the Inquisition and its delegates.

“She shall not wear a veil; on Wednesdays and Fridays she shall fast on bread and water.

“Each time she leaves her cell she shall recite her sin aloud”.

Incidentally, had the nun been adjudged by the Inquisition to have been “marked by intervention of the Devil”, she would undoubtedly have been burned alive as a witch. The last death sentence ever pronounced by the Spanish Inquisition — a few years before Napoleon abolished it in 1808 — ordered a woman to be burned alive for “producing infernal eggs as a result of carnal copulation with the Devil”.

Such then, was the “shocking affair” of the nun of Lisbon, who appears to have been both a political conspirator and self-confessed religious impostor. After being subjected for several centuries to the stifling domination of the Inquisition, can we wonder that the present intolerant Spain of General Franco is the end product?

STATING HIS REASON

Home again and still stunned by the most extraordinary conversation of my whole trip. An American wife I'd only just met was telling me about her good and devout husband.

“Marje”, she said, “he is so wunnerful and so good. Why only the other night, when we were having intercourse, he said to me, ‘Doll, this is what makes me believe in God.’”

MARJORIE PROOPS in the *Daily Mirror* (20/5/64)

Mary Baker Eddy

By H. CUTNER

Two things occurred to me when reading *Mary Baker Eddy* by Norman Beasley. (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1964, 30s.) The first was that the author, a most enthusiastic admirer of Mrs. Eddy — indeed, he looks upon her as “inspired”, which can only mean “divinely” inspired — is not a Christian Scientist; and the second was that its publishers, Messrs. Allen and Unwin, also published nearly forty years ago the most devastating criticism of Mrs. Eddy and her Christian Science — in *The Faith, Falsity and Failure of Christian Science* by W. Riley, Ph.D., F. W. Peabody, LL.B., and C. E. Humiston, MD. — which has ever been written.

Mr. Beasley ignores this book just as he never mentions that hated “unofficial” biography of Mrs. Eddy, Georgine Milmine’s *Life*, which virtually disappeared from book-shelves soon after being published in 1909. In fact, so cleverly written is Mr. Beasley’s *Mary Baker Eddy* that one can hardly suspect from it that the heroine was ever attacked as a writer of drivel. In my own fairly extensive reading — and I have never “discriminated” in it — I cannot remember coming across more perfect examples of imbecility than in the text-book of Christian Science, *Science and Health*. Just in passing, here is a gem:—

The vapid fury of mortal mind — expressed in earthquake, wind, wave, lightning, fire, bestial ferocity — shows this so-called mind to be self-destructive. Christian Science brings to light Truth and its supremacy, universal harmony, the entirety of God, good, and the nothingness of evil.

Mrs. Eddy’s own “mortal mind” easily disposes of a number of what might be called philosophical problems, but the reader should go to the fountain head of all her wisdom, *Science and Health*, to find out how much balderdash she can get into a paragraph. Here is one on Jesus:—

Jesus of Nazareth was the most scientific man that ever trod the globe. His spiritual origin, and his demonstration of divine Principle, richly endowed him to sonship in Science. He knew that the Ego was Mind, instead of body — that matter, sin, and evil were not Mind; and his understanding of this divine Science brought upon him the anathemas of the age. . . . Christ is the idea of Truth . . .

Mother Eddy — she never liked being called “Mother” in this way — objected to the Lord’s Prayer, because it never mentions “the Lord”. So she re-wrote it calling “Our Father”, “Our Father-Mother-God”. But few people outside the Christian Science camp know her emendations to the Holy Bible. She did not believe for example that Jesus was dead when taken down from the cross. But it would take too long to go into the mixture of belief and unbelief which characterises her crazy “teachings”. Very little of it is known to her adorers who are much more disposed to try out curing physical disabilities than to analyse her unblushing fabrications. The reader should get hold of the Rev. J. Moffat Logan’s *Christian Science Expounded and Exposed* for a list of them.

Of course, Christian Science stands or falls on its “healing”, its “cures”, and I would never deny that some people have been “cured” by its methods just as people have been cured by herbs and patent medicines. But the vast majority who have tried Mother Eddy’s “spiritual” aids — which consist in general of reading a page or two of *Science and Health* — have not been cured; and in her own entourage, many of her most valiant supporters have died when they might have been cured by doctors using orthodox medicines. Dr. Humiston gives a number of such failures to cure. Cancer, diphtheria, haemorrhage, tuberculosis, pneumonia, insanity, tumour, hernia, and many other ailments were followed by death

after Christian Scientists had completely failed. The details are given by him in full, and no one, and certainly not Mr. Beasley, has questioned the facts given by Dr. Humiston. And what is Christian Science worth if it constantly fails to cure — as it does? *Science and Health*, has an interesting history for its first edition was a flop — it was full of mistakes, and extremely badly written. Mrs. Eddy had to turn to the Rev. J. H. Wiggin to put its bad grammar right, but Mr. Wiggin insisted as well that it had to be altogether re-written — by him — and the present editions of the book are based on his more or less “authorised version”. But Mrs. Eddy is responsible for its hopeless “philosophy” and incomprehensible ramblings.

One thing stands out about *Science and Health* and that is, Mrs. Eddy saw that it was copyrighted as soon as it started to sell. Although she always insisted that there was no such thing as “evil” in the world — all, all was merely “error” — she took no chances when it came to money. And much the same when it came to her own illnesses — she took morphine to allay the pain. This fact is strenuously denied by her followers, but it is well-authenticated. She never resorted to having passages from her book to cure her, but relied in her last years on orthodox medicine.

But when it came to “material” cash, and not so much to “mortal mind”, Mrs. Eddy was truly a genius. She was a genius at extracting money from the credulous and the fearful, and in her many commercial companies, she made enough “beyond the dreams of avarice”. Mr. Peabody calls it her “frantic money grabbing”, and devotes over thirty pages to it which Mr. Beasley ought to have dealt with. Instead, he gives us a picture of a saintly, inspired, and dedicated woman, who apparently never made a false step, and whose heart bled for suffering humanity. Mark Twain, who saw through her, treated her with contemptuous amusement.

Unlike other religions which, willy-nilly, are often forced to allow some small changes with the passing years, in Christian Science, said Mrs. Eddy, “A slight divergence is fatal”. So she kept a tight hand on all procedure, and a tighter hand on the cash. And Mr. Beasley would have done better had he met her opponents full face and answered them.

Free Verse

(In the invincible style of Bertolt Brecht)

“Bread! Bread!” cried the beggar from the gutter,
“Materialist!”—retorted the priest,
“Man cannot live on bread alone”.

“Only a man with meat and wine says that, Share with me”.
“Communist! Atheist! Materialist!”
“Don’t count blessings in terms of bread”.

“My blessing is the man who shares with me”.
“But he is a Socialist—and Socialism is wicked,
All men are equal in the eyes of the Lord”.

“Then why are you fat while I starve?”
“Don’t anger,
The Lord will provide”.

“Too late—I lie dead”.
“Don’t distress,
’Tis the Lord’s will”.

—M. J. K. STANWORTH.

CORRESPONDENCE

CARDINAL NEWMAN

May I join Mr. Gillespie in deprecating Mr. Ridley's praise of Cardinal Newman? J. M. Robertson's criticism of the Newman polemic as "for the most part an utterance of hysteria under only aesthetic control" (*A History of Freethought in the 19th Century*) seems closer to the truth.

W. E. NICHOLSON.

GOD AND MEANING

The word "God" is so popular among almost all English-speaking people that it has become the most confusing of English words. To deny its meaning, however, does not seem to me to serve any useful purpose. The word is here to stay, whether we like it or not, and a reasonable way out of the confusion is to consider its many meanings and select the best.

Where the word "God" has a meaning it is usually one of the following: an unknown cause; a composite name for the things one considers especially valuable; one of the supposed persons described in the Bible as "Jesus Christ"; a human ruler; society; a church or other authoritarian organisation; on oath intended to convey strength of feeling.

I suppose the last of these is the meaning most widely accepted, and therefore the most desirable to be adopted as standard.

DAVID BIRD.

A-THEISM AND A-DEISM

Mr. Reginald Underwood (Nov. 29th, 1963) deserves widest support for his proposal to distinguish between atheism and a-deism. The confusion of the two unfortunately cancels a great deal of the freethought attack on Christianity.

Atheism up to now denied: (a) *all* particular gods; this part is an empirically true statement since gods were fancied to exist in space time; (b) *one* god God over and above *all* particular gods; this denial is logically true since the definition is an obvious contradiction in terms (category-mistake). While the disproof of (a) is empirically commonsense, the disproof of (b) is logically true.

Thomas Paine was an atheist of the first denial, since he rejected particular gods, including Yahweh. But he believed in "one god God over and above all particular gods". This was deism, a fallacious belief in a separate "*Deus*" from "*Deus*" of the Latin Bible. This confusion was due to the fact that Latin has no definite article to reproduce the Hebrew-Greek articles, and thus the illusion arose that "*Deus*" was a proper name of a different god than Yahweh.

Paine viciously attacks atheists in his *Age of Reason*, but what he meant were really "a-deists" as he himself denied Yahweh and was an atheist. His own confusion was that he did not distinguish the Bible *myth* of Yahweh, Son and Co. from the *fallacy* of "one god God over and above all Gods". This modern distinction was a fundamental philosophical achievement of Chapman Cohen (the name "category-mistake" was later introduced by Prof. Ryle for this fallacy).

Mr. G. Simons (Feb. 7th, 1964) is unaware that my exposure of "the god God" as a category-mistake is an application of modern philosophy to freethought use.

So let us distinguish "God"=the Hebrew-Christian-Muslim god Yahweh, from "God"=the deist's god God. The former — a myth, the latter — a verbal fallacy.

GREGORY S. SMELTERS (Australia).

GUY ALDRED

I have no doubt that you have heard of the funeral of Guy Aldred a month ago. I was laid up myself with a chill, and dared not — at 82 — leave my bed. His son read a secular burial service. I have since called on Guy's widow to express my regret for absence. He was one of the most stalwart exponents of Secularism in Glasgow, although his chief hobby was the preaching of Socialism.

During the G. W. Foote and Cohen régimes, he was one of the most popular Secularist speakers in Brockwell Park and Hyde Park. I engaged him several times to speak in Arsenal Square

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on Sundays when I raised the Woolwich Branch of the National Secular Society somewhere about 1910-12.

When he settled in Glasgow a few years later his open air meeting on Glasgow Green and at the end of Bath Street was one of the features of the Sabbath of the "Second City". His outspoken views in his paper called *The Word* shocked the staid Glaswegians: and when I told him — quoting St. John — that THE WORD was with God: the WORD was God: and the same was in the Beginning with GOD, he made it the "text" for one of his orations.

He stood for Parliament on at least nine occasions but always managed to be placed at the bottom of the poll. Yet he was quite unconcerned. During the war years he was gaoled as a pacifist on eight or nine occasions, yet served his sentence with a smile.

His knickerbockered and bareheaded figure will be sadly missed in Glasgow. He left his body to the surgeons of the Western Infirmary, whose mortuary is near the University Library. Yet I could not pluck up the courage to pay my last respects to that inanimate flesh: and when his funeral came round, I was confined to my own bed with a chill. Yet as soon as I was well enough I called on his widow — who knew me — to offer my regrets at absence.

At a Committee meeting of the Fabian Society — some years ago — I recommended him as one of the lecturers for the season. One member — with a blanched face — whispered "But the man's an Atheist". I replied, "And so are many Fabians, including myself". The members laughed — save the questioner.

With fraternal greetings and best wishes for "the cause".

HENRY G. FARMER.

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