

# The Freethinker

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AS THE autumn approaches, the world is awaiting a resumption of serious activities after the traditional silly season: a season impartially detested by journalists in Fleet Street and by grouse on the Northern moors. Soon the air will be thick with electioneering propaganda, most of it "propaganda for proper geese" as the late Professor Laski once wittily phrased it. In this country between the partisans of Home and Wilson in October, but far more important (for good Queen Victoria's golden days are now long over) in the American presidential election in November (where real issues of principle are involved) between the adherents of President Johnson and Senator Goldwater. But the fury of controversy will not be limited to matters of purely political consequence, for the Ecumenical Council of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ here upon earth, has also reassembled for a renewed season. And with this new session of the Second Vatican Council (as it is officially styled) comes the urgent need for making definitive and authoritative decisions.

## The First Vatican Council

As we have had occasion to note here before, this Vatican Council differs fundamentally from its prototype in 1869-70. For that was fundamentally and primarily a reactionary assembly, confirming the notorious syllabus of Pope Pius IX, that high (or low) watermark of intransigent orthodoxy, with its rescinding anathemas on all who declare and dare to affirm that the Roman pontiff can compromise with liberalism, with toleration and with progress (1864). The decision of this Council—only promulgated on July 18th, 1870, after stormy debate on the floor of the Council, and after much secret wire-pulling in which the English Archbishop (later Cardinal) Manning excelled—that attracted world-wide attention was the Jesuit-sponsored dogma of papal infallibility.

It is, of course, true though most of its critics, past and present, have apparently overlooked the point that the dogma of papal infallibility in itself is not necessarily reactionary. For it all depends on who the pope is and what the current circumstances may be: a fact that the late Pope John was subsequently to demonstrate convincingly. But in the hands of an ultra-reactionary like the pope who originally promulgated it, Pius IX (1846-70), papal infallibility served the immediate purposes of the most reactionary clerical interests. It was precisely for this reason that intellectual Catholics like Dollinger and Newman either openly opposed it or at least (in Newman's case) considered its proclamation inopportune. It was, ironically, only Newman's theory of the "development of Christian doctrine" that enabled the supporters of the dogma to by-pass tradition and proclaim it. "I am tradition" declared the pope himself.

It must, however, be pointed out that in the purely theological domain, the first Vatican Council took up a liberal and even rationalistic attitude. For it officially condemned fideism, the then widely-held belief that the

existence of God is only known through faith and cannot *ipso facto* be demonstrated by human reason. Since 1870, and thanks to this much-criticised Council, it has been the official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church that its fundamental doctrines (principally the existence of God and the immortality of the soul) can and must be demonstrated by reason before they can be accepted by faith—a theological revolution in its way and day! For

reason is now as necessary as faith (Cf. Joseph McCabe: *Twelve Years in a Monastery* and Fr. Bernard Boedder S. J.). However, despite this excursion into rationalism, it would be generally true to say that the first Vatican Council represented a vic-

tory for reaction and for medievalism within the Church.

## The Second Vatican Council

The case with regard to the second Vatican Council is fundamentally different. How far it will actually succeed in modernising a still overwhelmingly medieval institution like Rome is anybody's guess, but it is certainly trying seriously to do so. It was in fact initially called together for that avowed purpose by the late Pope John (1958-63) It was to give the Church a line to pursue in face of problems that range from biblical criticism to birth control, mostly of recent origin and quite unknown to the Fathers of the Church or its standard authorities in medieval times such as Thomas Aquinas and Cardinal Bellarmine, or even that modern reforming predecessor of Pope John, Leo XIII (1878-1903).

### Reform

Pope John was an avowedly reforming pope, in his own words, "a revolutionary pope," and the essence of this papal "revolution" was to transform the Roman Catholic Church from what it has been since the Jesuit-led Counter-Reformation, a 16th century Church, into a contemporary 20th-century one. Incidentally, it constitutes a fresh proof, if one is really needed, of the amazing versatility of the Jesuits, who led the Counter-Reformation of the 16th century and also secured the adoption of papal infallibility in the first Vatican Council in 1870, and who, today, appear to occupy the leading role in Pope John's contemporary papal revolution. One of the most important results of this may eventually turn out to be the substitution of the Jesuit evolutionist, Teilhard de Chardin for the now hopelessly superannuated medievalist Thomas Aquinas, as the Church's leading philosopher.

Be that as it may, and whatever role the Jesuits may play in it, the primary purpose of the present Vatican Council is totally different from that of its 1870 predecessor. It is a reforming council, aiming to reorientate the still world-wide Catholic Church from medievalism to modernism, from the age of faith to what the Vatican now recognises as being the age of atheism, in which the Church must either make good its 1870 affirmation that the existence of God can be proved by reason or else face ultimate extinction in a godless universe. The success or failure of the Second Vatican Council can and will be

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### The Two Vatican Councils

By F. A. RIDLEY

ultimately estimated by its success or failure in this fundamental respect.

### The Evolution of Catholicism

In an admirable booklet now unfortunately out of print, an ex-Catholic Protestant, Dr. L. H. Lehmann, gave a masterly précis of the evolution of Catholicism. Inside the Church of Rome there have always been two conflicting parties, or rather tendencies: what we may term the conservatives, who rigidly adhere to tradition and fiercely oppose all attempts at change, and the liberals who continually try to bring the Church up to date by successively modernising its traditional beliefs. For example, Pius IX and Pius XII (John's immediate predecessor) were conspicuous examples of the former tendency within the Church; John and his earlier predecessor Leo XIII (the author of *Rerum Novarum*) were equally conspicuous examples of the latter liberal one. (The present Pope seems to be a middle-of-the-road man). As Dr. Lehmann then proceeded to demonstrate, both

parties agree strategically, but they disagree tactically. They both aim at the growth and preservation of the world-power of Holy Church, but they disagree in how to promote the interests of the Church in the given era: whether to resist current evolution or to compromise with it. The first Vatican Council (like the earliest Council of Trent at the Counter-Reformation) was dominated by reaction, whereas the second one represents what is perhaps the most far-reaching attempt to bring Catholicism into line with contemporary progress that has ever been known in the annals of Christianity. Its effective motto is, "If you can't beat them, join them."

*Footnote:* We are fortunate to possess a day-to-day account of the proceedings of the first Vatican Council probably ranking as the finest report ever given of any ecclesiastical assembly. Entitled *Six Months at Rome*, it was the work of a bishop of the opposition to papal infallibility who concealed his identity under the pseudonym of Pomponio Leto, an Italian Humanist of the Renaissance. The book was promptly placed on the Index.

## The Heart of the Muddle

By D. A. DALE

IN "THE UNTAMED YEARS" (THE FREETHINKER, July 31st), Mr. Arthur Francis asked, "Why can't the writer put his point in plain language instead of the high-falutin' stuff?" And I suppose the short answer is, "Because he can't!" One has to be very "fly" indeed to discuss "Why people ever believed in God," for example, in really plain language. Chapman Cohen could do it, Bernard Hart in his *Psychology of Insanity* could do it—but the great Bradlaugh could *not* do it in his *Plea for Atheism*, where we get a syllogistic and metaphysical argument which is really too "slick."

I suppose the reason why primitive man believed in the gods was because he could see no other explanation of the world in which he lived. Thus he thought there was a god in the sun, or that the sun was god, and the same went for the sea, the earth, trees, the moon, the planets, war, love, birth, marriage, death, and so on. Eventually all these were combined under the thumb of one unskilled operator, who is known to the Christians, for example, as "God," or to the late William Blake as "Old Nobodaddy Aloft!"

But to-day many people are more interested in the amazing adverts in such a paper as *Prediction*, and some of the claims of these adverts would raise a smile on the face of "the missing link," for he could hardly be much less with science than a great percentage of the British public is in 1964! Sir James Frazer was right when he said that the veneer of modern "civilisation" was frightfully thin, and that you only had to scratch the modern man to find the primitive savage underneath.

Actually the unbeliever is the greatest friend that "God" has. Taking a look round the world and its inhabitants, by and large, the unbeliever cannot conceive of any (good) god, making such an inefficient, cruel, and ghastly mess of the job. As Chapman Cohen pointed out, if the Christians maintained that their god was All Bad, they would have a slightly stronger case to argue! If I see anybody praying, I say to myself, "It is ten millions to one that you don't know the official arguments for believing in God, nor do you know the philosophical arguments for *not* believing in God!"

We know that most of the people in the world are undernourished, under-clothed, under-housed, and uneducated—and yet our "leaders" (rulers would be a better

word) are always striving for better bombs, and the rest—and "The Best People" (as I believe they call themselves) carry on with their "huntin', shootin', fishin'." A decent Christian might wonder why God does not give these people better characters so that they do not care to do these things. But perhaps the Christians think that God believes that such conduct is all right! It is difficult to see how we can stop our taxes being used for the greatest arms race of all time—but at least we can say in the plainest English that we "think very little to it"—as they say in "famous Cambridgeshire."

I agree with Mr. Francis that we should express our thoughts as well as merely think them. We have somehow got to get the popular press to take up our cause.

As Mr. Francis suggests, "religion is the opium of the people," as Karl Marx opined. If only the ruling classes were sane, we might get a sane world. Unfortunately, only one country has to have criminal lunatics as rulers, and all the other countries have to "do armaments research" in self defence.

Like Mr. Francis, I also have a very strong wish for tomorrow on this earth—not in "thy infinite telescopic heavens"—or whatever William Blake wrote—the exact words escape me at this point.

Sir Henry Royce, mechanic, said:—"You can't be an engineer and believe in God." And that could do with analysing too. As Lecturer on the History and Construction of Locks under the LCC I have already dealt with "Lock Inventors and God" and "God and Joseph Bramah" (the Lockmaker) for Chapman Cohen, in the columns of THE FREETHINKER, some 24 years ago.

### ADRIAN PIGOTT

IT IS WITH deep regret that we announce the death, on September 9th, following an operation, of Adrian Pigott, occasional welcome contributor to this paper and author of *Freedom's Foe: the Vatican* (now in its fifth edition) and *The Vatican versus Mankind* (published this year).

Mr. Pigott, who was 73 years of age, had been a Commander in the Royal Navy. He leaves a wife and two sons, to whom we express our deepest sympathy. In accordance with Mr. Pigott's wishes, the cremation was private and without ceremony.

A tribute by D. J. McConalogue will appear next week.

# Comments on the Ecumenical Council

By ELIZABETH COLLINS

ECUMENICAL COUNCILS could be called the distress-signals of the Catholic Church. Popes call these councils into action whenever the Church is seriously threatened or opposed by nations, groups, or individuals. To imagine them as primarily concerned with religious affairs is an illusion. Their first purpose is political. By unremitting pressure on governments to ensure that Vatican influence is decisively felt, principally in the educational field. Especially is this necessary when the Church is losing ground and is on the defensive. Its second purpose is propaganda. By staging a dramatic ceremonial gathering it hopes to rally the faithful, and to focus attention on what it maintains is its supra-national role in world affairs.

Today, with improved educational facilities, press, and radio communications, not to mention increase in travel, archaeological and historical research, the Catholic position is being gradually undermined. Pope John saw which way the tide was running, and that the Church needed allies. An Ecumenical Council was the answer, and a get-together with the Protestants. Pope Paul went even further, and decided that such unity requires old enmities to be abandoned. Therefore we have the friendly gesture towards the Jews, so that in face of the new peril to the faith—atheism—they are no longer denigrated and abused. Protestants, who have endured so much as heretics, are now "our separated brethren" and can be tolerated (up to a point).

By this time we are used to popes and cardinals appealing for peace and unity, but they never get further than words, they take no practical step to bring about either. Malta is one case in point where the Church is obstructionist. Family planning is another, and those instances could be multiplied many times. The signs are that this Council will achieve nothing, and will only end by loudly condemning what it calls "Godlessness."

Even a cursory glance through accounts and objects of the previous twenty Ecumenical Councils will tell us much of the Church's dubious manoeuvrings, interdicts, intimidations, and arrogant self-assumption of power, which have produced unprecedented evil, misery, and bloodshed. Why? And for what purpose it may be asked? Power. Just power. Ever since the Christian Church was legally sanctioned by Constantine—and that was really only a permit to have the same rights as other religions in the state—it has sought supreme power by any and all means.

Heresy was its usual pretext for doing so in the past. Today it is atheism. To assume that the talk of unity really means anything is naive in the extreme. It is merely expediency—a sort of softening-up process which the Papacy is so expert at. To regard it seriously as a change of heart, as so many Protestants and others do, is to show little acquaintance with history. The Roman Catholic Church never has a change of heart, only a change of tactics. Never does it deviate one iota from its policy of achieving ultimate world domination, and any relaxation of opposition to it will be a fatal mistake.

Even so, Rome has her troubles, and the Ecumenical Council is a sign of them. Let us take a look at some of the reasons that called other Councils into being starting with the Council of Nicaea, 325 AD, which lasted two months and twelve days, convened to deal with the Arian heresy which it condemned in spite of the large following of Arius, and which split the Church. The Council of Constantinople, 381 AD, was for the denunciation of those

who questioned the divinity of the Holy Ghost, Ephesus, 431 AD, for the condemnation of Nestorius and Pelagius, and so on council after council. Chalcedon, 451 AD, to excommunicate Etychus. Always to condemn or excommunicate those who questioned its doctrines or authority, or who censured the wealth pomp, and luxury of the higher clergy.

The seventh Council held at Nicaea in 787 AD, regulated the veneration of holy images, a thing abhorrent, one would have thought, to those who formerly had poured scorn upon the pagans and their images. But expediency was beginning to be the order of the day. At the ninth Council, which was the first to be held in Rome at the Lateran, 1122 AD, presided over by Pope Callistus and attended by 900 bishops, we catch the first glimmerings of the bid for world power. That Council abolished the right of lay princes to investiture with ring and crozier. As most of those same princes were practically illiterate and highly superstitious, it was easy to impose that as a divine command. The object of the 1139 Lateran convened by Innocent II, was to deal with the "errors" of a notable man who was becoming a danger to the Papacy—Arnold of Brescia. His aim was to put an end to clerical corruption, and to terminate the secular power of the hierarchy. Arnold was a pious monk who led a rapidly spreading democratic movement in Italy, its main demands being that the pope and bishops should give up their immense wealth and power, and revert to simple Christianity. For that Arnold was hanged, his body burnt, and cast into the Tiber. Repercussion was the rise of the Albigensian and Waldensian movements which the next two Councils were called to deal with in 1179 and 1215. The latter, known as the 4th Lateran was actually the 12th Ecumenical, which framed further indictments against the Albigensians, and condemned "Trinitarian errors." It really marked the zenith of papal power, although this still remained formidable.

The business of the 13th, the Council of Lyons, 1245 AD, was mainly to depose the Emperor Frederick II and to direct St. Louis of France to undertake a new crusade. So we reach the famous Council of Constance, 1414-18, which deposed the notorious Pope John XXIII (1), issued a decree against Wycliffe and burned Huss. Another momentous gathering was the Council of Trent 1562-3, assembled under the joint jurisdiction of the pope and Charles V, when owing to Luther the Church was really faced with a major revolt, and was losing ground all over Europe, similar to the situation facing it today. That Council condemned Luther, and issued a number of dogmatic decrees mainly to define doctrine and to be of use to the Inquisition.

The famous 20th Council, Vatican 1869-70, was really convened to denounce liberalism and to promote the dogma of papal infallibility, and probably with a hope that the Catholic powers would be sufficiently impressed to intervene militarily and protect the Papal States against Victor Emmanuel. That was a forlorn hope. The States were an anachronism in the modern world, no longer to be left to a muddled and rapacious papal government. The Council, attended by some 800 bishops, was presided over by Pius IX, assisted by his crafty Secretary of State Antonelli, and they were determined that the infallibility measure should be carried, in spite of considerable opposition to it. As justification for the dogma it was pleaded

(Concluded on page 300)

## This Believing World

If either of the two radio journals the *Radio Times* or the *TV Times* happens to publish an unbeliever's letter, immediately a shoal of letters from true believers pour in in hot protest. One of the latest of these came from a Mr. G. L. Pine (*TV Times* August 16th), who is very angry that anybody still believes in evolution, and strongly objects to the Bible being contrasted with Darwin "to the constant detriment of the former." And he appears to be still more angry that so little is said to show "that the Christian faith still subsisted."

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While there is, of course, "no proof of the truth of the theory of Evolution," we must never forget, he tells us, it was known to Christian writers like Origen and Augustine; and even Newman used it to "applied theology." And Mr. Pine finds it hard to believe that there are still people who believe in "unproven Evolution" and refuse "to accept the far better authenticated truth of the existence of God and his creation and redemption of man." Mr. Pine appears to have been born 100 years too late.

★  
In a recent interview, Lord Thomson of Fleet, the press tycoon, was not afraid to say that he had no religion—though naturally he believed in justice, love, etc., purely human qualities. Whether this will evoke angry replies we do not know, but we are never surprised to find so many people interviewed on TV and the radio who have no, or so very little, belief. Moreover, we know that this applies to many of the interviewees, too.

★  
An almost completely unknown woman, Mrs. Jeane Dixon, has now joined the immortal company of world famous "seers" for her "prophesying the death of President Kennedy—a prophecy which proves beyond a doubt that she was "divinely inspired." Once the silly legend got started, journalists began to vie with each other in according her even more than divine inspiration as, for example, Mr. Iain Smith, in the *Daily Mail* (August 28th) who heads his article, "This Amazing Record of the Woman Seer."

★  
Some weeks ago Mrs. Dixon informed the world that the Beatles were to die on September 3rd or 4th, and we regret to add that even Mr. Smith did not believe in this prophecy, in spite of Mrs. Dixon's "amazing record." Why not? Alas, the prophecy was just a bit too precise for even a worshipper like him to swallow. The Beatles are still alive, naturally, but we are sure that this particular prophecy will either be completely disowned, or very sadly regarded as one of the failures of Mrs. Dixon's divine powers as Seer. And it may well be that from now on we shall be told that her "amazing" power has gone for ever! The latest report, we understand, is that Mrs. Dixon had a second "vision" which contradicted the first. The Beatles were not going to die, after all. Apparently she realised she had been too precise!

### DEBATE

ALLIANCE HALL, CAXTON STREET, LONDON, S.W.1  
(nearest Underground, St. James's Park)

THURSDAY, 24th SEPTEMBER, 7.45 p.m.

DAVID TRIBE, *President, National Secular Society,*

and

HAROLD LEGERTON, *Secretary, Lord's Day Observance Society*

"That the Sunday Observance Laws Should be Abolished."

## COMMENTS ON ECUMENICAL COUNCILS

(Concluded from page 299)

that the state of the world was such that Catholics needed a safe guide! The outcome of the present Council cannot be foretold with any accuracy. Unity will be much talked of as in the past, without positive result. Philip of Spain's forcible attempt to reunite Europe in the faith was even backed by Sixtus V to the tune of a million golden ducats. but owing to the failure of the Armada enterprise he was never called upon to pay. No doubt an appeal for unity will go forth accompanied by a stern denunciation of atheism and "Godless materialism," which will be declared the enemy. An enemy presenting a dangerous challenge to the Catholic Church, notwithstanding the fact that with its own vast commercial, industrial, and banking interests, there is no more materially minded power in the world today.

### THEATRE

#### "The Brig"

*The Brig*, presented by the Living Theatre of New York at the Mermaid Theatre, London, is a most remarkable production and a savage exposure of a military prison for US Marines in Japan, of which the author, Kenneth H. Brown, writes from first-hand knowledge. As theatre it is an overwhelming experience hammering against one's eardrums and battering the emotions into exhaustion.

The prison regime is staggeringly brutal. It seems deliberately designed to drive its victims mad. The guards continually shout at the prisoners, and the prisoners are made to shout back. Their quarters are divided up by white lines, which they always have to be crossing and recrossing, yelling for permission every time. Everything is done in mad haste, the routine for every action prescribed to make it as exhausting and uncomfortable as possible so that the victim is under unremitting strain, in a frantic and impossible effort to satisfy the guards. These, however, cannot be satisfied, because they do not wish to be; they are continually picking on one or another prisoner to ridicule or beat up. Typical is the sequence where they fluster and terrify a man into dropping some spades, and then punish him brutally for dropping them. Even at night the prisoners cannot relax, for anyone is liable to be called from his bed to be shouted at and punched in the belly.

*The Brig* has no plot. It has been said that the sequence where one man breaks down completely is an unworthy concession to audience-demand for dramatic incident. I do not think so. This seems to me to be the logical end of the system. Mental breakdown must be a regular occurrence. There could hardly be any plot in the usual sense. There is little characterisation. The guards appear to us, as they must to the prisoners, a single undifferentiated body with four heads. The prisoners cannot speak to each other, and not a glance could be exchanged without attracting the attention of a guard. Living crowded together though they are, each must live in his own private world of misery, trying only not to be noticed, reduced to hoping that someone else will be the recipient of the next shower of punishments and blows. Perhaps it is this feeling that is conveyed to the spectator; one becomes highly involved in the action, while remaining isolated from the actual characters, as they are from each other.

Much of the so-called Theatre of Cruelty is open brutality for its own sake, with characters and incidents equally contrived and incredible. Here we have a play about cruelty which demands to be written, seen and thought about. What sort of people plan a hell like this, and coldly write down the regulations which govern it? What sort of people are the guards who enjoy running it? How deep rooted in American life is this sort of brutality, and how much of it exists in our own country? These questions are not posed or discussed in the play, but they are suggested by it, and may remain long in our minds. To me the most shocking thing of all was the statement made after the play by a teacher, who said that she had frequently seen similar displays of sadism by youngsters in the playgrounds of our own schools.

*The Brig* is not a great play—to read it would probably be nothing—but it is a great production, and seeing it is a dramatic experience which will not easily be forgotten. One cannot pick out individuals, but the acting is uniformly superb. It does not offer a pleasant night out, but those who can stand such an attack on their nerves should not miss it.

MARGARET McILROY.

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY 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), Sunday, September 20th, 6.45 p.m.: E. TAYLOR, "Religion and Prehistory."

Havering Humanist Society (Harolds Wood Social Centre, Squirrels Heath Road), Tuesday, September 22nd, 8 p.m.: HECTOR HAWTON, "What Humanism Has to Offer."

Sutton Humanist Group (Red Cross House, Carshalton Beeches), Saturday, September 19th, 7.45 p.m.: "Humanism and the Scientific Revolution"—Reports from the BHA Conference.

## Notes and News

AS THE SECOND Vatican Council reassembles, F. A. Ridley contrasts it with the first Council of that name held in 1869-70, when the dogma of papal infallibility was proclaimed, and Elizabeth Collins looks back at the other Ecumenical Councils of the Catholic Church. Mr. Ridley's and Mrs. Collins's articles will provide, we believe, a useful historical background to the events in St. Peter's in the months ahead.

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"THE AMERICAN dice player who prays for a double six to come up in a crap game is really trying to apply psychokinesis," wrote Roy Perrott in his report on the seventh annual convention of the Parapsychological Association in Oxford (*The Observer*, 6/9/64). The notorious infrequency of double sixes leads, we suggest, to the conclusion that neither prayer nor psychokinesis is effective. But not for parapsychologists like Mr. H. Vorwald, a Swedish engineer, who has tried to show that he can "will" his dice to fall to the right or left of a marked table when projected from a mechanical thrower and has apparently had satisfactory results." If that seems trifling, turn to the well-tried—and found—wanting—field of telepathy. Here, as in more crucial matters, America vies with Russia. Mr. Douglas Deane, also an engineer,

told the convention how he had transmitted telepathic messages over a distance of 1,200 miles, thus beating Leningrad University's Dr. Vasiliev's widely-publicised 1,100 miles, but not the much-vouched-for messages to England from aunts in Australia. And we mustn't forget that Dr. Vasiliev threw in hypnosis for good measure! The delegates at Oxford, Mr. Perrott informed us, included psychologists, psychiatrists and other medical men, and philosophers "generally of a serious scientific calibre."

★

"CAUTIOUS AS A CARDINAL," is how *The Guardian's* Rome Correspondent, George Armstrong, described the late Palmiro Togliatti. While the Chinese Communists' views might be "erroneous and ruinous," Signor Togliatti had strong reservations about the calling of an international meeting of Communist parties to condemn the Chinese heresy. Especially as a "not insignificant number of parties" would be absent from the conference. Chinese and Albanian attacks against the Soviet Union and Mr. Khrushchev personally had not, anyway, been effective among the masses. The prestige of the Soviet Union remained high. In Italy, moreover, Togliatti had a special problem, because the poor peasants had been taught that the Chinese revolution was a peasants' revolution, and his party had to hold meetings to explain the Chinese "deviation." It looks now as though the party will have a little more explaining to do, for in this, his last message, Togliatti called on his comrades to stop preaching atheism and to adopt a new approach when dealing with Roman Catholics. Some naive Italian Communists might still be under the impression that religion is the opium of the people and that the priests were the chief dispensers of the drug.

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IN SUPPORTING the remarks of Professor A. S. Parkes and others on world population at the British Association, the National Secular Society has again drawn attention to the neglect of the overpopulation factor by the Freedom from Hunger Campaign. "While humane considerations urge us to take care of those who are physically and mentally distressed or neglected by their own families," the Society said in a recent press release, "equally humane considerations urge us to limit the birth of such unfortunate people wherever possible. Research in eugenics and an attempt to see that all babies are wanted babies would be important, even if there were no shortage of food. We must have regard for the quality as well as the quantity of life."

★

THE NUMBER of known species of insects is not far short of a million—greater than the total number of species of all other animals and plants—and several new ones are being discovered, named and described every year. The study of insects has—as the *New Scientist* remarked (9/7/64) on the occasion of the Twelfth International Congress of Entomology—contributed a great deal to biology in general and especially to biochemistry. Hormones that induce growth and moulting have been traced to a steroid derived from cholesterol; "colour changes, diurnal rhythms of activity, the rate of heart beat and the movement of other visceral organs are all regulated by identifiable hormones, many of them derived from non-secretory cells." Moreover, as Professor V. B. Wigglesworth pointed out in his opening address to the Congress in London, the controlling factor in metamorphosis—the development from egg to adult insect via the larval and pupal stages—is the presence or absence of a glandular secretion known as the juvenile hormone. There is no place for vitalism in entomology today.

## Re X: Religion and the Law

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

THE CASE of *re X*, reported in the *Guardian* for August 1st, is a judgment which no Freethinker must overlook, owing to the importance of its implications. Briefly, the facts are that both parents had been members for some years of a sect called the Exclusive Brethren, a body of biblical fundamentalists of an extremely Protestant kind. About 1960, the direction of the sect fell into the hands of an American, Jim Taylor, Jnr. Under this new leadership, there was introduced at Taylor's behest a principle of segregation under which members must have as little contact as possible with non-members. In particular, they were not to eat and drink together and, in future, believer and unbeliever must be as strangers within the same family.

The father in the present case withdrew from the sect in 1960 owing to the introduction of this new tenet. He does not seem to have changed his original religious and moral beliefs. His wife was thus segregated from him and, in 1962, she left her husband, taking her daughter with her. The child has not been allowed since then to eat or play with children of other beliefs. Thus, she has had few friends whilst she has been regularly indoctrinated at meetings of the sect. Her father was naturally worried and, as he could make a home for himself and the child with his mother, he sought custody of his daughter in the Chancery Division. The case was defended and led to an important judgment by Mr. Justice Pennycuik.

The learned judge remarked that the wife had ruined her own life, that of her husband and that of the child because of her religious convictions. He seized upon the principle of separation. "It seems to me that this limitation is one which must be odious to the vast majority of people living in the circumstances of today." The judge went on to give judgment in favour of the father, saying: "She must go back to her father who will not insist upon the principle of separation. I have no doubt that it is for her benefit that this order should be made without delay."

The case of *re X* is of outstanding importance. Usually, the High Court will not delve into the niceties of theological doctrines. It is content to deal with property or contractual rights, whatever the tenets of the sect might be. But, in this case, a judge of the High Court has decided that a doctrine may be repugnant and socially undesirable and he has shown himself willing to act upon the presupposition. His judgment will afford a precedent for the many other cases where Jim Taylor and his supporters have interfered with domestic life. The press has recorded case after case during recent months of families divided, businesses affected and careers spoiled at the outset through the intervention of this clique of fanatics with their principle of separation. Mr. Justice Pennycuik has described the principle itself as "odious" and his judgment must have great persuasive force in any case in which it may be possible to challenge this group in a court of law. The law of both contract and of tort might well afford a way of extending the judge's attitude in *re X* over wider fields. It would certainly be worth while to consider the legal implications of the point.

Again, Mr. Justice Pennycuik has shown that, where religious beliefs in general are concerned, the High Court does not have to exercise a "self-denying ordinance." It would seem that it is quite ready to interfere far beyond the sect of the Exclusive Brethren when any doctrine has

anti-social effects, if these effects can be proved. The nervous and sensitive child may well be a victim; a fact brought out strongly by such a book as L. P. Jacks's *From Authority to Freedom* or Sir Edmund Gosse's *Father and Son*. It would not seem to matter in law or in Equity whether or not the doctrine has a long history or tradition behind it. After all, Jim Taylor, if he had been called as an expert witness, could possibly have contended with some force that there is a good deal which points in the way of separation in the Pauline Epistles, whilst the Church of Rome has never been particularly accommodating towards heretics and unbelievers. But some such conception as a material representation of the fires of Hell beloved by Catholic and Protestant alike, and as found in both Jonathan Edwards and Father Furniss, would probably have the most anti-social results. So too could some interpretations of ideas of election and predestination or of the doctrine of the atonement through the blood of Christ. So long as it can be proved that the anti-social and harmful results move against a particular person, a case lies in Equity for the equitable remedies of injunction or of specific performance. The judgment by Mr. Justice Pennycuik in *re X* opens up the most important legal speculations in this regard. Theological doctrine, if it offends in this way, clearly lies under the jurisdiction of the High Court. It should be remembered that, when dealing with equitable rules, the Chancery Division has a discretionary power whilst, in cases concerning children, the Court will take the line that the benefit of the child is the primary consideration, the point urged by Mr. Justice Pennycuik in *re X*. Certainly, the whole case has opened up fields of legal possibility which may prove to be most helpful to the Freethinker in the long run.

There is one further point which should be pressed. In the matter of the entry of aliens into this country or of length of visits here, the Home Secretary follows a ground plan of certain rules, but he has very wide discretionary powers where an individual is concerned. The cases of Dr. Soblen or of Chief Enaharo will be readily recalled. Taylor is an alien, an American citizen. The question may well be asked whether the time has not arrived for the Home Office to ban Taylor and his satellites from this country as undesirable aliens. They propagate a doctrine which a High Court judge has branded as being odious and anti-social. Case after case has appeared in the press of homes ruined through this doctrine and of lives blighted in one direction or another. The practical results are so tragic that it is not an act of religious intolerance to urge that such teaching is merely not wanted in this country. Political and social agitators have frequently been excluded in the past. This man Taylor may describe himself as a religious leader but he is a social agitator who has effective and devastating results upon a certain number of individuals in a manner castigated by the High Court of the realm. It would appear most desirable for the well-being of society as a whole if the Home Office would tell Mr. Taylor that, owing to the judgment of Mr. Justice Pennycuik, he is not wanted in this country. A strong line of action is called for against this most extreme example of anti-social religious propagandism.

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# Education for Death

By GILLIAN HAWTIN

WHAT GOES ON IN Catholic schools? I received all my senior schooling in a convent school, and subsequently taught for a number of years in girls' Catholic grammar schools. Since I returned to the atheism of my parents and of my grandparents, fellow sceptics sometimes ask me what goes on in convent schools.

If you were to go into any of the convent high schools run by the major teaching orders, as indeed HM Inspectors do, you would probably be impressed by spacious and well-equipped classrooms, laboratories and gymnasias, the efficiency of cultured and well-qualified nuns, the tasteful and aesthetic appearance of it all. The chief difference from a non-denominational or Protestant opposite number would be the crucifix in each classroom, the greater number of religious pictures, and, probably, the greater quietness and higher standard of politeness of the girls! As in most other schools, the child's own capacity would be the only limit to what she could obtain from her education.

Well, if this is the situation, why oppose these schools? No dingy form-rooms, no abysmally bad teaching, but cheerful children and dedication and purpose. Convent schools vary in quality (like all others) but there are no walled up nuns! What, then, goes on in Catholic schools? Why! denominational schooling—just that!

The nun will probably tuck up her skirts and play tennis in the holidays, or even go swimming from a secluded beach. She will be sent to art galleries and museums, given pocket money for books and slides (which can never, of course, become her personal property) and attend summer schools and holiday courses to keep abreast of modern teaching methods and to increase her knowledge of her subject. The nun's life is specially devoted to every aspect of the welfare (as she sees it) of her pupils, and when they are grown up, qualified, married, they will come back to visit her and discuss their careers, or families.

Cultural activities are rarely, in my experience, neglected in Catholic schools. There are visits by school parties to theatres and museums, and lecturers coming to the school on art, music, travel; many schools will possess a movie projector and a sound track. All the usual examinations, and university entrance, will be taken, and these being set by external examining bodies, the children face the same competition as in other schools.

Now it is quite vital that such schools be seen in the eyes of the world to offer a high level in the secular field. Poison chocolates should have a picture on the box and a piece of satin ribbon. A rusty tin would warn you off, wouldn't it? The external state forces these schools to be up to scratch in the secular field. But this is not their *raison d'être*. The purpose of keeping hold of their schools is to teach Christianity, to plug Christianity, to mould the child during all its long formative period because Christianity is a complete way of life, a *weltanschauung*. Denominational education is to make sure nothing is taught conflicting with Catholic views on birth-control, divorce, evolution, history, and any controversial question, all of which will be freely and frankly discussed in senior forms.

Is all this obvious? It is frequently forgotten! The Catholic makes sacrifices and fights strenuously to have

his own schools to propagate and maintain the "purity" of his own doctrines. It is good to get a university degree, to be informed on secular subjects, but what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul? Here below we have 70-80 years at most; after is eternity. Death, judgment, Heaven, Hell. Adam sinned: Christ atoned for mankind and instituted the sacraments as channels of grace. Christianity is the Fall, Atonement and Redemption. Christian and Catholic education is the preparation for the next world. As H. O. Evenett expresses it in *The Catholic school of England and Wales*, (Cambridge University Press, 1944), it is education for death. If, as a Freethinker, the reader considers Adam and Eve a myth, evolution a fact, the historicity of Jesus at least doubtful, the existence of an after-life entirely unproven, this life the only one for strife and endeavour, the sacraments hocus-pocus and magic, what can he think of such an idea of "education"?

The whole thing is geared to a world which does not exist! It is for this that the Catholic parents and clergy demand 100 per cent subsidy. Non-Catholics think this arrogant. Now it is essential to grasp that the Catholic does not think it arrogant at all, but clear, sober justice. If you are a Protestant you pay rates and go to a Protestant school. If you are agnostic you pay rates, send your child to a non-denominational school and withdraw him from any assembly and R.I. "But," says the Catholic, "I pay rates (directly as a property holder, or indirectly as a tenant) and over and above this, to obtain education according to conscience, I have to find 100 per cent, 50 per cent, 25 per cent, to pay for *what I have already paid for!* Catholicism is not proscribed in this country. Where is the democracy in this situation? All that pre-1829 stuff is out of date."

When Combes expelled the nuns from France in 1902, they fled as refugees to England and the new world. Today, *one* order alone of which I have knowledge, has nine houses in this country and over two hundred in America. "Strike the flock and the sheep will be scattered." The sheep are hydra-headed! Formerly this order had a novitiate in France; now it has one in England and it recruits English girls. Remember that, vowed to poverty, nuns own no property or money, so that after (meagre) living expenses are allowed for, their salaries are used for building improvements and extensions and other needs of Catholic schools. When they had to find it all, this is how they survived and grew! The 1944 Act was their material salvation. So if you give 100 per cent to a Catholic school, you give it to a school where the greater proportion of the staff's salaries are already ploughed back. Not that all the members of the staff of a convent school are nuns. Certainly they are the nucleus who keep control—be sure they are!—but to speak truth, many of the staff are lay people, and of course, receive salaries.

Somebody did once think that as a teacher in a convent I did it for love. I received Burnham, though I wonder if I would have received so reasonable a salary if it had not been fixed and negotiated by an external, neutral, body. In many cases, convent schools could not continue without this lay help, but would have acute staffing problems. The attractions of the world, and the increase of lay careers for girls (in no way due to the Churches, though they take

advantage of it) have led to a falling off in vocations! Some of the staff, especially for such subjects as gym, or music, may not be Catholic, though care will be taken to retain control of history or biology.

The nun rises in the morning at, usually, 6 a.m. From 6.30 to about 8 a.m., she will spend in chapel, prayers, meditation, and at daily mass. But she usually goes to bed at 10 p.m. according to the Holy Rule. There is frequently great pressure of work, for nuns live several lives, but Reverend Mother ensures she gets her "sleep-time" and lay staff are often not in bed before 12—1 a.m.

Holland is a country where one may see a gradual creeping up of Catholic numbers. Its history has been a fight, on the one hand against the sea, and on the other against the might of Spain of the Inquisition. Yet it now has a Catholic minority of over 40 per cent plus. Nuns are everywhere, on motor cycles and in cars. Remember the higher birth rate of the Catholics, according to their notorious views on contraception, remember the ecumenical leanings of the Established Church, recall the recent vestments dispute. What will be the cumulative and combined effect of larger increases of population, plus unpaid staff, plus 100 per cent grant?

The expanding nature of convent schools is often quite obvious from the fact that their premises constitute a string of private houses, a nucleus for the community, and a sideways push in a residential area, houses nowadays too big and expensive to be in private hands.

There has been, in recent years, a good deal of propaganda ranging from what the *New Statesman* once aptly described as Hollywood's "tongue-in-the-cheek Catholicism" to books such as *They Are People*, to show what jolly, humane people—"just like you and me"—nuns are. If women choose to follow a specialised form of life, forgoing comforts enjoyed by others, surely it is their own private concern?

It is not, and they are not there only for their own salvation. Or, at least, they seek their own salvation by acting as the shock troops of the Church, the exemplars of the Christian life; and their convents are meant to be nothing less than spiritual power-houses. Nuns also seek out lapsed Catholics, instruct adult converts and write books and articles. Their life, bound by three vows, is the complete absence of desire, an utter immolation, a holocaust—a most primitive form of religion, back to Abraham and Isaac, a direct imitation of the sacrifice of Calvary. A nun completely sacrifices her freedom of movement, her natural motherhood, she mortifies her flesh (some flagellate), has a literal belief in the devil, and God is supposed to be her only consolation. All this is *not* a private affair because she is *intended* by the Church to be a leaven in the world. The Catholic school exists to strait-lace the mind; a few pupils will be picked out for conversion, especially the more able, likely to reach university, or be recruits for the religious life, and some of our ablest women citizens continue to be sacrificed to Moloch. It is a fact, and to me it is a *shocking* fact, that it is permitted by law in this Protestant country to enter a convent at the age of sixteen.

To support denominational schooling is not to be just tolerant of existing Catholics, but actively to foster and support the spread and propagation of a teaching Church which believes it has a divine mandate and commission. It is to give tacit support to the papal Syllabus of Errors, myths such as the Assumption, to support the teaching of the Old Testament chronology, to assent to the magic of sacramentals; in a word, to subsidise error. What rights has error in the eyes of the Church of Rome?

## CORRESPONDENCE

### EDUCATION AND MORALITY

Mr. Ian Fraser's extraordinary letter describes my article as "pretty far fetched." I would venture to point out that not everything described as far fetched has turned out to be starry-eyed twaddle in the test of time. As for children being allowed to hear all points of view, or as many as possible, I would have thought that this was the difference between education and the inculcation of "brand loyalty." In this context, I would like to hear Mr. Fraser's definition of freethought.

As a result of man's evolution into a social animal, he appears to have acquired an innate, if rather generalised, ethical behaviour. This ethical sense can be to some degree encouraged in its development in a growing child but the degree to which it can be positively "taught" seems to me to be limited, since it will surely be stunted or destroyed by bad social conditions which encourage "the other man" in us, or by the superimposition of a professed "superior morality" interwoven with irrational beliefs, the latter giving rise to Mrs. Margaret Knight's "baby and bathwater" phenomenon.

Personally, I prefer to speak of ethics, rather than morals, since this usage avoids some of the authoritarian and negativistic implications of "morality." In my article, I affirmed the principle of self-fulfilment, which is diametrically opposed to the implications of transforming character and "redeeming" mankind levelled against me: starry-eyed I may be; but "cross"-eyed, never!

NIGEL SINNOTT.

### CALVIN

With F. A. Ridley being a believer in Marxism, it is not very surprising to me that he wrote an appreciative commemorative article on Calvin in *THE FREETHINKER*. Mr. Ridley obviously wrote his article from the Marxist angle. Calvinism was on the side of progress and was a step in the right direction; therefore Calvin himself must be an historically progressive figure. But it all depends on what you mean by progress, does it not? In reality, Calvin wanted to purify Christianity by going back (not forward) to the original teachings of the Apostles.

Calvin's idea of predestination has something of a parallel in the Marxist theory of Historical Materialism. For Calvin, the gates of hell could not prevail against the "Chosen People" or "Elect," and for Marxists the salvation of the Chosen People, the proletariat, is assured because the god of History is on their side. I should not be surprised if Mr. Ridley wrote an appreciative commemorative article on Stalin, who, like Calvin must have been progressive as well.

R. SMITH.

### DUNDEE

We in Dundee note your remarks in the Notes and News column on July 31st regarding the prevalence in Dundee of atheistic pessimism, and your questioning if perhaps the climate may have something to do with it. We can only answer that truth may flourish in any climate.

A. WRIGHT.

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