

# The Freethinker

Volume LXXXV—No. 10

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

This year will, we are given to understand, see the definitive termination of the complex (and no doubt laborious) proceedings of the Ecumenical Council. The Second Vatican Council, in name a continuation of the first Vatican Council (1869-70), was called together by the late Pope John XXIII, with the explicit intention of effecting those reforms which were necessary if the Catholic Church is to function effectively in the so changed mental climate of the late 20th century.

## The First Vatican Council

But the Second Vatican Council would appear to have little in common except its name with its immediate predecessor. For the first Council was, at least in its effective composition and declared intentions, a conservative council initially assembled by Pope Pius IX (1846-78), not with any intention of compromising with contemporary progress, but with the express purpose of resisting all and any future movements designed to radicalise the Church. In which connection, it is relevant to note that the Jesuits, along with such extreme theological reactionaries as the English Cardinal Manning, represented the dominant force. The ecclesiastical liberals (the learned Dr. Dollinger of Munich, was the intellectual leader of the mainly French and German minority) the 1870 prototypes of Archbishop Roberts and his co-authors of *Objections to Roman Catholicism*, were first out-voted and then ruthlessly silenced or expelled, if they continued their opposition to the acts of the Council and, in particular, to its most publicised and controversial decision, the declaration of papal infallibility, which was passed on July 18th, 1870. In the eyes of its contemporaries, both clerical and secular, the first Vatican Council represented a victory for clerical reaction in every sphere.

## A Liberal Pope

However, paradox plays its part in ecclesiastical as well as in secular history. For it was precisely the declaration of papal infallibility—universally regarded at the time as an ultra-reactionary move—that eventually led directly to the convocation of the second (reforming) Vatican Council. For the liberal Vatican Council II owed its very existence to the earlier reactionary council's declaration of the dogma of papal infallibility. What presumably the Jesuit sponsors of the dogma in 1870 had not foreseen, was the election of a liberal pope.

However, after a succession of ever more reactionary Pope Piuses (IX, X, XI and XII), Cardinal Roncalli was finally elected after an unusually long and apparently stormy conclave, and as Pope John XXIII proceeded to put into operation a policy which, as and when judged by recent papal standards, was extremely radical. How far this papal turning movement was initially due to personal conviction or was merely shrewd strategy impelled by the current needs of an age dominated by the "winds of change", we have still no means of knowing.

But one fact stands out quite clearly. In Pope John, the Roman Catholic Church for the first time in this century, found dynamic and constructive leadership. It nowa-

days seems unlikely that the "papal revolution" inaugurated by him will ever be entirely erased from the historical record, though the present pope, a career diplomat trained by Pius XII is obviously trying hard to slow down its pace. But it seems to have gone too far for a return to the good old days of the Piuses!

## Problems Before The Council

Up to this present time, no decision has been taken by the Vatican Council equal, either in logical precision or historical importance, to the dogmatic decision taken in connection with the declaration of papal infallibility in 1870. But a large number of urgent contemporary problems have already become subjects of controversy.

These range from credibility to contraception; from the reform of the Roman Curia (the papal bureaucracy) to the complex problems attendant on Christian reunion.

Undoubtedly the two subjects for discussion most canvassed in the Council—or at least in the press—have been contraception and Christian reunion. But it seems (in so far as an unbeliever can foresee the inspired decisions of the Holy Spirit) that no immediate action is likely in connection with either of these questions. For Christian reunion does not depend solely upon Rome, and theological memories are apt to be tenacious and bitter. The non-Roman Churches have four centuries of the Counter-Reformation to forgive—or forget. The most that can be at least immediately expected in this field is agreement that atheism is now the public enemy number one of all forms of Christianity.

And the Council is unlikely to issue any very definite instructions on contraception. For Catholic opponents of family limitation can plausibly argue that had, say, Irish and Italian emigrants consistently practised it, Catholicism would not now be a world-wide creed. Much more urgent (in my opinion) from the immediate standpoint of the Council itself, are two other problems upon which both the Vatican Council and the Papacy have already commenced to act: the literally life and death problem represented by apologetics; and the future relations of the Church with the emerging nations in Asia and Africa.

The first of these two problems is (again in my opinion), by far the more important to come before the Vatican Council. For I repeat what I have often emphasised before in these columns: the present crisis of Christianity is essentially a crisis, not merely of organisation but of credibility. Unless the Roman Catholic Church can find some effective substitute for the nowadays moth-eaten demonstrations of her medieval schoolmen, and for the geocentric and pre-evolutionary apologetics of St. Thomas Aquinas, no amount of organisational changes can save it.

Problem number one before the second Vatican Council is, and must always remain that of credibility. For if the first Vatican Council laid it down as a dogma that the existence of God can and *must* be proved by human reason, the second Vatican Council has the (perhaps unenviable) task of discovering some way of actually proving

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

## The Vatican Council: The Summing Up

By F. A. RIDLEY

it. Next in importance probably comes the ever more urgent problem represented by Rome's present and future relations with the emerging races of Asia and Africa. For it is clear that the worldly-wise Papacy has long ago realised that the imperialist era is now definitely over. In which connection, Pope Paul's recent visits to Israel and to India were as much a part of the "papal revolution" as anything done by its originator, Pope John.

#### The Vatican's Last Stand

Most Rationalists will, I think, concur that nothing makes sense apart from its history. This axiom is certainly true of an institution so deeply rooted in human history as the Papacy. As and when viewed from this angle, Pope John's whole "papal revolution" and the second Vatican Council in which this is at present em-

bodied, represents the back-to-the-wall stand; the papal (counter) revolution versus the scientific and atheistic revolution which, if and when finally victorious will mark the genocide of the divine species: the end of all supernatural religions. It is, in my submission, because the "infallible" Vatican knows this, and not because of any sudden acquisition of really liberal sentiments, that the Vatican Council is now staging its strategic retreat on to its last defensive lines.

In dealing with so complex a problem, it is dangerous to assume the prophetic mantle. But it would be no surprise if the second Vatican Council were also the last; if by, say, 2065, the spiritual Roman Empire had gone to join its secular predecessors. For it is not only at Rome that events move fast today.

## The Veneration of the Odious

By F. H. SNOW

THERE is a great habit of admiring things because they are old. Cathedrals, churches and even common buildings, if historically associated, are eulogised, however ugly or decrepit. Because of this, funds which could far better be devoted to the furtherance of humanitarian causes are spent on the restoration of buildings which have no reasonable excuse for survival. Appeals for thousands of pounds are made to prop up structures, mainly those of an ecclesiastical nature, which, if considered from the point of rational spending, would be left to become rubble. Regarded as time-honoured institutions, to be preserved at whatever cost, they stand mute evidence of indoctrinated thought. Generation upon generation inherits the notion that the ugly, the bizarre, the decayed, are worthy of admiration and preservation, if they happen to be associated with the remote past.

In a visit to the village of Biddenden, in Kent, some years ago, I found myself, with other sightseers, in the centuries-old church. Not being addicted to eulogy of that which has only age to commend it, I saw little to admire and much to deprecate. The ravages of time were heavily impressed on the whole interior, and in one large area the beams supporting the roof had rotted through, and a great hole gaped where the ceiling had collapsed. A large-lettered notice appealed for some thousands of pounds for the renovation of the hoary edifice. To the left of the nave, I was astonished to see a representation of the Nativity, with little figures of the holy babe and his parents, the wise men from the east, shepherds, sheep, angels, cowshed complete with manger, and a very large star—the evident handiwork of members of the church. It being summertime, I wondered what could be the object of the Christmas tableau, till I realised it was to touch the religious feelings of visitors and cause them to drop cash into the collection boxes.

I could see nothing but its age to give the building special interest to strangers. Coming into the churchyard, I wandered around with others inspecting lumps of blackened stone, leaning, like huge decayed teeth, at all angles, and so eroded as to be almost unrecognisable as the headstones of evidenceless graves. I had made the coach trip ignorant of the entertainment at the journey's end, and was disgusted at its nature. Those repellent tombstones were treasured *in perpetuo*, presumably to remind one of the final inescapable beastliness. In that ancient churchyard, anger suffused me.

At Eynsford, in another part of Kent, I detached myself from the trippers swarming the bank of its charming

stream, and entered the twelfth century church. As in the case at Biddenden, a large poster invited funds for the restoration of the Norman-built structure. The large crowd of visitors to the village showed vastly more interest in the pleasures of the waterside than in the historic church, for I found myself a lone entrant.

The place depressed and nauseated me. Its atmosphere was positively unhealthy. The air one breathed was musty, as though impregnated with the damp of long-rotted timbers. The floor sloped towards the crude altar of the box-like building. There was no beauty that I could discern, to plead against its senile defects, for that Norman relic's reprieve from dissolution. In the fresh air outside, I surveyed the ugly structure, wondering at the irrationality of those who saw the desirability of perpetuating it at great cost, in preference to erecting a wholesome, comfortable place of worship for its meagre congregation.

Would any wheel of progress be slowed, history denigrated, education hampered, religious observance hindered, through the demolition or dereliction of this and many other decayed, unsightly churches, most of them with scanty congregations and revolting graveyards? I asked myself. Would it not morally benefit future generations to be deprived of spectacles suggesting human corruption and extinction?

It would be wrong to conclude that I hate all that is old, and love everything new. I dislike the newness that is springing up all around—ultra-modern settlements like Crawley New Town, with concrete blocks for shops, concrete roads, hordes of characterless houses, churches that scream of cement and ballast. Such glaring products of modernity offend me as much as any fusty relic of antiquity. My taste goes for the attractive and individualistic, whether ancient or modern, for restful gravelled roads, churches (if churches we must have) of the comfortable, symmetrical kind of comparatively modern times. For the beautifully old I have admiration, for the unsightly or unwholesome, none, however historic. Modern and ancient ugliness alike offend me, whether of a secular or ecclesiastical nature.

Of course, as a disbeliever in the tenets comprising the *raison d'être* of religious structures, I do not want any sort of church. More correctly, I do not want any sort of building in which the falsehood of a God and a heaven (with or without hell) is preached as unquestionable truth. I would not deny others the right to erect such buildings and worship in them, but for me they are monuments of a

(Concluded on page 76)

# Survival of the Social Group—A Principle of Ethics

By JAMES J. THOMPSON

PAST theories of good and right have been incapable of verification, faulty in application. Ethical philosophy requires a premise or principle which both is defensible logically and *a priori*, and which also accounts satisfactorily for human moral behaviour as it actually appears among people deemed by common consent to be of good character. This principle must be self-contained: for if the principle were, for example, like that of Christian ethics, dependent upon admission of existence of a god, or upon any other doctrine extraneous to ethics itself, then one who denies the extraneous doctrine has no morality; but a moral principle should be universal and apply to him, too. Indeed at the present time, people are forsaking religious belief, and there is hence a distinct need for an ethics based on a self-contained principle, rather than one borrowed from theology. Although past ethical theories have failed to provide such a principle, yet common sense declares that such a principle does exist and must exist, for otherwise human conduct would be chaotic.

The principle proposed and advocated here is that the good, the right, the moral, is that conduct which is deemed to contribute to the survival of society.

The word "society" for this theory is difficult to define, but not difficult to conceive. It can mean, primitively, any number of people more than one who interact in any way with one another. Practically, a society is the group of people with which a given individual thinks he could interact in ways which can contribute to his own personal survival. A Londoner considers people of Manchester to be within his society, because he not only enjoys benefits of exchange of commodities and culture with Manchester, but also because he thinks he could go there, be accepted by the people as one of them, settle there, take employment there, and rear his children there in a cultural heritage he desires for them. This Londoner does not consider Lenin-grad within his society, for he does not visualise himself as able to live there, to converse with the people there, to be accepted by them as one of them, to earn a living there, to rear a family there. But a society is not necessarily a nation or state, for the Jews for example, dispersed through the world for centuries, have yet considered themselves to constitute a single society regardless of geographic boundaries. Nor is a society a government; rather a government may be an instrument of society, and societies have overthrown their governments, as in the French Revolution. Individuals who oppose their governments may feel themselves members of either a smaller society, such as a royal family, a faction, etc., or a larger one, such as a world society, or may fear that the actions of the government actually imperil society.

It is necessary further to define the sphere of ethics as concerned with interaction among people. It is not concerned with individual conduct which affects nobody else. It does include within its scope an inter-personal behaviour. Business is not usually considered an ethical matter, but this is because economic practices reward successful business so immediately and so generously that business is motivated really by self-interest rather than by social interest. But if everyone were to become suddenly lazy, and all business were to stop, then business would become indeed a crucial moral issue.

Consider, if you will, the alternative propositions that society should survive or ought to survive, and that society should not or ought not to survive. If the former alter-

native is accepted, then the conclusion follows that there must be an ethical principle that persons should do what they can to contribute to the survival of society; for to declare that a thing should be done is to declare that persons should do it, and it would be incoherent to believe that something should be done and yet it is a matter of indifference whether anyone does it. If the latter alternative, that society should not survive, be accepted, then society should end. If a society were to end, would it be replaced by another or not? If it were replaced by another, as the Americans did after their revolution, society still survives and endures; it is changed, but has not ended. If the terminated society is replaced by no other, then the question is, does the destruction of society imply the destruction of the people who compose it? If it does, there is no need for an ethics or an ethical principle, for ethics is concerned with human conduct. If it does not, then do these surviving individuals interact, or not? If they do interact, they constitute a society, within the definition above. Since this conclusion contradicts the assumption with which we started, it must be rejected, for we started to explore the consequences of the assumption that society should end, and a conclusion that society does not end would entail an argument in a perpetual circle which could be escaped only by going to the alternative conclusion that individuals would not interact. If they do not interact, then they live solitary existences like worms in the soil, each worm digging his own hole without concern for any other worm. Then they need no ethics as defined above, and no ethical principle at all. Hence we are faced with the alternative: either people should contribute to the survival of society; or there can exist no ethics or ethical principle at all. If there is to be any morality at all, a principle of it must be that people should contribute to the survival of society.

The alternative assumptions above are not inclusive, for there can be a third: it makes no difference whether society survives or not. This alternative can be rejected, because if ethics is defined as concerned with man in society, with inter-social conduct, then it is not indifferent whether society exists. Also it can be argued that if it is indifferent whether society survives, it is equally indifferent whether there should be any ethics or ethical principle.

This ethical principle is both teleological and deontological: teleological, because it upholds a purpose; deontological, because the nature of morality itself requires the principle that society should continue.

Empirical verification that this principle is actually the implicit foundation of moral conduct can be found in palaeontology, archaeology, history, anthropology. The first anthropoids who ever departed from the beasts, however few the members of that first little human family, must have at least realised the existence of each one and of one another, and the need for such action on the part of each as might ensure the survival of that whole group. As our primitive ancestors advanced both in numbers and culture, this necessity was never lost, not to the present day. Throughout the whole period of human existence, instance upon instance may be cited to exemplify this basic moral principle, and indeed all of history may be interpreted in accordance with it.

Implicit acceptance of a guiding principle of survival of societies, albeit undefined and only vaguely recognised,

(Continued on page 76)

## This Believing World

The pathetic attempts to prove that Spiritualists do now help the police to solve unsolvable crimes—if not in England—are particularly in evidence these days. Six women have been murdered, and not a single medium in the country has been able to provide even a whisper of a clue. It is not because we haven't the mediums. Some of ours, like Mrs. Leonard, Mrs. Twigg, Mrs. Roberts, Mr. Benjamin, and many others, are "world famous". They all produce talks with dead relatives or friends as easily as non-psychics bring living people to the telephone. Alas, when it comes to helping the police find the murderer they are as powerless as the most ignorant unbeliever.

★

In the "Daily Express" (February 16th) William Barkley tells us that MPs agree that the old laws, which made the British Sunday dull and drab, will be abolished. Not "with a bang or a whimper" but abolished. But so indifferent is Parliament on the matter that, "when the Government asked MPs to advise them on the question . . ." there were never more than "a dozen MPs present". Which really is what one would expect. The man who wound up for the Government was Welsh lay preacher, Mr. George Thomas, Under Secretary at the Home Office—naturally, the best possible choice! The Government was "not ready with proposals", he said.

★

The remains of Peter have been found in scores of places. And the latest find is by "a woman archaeologist in the Vatican" (*Daily Express*, February 19th). This time, they are "fragments of a skull and half a skeleton in a box in St. Peter's Basilica". Could anything be more evidential? To make things absolutely foolproof, all that need be done is to put the remains under glass and ask every person in Italy suffering from an incurable complaint to touch it. Such a treatment, followed by the prayers of the sick person, would result in an instantaneous cure—and thus confound all the stupid sceptics in the world; to the greater glory of the Vatican and Peter, of course!

★

In the same journal we are told of an "historic step toward Church unity"—that the Roman Church has officially agreed to co-operate with the World Council of Churches. The Vatican wants "a study of ways for future collaboration". There was "tremendous applause" when this was announced in Geneva the other day. But anybody familiar with "the ways that are dark" of the Vatican knows that there can be one and only one type of unity with the Roman Church—to be swallowed up whole by it!

★

According to "The People" (February 24th), the latest import from America is "pop religion". And one of the five pirate radio stations which bombard England daily is responsible. It has gone "religious" for £115 an hour. The biggest advertising groups are American, and the producer a Mr. Calvert, decided it worthwhile "converting" his hit-parade numbers. He now broadcasts Seventh Day Adventism, the Voice of Prophecy, and Wings of Healing. Mr. Calvert does not go to church, but is very religious—which made "Lord" Sutch exclaim: "Here's Calvert going all religious, it beats me". But surely not at £115 an hour!

---

### WITHOUT COMMENT

"Humanists" is perhaps a false description of this group; they appear to be the product of this present adolescence of thought which can only be termed "materialist", and which lowers mankind to the status of an intelligent animal whose immediate wants are his god.

—Letter in the *Daily Telegraph* (20/2/65)

## THE VENERATION OF THE ODISIOUS

(Concluded from page 74)

credulity disgraceful to our age. And when I see the crumbling bastions of superstition patched up and preserved as precious heritages, I think that we are still infantile in reasoning capacity, still primitively indecent.

Christendom has always hugged horror to its breast, and persists in flaunting its sepulchral stock-in-trade in modernity's face. Mouldy graveyards flank the approaches to many churches, and the atmosphere of the tomb mars wholesome reflection. In this forward-looking age, our "green and pleasant land" is blotched by dank souvenirs of the savagely superstitious past. We need to foster rational ideals, emancipate ourselves from the cult of the ancient and effete, and aspire to the creation of a world free of the man-created gods which retard our civilisation and degrade our intelligence.

---

### SURVIVAL OF THE SOCIAL GROUP

(Continued from page 75)

has formed the foundation of government, of law, of religion, of sex codes, of education, of national sovereignty, of international relations, of customs, of all social institutions and actions.

Although anarchy may theoretically be the ideal state of society, it has not been found practicable, and a system for orderly regulation of human affairs has had to be imposed upon all, or accepted by all, to ensure the survival of society in such aspects as defence against enemies, protection of life and property, enforcement of contracts and other matters, neglect of which would certainly imperil the continuance of the state. Government is an instrument, a tool, of society, and it is an error to regard it as the master.

Law is the formulation of specific rules for the continuance of society. It may be that not all law is human, for there may be as well natural laws which affect human conduct. The differences between American and English copyright law might furnish an interesting example. Law confers rights and duties. An end of law is justice, which implies equality of treatment by society of members who are relevantly equal.

Although religion probably began with attempts to explain mysteries of nature by peopling the world with unseen spirits whose capricious wills dominated all events beyond the immediate control of man, it was soon turned to practical use as a means for enforcing law. A hierarchy of priests, especially if endowed with the pompous ceremonials and trappings which so impress the ordinary people, was very useful to a ruler who had to rule in person, with the complex administrative organisations that characterise modern governments. As the falsity of religious doctrines becomes ever more clearly apparent with the progress of scientific discovery, people are nevertheless reluctant to discard religion for concern about what would replace it. As if something must replace it. This trepidation is due to a long-prevailing fallacy that morality springs from religion, rather than that religion is an enforcement instrument for morality, which in fact springs from the necessity to preserve society.

(To be concluded)

---

### NOW IN PAPERBACK ALL THINGS NEW DR. ANNE BIEZANEK

The controversial book by the young woman Roman Catholic doctor—mother of seven children—who here explains why she defied the Church she loves in order to practise and teach scientific birth control.

Available from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop, price 3s. 6d. plus postage.

## THE FREETHINKER

103 BROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1

Telephone: HOP 2717

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.25, half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Brough High Street, London, S.E.1. Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Brough High Street, S.E.1. Inquiries regarding Bequests and Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

### Lecture Notices, Etc.

Items for insertion in this column must reach THE FREETHINKER office at least ten days before the date of publication.

#### 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 J. W. BARKER, L. EBURY, J. A. MILLAR and C. E. WOOD.

(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

Bristol Humanist Group (Hawthorns Hotel, Bristol), Tuesday March 9th, 7.30 p.m.: H. S. WHALEY, "Some Developments in Modern Education".

Cambridge Humanists (Cambridge Union—tickets from Secretary, 12 Brookside, Cambridge), Sunday, March 7th, 3 p.m.: PROFESSOR WILLIAM EMPSON, "The Recent Christian Revival in Literary Criticism".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, March 7th, 6.30 p.m., 84th Anniversary: C. BRADLAUGH BONNER, "Freethought Today".

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place London, W.1), Sunday, March 7th, 7.30 p.m.: JAMES MCKIE, "The TV World—Parsons, Pops and Panties".

Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group (Room 5, Community Centre, Sheen Road), Thursday, March 11th, 8 p.m. A meeting.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, March 7th, 11 a.m.: LORD SORENSEN, "The Human Weaving of Theological Patterns".

Tuesday, March 9th, 7.30 p.m.: OTTO WOLFGANG, "The BBC's Second-Class Subscribers".

Surbiton and Malden & Coombe and Kingston Branches NSS (The White Hart, Kingston Bridge, Hampton Wick), Friday, March 6th, 8 p.m. A meeting.

### Notes and News

HAVING had the pleasure of corresponding with Arthur O'Halloran for some years, and of meeting him and his wife when they visited England, we fully endorse Mr. Hornibrook's remarks on page 80. Mr. O'Halloran's last article for THE FREETHINKER, "New Zealand's Pioneer Missionary" reached us a little while ago, and is printed this week.

★

A MEMORIAL meeting to the late Victor Purcell, CMG, Litt. D., of Trinity College, Cambridge, has been arranged by a number of his friends, and will take place at 6 p.m. on Monday, March 8th, in the Parlour, Gonville and Caius College. Dr. Purcell, who was University Lecturer in History, was also that "very ordinary girl"—actually a

brilliant satirist—"Myra Buttle", author of *The Sweeniad*, *Toynbee in Elysium* and *The Bitches' Brew*.

★

JOHN MORGAN was not perhaps the most suitable person to interview Cardinal Heenan (*Panorama*, February 22nd). Mr. Morgan's own editor, Paul Johnson, Catholic admirer of Pope John, could have asked more searching questions. But then, Mr. Johnson is on ITV. Indeed, one feels that the Independent *This Week* would have done a better job than did BBC. We might perhaps have heard from the liberal Michel de la Bedoyere in addition to the completely orthodox Hugh Kay, and had more criticism than of the slight aloofness and coldness which Mr. Kay thought even the Cardinal would admit. What we got, in fact, was a completely orthodox profile: the "middle class" birth-place, boyhood pictures, interview with a schoolmate (who, of course, never expected Joseph Heenan to end up where he has), Westminster Cathedral, walking in St. James's Park and so on. As for the urbane Cardinal himself, ready as ever to laugh off the difficult question—and allowed to do so as surely no politician would be—at least he betrayed the selfishness at the heart of Christianity when he described his main aim in life as saving his own soul.

★

WRITING (in the *Birmingham Post*, 19/2/65) with what he called "a deep love and loyalty to the Church", Father Arnold A. McMahon denied that contraception was always wrong. Without it, "a woman would have so many children that she would become their slave—unable to grow in that richness and maturity which is her God-given right". Every woman has "limited emotional, physical and spiritual resources," said Father McMahon, and "God does not want her to go beyond them". But, he argued, such a woman has "a right to intercourse" and God "has not made her womb to be a machine that mass produces babies, battery-hen style". If, then, man uses his talents to develop means and methods enabling "husbands and wives to retain their humanity, this can only be a great gift from God."

★

FATHER McMAHON referred to the enthusiastic reception of the "historic speeches" of Cardinals Leger, Suenens and Alfrink, and Patriarch Maximos of Antioch, at the Vatican Council on October 29th and 30th, 1964. And yet, he said, here in England many seemed afraid to speak. But the Father had "come to believe that not only *may* Catholics use contraceptives"—he believed they had "the right". And, he added boldly, nobody could take the right from them. Thou shalt not kill; but there were "more types of destruction than physical murder. It prevents a human being from being able to love". And, the "teaching authority of the Church should not be trying to take away such a right . . .". On the evening of the day his article was published, the Father was advised to visit the Superior General of his order in Rome.

★

"THIS had to happen," said Freethinker Professor P. Sargant Florence, who described Father McMahon as courageous. The dogma was breaking down, the Professor added, "in the face of the needs of Roman Catholic families". A few days later another young priest, Father Cocker, came out in support of Father McMahon, and was relieved of his duties.

★

A VERY different priest who, so far as we know, was never reprimanded by his Church, is due to retire at the age of 73. Father Charles Coughlin gained world-wide notoriety in the 1930s for his broadcasts, in which he praised Adolf Hitler. His church is the Shrine of the Little Flower, at Royal Oak, Detroit.

# New Zealand's Pioneer Missionary

By ARTHUR O'HALLORAN

ON Christmas Day, 1814, the Reverend Samuel Marsden, a chaplain in New South Wales and a magistrate at Parramatta, a few miles from Sydney, arrived in New Zealand, at the Bay of Islands and preached to several hundred Maoris and some twenty Europeans. He took as his text "Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy". It was the first Christian service ever held in New Zealand. New South Wales was at the time the centre of one of England's nefarious convict settlements. New Zealand had not yet become a British colony. It did so in 1840, when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed in the same area—the Bay of Islands some 150 miles north of Auckland.

However to get back to Marsden and his Christmas Day service. This event was commemorated with great publicity on Christmas Day, 1964. The New Zealand Government issued a special pictorial stamp. Marsden's great-great-grandson, the Rev. R. E. Marsden, vicar of Pendeen, Cornwall, travelled all the way from England to be present and to preach the commemoration sermon. The Queen and the Archbishop of Canterbury sent messages. The Governor-General, Sir Bernard Ferguson, attended. The Primate of the New Zealand Anglican Church and three or four other bishops waded ashore at the identical spot where Marsden had landed one hundred and fifty years before. The front pages of New Zealand newspapers splashed headlines and pictures of the commemoration event; editorials solemnly commented and "looked back"; the BBC included it in its news.

It was a glorious summer's day. The sun shone and sparkled on the waters of the bay—truly a bay of memories but some of them vicious and murderous. There was a large attendance of pakehas and maoris. Cars and yachts added to the colour. All went well—all to plan—except for one "nasty" unexpected piece of journalism. New Zealand's most widely read weekly, *New Zealand Truth*, with a circulation from end to end of the Dominion came out, a couple of days before the celebrations with a special article headlined, "The black facts about Samuel Marsden". And it called this churchman, flogger, gunman, sadist, squatter, Christian? A nasty pill to swallow as the echoes of pious adulation of Marsden, the Apostles Creed (in Maori and English) and Marsden's old hymn "All people that on earth do dwell" merged with the rippling tide.

Samuel Marsden was the son of a Yorkshire blacksmith and small farmer. His mother was Methodist and Sam too belonged to the Methodist Church for a time. But in early manhood he joined the Church of England. And, in 1793 he obtained an official appointment as assistant chaplain to the convict colony of New South Wales. He became a sheep farmer and was appointed a magistrate. He had the power to order floggings, and did so with a vengeance. Eric Ramsden's biography of Marsden, published more than twenty years ago revealed this reprehensible side of Marsden. *The Auckland Star*, in its editorial of December 22nd, 1964, referred to Marsden's career in the magistracy of New South Wales, which "as is plain now, was a mistake and in these times would be held to be incompatible with the office of a Christian chaplain". Nevertheless, said the *Star*, "any man, to be judged fairly, must be assessed in the social context of the time in which he laboured. He ordered floggings then for what would be minor offences today. Which is not a matter for condemnation so much as for realisation that he was inevitably a product of a harsher age".

Marsden certainly lived in a harsh age, but there were good and noble men, such as Romilly, living in the same age; men who strove with might and main to lessen the inhumanities and cruelties of man to man. No doubt the psychiatrist would today have some of the answers to Marsden's odious conduct. Be that as it may, Marsden is a bad advertisement for a religion which is claimed to be the hope of humanity—indispensable for the moral and spiritual uplift of mankind. It is not easy to forgive Marsden's sadism—his frightful penchant for the lash, his indifference to the pain and suffering he inflicted—the 300 lashes (maximum allowed under British law at that time) to Paddy Galvin the Irishman, to cite one of the worst cases. To me there is nothing to love or respect in the man. He preached a gospel of love and forgiveness; mouthing the "good news" of eternal bliss, yet ever ready to inflict pain and suffering on the unfortunate convicts, even when other punishments were available and permitted.

I have not checked on the other charges made by *New Zealand Truth*, and am not prepared at this stage to pass judgment on them. But ever since, many years ago, I read the result of Ramsden's researches, I have known there was little to endear the memory of New Zealand's most famous missionary. And the pious platitudes and blandishments over the recent celebrations were certainly not aimed at revealing the real man.

A stained glass window commemorates this "saintly", clergyman-magistrate-missionary in St. Mary's Cathedral, Auckland, and the reader may be surprised to learn that the writer collected a mite towards it. My excuse? I was young and innocent, addicted to Hymns Ancient and Modern, Collects for the Day, the donning of surplice and cassock, and most assuredly knew nothing of the cruelties and hypocrisies of the Rev. Samuel Marsden.

---

## We'll Remember Them

By PETER COTES

WHEN Andrew Lang once wrote that "to have a clever and accomplished man telling you, in his best manner, what thoughts come into his head after reading even a new novel, is no trifling pleasure among the pale and shadowy pleasures of the mind", he could quite easily have been referring to Hesketh Pearson's posthumous work, *Extraordinary People* which was completed shortly before the author's death in April 1964, and is now at last published (Heinemann, 30s.).

Pearson, who was a poor actor in his young days (I have this on the best of authority, although I never saw him act) was besides being a merry fellow and good companion, surely one of the best popular biographers of our time. He writes here with all his accustomed fluency and zest, and the result is a book which must be especially absorbing to all Freethinkers. Wilkie Collins, Erasmus Darwin, Thomas Day, Henry Fielding, Johnston Forbes-Robertson, Francis Galton, Frank Harris, Samuel Ogden, Tom Paine, Anna Seward and Bernard Shaw are all in potted biographies dealt with by an expert at the job, who couldn't write a dull page if he tried. But for my taste, because it opened up so much food for thought, his best contribution to the present volume is the ultimate chapter, "Beyond the Pale".

It is an essay in which Pearson, himself a Freethinker, reflects how, nearly thirty years ago, sitting with two

friends, the late Hugh Kingsmill and Malcolm Muggeridge (so sceptically and happily still here with us!) the trio got around to discussing the now pop word, "Establishment". As initially Pearson apparently gave general currency to this word used in a secular sense, he goes on to explain how it eventually appeared in his biography of Henry Labouchere, published in 1936. His summing up of why even such a pillar of the Establishment as Dr. Johnson was not "accepted" as an insider, but was always an outsider, as well as Shaw's own witty, affectionate, and perceptive views on the real (as opposed to the popular) reason why Frank Harris could never be acceptable to the Establishment, make for enlightening reading. Shaw's own expulsion from yet another mirror of the Establishment, the Dramatist's Club, during the first world war, is entertainingly dealt with—in GBS's own words.

Other independent "spirits", who would have reached the top of their professions if they had only been able to conform to the safety-first policy of establishments were: - Sir Richard Burton "whose freedom of thought and speech terrified the official world"; Samuel Butler, "who was ignored by the scientific mandarins of his age"; and W. S. Gilbert, "who laughed at all authority, rounded off his career as a librettist by poking fun at the national anthem, and did not receive a knighthood until he was considered too old to be awkward".

Whistler, Elgar and Herbert Barker, the osteopath, whose offer of free treatment for the soldiers in the 1914-18 war was declined by the Home Office, are others who are mentioned as being unable—physically as well as mentally, presumably—to take their places anywhere but outside the Establishment of their times. Personally, I should have liked the inclusion in this gallery of those ruggedly independent extraordinary people of genius, of Churchill; he who could never really be depended upon *not* to rock the ship of the Establishment if he felt like it, and whose almighty talent flowered as much when "in the wilderness" between two world wars, as when he mercifully had control of affairs of state during the second world combustion.

And then there was Ettie Rout, once described by H. G. Wells as, "that great unsung heroine of the first world war" who deserves a chapter to herself as an opponent of the Establishment about whom Pearson writes so engagingly. If those odd non-conformists of the present, who are nevertheless succeeding *outside* the Establishment, are a mere handful today—Pearson's old friend, the poet, Colin Hurry in commerce; James Cameron in journalism; John Osborne in the theatre; Kenneth Tynan year in and year out with unforgettable essays in dramatic criticism—no matter: that they carry on at all does not invalidate Hesketh Pearson's case. Only perhaps with luck, tenacity, and a very great talent can an artist succeed outside, instead of inside, the Establishment. The rebel, in order to succeed, cannot afford to be less than brilliant, and even with that brilliance, he needs luck.

Let it never be forgotten in our own day that that splendid novelist, Joan O'Donovan, is still compelled to work as an assistant headmistress in a mixed secondary school, nor that Sean O'Casey died in the same month recently as Ian Fleming, poorer in worldly goods than James Bond's creator, but richer in every other way outside the portals of the Establishment. H. G. Wells, despite his world-fame, went officially unrecognized when the Labour Government he'd done so much to bring to power, swept into office in 1945. The greatest "populariser" of socialism in our time died without receiving any of those "honours" he deserved, but never requested. Undoubtedly he'd have turned down on principle a life-peerage had he been offered anything as pedestrian as this title has become. Paul Rotha, docu-

mentary pioneer, art critic, screen writer-director and film historian, to digress further, has always worked outside the Establishment; he brought an acute social sense even into his productions for the screen or *The Times* newspaper and the GPO: both commissions by the Establishment. Pearson recalls here that GBS himself, who way back in the 1890s with his tracts and speeches, once formed with the Webbs an opposition Establishment called the Labour Party, with the Labour Party in power at the end of his life confided to the author, "I am not persona grata with the Cabinet just now". Shaw would have kicked over the traces of any Establishment including one of his own making.

Yes, how much poorer we should have been without these "wild men"; the "irregular", the "anarchist", the "eccentric", the "stormy petrel" and the "show off". They have been described by these and by many other names as well by their critics, the place-hunter, the safeman, the time-server and the stooge. But the word "freethinker" means precisely what it says, and applies as much to theists like Donald Soper and Trevor Huddleston as it does to contributors to this paper. Or to Hesketh Pearson himself and all the extraordinary people of this, his final work.

## God or No God?

By TOM PRICE

THE existence of God is acknowledged so widely, and in such a variety of ways by such a variety of people, that it seems to be a truism, a strong accomplished fact.

It is very difficult to argue against the existence of God in these circumstances, but that is what the atheist does.

The intelligent atheist, however, is not content with merely refuting the existence of God; he seeks to explain how the *idea* of God grew up: in other words, how man created God in his mind.

The first difficulty he has is to find out exactly which God he is out to explain. For definitions of God vary widely.

A savage sees God in the giant tree or the untameable river. A tribal Jew sees God as an avenger who is always on his side and will help to win his battles.

A Jehovah's Witness sees God as a perfect man who will literally come to earth, slay the Devil, and institute the millenium.

A negro slave saw God as a benevolent "Massa" who would open his arms, soothe the lashes of whips and words, and make the heavens ring with eternal and highly-rhythmic tunes.

Our grandfathers saw God as a stern but righteous judiciary, who would punish the sinful and cherish those who went to church, did not beat their wives and knitted nightgowns for Kaffirs.

The learned Protestant theologian sees God as a Spirit that pervades the hearts of mankind.

The politician sees God as a humanitarian capitalist, or as the fount of socialism.

Hitler's God was a jew-baiter; Verwoerd's God is apartheid, the Salvation Army's God is a bowl of soup and a bed and a brass band.

Take your choice and pay your price! Choose your God to suit your circumstances!

The poor atheist is at a loss to know where to start. Which God should he fire his logical guns at?

And yet, the very quandary gives him ammunition. The very fact that here are so many Gods with so many faces,

contradictory faces, is some evidence that God is a very human creation.

Ah, says the theist—but how do you explain the fact that everybody accepts a god of *some* sort?

To answer that question is the hope of the atheist; in fact he has already answered it. But there are so many gods on the market that it is difficult to get in with a new product.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### TEACHING COUNCIL (SCOTLAND) BILL

May I refer to your note (19/2/65) "The Churches in Politics" where you say, "The only consolation is that, in some respects at any rate, the two Churches are likely to cancel each other out"?

This is cold comfort to humanist or freethinking teachers in Scotland, who have learned by bitter experience that the earlier appointments of religious representatives on local education committees has resulted in these people using their opportunity to victimise and withhold promotion from anti-religious teachers.

That is why some of us have got together to appeal to the Secretary of State to consider the appointment of a Humanist representative to the proposed Teaching Council, in the event of the Bill retaining the principle of having representatives of beliefs given a place on the Council. As spokesman I have now received the following reply:—

Dear Sir,

I am writing on behalf of the Secretary of State to acknowledge you letter of 13th February requesting that a representative of the Humanist Movement be allocated a place on the Teaching Council.

Your letter will receive attention.

Yours faithfully,

Sgd. G. G. Lyall, Private Secretary.

I would like to get in touch with more teachers who are disturbed by the fact that religious representatives are being considered for appointment to the Teaching Council and I hope that this letter will enable them to get into touch with me. When replying please state whether agreeable to having your name made public or kept confidential as I realise that publicity brought to the notice of church representatives on education committees could have an effect of prejudicing possible chances of promotion.

I may say that I have also approached the Secretary of the Scottish Council of Humanists to ask his Council to deal with this matter and, if necessary, to consider the handling of the subject on our behalf.

E. G. MACFARLANE,  
Chairman, Dundee Humanist Group,  
10 Harefield Road, Dundee.

### DAVID AND SOLOMON

While thanking Mr. Ben-Yehudah for his kind reference to me, may I say that I came to the conclusion that these famous "kings" were mythical only after a hard course of reading.

So indoctrinated have we all been about Bible heroes, that it will probably take scores of years or even centuries to persuade people that the Bible is packed with allegories or, to put the matter more simply, with fairy tales, extremely well put together and, in the Authorised Version, beautifully translated.

However, if I may, I will try and show in future articles why I am quite convinced that while there are some historical names in Kings and Chronicles, David and Solomon have had no more real existence than Cain and Abel, Romulus and Remus, or Peter and Paul. No archaeological discoveries have revealed any trace of them in Palestine.

H. CUTNER.

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY 59th ANNUAL DINNER

Guest of Honour: LEO ABSE, M.P.

at the

Horse Shoe Hotel, Tottenham Court Road, London, W.1.

SATURDAY, MARCH 20th, 1964

RECEPTION 6 p.m. DINNER 6.30 p.m.

Chairman: DAVID TRIBE

Vegetarians catered for Evening Dress Optional  
Tickets 22/6 from the Sec., 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1.

## OBITUARY

I regret to announce the death, at the age of 73, of Arthur O'Halloran, of Auckland, New Zealand. Mr. O'Halloran was a man of wide reading and wide interests, and he took a prominent part in any worthwhile cause, no matter how unpopular it made him; and he always stood as a champion of the underdog. He hated tyranny and hypocrisy, condemned war and its so-called glories. He fought against capital punishment; supported vigorously with pen and speech the Howard League for Penal Reform, the Radio Freedom League and the New Zealand Rationalist Association.

Mr. O'Halloran was very fortunate in having a wife who shared his interests fully, and fought with him for the causes they considered worthy. We send her our deepest condolences. Some two or three years ago the O'Hallorans came to Britain on holiday, when they met many of the British Freethinkers who admired their direct approach to questions of mutual interest.

Of Arthur O'Halloran it can be said without doubt that he devoted his energy and his time,

To the cause that needs assistance  
To the wrongs that need resistance  
To the future in the distance  
And the good that we may do.

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

### NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society was held at 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1, on Wednesday, February 17th. Present Mr. D. H. Tribe who was in the chair, Mr. W. Griffiths (Treasurer), Messrs. Barker, Collins, Condon, Ebury, Hornibrook, Kuebart, Leslie, Millar, Miller, Shannon, Sproule, and Timmins, Mrs. Collins, Mrs. McIlroy, Mrs. Venton, and the Secretary (Mr. W. McIlroy). An apology was received from Mr. F. Warner.

New members were admitted to the Marble Arch, North London, Reading, Surbiton and Parent branches. Financial reports for December 1964 and January 1965, were accepted. The annual financial report of Marble Arch Branch was read before the meeting and congratulations were expressed to the branch.

Mr. W. Shannon was elected delegate to the National Council for Civil Liberties conference on Northern Ireland. It was reported that plans for future activities in connection with secular education were being formulated. Final arrangements for the 59th Annual Dinner were announced. A letter would be sent to the Lord Chancellor urging that the Blasphemy Laws be repealed. Oxfam was congratulated on including family planning in its programme. A protest would be sent to the Italian authorities on the banning in Rome of performances of Rolf Hochhuth's play *The Representative*. The next meeting was arranged for March 10th.

## POPULAR PAPERBACKS

### TRAVEL

The Kon-Tiki Expedition Thor Heyerdahl 4s.

The Crossing of Antarctica Vivian Fuchs and Edmund Hillary 5s.

The White Nile Alan Moorehead 5s.

### BIOGRAPHY

The Tale of Beatrix Potter Margaret Lane 3s. 6d.

The Rothschilds Frederic Morton 5s.

The Intelligent Heart (D. H. Lawrence) Harry T. Moore 7s. 6d.

### HISTORY

The Origins of the Second World War A. J. P. Taylor 5s.

The Reason Why Cecil Woodham-Smith 3s. 6d.

The Price of Glory: Verdun 1916 Alaistair Horne 5s.

### REMINISCENCE

Cider With Rosie Laurie Lee 3s. 6d.

Down and Out in Paris and London George Orwell 3s. 6d.

Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter Simone de Beauvoir 5s.

### MISCELLANEOUS

The Fire Next Time James Baldwin 2s. 6d.

The Bafut Beagles Gerald Durrell 3s. 6d.

Penguin Science Surveys, 1964, A and B

Edited by S. A. Barnett and Anne McClaren 7s. 6d. each.

The Penguin Book of the Renaissance J. H. Plumb 10s. 6d.

The Heart of the Hunter Laurens Van Der Post 3s. 6d.

The Hill of Devi E. M. Forster 3s. 6d.

The Age of Austerity 1945-1951

Edited by Michael Sissons and Philip French 5s.

The Living Past Ivar Lissner 10s. 6d.

Man Meets Dog Konrad Lorenz 3s. 6d.

from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop  
103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.