

The Freethinker

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AS THE DRUMS throbbed madly and the figure on the mat, swathed in white struggled feebly, a sigh of relief escaped the lips of the anxious parents watching feverishly the ritual they had caused to be performed. A cure had been effected, they all said, and the streaming bodies of the dancers limped slowly to rest. The parents tenderly carried the patient into the room and there was peace again in the household: the devil had been cast out that had plagued the life of their child.

This is the belief of thousands, that the demons have to be placated and their own prosperity assured in this manner. Few indeed, have challenged it. But I met a man last week who has consistently investigated these and similar phenomena and has come to the conclusion that it is all a lot of hocus-pocus. Not a particularly original position you might argue, but Abraham T. Kovoor who describes himself as a rationalist has gone beyond merely making this claim. He has proved by demonstration that there is nothing supernatural nor mysterious in these alleged cures.

Midnight

Not long ago, Mr. Kovoor told me, he was awakened about midnight by the barking of his dogs, and, rousing himself wearily, found four persons at his gate. When he reached them he was told that they had come to ask him for his assistance, knowing him to be interested in such cases, over a woman who had been possessed by the spirit of her husband's first wife. It transpired on questioning that she was already the mother of seven children and was expecting an eighth and that her husband's first wife had two children.

Because of the awkwardness of the time, Mr. Kovoor had assured his nocturnal visitors that nothing could be done at that hour and on their suggestion agreed to treat the woman the next morning at his home.

About 8.30 that morning, the patient arrived in the company of four others, two of whom held tightly to the woman who was going through the most tedious tremors, jerks and unintelligent murmuring. She was led into the house and because of the great crowd that had gathered to witness this phenomenon Mr. Kovoor insisted that only the woman's relatives come with him into the room in which the cure was to be effected.

Possession

It was Mr. Kovoor's position that no "possession" can take place and that in this case as in many others, the woman had merely become hysterical. He believed she had a guilty conscience, feeling that she had taken possession of a dead woman's properties, and this fear, coupled with popular belief, gave her particular form of hysteria the semblance of a super-natural or extra-normal manifestation. In order to cast this spirit out, Mr. Kovoor had asked his wife to prepare a room and to place in that room an empty cigar-box with a length of string in it. One end was tied to the woman's finger, and it was explained that the "spirit" would rush along it into the box.

When the woman had been placed in a chair in this slightly darkened room, Mr. Kovoor also explained that, should he succeed in driving out the spirit, it would have to be taken out of the island lest it returned to worry the woman again. Indeed he would send it off to Malaya to a Swami friend who would attend to it.

He had then placed his hands on either side of her head, which kept bobbing ceaselessly. Holding on as firmly as he was allowed to, he had then started to chant in Malayalee, poems he had learned as a child. It was a marvellous incantation which droned on and on. All the while, Mr. Kovoor stroked the woman's head and eventually he changed his chant into "She's leaving

you now, she's leaving you now . . ." in English for the edification of those around.

As the woman slowly began to ease her tortuous movements and at the appropriate psychological moment, Mr. Kovoor quickly asked his wife to burn the thread which ran into the box. "He's gone into the box now" he shouted and the box was closed tight.

Immediately the woman stopped all her gyrations. She had not eaten for a week before, so he gave her two multi-vitamin tablets and packed her home. No spirits invaded her mind again!

Poltergeists

Mr. Kovoor is convinced that all "supernatural" manifestations can be interpreted in purely natural terms. A case of poltergeist action was reported to him from Mutual. Here a woman and her husband complained of continuous stoning at certain times of the day.

Mr. Kovoor on visiting the home discovered that the couple shared their home with the wife's younger sister, who was in her teens. There seemed to be no possible explanation for the phenomenon until Mr. Kovoor decided to cross-examine the girl, who when confronted with the challenge he put forth admitted to being the real agent. The "ghost" was laid!

Phenomena

Intrigued by these various mystical—or mythical—phenomena Mr. Kovoor set out to try to explain clairvoyance. He said he had his first opportunity in London when he was introduced to an institution which held regular seances, at which the visitor was permitted to ask one question of the medium. The small hall which accommodated 50 people was suitably decorated, and as the woman, tall and gaunt and draped in black entered, the lights dimmed and a hush descended over the assembly. Before her on a table was a crystal and, as she hummed and fell into a trance, the Secretary collected from those present their questions, which they had been requested to write on a piece of paper and place in an envelope which was sealed. When finally all the envelopes had been collected the medium was pronounced ready to answer the questions. She was Marie Antoinette.

Taking the first envelope in the heap, she placed it over her head and after a moment's hesitation spoke the name

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

To Hell with the Devil

By NARCISSUS

of a person who, as requested, stood up in the hall, full of excitement. Then the medium read the question out to the gasps and astonishment of those present.

It was correct, said the astounded man. And so through the whole list she went, correct to the last detail. The medium to prove it, opened the envelope and read out its contents. What hidden power did this woman have, who claimed to speak in the tongue of a long departed member of the human race? Was the hand of death reaching out from beyond? Was it telepathy? Was it pure 100 per cent accurate guess-work? Was this prodigious mind a fake? Was there some common trick behind it all?

Well, several years later Mr. Abraham T. Kovoor who is President of the Rationalist Society of Ceylon, was responsible for organising the Onam celebrations of a Keralan festival, and after the business of the day had

nearly been completed, he announced to those assembled at the Thurstan College Hall that there was to be change of programme because a very saintly and famous Swami had arrived from India to carry out an experiment. He invited those present to co-operate.

After the short interval, the Swami appeared on the stage in saffron robes and ashes and a great beard, and as in the Psychic Research Institute in London, questions were allowed, and the Swami placed the envelope on his head before reading out the questions. And they were all right. The "medium" was Abraham T. Kovoor and the trick was so simple, he has my promise not to divulge it. Mr. Kovoor has so far investigated 62 cases each of which he has solved successfully. Indeed, he has thrown out a challenge and an offer of Rs. 25,000 to anyone who could prove conclusively that any of these so-called phenomena are the instruments of a spirit world.

De Courcy and Christianity

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

IN THE *Sunday Citizen* for July 11th, Mr. Tom Driberg MP, had a most illuminating article concerning the financier, Kenneth de Courcy, who was recently sent to prison for seven years. The words used by the Common Serjeant of London when passing sentence could scarcely have been more scathing in describing de Courcy's low levels of financial trickery. Mr. Driberg gives many examples of the anti-Communist front provided by de Courcy for his financial empire, and quotes widely from his newsletter, *World Intelligence Digest*. The quotations are amazing and more reminiscent of James Bond than of sober political thinking. Only an utter fanatic or hidebound bigot could have been taken in by them, even though they are reminiscent of the American John Birch Society or of McCarthy at his worst. But there is one point upon which Driberg does not touch. De Courcy was a prominent and active Christian. His newsletters dripped with references to the war waged by Christianity against Communism. On one occasion, he actually suggested that Communists were entering the Church in order to weaken it from within by immoral behaviour. The Soviet Union was of course the epitome of godlessness and stood in contradistinction to the Christian tradition, presumably to the particular brand of which de Courcy himself was a leading light. According to one newspaper account, de Courcy regularly held prayers for his household and servants in the private chapel of his mansion.

All of this is within a good old tradition. One recalls that the pious local preaching of the Methodist, Jabez Balfour, ended when this light of Christian finance received the sentence of fourteen years penal servitude. Even Horatio Bottomley dabbled with the idea of founding a new religion. De Courcy likewise knew his customers and realised that, with the spread of left-wing and equalitarian views, there must nowadays be a political edge to his piety. Beating the anti-Russian drum was good for many thousands of pounds in terms of hard cash, and fitted in well with the picture held by the Christian traditionalist.

So much for de Courcy himself. But what can one think of the clergy and laity who used to subscribe to his anti-Socialist rubbish and who believed firmly that in de Courcy they had found the quintessence of political wisdom linked with moral leadership? It is merely a fact that this nonsense circulated among the clergy and helped

to shape clerical opinion in these fields. Quite clearly, it proves the utterly reactionary views of established Christians when they are faced with the wider issues of social, political and economic change. But it is not merely a question of criticising them for holding reactionary opinions in these fields. This is a notorious fact which did not need the aid of de Courcy to prove it. De Courcy's rubbish has its closest links with James Bond, with espionage, with the adolescent excitement of clock and dagger stories. It is merely pathetic to recall that clergymen, retired colonels who act as churchwardens in such towns as Cheltenham or Bath, elderly ladies who are pillars of the local village church, hard-headed Christian men of business, read and believed in this sort of trash, accepting it as a sober fact. The de Courcy affair is a comment upon the distance of their remove from the Jesus who is recorded to have taught an equalitarian social gospel as well as from the world of commonsense. The whole incident is a lesson likewise upon the critical level possessed by this type of person. The current edition of *Crockford's Clerical Directory* comments somewhat unkindly upon the intellectual levels of the bishops of the Church of England. But the de Courcy incident would seem to permit the extension of this approach to a good many Church members and to underline that their deficiency is not only in factual knowledge but in critical judgment. They will merely accept any story which they may be told if it suits their prejudices to do so. Of course, it might be said that this is exactly why the establishmentarian type of person caught by de Courcy is willing to swallow the historical claims of the Christian saga.

During the trial, an incident was mentioned by Mr. John Buzzard, the prosecuting counsel. It would seem that de Courcy put some stooge of his through a theological college although he had little formal education. It secured him an ecclesiastical preferment and then linked him with his business dealings. The moral stands forth: it is that of the manner in which the Church may be used to dubious ends. Perhaps it is not too much to say that it is used today by reactionary people for dubious social and moral purposes. But the de Courcy story shows how organised Christianity can be used for dubious economic ends as well, and the extent to which, among both his clerical and lay followers, Christianity of the de Courcy

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The Blackest Record

By D. J. McCONALOGUE

MANY READERS of THE FREETHINKER will have read Adrian Pigott's *Freedom's Foe—the Vatican*, in which, by considering the Vatican's disgraceful political record, especially in the present century, and the openly expressed views of its spokesmen, he showed that the Roman Catholic Church is as ruthless and unscrupulous in crushing human liberty in the 20th century as it was in the 16th. The book had a well-merited success, and is now in its fifth edition. The thesis of Mr. Pigott's latest book *The Vatican versus Mankind* (Pioneer Press, 4s.) is that at the present time, when the world is facing such unprecedented problems as nuclear war and the population explosion, it can no longer afford to tolerate the mischief-making, both social and international, of the Roman Catholic Church.

The past history, and present activities of this Church, he contends, show that it has pursued ("always, all places and at all times") its own selfish interests, whatever the cost in terms of human happiness, sanity and prosperity. The book is designed to detail the charge, and to present some of the evidence in support. The first three chapters are devoted to the activities of the *Ecclesia Docens* (the Teaching Church). Its chief victims here are "the faithful"—its own adherents. Wherever the Church can function without serious opposition as in Spain, Portugal, Sicily and the South American republics, illiteracy flourishes, with its inevitable concomitants, poverty, disease, hopelessness, the senseless production of unwanted children, social irresponsibility and crime. Even where the faithful are in the minority, as in England and the United States, where education is compulsory, the Church manages to sabotage the system. For economic reasons, much of the "education" it provides is of poor quality, being imparted by priests and nuns who are totally unsuited to guide young people. The amount of time devoted to the instillation of preposterous beliefs results in the production of character instability which is one of the factors, along with the production of children who cannot be adequately cared for, which leads to the Catholic over-representation in crime. It is ironic that this self-appointed custodian of the morals of others should produce proportionately more criminals than any other group, religious or non-religious. Nor is it a coincidence that so many criminals, from squauid murderers, to mass murderers like Hitler and Himmler should have enjoyed "the inestimable privilege of a good Catholic education."

In Chapter IV, the present position of the Vatican is examined, and the picture that emerges is quite heartening to those who detest its particular form of tyranny over the human mind. Details are presented, which show that the Vatican is suffering severe defeats on many fronts. Over large areas of the world, education is increasing, and with it anti-clericalism and widespread lapsings among the faithful. Furthermore, there has been a catastrophic decrease in the number of "vocations to the religious life." France, "the Eldest Daughter of the Church" loses the equivalent of one diocese (about 400 priests) per year. "Priest-famine" is now widespread, not only in South America, but even in places like Spain, Italy and Malta, where the supply at one time seemed limitless. In Africa, the activities of Catholic missionaries are being rendered fruitless by one of the Church's oldest enemies, Islam, greatly strengthened by its alliance with African nationalism, while Protestant missionaries in South America are

converting about a thousand per day. In Eastern Europe, the newest enemy, militant Communism has largely triumphed. Even in the English-speaking world, many of its nominal adherents are very lukewarm. Mr. Pigott maintains, with good reason, that a second Reformation, less dramatic but more far-reaching, than Luther's is taking place today. The Church's claim to a world-membership of 527 millions is a gigantic fraud.

Chapters V to VII are devoted to the influence of Vatican diplomacy in international affairs, with particular reference to the period since 1920. True to its traditional policy of making a deal with any political party however corrupt which would promise to respect the Church's "rights," the Vatican hoisted Mussolini to power in Italy in 1923, and helped Hitler to power in Germany in 1933, the papal Nuncio in Munich at that time being Cardinal Pacelli, later the Pope of Peace. Since the defeat of its "Bulwark against Atheistic Communism" in 1945, Vatican policy has been devoted to creating discord between Eastern Europe and the "Free World." In this, it has been greatly aided by the final megalomaniac phase of Stalinist diplomacy. Chapter VI discusses the efforts of the Vatican in North and South America. In the United States, the effect is two-fold. The Catholic contribution to crime is, as usual, disproportionate. Organised gangsterism is largely the work of practising Catholics. Secondly, the Church, always a specialist in the vilification of its enemies and in the creation and exploitation of anxiety, is the backbone of the hysterical anti-Communism which plagues the country at present. South America, after 400 years of Spanish Catholicism, has been reduced to an unbelievable condition of degradation. Mr. Pigott supplies details of the scandalous conditions, mainly from his own observations, as he has been visiting the continent in his profession as a sailor at various times over the last half-century.

Chapter VII is devoted to Popes Pius XI and Pius XII, and the details of their disastrous collaboration with the various Fascist regimes between the wars are tabulated.

The remainder of the book is devoted to the destructive effects of Roman Catholicism in terms of human resources, happiness and talents, and to the Vatican's role in keeping the Cold War active, and finally to the fraud and humbug of "Christian Unity."

Mr. Pigott has once again written a useful, timely and humane book. He writes courageously and without evasion or circumlocution, but also without personal animus or bigotry, distinguishing carefully between the Roman Catholic system and its victims. He provides a useful battery of carefully documented evidence which shows to any honest reader that when mankind's survival depends on a combination of reason and good will, the continued selfish mischief-making by a system of priestly fraud and imposture cannot be afforded. There is good reason to believe that this view is becoming clearer recently, and Mr. Pigott's book will do its part in the general enlightenment.

Finally, the book is attractively produced with telling photographs, and very reasonably priced. It deserves the widest diffusion possible.

A DEFINITION

Christianity: the greatest money-making scheme the Jews ever invented.

N. E. S. WEST (USA).

This Believing World

In one of the last programmes we heard of ATV's "Why I believe," Mr. Kenneth Harris questioned three of its clerical advisers about religion, and got three answers in about five minutes which must have added confusion to confusion even to believers. Naturally, they all wanted to bring God into everybody's homes, and one of them managed to get Jesus wedged in somehow, but what they all meant was another matter. In any case, how can even three parsons explain Christianity in five minutes? Perhaps they (or Mr. Harris) were expecting another miracle, a special one for the occasion.

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But apart from this, a comic interlude on religion, which so often invades Parliament, was the discussion in the House of Lords on what clergymen should wear when preaching God's Precious Word to the ignorant masses. The correct costume is most essential—especially the item which looks to most of us like a woman's frock. (Incidentally this may be a hangover from those far-off days when male and female gods were fervently worshipped). However, as a good Protestant, Lord Alexander of Hillsborough attacked any proposition to allow a parson—if he liked—to wear popish vestments, and he bluntly asked the Archbishop of Canterbury "Are you a Protestant?"—a question nearly all good Anglicans hate answering.

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But Dr. Ramsey declared he was and added in effect that a clergyman should be allowed to wear what he liked, a proposition which Lord Alexander hotly challenged, saying in his opinion, the vestments he objected to were those of the Mass, and he wanted to know if these vestments were allowed. "What is the use of having a Protestant Church?" Viscount Brentford thought "the Lords were asked to back the greatest appeasement since Munich," and he objected to any move "that nibbled away the foundations of the Anglican Church." All the same, the Lords were in favour of "popish vestments" by 86 votes to 15, and "unity" was a little further ahead.

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Every member of the Mothers' Union is a devout Christian, of course, and they all believe in loving neighbours like themselves—except, alas, when they are divorcees or unwed mothers. And they are backed up entirely by the Rev. N. Humphreys, vicar of Dalston, near Carlisle, who insists that Christian mothers who belong to a Mothers' Union must "not be too friendly with such people" (*Sunday Express*, June 28th). "Love ye one another" is not for them.

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We are sorry to say it, but the vicar's wife is aghast at his decision, and she insisted that such rules in the organisation "were archaic and completely out of touch with the times," though at the same time, she added, "There is no row between my husband and me. It is a purely theoretical argument." Thank God for that.

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Christian readers of "The Observer" (June 28th) must have been shocked at the article by John Grigg who, though he still retains "immense respect" for Roman Catholicism, wants England to stop teaching religion in schools, thus subsidising a number of "sects," and wants the state to stand for "an open non-sectarian (and, of course non-political) education." The state should have no special relationship "with any religion or any Church and it ought to give no financial support to schools other than its own."

Abortion Law Reform

ON JUNE 11th in the House of Commons, the Conservative MP for Hartlepoons, Commander J. S. Kerans suggested that it was time that the abortion law was reformed. "Surely," he said, "doctors in this country should have greater freedom—especially on eugenic and rape grounds—for operations?" The Home Secretary informed the Commander that "this was a highly controversial question." Then Mr. Brooke, replying to a further question from Mr. Kenneth Robinson (Labour, St. Pancras) doubted whether it was "now appropriate to introduce legislation to amend the Act." A few days later the Commander, two other Conservative MPs—Mr. Keith Stainton and Miss Jean Vickers—and three Labour MPs—Mrs. Bessie Braddock, Mr. W. W. Hamilton and Mr. R. W. Sorensen—sponsored a motion calling for a revision of the Offences Against the Person Act, 1861, "to clarify and liberalise the law, to reduce the havoc and danger of illegal abortion." On June 17th, Miss Vickers asked for parliamentary time "to revise the 1861 Act," but Mr. Selwyn Lloyd said that he had nothing to add to the Home Secretary's previous reply.

The Abortion Law Reform Association is preparing to launch a big campaign for the promotion of a Bill in the new Parliament, and is appealing for financial support—donations or subscriptions. The secretary is Mrs. D. E. Cassey, 19 Kenneth Court, 173 Kennington Road, London, S.E.11.

DE COURCY AND CHRISTIANITY

(Concluded from page 250)

type was little more than a dressing up of the extreme political and social right-wing in angelic robes, haloes and all. It is often urged that Freethinkers should drop their more negative opposition and seek to co-operate with Christians when any form of co-operation is possible. The present incident is a striking comment upon any such plea that may be brought forward. The Christians and their concrete organisations within society lack critical judgment, are too committed to the extreme right and are too ready to fall for the bend of James Bondism and Senator McCarthyism shown by the de Courcy racket. Could utter condemnation go further?

The whole incident is a standing condemnation in particular of any theory that Christians and Humanists or Freethinkers could co-operate upon such vital matters as education in the schools. Whatever may be the merits of individual Christian educationalists, it must be recalled that they represent institutions which drag along a tail of de Courcys and the like. But, in any case, there is a far wider and more general sphere within which refusal to co-operate would be more than wise. Perhaps it can best be put in this way. The next time that somebody turns up at the door and starts talking a blend of Queen and Country, of foreign espionage and Russian agents, of the Christian crusade against Communism and of really big business, the wise man will just recall that de Courcy got seven years and refuse to ask them over the threshold.

TEN NON-COMMANDMENTS

(A Humanist's Decalogue)
by RONALD FLETCHER
(recently appointed Professor of Sociology in the
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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

Notes and News

"TO HELL WITH THE DEVIL," our Views and Opinions this week, is slightly adapted from the first of several "pages in the case-book of Abraham T. Kovoor," which appeared in *The Ceylon Observer* last December and has been sent to us by Mr. Kovoor himself. Our regular readers will already know of Mr. Kovoor's reputation as a psychic investigator, as of his offer of 25,000 rupees for proof of "spirit" or supernatural phenomena. Those who had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Kovoor and his charming wife at the World Union of Freethinkers weekend conference at Beatrice Webb House, in September 1961, will recall his vivid account of the problems facing the Ceylon Rationalist Association of which he is the President.

WELL MIGHT British Labour MPs fear the consequences for Malta of the Independence Bill which was rushed through Parliament under the aegis of the Commonwealth and Colonial Secretary, Mr. Duncan Sandys. The protests varied from Mr. James Griffiths's plea that "some slight changes" be made to go "some way to meeting the Labour Party in Malta," to Mr. Tom Driberg's "much nearer a dictatorship than a democracy," but behind them all was the recognition that Archbishop Gonzi had won the day. As Mr. Driberg said, the constitution could be interpreted as entitling the Maltese Church to intervene in elections with every bit as much pressure as at the "last disgraceful rigged election." "The real fact is," said Mr. A. Duffy (Labour MP for Colne Valley) "that the Church won't get out of politics and won't give democracy a chance in Malta." The Archbishop was, Mr. Duffy added, "a man with a deplorable record, a man who is the Gold-water of Catholicism . . ."

THE FORMER editor of *The Catholic Herald*, Count Michael de la Bedoyere, who had just returned from Malta, also thought (in a letter to *The Guardian*, 23/7/64)

that the new constitution could only lead to "serious trouble, religiously and politically." From what he had seen and heard on the island, it seemed to this liberal Catholic that "the antique and unique Roman Catholic Establishment . . . was totally out of step with the position of the Catholic Church in Europe and America (with the exception in certain respects of Italy)." The Count—who spurred off the recent Catholic birth-control argument by printing an interview with Archbishop Roberts—overlooked the strongly conservative elements in the British and American hierarchy, and surprisingly forgot the Spanish, Portuguese and Irish Churches, but he had a point. The Maltese Church has, as he said, a "medieval mentality." And it was commendable of Count Michael de la Bedoyere to speak up for Dom Mintoff who "ceased to practise the Catholic faith" at "an early age" and would "certainly call himself an agnostic or free thinker."

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IT WAS painful—or laughable—by contrast, to read Mr. Hugh Kay's defence of Archbishop Gonzi a few days later (*The Guardian*, 27/7/64). The Count had erred, Mr. Kay said, in saying that Labour followers were liable to excommunication, but "Maltese priests have advised their people that it is sinful to vote for a party whose leader's intentions seem to aim a blow at the community's Christian foundation." That "advised" is choice. Has Mr. Kay read the Archbishop's fulminations, we wonder?

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THE SPREAD of Western culture among Malays has resulted in a sharp drop in attendances at Friday prayers in mosques, according to the Sultan of Kedah, state head of the Islamic religion. "We do not have even 50 per cent of the people attending these compulsory services," the Sultan told 750 religious heads, including imams, religious teachers and Kathis (*Straits Times*, 10/7/64). "Fancy such a situation arising in a distant corner of Malaysia," exclaimed the reader who sent us the cutting, Mr. Seevaretnan John, "particularly considering the strict injunctions of the tenets of Islam!" It confirms your view that the hold of religion is weakening in the modern world, he added.

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SOME YOUTH club leaders at Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire, have passed a resolution deploring the jokes cracked at a charity carnival by jazz musician Mr. Acker Bilk. In fact, Dennis Crisp a Roman Catholic youth club leader, was "staggered" that there hadn't been "a public outcry" (*Daily Mirror*, 24/7/64), and his wife explained that, "All evening Mr. Bilk was using the word 'sexy' It was unsavoury for young people to have to listen." The band leader had an apt comment on the complaints. "If the word 'sexy' is considered bawdy language," he said, "then I'm all in favour of bawdy language. Anybody in 1964 who finds the word 'sexy' objectionable must be pretty sexless." Or, we might add, a Catholic youth club leader.

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BERNARD LEVIN—writing in the *New Statesman* (17/7/64)—rightly ridiculed the Lord Chamberlain's latest interference with a Royal Shakespeare Company play at the Aldwych Theatre, London. Samuel Beckett's *endgame* contains a comment on the failure of a prayer, "*Le salaud! Il n'existe pas!*" which was translated as "The bastard! He doesn't exist!" It was blue-pencilled and replaced by "The swine! He doesn't exist!" Perhaps the Lord Chamberlain considered this the better translation; perhaps, as Mr. Levin remarked, it indicated "Fine shades of blasphemous difference," or was it just foolish? Anyway, it seems you can call God a swine, and Mr. Levin wondered "what it entitles us to call the Lord Chamberlain."

Arius and His Teaching

By AKIBA

CHRISTIANITY evolved painfully towards a Catholic dogma and a Roman-dominated Church. In its early history, it had to overcome the great heresiarchs who stood in the way of this evolution. Powerful historical figures such as Arius, Pelagius and Marcion undoubtedly played a principal part in moulding Christianity, even if the moulding was itself a product of a reaction against their doctrines.

Arius, born around 256 was a central figure in a controversy, the repercussions of which still remain a source of friction and argumentation within the Christian world to this very day. Regarded as the originator of the heresy known as Arianism, the facts of his life are reasonably well known.

He was born in Libya, and was a pupil of Lucian of Antioch before becoming a deacon at Alexandria under the Bishop Peter (300-311), only to be excommunicated for association with the schismatic Meletians. Restored under Achillas (311-312), he advanced to priesthood in charge of the church at Baucalis.

His first major conflict took place in 318, or 323 with Bishop Alexander (312-328). Alexander investigated his teaching. Shortly afterwards, Arius wrote to Eusebius of Caesaria, seeking his support, and the more famous Eusebius of Nicomedia, a statesman-bishop who had influence with Constantia, sister of the Emperor Constantine I and wife of Licinius.

Arius's teaching was then condemned by a synod of Alexandrian clergy. A few months later after attempts at reconciliation and compromise had failed, in February 325 he was again condemned at a synod at Antioch. This was quickly followed by the historic Council of Nicaea which met on May 20, and condemned Arius and his teaching.

He was banished by the emperor, but he continued to propagate his teachings, which, it might be added, have survived only through the accident of having been quoted and polemicised against — by Athanasius. Not long after 335, he presented a confession of faith sufficiently orthodox to have his case reconsidered, and is said to have died on the eve of the day when he was re-admitted to the Church by the synod of Jerusalem. It is, perhaps, of some interest to note that his friends were convinced that he had died through poisoning, and that his inveterate enemies held his death to be the act of a vengeful Providence (assisted by human hand?).

This briefly is a sketchy outline of the life of the founder of Arianism, which is to this day classified as a "heresy," the heresy that Christ, the Son of God was not God himself.

Arius's main work, written in verse and prose, is *Thalia* (The Banquet), which has come down only by way of polemical quotation; some caution must therefore be exercised before attributing to him and his school views which perhaps, have no basis in fact. The Encyclopedia Britannica (1963 Edition), attributes to his doctrine the "theory that Christ, the Son of God was not divine, but a created being," in the entry under "Arius," and under "Arianism," the belief "that Christ is not truly divine, but a creature ex nihilo who at one time did not exist."

This, in fact, is a misrepresentation of Arius's teaching, for he founded his doctrine on the Gnostic Introduction to the Gospel of St. John which begins (in the Authorised version): "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Other transla-

tions approximate closer to the literal text e.g. the Peshitta translation by George M. Lanza has it: "The Word was in the beginning, and that very word was with God" (*The Holy Bible from Ancient Eastern Manuscripts*); J. B. Phillips *The New Testament in Modern English* renders it as: "At the beginning God expressed himself. That personal expression, that Word, was with God and was God, and he existed with God from the beginning," and the New English Bible translates it as "when all things began, the Word already was, the Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was."

However, only Haldane and, surprisingly, the Jehovah's Witnesses have given the absolutely literal translation, "In a beginning was the Word, and the Word was with the God, and a god was the Word" (based on the interlineary reading of Benjamin Wilson's *Emphatic Diaglott*).

Clearly the Logos was not God with a capital "G," but "god." It was this "minor" change which casts light on the Arian controversy. It is significant that the traditions exemplified by Dionysius of Alexandria, Origen and Tertullian all laid emphasis on the scriptural subordination of the Son to the Father.

The Britannica comment on this point is unconsciously revealing: "Arianism, was the full flowering of the subordination that had been introduced into Christian theology in the 2nd century through the acceptance of the Logos as Word Christology, which tended to make the one Son an impersonal function of, and therefore inferior to the Father." In other words, Arianism represented the Old Guard traditions within the Church to the revolutionary trinitarian innovation forced through by the Council of Nicaea.

In the Arian doctrine, the Father was God and the Christ-Logos was the Son of God, a "god" co-eternal with the Father, and "proceeding from him," as light from the sun. The persistence of the so-called Arian "heresy"—the "heresy" being powerful even in the 7th century and beyond—suggests an explanation radically different from the one elaborated by orthodox Christians.

In fact, the Unitarians, recovering and re-establishing the 2nd century theology and Christology of the Christian Churches were doing nothing more than placing Arianism in its true historical setting, that is, in the mainstream of Christian development.

The truth is that it was the Athanasians who overthrew the orthodox 2nd- and early 3rd-century teachings of the Church Fathers, and it was at the Council of Nicaea that the trinitarian counter-revolution triumphed over the early traditions of the Church, which were later denounced as "Arianism." That such different persons as John Milton and Joseph Priestley even in this country, found in Arianism and Unitarianism, the true Christian theology, underlines the conviction that the truth about the 2nd-century Church cannot but be stumbled upon by anyone who takes the New Testament literally, as it was meant to be taken.

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A Mockery of International Understanding

By BOB CREW

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL exchanges, friendship leagues and their counterparts consume a considerable amount of time and effort, a limited amount of expense and a dubious amount of talent for no reason other than enabling people of different nationalities to stand around and gape at each other over cocktail glasses and be reminded how "different" they are. They are careful to avoid discussions related to the serious problems of colour prejudice, religious differences and racial habits which keep people apart. They avoid embarrassment they would do well to disperse.

The conversation is ever so polite and frequently inconsequential. The entertainment emphasises traditional differences (of which we are already aware from books and films) by demonstrating the respective peculiarities of dance, dress, culture and custom as they are practised in the nations concerned, and never allowing any time for constructive criticism or serious comment of what has been seen. Time only for praise and applause. Time is short. Drinks are few. The programme is rushed and the invitees are too many. Little is gained and much is lost.

People are impressionable. They go away reminded of how different they are; how the conversation lagged when anything serious was mooted (like differences in religion, politics, education, sex, etc.) and how it bubbled when frivolous topics were introduced; some clearly snubbed, some highly amused at the native dancing and others far too proud of their own cultural background to listen very attentively to the details of other cultures; how some people made invitations to spend a weekend with them; how others embarrassed everyone with their clumsy attempts to avoid making such invitations; how some people were too polite to be true, some passed catty remarks about the way in which others were dressed and, finally, how many people showed their ignorance.

This misguided method of bringing people together in "friendly appreciation of art and culture" is a celebrated one which suggests to me that time is being wasted whilst international understanding is made a mockery. Social hobnobbers from all over the world succeed only in imitating the follies of their political representatives, whilst the problems of their estrangement are pushed further into the background to the mere clink of a cocktail glass.

Copious literature is published on subjects related to culture, art, friendly appreciation, famous patrons, dignified vice-presidents and social activities—all weak tea and circumlocution! Possibilities for clear-cut understanding, practical expressions of goodwill, and proper intercourse between nations, are sacrificed for "friendly appreciation," as it is confined to those people who are considered by each other to be socially acceptable. They avoid soiling their literary fingers with publications on subjects related to their respective sociologically significant problems. Compared to the colour prejudice among many Britons as a result of a belief that it is the West Indians who bring venereal diseases into the country, international art and classical culture as seen through the bottom of cocktail glasses is not important and does little to bring foreign populations together.

I do not contend that all those devoted workers who bring about these exchanges are idiots. I think rather that they allow their efforts to be moulded into idiocy by the chatterboxes who support them. I imagine that they

allow this because it satisfies their egos to give of themselves something which they think mankind requires of them. They find it difficult to get an audience to do justice to the kind of work I say they are avoiding, so they give themselves to the popular requirement rather than not give at all. Probably they are quite aware of their limitations and think that they are best employed to do their little bit in the time available rather than look further afield for the answers. To some considerable extent, I believe that theirs are the generating shops of popular misconception and half-truth. The amateur diplomats are no better than the professionals.

Of course, many people who attend these gatherings do so purely for the social and business advantages to be gained from increasing their contacts with embassy officials, foreign diplomats, businessmen and better-off tourists. I doubt if they would entertain the idea of chatting with an Indian factory worker in a bus queue or with an African student in a coffee bar. They would be too busy!

Judging from the aims and objects stated in the terms of reference of such bodies, and from some personal experience of their functions, I cannot help thinking that they are farcical and pretentious. The sooner they are extinct the better.

Madalyn Murray

WE PUBLISHED on July 24th a letter from Madalyn Murray in which she made certain allegations against Lemoin Cree and other officers of the Freethought Society of America. We think it only fair therefore to present the Society's point of view, just received.

Time magazine for July 3rd, reports at page 74 on Mrs. Murray's recent activities. She has fled to Hawaii without consulting either the Directors of our organisation or its attorney. Since June 20th she has not co-operated with those who now carry on the litigation and the publishing which she started.

It is the undersigned who, with less than half a dozen volunteers, now continue the work which Madalyn began.

Be all that as it may, we hope that Madalyn will again serve our common cause. Although replaced as President and Editor by Mr. Lemoin Cree, she has been elected Chairman of the Board of Directors; we keep the door open for her.

The tax-church-property case was tried in Baltimore Circuit Court on July 1st, Mr. Cree testifying as plaintiff so skilfully as to earn plaudits from opposing attorneys. Defendants included not only the City of Baltimore but also the State of Maryland, the Catholic Archdiocese of Maryland, and the Episcopal Archdiocese of Maryland. A decision is expected in mid-September, whereupon the loser is sure to appeal to the Maryland Court of Appeals and ultimately to the Supreme Court of the United States. Should Mrs. Murray not be able to continue as a plaintiff, Mr. Cree will—and so will the Freethought Society of America as owner of the building at 2502 North Calvert Street, Baltimore, Maryland, 21218.

Lemoin Cree, President; George Hetzel, Vice-President; Vernon Steensland, Secretary; David J. Wayfield, Director; Freethought Society of America.

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Religion in Schools Debate

The speakers in the Havering [Essex] Humanist Society debate on "The Value of Christianity in Education" on July 7th were Dr. J. L. Whiteley, headmaster of East Ham Grammar School for Boys, and Mr. F. H. Amphlett Micklewright, lecturer and ex-clergyman.

Opening the debate, Dr. Whiteley said that a very great challenge was reflected in the failure of much of the religious teaching in schools. Although a Christian, he was far from being a fundamentalist. "I feel that the evangelical movement has little to say to modern man," he said. "I am on the side of the Bishop of Woolwich, and I accept our vast extension of knowledge."

If religious instruction was approached intelligently, children were very interested. They wanted opportunities for discussion, but they would not have authoritarianism. "We can show that Christianity's deep insight into man and his problems can be made relevant to them. I do not conceive it my duty to create more Christians, but to make youngsters understand more intelligently, and to leave the final decision to them. Finally, to lead them to the most satisfying ideal of all, that of serving our fellow men."

Dr. Whiteley concluded: "If the teaching of Christianity is to be of any real value in school it must be Bible-centred, intelligible and up-to-date, and must be made relevant to young people. I can only hope that the ferment going on about RE, and in the Churches, will result in Christianity making a better impact on the young than in the last 20 years."

Mr. Micklewright said that he agreed with Dr. Whiteley on some things, but he was astounded to hear them. Dr. Whiteley sided with the Bishop of Woolwich, for *Honest to God* was completely destructive of historical Christianity. The Bishop agreed that its basis was mythological. How could Christianity be made relevant? It was entirely irrelevant in a scientific age. He was surprised to hear that it should not be taught in an authoritarian way. Surely Christianity was authoritarian?

"Why must morality be associated with Christianity?" asked Mr. Micklewright. "Are morals divinely revealed, or are they the social expression of any particular given age? There is no such thing as a universal social ethic, and Christian ethics have varied enormously from age to age. Once you say that ethics must be set in a Christian framework, you are doing a grave disservice to ethics as a whole. We live in a secular state, with all sorts of beliefs, therefore ethics must be broad enough to cover all. When the time comes that intellectual arguments for Christianity can no longer be maintained, then the morality associated with it will collapse."

Historically, religion had entirely failed to influence morality for the better. When he studied the figures relating crime to religious belief, he found that Roman Catholics were responsible for a fantastic amount of juvenile and adult crime. The delinquency figures for Anglican schools were no better than those for state schools.

"Religion has fought every bit of new knowledge, on grounds of credal expediency," said Mr. Micklewright. "What does this say for truthfulness? When I read the history of this country, I find that religion has never been a force for social advancement. Peace? Apart from the Quakers, this is not a Christian idea. Slavery? The anti-slave movement originated with the atheists of the French Revolution. Emancipation of women? Entirely due to unbelievers like Shelley, Godwin and J. S. Mill."

The Gospel was a next-worldly philosophy, as was Paul's teaching. Both showed a lack of concern with worldly order. "The 20th century is increasingly turning to secular morality, that concern for human welfare and happiness. I want to see a compulsory, free and secular education; a race of people taught to face the issues of today, the issues of the only life we know."

Summing up, following discussion, Dr. Whiteley said: "Mr. Micklewright has been putting the arguments of 50 years ago. It is not fair to the modern Church, which is doing a lot to make its ethic socially relevant."

Mr. Micklewright replied: "The very fact that these things still have to be said shows how much the Humanist and Secularist movements still have to do. Christianity has hampered social advancement and is now breaking down. I want to see more light, but I do not see it coming through a return to any theological belief, which can only darken our way."

R. J. CONDON.

The Crimes of the Popes (A chapter from *The Crimes of Christianity* by G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler) Price 6d. postage 3d.

CORRESPONDENCE

CALVIN

Mr. F. A. Ridley rebukes Freethinkers—and presumably THE FREETHINKER—for paying too much attention to Shakespeare, at least at the expense of Galileo. Of course, Mr. Ridley, we know, cannot get out of his mind Shakespeare as a Tudor courtier! But surely the deficiency could have been remedied by Mr. Ridley himself paying tribute to Galileo.

What, instead, do we get? A tribute to Calvin, the murderer of the freethinking Servetus. "When judged by his intellectual influence, Calvin was undoubtedly a great man," says Mr. Ridley. Why, he even tried—unsuccessfully—to substitute decapitation for the burning of Servetus!

Mr. Ridley even tries to justify his "theological centenary" tribute to Calvin by arguing that "Calvinism is surely *de facto* atheism when pressed to its logical conclusion." More: we learn that the Genevan's "influence was so great and on the whole socially progressive enough to warrant a commemorative article."

I suggest that this is not F. A. Ridley the Freethinker speaking, but F. A. Ridley the political revolutionary (is it coincidence that Archibald Robertson should also have admired Calvin?). In fact, Calvin was nothing like so progressive as we are led to believe, and nothing like so liberal as, say, John Huss. He was influential, yes, but disastrously so. He was probably responsible for more human suffering than any other "reformer." I know, I'm a Scot.

ROBERT M. YOUNG.

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