

The Freethinker

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IN THE year 393 of our era, the Roman Emperor Theodosius issued an imperial edict banning the Olympic Games, a time-honoured festival in the world of classical antiquity since Homeric times. For the first celebration of the Games is traditionally dated to the 8th century BC, about the same time that in all probability, from internal evidences, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were written—"either by Homer himself or by someone else of the same name",

as a percipient Teutonic critic is said to have remarked. The Emperor Theodosius, a professional soldier before his accession to the imperial throne, and a Christian, set himself immediately he had become emperor to eradicate Paganism from his vast dominions.

Theodosius may in fact, be called the first really Christian emperor, with much greater exactitude than the earlier Constantine, who seems to have been really at heart an opportunist politician, rather than a zealous Christian, anxious to play off Christianity and Paganism against each other to the consequent benefit of the state. Theodosius contrarily, was a fanatical bigot, the first of those great Spanish scourges of heresy, a list later to include such pillars of Catholic orthodoxy as St. Dominic, St. Ignatius Loyola and Torquemada who, for some mysterious reason—despite his immense services to the Church as the effective founder of the Spanish Inquisition—has never been officially canonised. Neither for that matter has Theodosius, though a grateful ecclesiastical posterity awarded him the honorary title of "the Great". One can in fact say that it was the "great" Constantine (who was canonised by the Orthodox Eastern Church) who began the epoch-making Christian revolution of the 4th century and that it was the "great" Theodosius who concluded it in favour of Christianity.

The Ancient Olympic Games

Among the casualties of this Emperor's anti-Pagan campaign, were many famous and familiar names in classical mythology, such as Jupiter, Mars, Apollo and Hercules. The Emperor's order to demolish the temple of Hercules at Ostia (the port of Rome) was appropriately resisted by force by the Pagan devotees of that strong-armed deity. By 393 towards the end of his reign, Theodosius got round to the Olympic Games which had continued uninterruptedly for about 12 centuries: the first one being traditionally celebrated in 776 BC.

Throughout the whole of this long period, the Games—always run upon a strictly amateur basis—had occupied a leading position in the cultural and social existence of the ancient Hellenes (or Greeks, as the Romans themselves first described them). It is, of course, well known that classical Greece was, and remained politically divided amongst separate and often fiercely antagonistic city-states. But there were always two places in Greece that were sacrosanct holy ground, where all the Greek-speaking states laid aside their mutual antagonisms: the Oracle of Delphi, sacred to the god Apollo, and Olympia (in northern Greece) where every four years the great athletic

festival was held. Only Greeks from *bona fide* Greek cities were allowed to compete. Even foreign kings including Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, were refused admission in the interest of racial purity, a belief held by the ancient "Aryan" Hellenes long before Hitler revived the cult. The classical athletes at Olympia were not professionals, a tradition that has been retained since the revival of the Games. But the sole Olympic

trophy, the olive crown and palm remained notwithstanding, the most coveted prize open to any citizen of any Greek city. To be an Olympic winner was, and remained throughout the duration of classical antiquity the highest honour open to any Hellene.

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Olympic Games —A Humanist Festival

By F. A. RIDLEY

Christianity and the Olympic Games

Such then were the Olympic Games of classical Pagan antiquity. But it is of course probably true that by 393, when victorious Christianity—of which Theodosius was only the political instrument—finally suppressed the Games, that they, along with the classical civilisation itself, had fallen from their formerly high estate. For, already in the first century of our era, that picturesque buffoon, Nero, had insisted on participating in them though he had not a drop of Greek blood in his veins. However, this was not the reason why Christianity, fresh from its spectacular victory over the rival Pagan cults of Mithras and Apollo, insisted upon the prompt suppression of the Olympic Games as soon as the Church had got control of the secular power of the Roman Empire.

The *real* reason for the immediate Christian suppression of the Games lay ultimately in their essentially Pagan and secular character, and perhaps the latter even more than the former. For while the Games were nominally consecrated to the Pagan gods which was, no doubt, the ostensible pretext for their suppression by Theodosius, the whole philosophy implicit in these classical games was a secular and a humanist one. It can, in fact, be effectively summarised in the inspired aphorism of the Roman poet Juvenal: *Mens sana in corpore sano* (a healthy body in a healthy mind). For the whole outlook of the Games was entirely human and secular, and its supreme cult of physical fitness was anathema to the then dawning dark ages of faith.

The medieval Catholic Church emphatically rejected, in both precept and practice, the modern sanitary aphorism that cleanliness is next to Godliness. It raised to its altars, in a halo of posthumous sanctity, people like St. Simon Stylites—who lived for years on top of a pillar without presumably any opportunity for exercise or facilities for washing—or that paragon of feminine sanctity, the blessed St. Sylvia of Antioch, who publicly boasted that for thirty years she "had washed nothing save the tips of her fingers at Mass". Clearly Roman Christianity at the time of the suppression of the Olympic Games had nothing but contempt for the human body, then regarded by Christian orthodoxy as a mere encumbrance to the immortal soul. The glorious figures of the

ancient Olympic athletes which have come down to us in the sublime art of the ancient Greek sculptors, were anathema to the contemporary Christianity of the 4th century.

The modern revival of the Olympic Games must, we submit be regarded as a striking success for the this-worldly cult of secularism and humanism. For whilst the international athletes who are competing in Tokyo may be of all religions or none, the philosophy which inspires them and which underlies their athletic activities is, we repeat, essentially a humanist philosophy which ignores the supernatural and transcends all racial and colour barriers. This fine humanistic outlook, with its utter and complete incompatibility with all forms of racial arrogance, was strikingly demonstrated when the Games committee gave the South African racialist regime the option between relinquishing apartheid or being excluded from the Games. In so doing modern Olympics took a great step forward, even by comparison with their classical Greek predecessors, whose mental outlook, conditioned by the circum-

stances of their era, was limited (as we have noted above) to their Greek contemporaries; no "barbarian" (non-Hellene) could compete in them. Contrarily, the modern Olympics represent perhaps the most successful example in the modern world of a cosmopolitan outlook. When at the 1936 Olympics held (ironically enough) at Berlin under the Nazi regime, Hitler ostentatiously turned his back on the great American Negro runner, Jesse Owens (the winner of three gold medals) this surely was more than a discourteous gesture; it represented the clash between two social philosophies, the idea of human equality brilliantly realised in the Games, and the barbarous racial arrogance of the "chosen race" represented by Hitler in 1936 and today by South Africa's apartheid regime. Today, in a world striving towards a terrestrial unity that excludes all other-worldly supernatural influences, the Olympic Games surely embody all that is finest and most hopeful for human progress towards the entirely secular and human world of tomorrow.

Golden Streets

By F. H. SNOW

VIEWING a recently televised church service, I was irritated by the vacuously innocent expressions of the hymn singers. Had it been children I was viewing, I could have understood that complacency, as the most fundamental of hymns rolled from their tongues. But it had been the same with myself, years ago, I recollected. No disturbing query of the absolute truth of the words I mouthed, in company with other worshipful persons, had crossed my simply-believing mind, though sometimes I had felt a little sheepish.

Nevertheless, it irked me to see those grown people, with the expression of guileless children, singing:

The Hill of Zion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the Heavenly Fields
Or walk the golden streets.

After all, I had come out of my blind credulity whilst a very young man, and these are very different times. We are living in a realistic age, and modern knowledge has dissipated many ancient beliefs. We have the advantage of the scientifically-established evolutionary theory of the origin of species, now generally accepted by the churches; we have scholarly criticism of so-called Holy Writ, exposing the many-authored Bible as unworthy of the designation "inspired"; we have astronomical, archaeological and biological findings to give cause for disbelief in a supernatural originator of everything. We have even a bishop denying the existence of a literal God, and therefore of a literal Heaven. Yet a congregation can be televised, solemnly singing of heavenly fields and golden streets!

The bald fact is, of course, that the great majority of people never apply to religion the logic they use in ordinary affairs, hardly ever bother to acquaint themselves with the lessons to be learned from scientific discovery, and are intellectually apathetic towards critical investigation of "sacred truths". I wondered what kind of reasoning powers the people I viewed possessed. They were mostly mature adults, and should have been past the purely instinctive stage. What held them back from realising that there was something wrong with their religious notions, from realising the foolishness of the anciently-conceived story of a tangible Heaven?

Undoubtedly, the prime cause of their inability to entertain any doubt of its verity, was its engraving on their

minds in childhood. Without the sedulous impressing of the hoary absurdity on the plastic juvenile mentalities, how many of them would have gone directly against the reasoning they applied, in adulthood, to other fantastic tales? How many of them would have been in that congregation, singing of real mansions in Gloryland? It is not too much to say that, without the divining of the Old, Old Story into generation upon generation of children's ears, that picture nor any of a similar nature would have been televised. Indeed, it is not too much to say that there would not be a religious broadcasting committee.

The Churches' greatest fear is that indoctrination should cease. They dread the consequences for religious belief should children be allowed to grow to a really reasoning age without having been subjected to the early brain-washing which, allied to weak critical capacity, produces the type of smug believer in golden streets, all too frequently seen on the television screen.

Watching, though for a very short while, these adult mouths opening and shutting in adulation of a very material Up Above, I reflected that their owners were, at least, more honest than the generality of spiritual instructors. Quite a lot of parsons imply, from the pulpits, a literalness of belief which doesn't represent their true views. Whilst not actually lying, they express themselves in terms which do not disclose the difference between their tenets and those of their flocks. If the preaching fraternity became suddenly frank, many an old-fashioned religionist would be jarred out of complacent assurance in his brand of faith, and his pastor's divine appointment.

I remember that, when I was a hospital inmate, a clerical gentleman came conning the case-sheets, and stopping at my bed, remarked: "I see you're of no religion". "That is so", I replied, and proceeded to acquaint him with my reasons for rejecting belief in a supernatural Creator. "We think very much alike", said my parsonic interlocutor, smiling, and went off, with a handshake, to see whether there were any patients of his denomination to be spiritually helped.

It would be wrong to assert that most ministers of religion disbelieve in a "Granddaddy in the sky"—to quote the Bishop of Woolwich—but if those of them who have rejected the old concepts of God and Heaven stated so

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The Bishop and the Election

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

DURING RECENT years, the coming around of a general election has not provided much of an outburst on the part of the Church of England clergy, and the recent one was no exception. There was a time not so many years ago when an election could be sure to betoken the appearance of the local vicar upon the Tory platform. Monarchy and empire, church and state, blood-curdling anti-radicalism, would be the staple diet of his political contribution. Indeed, those who can recall the elections just after the first world war will not forget the number of clergy who were exhorting their flocks to vote against the atheistic bolshevism of the Labour Party! Some of the more obscene versions of the story that the Russians had nationalised women were circulated during those years by clergymen of the Church of England. It was a period when bishops wrapped up their gospel with a "red dawn" in advocacy of Sunday cinemas, and when Prebendary Gough made ridiculous the pulpit of Brompton parish church with picturesque anti-communistic diatribes readily swallowed by his uncritical congregation of South Kensingtonians.

Times have changed very much indeed. Both parties include members of the Church of England and the clerical diatribe in favour of the gospel of big money is no longer the order of the day. On the whole, the recent election called forth few parsonic contributions in the arena of discussion. Perhaps it is a sign of the extent to which the clergy of the Church of England from the diocesan bishops downwards have declined as an effective social force. Even if they do say something in their own parish magazines, they are rarely quoted in the national press, unless the opinion voiced is more than usually foolish. It was therefore not without interest that the *Guardian* for September 30th included in its general election news some quotations from the *Diocesan Notes* of the Bishop of Peterborough, Dr. C. Eastaugh. It may well be that they represented the general cautious opinion of the Anglican clerics towards social change in 1964. As such, they are worthy of attention, even though the election is over.

With some of the things which the bishop said, any thinking man must be in agreement. It was clearly the duty of citizens to find out what the election was about and to produce an informed opinion as they went forth to vote on October 15th. In these days, there are plenty of opportunities, ranging from TV to paperbacks, of gaining an informed opinion within the sphere of contemporary politics. Again, it is clearly for the good if the uninformed voter abstains from voting. It is not a good thing when people vote blindly for a party without troubling to examine the content of the party programme, or when they determine their choice by an image or a label. Possibly the greatest disservice done to English politics by the Tory machine within recent years lay in its use of those large-scale advertising techniques which had exactly this effect. So far, it is possible to agree with the bishop, although he was perhaps a little hard upon those who remained "Don't knows." There may be many reasons for this position, such as a cynical disillusionment with all of the major party programmes. Whether or not this attitude be justifiable when measured objectively in the light of the facts, it is at least possible to contend that it is a tenable position.

But the bishop went further in his advice. He stressed the rights of a person to opportunity of choice and free action, and he went on to say that "we have a duty to be on our guard against policies which tend to reduce persons to the status of things by the over-regulation of human life." It is exactly this type of statement which makes clerical contributions to political issues come to be regarded as tendentious and other than straightforward. The bishop must have known that one of the favourite cracks of Tory propagandists of the type of Sir Alec Douglas-Home or Mr. Quintin Hogg lies in the direction of accusing Labour policies of being bureaucratic and of making against the individual man. Whether or not this statement be true or false, it is a commonplace of Tory propaganda. It would be possible to have the fullest respect for the bishop if, like his predecessors of bygone years, he had urged those willing to listen to him to vote Tory. This would be no more than an exercise of his legitimate freedom of choice. But the reader of his notes has a perfect right to object when an obviously slanted piece of political thinking is put forward as an unprejudiced and non-party observation. The whole approach is too reminiscent of the political neutrality of the Anglican vicar and what it has meant in the past.

Certainly, the depersonalising of the individual is a form of social challenge which the western world has learned to oppose. It is obviously something standing in juxtaposition to democratic modes of life. Yet, within modern history, the policy of depersonalisation did not have its rise with radical political theories. It was to be found in the land-enclosure movement which forced the peasantry off the commons and, between about 1780 and 1820, turned the old, independent yeoman into the wage-slave agricultural labourer. The Church of England was well to the fore in this movement. Large areas of common land were in fact enclosed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and other ecclesiastical dignitaries. They now form a part of the estates administered by the Church Commissioners.

Again, the depersonalisation of the individual was one of the results of the industrial revolution and the subjugation of labour to capital which it implied. It was the liberal Christian preacher, Frederick Denison Maurice, who protested strongly against the depersonalisation of the factory-worker as it was implied in the term, "hand." But Maurice and his few followers gained scant support from the Church of England of those days. Depersonalisation has continued in such areas as the "take-over" bid or in the complete failure to pursue any democratic policy in meeting the housing shortage. At its worst, it was seen in the unemployment of the inter-war years so graphically portrayed by Greenwood in *Love on the Dole* or by Ellen Wilkinson in *The Town that was Murdered*. Opportunity of choice and freedom of action sound out in the episcopal message as a clarion call to human rights. It only takes a moment's reflection to recall that they are grand but empty phrases unless buttressed by an economic order in which it is possible for those rights to be exercised. It is all very well for the Bishop of Peterborough to trot them out at election-time as so much window-dressing. But it is an entirely different matter when it comes to be asked what the

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This Believing World

A "Daily Express" report from New York, on October 5th, informed us that four scientists have come to the conclusion that "life on earth may have evolved from tiny polka-dot air bubbles in the sea". No doubt this theory is as good as any other—though of course biologists have long held that "life" originated in the sea. In any case, the point to note is that the story in Genesis is contemptuously dismissed. This proves again—if proof were needed—that evolution is still, as it always has been the most deadly enemy of Christianity.

★

But our bishops are faced with another and perhaps a more urgent problem. "They are bored with their gaiters", says the Bishop of Kensington, who courageously refuses to wear them—except of course "at a Buckingham Palace reception, or a similar event". But this is all very well. How is a layman going to distinguish a bishop without his gaiters from a mere parish priest?

★

For advocating birth control and contraceptives, Charles Bradlaugh narrowly escaped a six months' imprisonment, while many other Neo-Malthusians (as they were then called) were imprisoned or heavily fined. And now? The *Daily Mail* (October 6th) reports from Rome that "births boom beats the harvests, warns UN". Malthus uttered the same warning over 160 years ago, and was laughed at or condemned for his pains. It was determined Free-thinkers like Francis Place, Richard Carlile, John Stuart Mill, and Charles Bradlaugh, among many others, who warned the nations about the coming "population explosion", and were hated by Christians for doing so.

★

The "grim picture" disclosed in the UN Report shows that "most people had less to eat" than in the last twelve months, and "almost everywhere food cost more". During the past five years, "there has been no increase in world agricultural production per head of the population"—and no doubt things will grow steadily worse until something world-wide is definitely done in promoting contraception among the prolific Asiatics and Africans—a task which at the moment seems well nigh hopeless.

★

Rather naively, "Psychic News" appears to think that its story (October 10th), of a diamond ring "apported" thousands of miles from Africa to Devon, is something wonderful. It is not a patch on the way Mrs. Guppy, over ninety years ago, was apported in London. This lady a well-known medium, weighing nearly twenty stone, was busily making up her household accounts in Highbury, when she was suddenly transported by spirits to a house three miles away where a seance was being held. Mrs. Guppy came smack through the ceiling on to the table round which the Spiritualists were sitting—the hole in the ceiling closing up at once behind her.

★

No one was in anyway surprised, least of all Mrs. Guppy. This is perhaps the classic case. But apports are hardly ever referred to these days—emphasis nearly always being laid on "spirit" healing. Surely a few "transportation" cases, like that of Mrs. Guppy, would help the cause of Spiritualism.

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The Catholic Church and Hitler

What happens when a Church refuses to come to grips, but rather comes to terms with the criminal policies of a civil government in order to safeguard its special interests? This question is asked by *Church and State* (September, 1964) in a review of *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* by Guenter Lewy, published in America by McGraw-Hill (\$7.50).

For his comprehensive study of the Roman Catholic Church and its relationship to Hitler's Third Reich, the author, a political scientist now teaching at the University of Massachusetts, studied thousands of Gestapo reports, diplomatic dispatches, documents from the chanceries of German dioceses, and Catholic publications. He traces the gradual transition of the Church's official attitude from the position of forbidding Catholics to vote for the National Socialist German Workers' Party to the position of forbidding Catholic organisations to criticise the Third Reich.

The apparent apathy of the Pope, German bishops, and German Catholics towards Hitler's Blood Purge in 1934, his wholesale extermination of German Jews, his plunging the world into war, his murder of Poland's intelligentsia, his compulsory sterilisation law, and his euthanasia programme are thoroughly documented. And, as Mr. Lewy shows, only in one instance did the Church oppose Hitler's programme. This was in regard to euthanasia for the infirm and mentally ill. Moreover, according to material gathered by the author, the forceful reaction of the Catholic Church was the primary cause of Hitler's abandonment of his euthanasia programme.

The fact that this took place when the Fuhrer "stood at the zenith of military success" shows the power of public opinion, even in Nazi Germany. It completely demolishes the argument used against Rolf Hochhuth, that it would have been useless for Pope Pius XII to condemn the Jewish persecution. "Had German public opinion shown a similar response against other crimes of the Nazi regime," Mr. Lewy says, "... the results might well have been similarly telling."

Indeed, in his section on the "Jewish problem," Mr. Lewy demonstrates that the Nazi assault on Jewry took place in a climate of opinion conditioned by centuries of Christian hostility to the Jewish religion and people. He quotes Hitler in a conference with two high-ranking German Catholics saying that he was merely going to do what the Church had done for 1,500 years.

Mr. Lewy gives as the reason for the writing of this latest work, an attempt to correct the false legend of resistance on the part of the Church at large in Germany. The Church as an institution, he declares, did not resist Hitler's regime; the most it did was to criticise some specific measures. Faced with devastating evidence, says *Church and State*, the reader finds it hard to disagree. The author points out, however, that a few Catholic priests, unlike many of their more cautious superiors, were martyrs to their convictions.

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INDOOR

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 25th, 6.30 p.m.: VED SING. "Yoga".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, October 25th, 7.30 p.m.: FRED MCKAY, "Revival of Folk Singing in Britain".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, October 25th, 11 a.m.: DR. STARK MURRAY, "Morals of the New Medicine".
Tuesday, October 27th, 7.30 p.m.: RICHARD THONGER, "Anglo-German Relations".

Notes and News

AT LAST—if somewhat belatedly—reviewers of *The Future of Man* (Collins 30s.) are beginning to see through the vacuity of Teilhard de Chardin's religio-evolutionary philosophy. "Presented in polysyllabic neologisms, the thesis is imposing but incomprehensible", wrote Father Anthony Kenny (*New Statesman* 2/10/64). "Stated in plain language, its premisses can be seen not to entail its conclusion". And Father Kenny proceeded to expose some of Teilhard's insidious devices, such as representing a thing diagrammatically and then endowing the reality with the properties of the diagram. John Weightman, under the heading "Forward to the Noosphere" (*The Observer*, 11/10/64), called Teilhard's view "an attractive form of Deism" which left out so much of traditional Christianity as to be "a different, heretical creed". He must, as Mr. Weightman said, "have kept his mental operations as a priest and thinker in separate compartments".

BUT, Mr. Weightman continued, Teilhard "leaves untouched some of the intellectual difficulties formulated two centuries ago by Diderot and Voltaire". Whereas Diderot was puzzled by "nature's" mistakes and the Lisbon earth-

quake "stuck in Voltaire's gizzard", Teilhard, "blithely assumes that the catastrophes of creation are cancelled out by its forward movement". Evil in all its forms, wrote the Jesuit, "injustice, inequality, suffering, death itself—ceases theoretically to be outrageous from the moment when, *Evolution becoming a Genesis*, the immense travail of the world displays itself as the inevitable reverse side—or better, the condition—or better still, the price—of an immense triumph". With this, as Mr. Weightman remarked, we are back to Leibniz; in fact Father Teilhard de Chardin did no more than ring the changes on "pseudo-metaphysical statements that Voltaire and the other early critics pulverised in the heyday of the Enlightenment". And Diderot and Voltaire, we suspect, would have seen through Teilhard a good deal quicker than some modern reviewers—and Humanists!

DR. MERVYN STOCKWOOD wrongly designated Bishop of London in the *Daily Telegraph* (6/10/64)—has become the first Anglican bishop to be present in episcopal robes at a Roman Catholic service in England. He attended a High Mass in the Jesuit church in Farm Street, Mayfair, on the feast of St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order. "I sat in the Sanctuary, vested in rochet and chimere, opposite the Apostolic Delegate, Archbishop Cardinale", Dr. Stockwood wrote in *The Bridge*, the Southwark diocesan review. And to think that one of his first acts on being translated to the bishopric of Southwark was to suspend a priest for papist practices.

A YOUNG Australian artist, Peter Upwards, has an exhibition of "astrological portraits" opening at the Rowan Gallery, London, this month. We learnt this from *The Observer* (11/10/64), which printed respectively a non-astrological portrait of William Blake, a horoscope of William Blake and Mr. Upward's "painting of the horoscope of William Blake". Now there may be some symbolic significance in it, but the Upward painting looked to us like a blotch of pastry above a small coin; regretfully we confess we prefer the "realistic" portrait of Blake. Among others that Mr. Upward has "acted out in symbol form" (from horoscopes by John Naylor) is Marilyn Monroe. We wonder how this "astrological portrait" compares with the original. In case anyone should want to check, the Rowan Gallery is in Lowdes Street, S.W.1. But please don't blame us in case of disappointment.

WRITING in the *New Statesman* recently (2/10/64) Edward Hyams offered advice to Pakistani door-to-door salesmen. He asked them not to open the proceedings by forcing a good-luck charm on the householder; "we are no longer in the 10th century" and it merely infuriates us. And, "Stop dragging God into the proceedings, it is no business of yours whether we do or do not believe in God, and the argument that, if we do, then we ought to buy from you to help you is unsound". Mr. Hyams also suggested that the salesmen should carry better quality goods: it might "be convenient, and save one a trip into town, to have shirts and such things brought to the door". But "it is impossible from you", he said, "when all you offer us is expensive rubbish".

DR. RAMSAY'S *Canterbury Essays and Addresses*, just published by the SPCK (18s.) contains these coy remarks on sex. Its emergence in history, writes the Archbishop, "its interior depth, and its stable continuance require the sacrifice of a great restraint: that Venus is not indulged outside the marriage bond and that Venus is not indulged before it".

The Awful Truth About Convents

By GILLIAN HAWTIN

THE AWFUL DISCLOSURES OF MARIA MONK are a form of crude virulent anti-Catholic propaganda now quite outdated. They are plainly and demonstrably false. Too many non-Catholics have passed through Catholic schools, and they know these things just are not true. Moreover, this fundamentalist Protestant type of propaganda, so far from serving the cause of enlightenment and freedom of thought, even does harm, because it diverts the attention of rationalists and others from what is really the nature and purpose of conventual life, and schools run by nuns. Freethinkers, rightly and properly holding themselves aloof from such institutions, often hold rather inaccurate views of them: the biggest friend the Catholic Church has today is probably people's real ignorance of it. They know what they *think* it is; this may not correspond very closely to reality. How few people care about these matters, anyway? They are far too busy getting and spending. They assume nuns to be harmless, benevolent, misguided women — often heroic, always self-sacrificing. They are, and can be, most of these things; but resist your impressions of amiability. They are *never* harmless. *The Bells of St. Mary's* showed nuns as coy and unassuming; but they were cute enough when it came to business matters. Nuns are not at all guileless; they are the victims and the agents of a mind-enslaving system, which leaves Communism in the shade, which consumes the whole being.

I have written, previously, that there are no walled-up nuns. However the real imprisonment of a religious is not material, but mental. McCabe's *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, now regrettably out of print, contains nothing which, in my experience, can be contradicted in any basic particular. Protestant pupils who are sent to Catholic schools (except by some remote accident) tend to be drawn from an intelligent but non-intellectual, law-abiding, conservative class of the community, the lower middle-class. Convent schools had in the past — and this is still comparatively true — the one great advantage of slightly lower fees. The professional man's daughter went to the high school, but the clerk or the small tradesman, who did not wish his daughter to absorb rough manners at the local board school, was prepared for his snobbery to risk the poison of papistry.

Such parents might be heard to remark: "I think they always make the girls very lady-like." It is true. There is quietness of manner, and the teaching of consideration for others. It is all there. The nuns do it very well. They argue "By their fruits ye shall know them." But how invalid to take the next step, and say "This proves our religion is of God." Forty or so years ago these schools gave these girls just the kind of education they sought — languages, needlework, music. The girl might thus make a rather better marriage than she would otherwise have done. The girls' backgrounds meant they were intelligent enough to absorb, and seldom intellectual enough to perceive the logic of the education they had received. If they did, they went *over* — and *in*. When this occurred, of course, there was dismay. It was only an example, on a small scale, of what we see all around us today, a complete underestimate and lack of realisation of the strength, and resuscitatory powers of Catholicism.

The pattern has adjusted itself to the needs of the times. Nowadays a girl is not excluded from the grammar school because her father is in a trade, but because she

fails the 11 plus. Then the parent who wants a little more for his daughter will pay fees for the independent convent rather than let her go with those rough types — gym. slips indecently above the knees, panama tilted on the back of the head, a boy and a bicycle at the corner of the street — who attend the local secondary modern. This is the pattern, and the hierarchy is well aware of it. New convents are founded where there is a big grammar school overspill. The girl today wants, perhaps, to be a radiographer, or attain her BSc. Only the most noted orders may attain their successes at Oxbridge, but the smaller ones will have a very creditable list of arts and science degrees from provincial universities.

It is a joke among Catholics that even God does not know the number of women's congregations. How, why, and when, do girls become nuns? Dismiss at once the idea it is because a girl is jilted, and grows world-weary, for perhaps this illusory notion still lingers. Is it due to the inscrutable and ineluctable workings of the Holy Ghost? Not a bit of it! There is irony in that aphorism of Augustine of Hippo's — "Pray as if everything depended on God, and work as if everything depended on men"! Recruitment is a cynical and calculated business. You will note that I do not use the terms "call" or "vocation." Certainly not. They imply belief. Yet neither do I speak of the girls' choice or intention. It is just as deliberate as army recruitment — though, indeed, it smacks more of the methods of the press gang. Have you ever seen, in Catholic papers, the advertisement column headed "vocations," as much as to say "sits. vac."? These do seek out girls who are older, in business, looking for some order suitable to their particular aptitudes.

Priests tour schools in Ireland, collecting little groups of girls for English novitiates — writing to them, marking them down, till they are finally hooked and landed. But mostly "Rev. Moth." pops the question. I have already drawn attention to the fact that girls are permitted by law in this country to enter convents at the age of sixteen. You may hope this age is exceptional. It is not at all unusual. It is the average age! At any rate, seventeen or thereabouts is, and the influence will begin at fourteen or so. Catholic parents do sometimes object; the clergy complain that the parents do not have the same objections to early marriage. As we can set aside diabolical influence, there may be good reasons for it! Think that, at about the age of fourteen, when most girls will be beginning to have a boy friend, enjoying the freedom of their bodies, bathing in the sun, planning their secular career, the nuns ceaselessly seeking for recruits to maintain and increase their numbers, select likely ones. It does not always come off, naturally; some slip through their fingers. A girl has to have some ability to offer the convent, and she must be of good moral character. (Indeed, the bishops complain that the convents take "our best girls.")

The girls will usually not just have something to offer (note — a *sine qua non*) but be the cream, the most brilliant. A few more years of their family, brothers, sisters, then the trousseau of black dresses, black stockings, plain underwear, half a dozen of everything to put the convent to no expense in case she leaves. The mother weeps, but sacrifices her child for her own (and the mother's) eternal salvation, and the added social kudos among the neighbours. Once vivacious Mary becomes

quiet, withdrawn, sacrificial, restrained. The rest of the class realise she is set aside. One day, after "O" level, or a year or two in the sixth, she disappears. She is seen and heard no more. She does her postulancy and novitiate of two to three years, and is then sent to "foundation," which is very rarely the house where she was at school. Sometimes she is encouraged to do "A" level first; she will then be a bit more mature before she enters. Also, it means it is done at the parents' expense, and she can be sent by the order straight to university or training college when professed. The excuse is likely to be that, if she leaves, she has a better chance to make a secular career. Consider how late, in this competitive world, she will embark on a secular career if, proving to have "mistaken her vocation," she returns in any case to the world. Added to this, of course, is all the necessary psychological readjustment.

(To be concluded)

French-Canadian Separatism

French-Canadian Separatism has recently been making itself heard — and felt. There were even fears expressed — and extraordinary precautions taken — for the safety of Queen Elizabeth during her visit to Quebec Province. Certainly the movement is strong. In a survey carried out by *La Presse* of Montreal some three and a half years ago (March 18th, 1961), 12,000 French-Canadians were interviewed and 45 per cent favoured the separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada. This does not mean that they would work actively for separation, still less adopt violent methods (terrorism, it should be emphasised, is very much the work of a small minority and condemned by the majority) but it does indicate a disgruntled attitude.

"French Canada must decide today," Marcel Chaput has written in *Why I Am a Separatist*, "what it wants to be. An eternal minority going eternally backward in a vast country which is not his, or else a living and progressive majority in a smaller country which belongs to him." Inevitably Separatism, bound up as it is with language, has shown itself in revolt against everything "English."

To speak French is, it is said, to speak Catholic: to speak English is to speak Protestant. And Jean C. Falardeau, a sociologist at the Catholic Laval University in Quebec city, has aptly said that the history of French Canada is "to a large extent, the history of the Roman Catholic Church in Canada." French-Canadian education has indeed been dominated by the Church, and the Church is largely responsible for the inferior status of which the Separatists complain. The Church extolled the agricultural life as opposed to an industrial "materialistic" one. It taught that poverty was a virtue. Above all, it placed religion first and foremost in education, to the detriment of "worldly" knowledge.

Now, as many young French-Canadians realise their disadvantages — economically, socially, educationally — they turn against their English "rulers." But some of their wrath should be reserved for their Church.

LANJE GARDYEN

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GOLDEN STREETS

(Concluded from page 338)

unambiguously from their pupils, hitherto docile believers would be stirred to a reluctant exercise of their wits on the actuality of the things they sing of. And though, unlike Dick Whittington, many of them would fail to assimilate the fact that their dream streets were unpaved with gold, we should be a long step nearer the time when reason will supplant infantile faith, and the television screen will have ceased to depict vacuous extollers of crowns, harps and thoroughfares of precious ore, way up in the ether.

Those who assert that fundamentalism is practically moribund are greatly mistaken. Up and down the country, an astonishing number of people lift up their voices in eulogy of the completely unevidential God they learned to believe in when their minds were as wax, and an astonishing number of people who do not sing his praises nevertheless regard him as an actual Person, lording it in a solid Heaven. In this age of scientific advance, our press and broadcasting services assiduously abet the exemption of such beliefs from commonsense analysis, by their virtual embargo on the expression of forthright scepticism. And the great nonsense goes on, and the twentieth century approaches its close with primitive religious belief still very much in evidence. What a reflection on the national intelligence!

We have, however, the consolation of knowing that, however hard the powers that be drag their feet, the increasing pressure of modern thought will force them to relax their stranglehold on the throat of Freethought, and finally effect the dispersal of the great superstition that has hagridden us for the best part of two thousand years, and is able to impose on our television screens the spectacle of grown-up children glibly chorusing of a paradise beyond the bright blue sky, complete with mansions and golden streets.

THE THOMAS PAINE SOCIETY

The first annual general meeting of the Thomas Paine Society will be held on Saturday, November 14th, at Lewes, Sussex, the town where Paine spent a number of years as an exciseman. After a members' meeting in the morning, a lunch will be held at Paine's Lewes residence, the Bull, and this will be followed by a tour of the town and a public meeting in the evening.

The Society is also organising an exhibition, opening a week beforehand, with the co-operation of Mr. Eric Blundell at Mr. Blundell's Fifteenth Century Bookshop, (99 High Street, Lewes). It will include books, pictures, ceramics and token coins connected with Paine and his works, and will continue until the afternoon of the 14th, also featuring Paine's friend and admirer, Thomas "Clio" Rickman, who was born in Lewes in 1781. Like Paine, Rickman was born of Quaker stock, but he professed to belong to no sect or religion. The exhibits will include Rickman's biography of Paine—the first friendly account of Paine's life to be published—as well as some of his poetry about Paine.

Further details of other events, which are still being planned, can be obtained from the Secretary of the Thomas Paine Society, Robert W. Morrell, 443 Meadow Lane, Nottingham.

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THE BISHOP AND THE ELECTION

(Concluded from page 339)

Church of England has done over the years to produce a greater sense of justice in the economic order.

Actually, a moment's reflection upon the social history of the Churches over the last hundred years shows the Church of England and its hierarchy to have done very little in the matter. Again and again, they have openly championed the forces of economic and social reaction. But it is not a little curious that they should now come forward as the opponents of the depersonalisation of the individual. It would be difficult to think of any greater force than Christianity in the accomplishment of depersonalisation. The individual will is to be bent into conformity with what is believed to be the will of God. Having decided what is the will of God, society is to be so organised that it reflects this divine will.

Schools are maintained in order that the children may be indoctrinated and brain-washed. Is the Bishop of Peterborough, for example, willing that the child shall exercise the opportunity of choice and free action in such a question as religious education? When various instances are recalled of underhanded methods used in seeking to overcome the legal right to contract-out as they have been engineered in schools by Papists and other Christian hangers-on, it is not difficult to imagine how far freedom of opportunity of choice would go in such a matter. Is the bishop willing to set aside the autocracy implied both psychologically and socially in an authoritarian creed? Would he be willing to appeal to freedom of opportunity of choice rather than a derived ecclesiastical autocracy in such a matter as marriage and divorce? It is these far-reaching intellectual and social issues which provide a touchstone, simply because they go far towards illustrating the extent to which the traditionalist Churches work for the depersonalisation of man and seek to utilise him as a mere puppet of the Church Catholic.

It may well be that man needs a freedom of opportunity of choice, but he will gain nothing by being seduced by the crocodile tears of Anglican ecclesiastics as they weep in public over human depersonalisation. He may be wise to keep an eye upon the developments within modern society of administrative law and the rise of a social bureaucracy which caused a former Lord Chief Justice, Lord Hewart, to write of the new despotism. But we should do well to recall that there is probably no body more despotic than the Christian Church and no organisation more soullessly bureaucratic than the Church of England as it has become.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE VATICAN COUNCIL AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

The Second Vatican Council has at last decided that some freedom of religion should be granted to non-Catholic denominations. Can it be that an organisation which claims to be built on love has taken almost 2,000 years to find even tolerance? Or is this new pronouncement another bid in the Christian Unity stakes, which, if successful, would eliminate all rivals by absorption into Rome?

With much ballyhoo the Vatican is talking about striding into the modern world with important concessions to outside criticism. But almost the only unequivocal statement we have had from the Council is that part of the mass may now be conducted in the vernacular. Non-Catholics may feel, however, that a pagan ritual might as well be conducted in a pagan language.

Questions the world is asking and to which the prospect of satisfactory answers doesn't seem encouraging are these:—

1. Will the Church recognise the complete validity of register office marriages and marriages after divorce, though it may advise its

own faithful against them? 2. Will the Church allow divorce in Catholic countries? 3. Will the Church allow partners in mixed marriages to decide themselves where they will get married and how their children shall be brought up. 4. Will the Church extend to the individual conscience the right to decide questions on contraception, premarital intercourse, abortion, euthanasia and suicide, although it may advise against them? 5. Will the Church allow Catholic children to receive impartial teaching in history, science and philosophy? 6. Will the Church cease to try to ban plays, films, books, broadcasts and other means of communication and artistic expression of whose ideology it disapproves? 7. Will the Church in Catholic countries cease to issue, on pain of excommunication for disobedience, political instructions? 8. Will the Church allow atheistic propaganda in Catholic countries?

The world is entitled to clear answers.

DAVID TRIBE, *President, National Secular Society.*

JESUITS QUIT CATHOLIC WEEKLY

Your Dutch correspondent informed you in the issue of June 5th, that three Jesuits, members of the editorial staff of the modern Catholic weekly *The New Line*, had been ordered to cease their contributions to that paper.

Now four others, special contributors, have quit *The New Line* by order of the recently deceased Father General of the Jesuits. They are: Professor J. Ross, MA, dramatic critic, Father B. Tervoort, correspondent in the USA, Father Bart Struwer (Father Bijman), editor for Near East questions and Professor P. Franssens, writing on Council subjects.

What has become of the three Jesuits who had to leave last April? Father Arts is now reporting in Rome as a journalist upon Vatican II. Father Van Hees has been staying in a hotel for priests at Amsterdam for six weeks. The fate of the third is unknown.

A. M. van der GIEZEN.
(Middleburg-Holland)

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