

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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THE murder of the famous Negro revivalist, black nationalist and former deputy leader of the Black Muslims, affords a startling reminder that the long tradition of religiously-inspired assassinations is still operative in the modern world, and in the United States, where Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet and founder of what is still perhaps the most successful of post-Christian religions in modern times, the Church of Latter Day Saints (commonly known as Mormons), was lynched by an infuriated mob of American frontiersmen in 1844. Nor has religiously-inspired murder been confined, again even in modern times, to the New World. For the Bab, the Persian pseudo-prophet who founded the still widely-diffused Bahai religion, was also judicially murdered by an orthodox Muslim Persian tribunal about the same time as Joseph Smith. Neither the American nor Persian prophet was unique in the manner of his end, for if there is any substratum of factual truth in the legends recorded in the New Testament, lynch-law was responsible for the deaths of several early pioneers of the then novel and unacceptable Christian heresy.

1865-1965

It is somewhat ironical, perhaps an ominous portent, that the murder of Malcolm X, which will probably spark off a new chain of homicidal violence and which must in any event exacerbate an already tense racial situation, should have occurred almost exactly a century after the close of the savage American Civil War, the best-known result of which (though not its original cause) was the liberation of the Negro slaves. This year, too, is a centenary of assassinations. For if 1965 has demanded the human sacrifice of Malcolm X, the most publicised at least of Negro nationalists, 1865 saw the destruction of a far more valuable life, that of Abraham Lincoln.

Any personal comparison between Abraham Lincoln and Malcolm X could only be futile, for Lincoln was one of the world's now universally acknowledged great men, whereas it would not appear that Malcolm X was anything more in reality—as opposed to the perfervid imagination of his own sect—than a talented showman and demagogue, perhaps a potential Negro Hitler, preaching racialism in reverse. He was not indeed the first of his kind. Marcus Garvey, a formidable demagogue with whom I once debated, had anticipated the Black Muslims in his demand for a separate Negro republic, and even ran for the Presidency of the USA.

But it is significant, if not actually ominous, that exactly a century after the end of the first Negro revolution—as we may appropriately term the emancipation movement which, thanks to Lincoln finally triumphed in 1865—we seem to be entering a second Negro revolution. Where and how, will it end? Is Malcolm X destined to live in American history as the Negro "John Brown"?

## President Johnson's Dilemma

The mounting wave of violence that appears already to be following close upon the murder of Malcolm X con-

fronts even a professional politician like President Johnson—whom another assassin's bullet so swiftly raised to the Presidency—with a problem of appalling complexity. The mounting war in Vietnam is surely sufficiently daunting for even the stoutest heart and the broadest pair of shoulders. But here is, perhaps, an even more terrifying problem on his own doorstep: on the one hand, the intransigent white Deep South with what is in effect, an

apartheid mentality and an apartheid culture—the fine flower of which has blossomed into the Ku Klux Klan—and an increasingly intransigent Negro racial movement, the culminating point of which is represented by the Black Muslims and Malcolm X. How

to mediate between such rival irreconcilables? Such is the problem before President Johnson.

## Religious Assassination

In this so tangled a situation, where does religion come in? For the connection between religion and racialism in the present day USA, is certainly close. The Black Muslims claim to be militant followers of Muhammed, and to condemn white supremacy in the name of a Semitic prophet who flourished in 7th century Arabia (c570-632). It is perhaps also relevant to note that the leader of even the moderate non-violent Negro racialists, is a clergyman, the Reverend Martin Luther King. How far the present-day Black Muslims (as also their late breakaway offspring, Malcolm X) are *bona fide* Muslims, recognised at such headquarters of Muslim orthodoxy as, say, Mecca or Cairo, does not seem very clear at present. For certainly orthodox Islam, like orthodox Christianity is a cosmopolitan religion with a world-wide following and not a purely tribal cult of the chosen race like, say, Judaism or Shintoism. In Muhammed, as in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, white nor black". Indeed we would be inclined to suppose that Islam, a democratic creed without any priestly caste, is probably less racial in composition than is Christianity. For the cult of the Koran does not seem ever to have permanently allied itself with any ethnic group, anything like as closely as did Christianity with the white races throughout the heyday of European Imperialism.

However, Black Muslims in the peculiarly inflamed conditions of the present-day USA, may have used the creed of Muhammed as a convenient alibi under which to stage their racial crusade against the white infidels, just as, say, German Catholicism used the essentially pagan ideology of Nazi Germany in order to smash its public enemy number one—atheistic Communism.

Be that as it may, Islam is no stranger to violence. The Jihad (or Holy War) has always been its last and sometimes its first line of resistance when the cult of the Koran was endangered by aggressive infidels. Nor for that matter, has assassination been unknown in Islam; Malcolm X had many Muslim predecessors. It is surely relevant to recall that the very word "assassin" itself, was originally derived from a heretical Ismailite Muslim sect domiciled in Persia

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Abraham Lincoln and Malcolm X

By F. A. RIDLEY



and Syria in the 12th and 13th centuries, whose theocratic chief, the Sheik-al-Jebal (the "Old Man of the Mountain" as the Christian crusaders called him) sent out professional killers habitually drugged with hashish to murder inimical Muslim and Christian potentates. Our word "assassin" is derived from the drug, hashish—viz. *haghighin*. It may also be relevant to add that the Jesuits also introduced a technique of religious assassination during the Counter-Reformation. If the killer of Malcolm X was a Muslim—a black or white, orthodox or heretical—it is clear that

he and Malcolm X had many predecessors.

Meanwhile we are left with an ominous centenary. In 1865 the first phase of the racial war in the USA, black versus white, was sealed with the blood of Abraham Lincoln. In 1965, what looks increasingly like the opening of the second phase in this self-same racial war appears to have been sealed with the blood of Malcolm X. For whoever the killer, and whatever his precise motive, the direct result can only be new outbursts of interracial violence and of perhaps inter-Negro conflict.

## Bitter Pill

A (completely imaginary) conversation between Jehovah,  
Pope John, and a young priest

By TOM PRICE

*Jehovah*—Well, son, you've done it this time. If they don't give you the sack I reckon they'll send you to the Congo. And I can tell you that it's going to be as hot as h--- out there again before long.

*Pope*—Don't scare him, Father. He's done a mighty fine job on this birth control thing. Some of those layabouts in the Vatican needed a shake-up like this. They haven't a clue when it comes to public relations. If you hadn't called me up Here, I was on the brink of doing something similar to what this young lad's done. Of course, I would have been a bit more discreet . . . something on the lines of "You can use the Pill as long as you use it in the Holy Safe Period, and as long as you buy it from your Holy Priest, so that any Holy Profit goes to the Holy Church". That way, everybody would be happy . . .

*Jehovah*—Rubbish. You people have always been too touchy about birth control. You made a big mistake in dithering about it when it was invented. Celibacy is a lot of bunk. I shall always regret that He—I mean I—never found a bonny young Jewish girl way back in BC. Or was it AD? I could never make sense of your crazy calendar.

*Young priest*—I only told the truth . . .

*Pope*—Truth? My boy, nobody knows the truth, especially when it comes to s-e-x. That's dynamite, my boy. Better left alone. Trouble is, those priests seem to be obsessed with it. People keep harping on it in the confessional and before you know where you are—wham! Revolution in the presbytery!

*Young priest*—Women are not childbearing machines, and . . .

*Pope*—Women, women! They're the cause of all the damn trouble. I wish . . .

*Jehovah*—Careful, Johnnie me boy. Remember that woman was my idea. I did a natty job of rib-plucking there. And don't forget that *you* wouldn't be here if it wasn't for women. Aha! Just think, if they'd had the Pill in those days, you might not be living it up up Here now, playing your harp like a little demon. I tell you this—I'd rather hear a good prima donna any day than your eternal plinking and plonking.

*Pope*—I always preferred boy sopranos. But what You fail to remember, Old Man, is that if you let the women have their heads they'll be taking over in no time. Look what's happened to the nonconformists and all that lot . . . women in the pulpits, women preaching sermons, women taking the collections . . .

*Young priest*—Well, I see no objection to women . . .

*Jehovah*—Hah! He'll be turning everything topsy-turvy if you don't watch him. Do you all good! I like a rebel

. . . used to be one Meself in the old days. But remember this, young man. You're very lucky to be born of woman in enlightened times like these. I can remember when it used to positively reek up here with the fumes of disobedient priests. Some of those old popes, present company excepted, used to report to Me in two simple words—"Frying tonight". Quite fun it was, especially when it turned out that the ones that were fried came up Here and the other fat fools went Down There. Still always remember that your betters don't like you to talk to the newspapers. I never did it Meself, I used to engrave My pronouncements on bits of stone or gold and leave 'em on a mountain. If anybody pinched the copyright, that was their business . . .

*Young priest*—To get back to the subject . . .

*Pope*—I'm fed up to the teeth with the subject. To coin a phrase, go thou, and sin no more.

*Jehovah*—And if thou canst not be good, be jolly careful.

## Religious Instruction Bill

EVERY year a well-meaning legislator presents a bill in Philippine Congress intended to make religious instruction a part of the public school curricula. Every year, therefore, we have to remind the pious congressman to read the Philippine Constitution. Paragraph 3 of Section 23, Article VI, states:

"No public property or money shall ever be appropriated, applied, or used directly or indirectly, for the use, benefit, or support of any sect, church, denomination, sectarian institution or system of religion or for the use, benefit or support of any priest, preacher, minister, or other religious teacher or dignitary as such, except when such priest, preacher, minister or other religious teacher or dignitary is assigned to the armed forces or to any penal institution, orphanage, or leprosarium."

In this year's Congressional Session, 1965, it is Representative Miguel Cuenco of Cebu who is presenting another religious instruction bill, on the strength of a little clause smuggled into Section 5 of Article XIV of the Philippine Constitution. The inserted clause, obviously intended to nullify the prohibition in Article VI, states:

"Optional religious instruction shall be maintained in the public schools as now authorised by law."

All past sponsors of previous religious instruction bills depended on the support of this little stowaway in Section 5 of Article XIV. How this item sneaked into the Philippine Constitution should be investigated by competent secular legislators.

GONZALO QUIOGUE, Manila.



# MRA and Its Open Secrets

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

It is difficult to claim that the critical reader is likely to find any attraction in the apologetics of Moral Re-Armament. The movement has long been shrouded in a semi-mystery which has a suggestion of the sinister. It has stood out for sheer political reaction and, under the guise of semi-morality mixed with semi-religion, it has proved to be very much a weapon of the anti-Communist front. MRA is nothing more than the extreme of the right wing, seeking to attack the progressive forces of an emerging secularist and scientific culture. Such a position is difficult in its very nature to present in terms of attractive apologetics. On the moral side, few would be impressed by the one-sided *New Morality* of Sir Arnold Lunn and Mr. Gareth Lean. Its influence upon the BMA has been not a little suspect. Much of its propaganda takes the form of half-truths or of statements widely open to challenge. The assumption of moral and spiritual superiority ends by becoming merely nauseating. But it must be admitted that a new book, *The Open Secret of MRA*, by the Rev. J. P. Thornton Duesbury, Master of St. Peter's College, Oxford, is of a different order. The author has lived out a quiet life among dons and is, in a sense, a leave-over from the days of forty years ago when Frank Buchman made his great onslaught upon Oxford University. The Master writes quietly and without the moral hysteria so often associated with MRA publications. He sets out to make a case for MRA and to justify his position.

At the outset, the Master is unfortunate. Several years ago, Mr. Tom Driberg published a small pamphlet attacking the movement. It is this pamphlet which the present book seeks to answer. But Mr. Driberg has not relied upon a short statement. He has followed up his attack recently in a full-length book which presents a case for the prosecution of unanswerable quality. Many of the pleadings of the Master of St. Peter's College are answered heavily in this work and there is no need to go over the same ground again. In the end, the case comes down to the same issue. MRA believes in moral absolutes which it sums up finally under four main headings. It applies these absolutes in practical life.

Leaving aside, the contentious questions as to whether these absolutes really demand their proper application in sexual hysterics and extreme right wing politics, the vital question is whether such absolutes have any real existence at all. For the humanist, they simply do not exist. He can only have experience of the universe as he knows it. The history of morality, sexual or otherwise, is that of widely differing moral systems in different societies and centuries. Even within nominally Christian societies, moral demands have changed and evolved. Various moral systems cancel each other out. One need only contrast the introspective pacifism of much oriental religious morality with the extrovert militancy shown by that of Islam. Some societies have been monogamous and some polygamous. In some moral orders, personal possession plays a part not to be traced in others. Some show a great respect for all life which is not seen in others. In short, morality appears as the particular formulation of a particular society at a particular time. The formulation itself will be the product of social and economic causes. Absolutes become the abstractions of the human mind personifying and abstracting so that, in the end, some sort of transcendental belief emerges. The absolutes of Mr. Thornton Duesbury are in no better case than are other moral absolutes and, as a

basic belief, the MRA standpoint collapses upon this very point.

I do not intend to follow the author through the details of his case for the defence. It has already been answered in considerable detail by Mr. Driberg. One can only express surprise that a person of such obvious integrity as the Master of St. Peter's is not moved to a far greater suspicion by the nature of the charges and the shuffling sort of reply which commonly emerges from MRA circles. For example, the links with Hitler are too clear and well-known to be explained away. But we do wish to take up the Master upon his particular treatment of the case of "K". As an undergraduate, "K" was a prominent member of the Groups in Oxford. He later turned against them and supplied much material to the Bishop of Durham, Dr. Hensley Henson, who wrote a famous attack upon the Group Movement some thirty years ago. The Master suggests that "K" was always unstable and goes on to mention that, according to a quotation from the *Daily Express* early in 1943, he was sentenced to "three years' hard labour" for importuning men in Piccadilly Circus. After this incident, Dr. Henson quoted him no more and "K" faded out of the picture. It might be assumed that "K" was an utterly unstable person and that it was upon this rotten pillar that Dr. Henson rested much of his case.

Actually, there is a mass of material in Dr. Henson's book which did not come from "K" at all. But, unfortunately, very few of the readers of the present book will have heard of "K's" existence. It just happens that I was at Oxford at the same time and knew "K" very well. He was a prominent member of the Groups, an extremely pushful individual who had taken a good first degree in history and was very popular and well-known among the Evangelical clergy of Oxford. Certainly, his religious associates pushed him forward as a prominent figure, and gave no hint that they knew him to be in any way unstable.

"K" claimed to have been disgusted by what he saw and heard on a Buchmanite tour, kept a careful diary, seceded from the Group Movement when he returned home, and supplied Dr. Henson with a great deal of information at first-hand. The cry that "K" was unstable now came from the Groupers, but he was still much in favour with the Evangelical clergy of Oxford, and regarded as one of their coming men. He was merely one of the many ex-Groupers who were to be found in Oxford at that time, and who, as such, were made the subject of bitter attack by their former associates. From the wider world, there was still no hint of instability. "K" was then ordained and was appointed to a series of important ecclesiastical posts in a northern diocese at an extremely early age. Presumably, his bishop and his clerical associates did not believe him to be in the least unstable. Finally came the catastrophe of Piccadilly Circus. Mr. Thornton Duesbury should have checked his facts. No magistrate has the power to award the sentence which he mentions. The magistrate did accuse "K" of committing perjury and, despite the fact that various bishops and deans were dragged through the witness-box to testify to "K's" character, he received a sentence of three months' hard labour. Incidentally, did "K's" clerical friends who appeared in court on his behalf believe him to be unstable? If so, what right had they to give such evidence?

(Concluded on page 84)



## This Believing World

**Humanists are to be allowed** to state their objections to Christianity from the pulpit of St. George's Church, Edgbaston, Birmingham, at a series of lunchtime services on Wednesdays during Lent. P. Sargant Florence, Professor Emeritus of Birmingham University, A. F. M. Brierley, Lecturer at the Birmingham College of Commerce, and F. G. Lyne, Chairman of the Birmingham Humanist Group are among those who will speak for ten minutes (*The Birmingham Post*, February 25th). They will be answered by the Bishop of Birmingham, Dr. J. L. Wilson; Dr. Wiliam Strawson, Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy at Handsworth Methodist Theological College; Canon William Purcell, head of religious broadcasting for the Midland Region of the BBC; and the Rev. Donald Tyther, Rural Dean of Smethwick. The procedure was called for by the times in which we live, said the Vicar of St. George's, the Rev. George Browning; there were so many uncertainties about what people thought that it was "better that they should be talked about in church". It was, so far as he knew, the first time that Humanists had been given such an opportunity to present their case. A buffet lunch would be provided after each service.

★

**It sounds almost like a horrid case of lese majestie.** Here we have Dr. John Heenan just made a glorious Cardinal, and at the same time two upstart Roman Catholic priests are not only advising Catholic women to use artificial contraceptives if they want to, but one of them doing so in the Roman Catholic journal *The Tablet*. Cardinal Heenan is the great anti-birth-control champion in the Church of Rome, its Bayard *sans peur*, and it must have been more than heartbreaking for him to be thus betrayed by his own comrades.

★

**Fortunately, the Vatican has ways of dealing** with such betrayals, and it has promptly sent the recaltrants into retreat, where they will be allowed to repent and pray to Almighty God in pain and sorrow. In the meantime, we note (*Daily Mail*, February 27th) that a Catholic woman who has a large family and who wanted to "receive the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion", was sent away by two priests. Why? Well, this sinner had actually "had an operation for sterilisation"—something too awful to contemplate.

★

**A leaflet published by the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection**, entitled "God's Representatives to the Animals" is based on a sermon delivered by the Rev. B. Viney, and gives, we are told "the case against vivisection from the Christian standpoint", with many references to God and his animals. Anti-vivisectionists often drag in Jesus at their meetings as if he were the greatest anti-vivisectionist who ever lived. They stick to their guns though "our Lord" hardly mentions animals.

★

**The fact is that Jesus never said** a word against "nature red in tooth and claw", and certainly never protested against any cruelty to animals by man. One of his most famous commands was, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine"—in both cases reflecting his contempt for animals. The custom was in his day, and probably still is to refer to them in most uncomplimentary terms.

★

**We cannot help wondering what the Church's** attitude is now, to the literal acceptance of miracle. Here, for

instance, is Dr. John Robinson, the Bishop of Woolwich, writing in the *Sunday Mirror* a number of articles on Christian problems brilliantly, but thoroughly confusing all genuine believers in Christianity as it has been known in history. To call, as he does, "sharing" something or other a "miracle", is delightfully disingenuous.

★

**But the sturdy unbelief in miracles** of the Rev. J. Lowe of Southend must surely disturb even Dr. Robinson. Miracles "are only figurative examples to illustrate deeper truths", Mr. Lowe says, and we regret to add that he won't accept the famous drunkard's dream of Jesus turning water into wine, nor the Resurrection, the most marvellously attested historical fact in history. On the other hand, Dr. Robinson begs us to believe that "there is nothing love cannot do"—whatever that means—and "no limit can be set to the power of the Spirit of God", whatever that also means, for we don't know.

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### MRA AND ITS OPEN SECRETS

(Concluded from page 83)

"K" appealed to the Quarter Sessions and secured the reduction of his sentence to a fine and binding-over. But this is not the end of the story. A certain south country bishop had been one of the prominent Evangelical clergy at Oxford in "K's" time and must have had many an opportunity of deciding whether or not his young friend was unstable. "K" had been forced to resign his clerical appointments upon conviction by the Quarter Sessions, but this particular bishop was now to come to the rescue. "K" was not unfrocked, and so he was free to be appointed domestic chaplain to the bishop and to be sent around the diocese conducting various religious services. Did this bishop believe him to be unstable? The end of the story came with "K's" sudden death from a heart attack round about the end of the war, whilst he was still chaplain to the bishop in question.

I have concentrated upon the sordid story of "K" because Mr. Thornton Duesbury raised it anew in his book. It is certainly not my desire to dig up a long past scandal, and the unhappy man died many years ago. But I have taken the liberty of filling in the gaps in the story merely to point out that this sort of thing simply will not do. Because a parson leaves the movement, it does not mean that he is unstable. Indeed, change of thought may well suggest that men are mentally and critically alive. Again, if some piece of evidence is to be resurrected or a critic attacked, the whole story should be told. I do not think much of Mr. Thornton Duesbury's critical methods in dealing with the story of "K". It leaves me wondering how much more of his "open secret" is really a half-story. This doubt alone causes me to place his book on the shelf beside so much other MRA propaganda, of which Mr. Driberg has shown the true worth as factual narrative. The whole sequence of its apologetics is a sad comment upon a movement which claims to seek the moral rearming of the world.

[N.B. I have followed Mr. Thornton Duesbury's example in telling the "K" story with strict anonymity. It is an old scandal and I have no desire whatever to cause pain to people who are still living. But, if I am challenged by MRA or anybody else as to the accuracy of my facts, I am in a position to give "Ks" full name and college, the diocese in which he received his clerical appointments and their nature, and the name of the south country bishop and his diocese. I trust that this will not become necessary—F.H.A.M.]



## THE FREETHINKER

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### Lecture Notices, Etc.

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

#### OUTDOOR

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.

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

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, 25 Bath Street), Sunday, March 14th, 3 p.m.: HUGH MACDIARMID, "Religion and Irreligion in Scottish Life and Literature".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, March 14th, 6.30 p.m.: EDMUND TAYLOR, "The Greek Vision of Pre-History".

Manchester Branch NSS (Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, March 14th, 7.30 p.m. A meeting.

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenter's Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, March 14th, 7.30 p.m.: Mrs. E. VENTON, "Humane Education".

Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group (Room 5, Community Centre, Sheen Road), Thursday, March 18th, 8 p.m. A meeting.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, March 14th, 11 a.m.: JEAN GRAHAM-HALL, "The Problem of Vandalism".

Tuesday, March 16th, 7.30 p.m.: G. N. DEV, "The Problem of Immigration".

Surbiton and Malden & Coombe and Kingston Branches NSS (The White Hart, Kingston Bridge, Hampton Wick), Friday, March 12th, 8 p.m. A meeting.

University of Manchester Union (Oxford Road), Friday, March 12th, 7.30 p.m.: Debate, "This House Believes Easter To Be Irrelevant". DAVID TRIBE and Others.

### Notes and News

THE newly-created Cardinal Heenan arrived back in London with his red hat and a message from the Pope that "there should be an end to public discussion on contraception". We were informed, the Cardinal said, "that it was not for us to make further public statements on the subject" (*The Guardian*, 1/3/65). He proceeded, therefore, to discuss the safe subject of the use of the vernacular in the mass which, he didn't doubt, caused genuine distress of mind and soul. It was true that something was lost by having an English liturgy, but the Pope and the bishops were convinced that it would be an immense gain to the majority of the faithful if their mother tongue were used.

★

FATHER JOSEPH COCKER, the 25-year-old priest of St. Mary's, Ryde, Isle of Wight, whose birth control article in *The Tablet* led to his suspension, didn't share Cardinal Heenan's willingness to sweep the matter of contraception

to one side. Father Cocker thought that "reasonable discussion must be allowed to take place, and not banned as it has been" (*The Birmingham Post*, 26/2/65). He had met many families who had "suffered very greatly over this matter" and it caused "very many Catholics" to leave the Church. The conflicting reactions of two Catholic mothers to the Father McMahon controversy will be found on page 87.

★

NOR, it seems, does Archbishop Roberts believe in quietly accepting the embargo on birth control discussion. In his introduction to *Contraception and Holiness* (due to appear shortly in this country) the Archbishop makes what the *Observer* (28/2/65) called "a thinly veiled reference" to Cardinal Heenan and his "unprecedented attack" on the theological authors of the schema on "The Church in the Modern World", with their "understanding and sympathetic account of modern problems in marriage". *Contraception and Holiness*, a symposium of ten essays by priests and laymen, "all of whom plead that it should be the right of the individual to determine what method of contraception he or she should use", has already appeared in the USA, where it was praised by the liberal Catholic magazine *Commonweal*. "No matter what Pope Paul and the Vatican Council say about birth control," said the reviewer John T. Elson, "the Catholic attitude toward the problem can never be the same".

★

CATHOLIC reaction to the birth control sketch on *Not So Much A Programme* was, however, exactly as might be predicted. The very idea of depicting a "bog" priest interrogating a Liverpool-Irish wife about her pregnancy-free year! (Had she sinned?) Norman St. John Stevas deplored it at the time (wasn't the Vatican Council considering the problem?) but had much the worse of the subsequent argument with Dee Wells (Mrs. A. J. Ayer). Other Catholic MPs like Simon Mahon complained to the BBC, whose Director-General, Sir Hugh Greene, regretably felt it necessary to apologise for the sketch. In the Lords, the faithful Lord Longford confessed himself "staggered" at a programme that was "dirty beyond belief". It could not, he said, "have been put on by some producer merely in a fit of aberration". And it was "really criminal" that it should ever have been screened. But the criminal thing, as we see it, is that the sketch should need to be screened.

★

THERE was considerable controversy in the *Glasgow Herald* and the *Scotsman*, following the Scottish Christian Youth Assembly in Edinburgh (*THE FREETHINKER*, 26/2/65), largely concerning a resolution describing God in Tillichian terms. Perhaps it is intelligent language to say that "God is found in the very depths of our being" or "in personal relationships", wrote John Wilson of Motherwell (*The Glasgow Herald*, 23/2/65), but for him it was meaningless—"just a nice, poetic meaningless expression". On the same day in the *Scotsman*, the Rev. A. H. Forbes of Carnoustie, found nothing in the resolution at variance with "the spirit of either the Old or the New Testament," though Alastair M. Caine of Edinburgh thought that it "virtually rejected Christ".

★

WE have not yet seen the film, *Young Cassidy*, which is based on the early life of Sean O'Casey, but we can well believe with Kenneth Tynan (*The Observer*, 28/2/65) that it is "O'Casey spruced up for export". All "disturbing excesses are banished", Mr. Tynan said; and where is there, he asked—in the script, the direction or the acting—the "faintest hint" that Sean O'Casey was "a passionate Communist and a virulent anti-Catholic?"



# *Survival of the Social Group—A Principle of Ethics*

By JAMES J. THOMPSON

(Concluded from page 76)

AFTER our Palaeolithic ancestors discovered a connection between coition and the birth of children, sex codes were introduced to ensure that new members of society could be reared by those who had begot them rather than by society. The chances for the survival of early societies must have depended largely on their populations; hence a ruler desired sway over as many people as possible, over as large an army as possible. Hence if anyone were to obtain sexual gratification without making a baby, the ruler might feel cheated and imperilled, and would therefore enact laws strictly forbidding such acts as homosexuality, onanism, auto-erotism, and would instruct his priests to condemn them with dire preachments and to describe in the sacred literature the destruction of cities for sodomy with fire and brimstone. Today, as a population explosion threatens, all attitudes towards sex are becoming far more tolerant.

The basic aim of education is not, as educationists so often assert, the perfection of the individual, but rather the preservation of society and the state, for without education a people would revert to barbarism. Education is more necessary to the survival of the state than armies and navies are, for whilst armies and navies protect against enemies without, a state lacking education would crumble from within, since all its industry, its commerce, its professions, its whole culture would inevitably end. An educational fallacy that has persisted through the ages is that the survival of culture requires indoctrination, in the tribal beliefs, in whatever the most influential persons or groups wanted the new generation to be. It is now becoming clearer that this is an error, and that the purposes and advancement of society, indeed of humanity, are better served by an education based on intellectual freedom with which children would be relieved of dogmatism from the time when they first enter the infants' schools, and would be permitted and encouraged to learn by concluding for themselves with no complusion to conformity. The moral education of children, with the system of ethics here outlined, might be best accomplished by pupil autonomy in the classroom.

Why are there nations? When our Neolithic ancestors snatched a precarious existence from the pursuit of wild game, they probably often went hungry; and when they learned the pastoral life of domesticating animals and of wandering as nomads to new pastures, they regarded no part of the earth as particularly theirs, and the ideas of private property in land or of national territory did not occur to them. It was when men learned agriculture that they regarded the land they tilled as their own, to be protected against other people that dire necessity prompted to encroach upon the domain of others. Thus probably arose the notions of nation and nationality, of one's own territory and that of others, of the citizen and the alien. Thus arose also international relations, international commerce, international disputes and international warfare. Today's civilisation is agriculturally based. There could be no cities if there were no farms. Agriculture caused permanent settlement, buildings, cities, nations. Basically, the need is the need for food. The nation enables society to feed its members, and thus enables them to live.

Conflicts between societies, resulting in the hostilities of war, result from two errors: confusion about what constitutes or should constitute a society; and social indoctrina-

tion. Because this basic principle of ethics, the survival of society, is in the minds of most people not clearly defined nor even explicitly stated, and because fallacious doctrines of the nature and origin of morality rather are proposed to and uncritically accepted by them, people are prone to confuse society in general with some particular forms of society, and to use the vaguely recognised, implicit maxim that society must survive to mean that some particular form of society must survive against the competition of other forms. Here, people confuse society with the monarchy; in various places they confuse society with Capitalism, or Communism, or the Muslim faith, or the Hindu faith, or the Hebrew faith, or the Christian faith. They confuse society with their way of living, believe that Africans should wear European clothing and adopt European customs, and that the Brazilian natives are immoral to be completely naked. The German Nazis believed they would become rich by destroying cities and means of production and commerce of other countries, and by purifying their society by exterminating members who were different. People in a society are not permitted to think reasonably about these matters because it is customary everywhere to a greater or less extent to control belief by indoctrination. The Hindu of India must hate the Muslim of Parkistan. The Arab must hate the Jew. Capitalists must not allow Communism to exist, nor Communist doctrines to be advocated. Americans cannot withdraw their arms from Vietnam because of the indoctrination in Communist China. Peaceful co-existence with Russia is not possible because of the indoctrination in the United States. Neither armament nor disarmament will prevent the next war; for neither clarifies the fundamental misunderstandings which underlie hostility. The most promising and hopeful proposal for world peace is a kind of education which would be free from indoctrination.

Three motives of human conduct include: the instinct of self-preservation which effects the survival of the individual; the sex instinct, the survival of the species; and morality, the survival of society. Ethics might form a philosophical foundation for sociology, much as epistemology can furnish a philosophical foundation for science.

Ethical theory should be more than an intellectual pastime—it should be applicable to problems of human living. Clarification of these bases of right and wrong may help in the fight against delinquency; for if it were possible to justify a reasonable explanation of morality it would be possible to give children in school a moral education based on logical reasons rather than on the empty preachments or authoritarian dictates of today's classrooms. There should exist also a social ethics, a national ethics, an international ethics: morality at present is thought to be limited to the social acts of individuals. If humanity is to survive the atomic age, the world needs an ethics for international relations, and this is a grave deficiency of conventional morality. The theory here proposed may lend itself admirably to this application. Wars are not all unjustified. Pacifism can not be a moral rule. If the world agrees upon logical moral principles, it is easier to arbitrate disputes among nations. As technical civilisation becomes ever more complex, ever more powerful, it becomes ever more necessary for people to perceive clearly the real roots of proper human relations.

To recapitulate: why should society survive? Because



if it did not, humanity would be reduced to the solitary life of the worm, and morality would not even exist. Why should this not be? Because the survival of the individual is better assured by living in society. Why should the individual survive? This is the question which cannot be answered with present knowledge: why living things exist on the earth, why there is any earth, why living things are self-perpetuating and self-propagating, why each individual plant and animal does the things that are needed for life, why each clings so tenaciously to life, why living things live, these are questions which perhaps the future may answer. But they are outside the scope of ethics. The ethical system here proposed is complete and closed within itself, for if there is to exist any ethics and morality at all, then society must exist and survive. If two or three people come together, their first duty is to do such things as continue their association: if they kill one another, then society ends; if they steal from one another so that nobody can possess anything, each will take his belongings and go his way; if none can believe what another says, communication becomes impossible and the association disintegrates. We need a morality simply because we live in society, because we interact one with another, and only for that reason.

Because these ideas have not been given explicit formulation but are only vaguely recognised, people become confused and wrongly ascribe morality to other sources. This confusion leads people to resist change of social forms, even when changes are wise and desirable. The tendency to cling to forms and to preserve them is the core of the Capitalist-Communist controversy which threatens to devastate the earth. It would be by clarifying such matters that the minds of men could be enlightened and their social problems be solved.

## Where the Bushes Grow

My brother died while he was on holiday in France with a party of his schoolmates. They sent his baggage to me at the presbytery as our parents are dead—a leather valise and a canvas holdall. I was stricken with grief. As a young priest I'd been too busy with my first parish to give my young brother much attention, yet I should have taken our parents' place in his life. Of course I'd been sure that the priests at his school had been keeping a strict eye on his spiritual welfare, all the same I felt I had failed in a duty. It was some days, then, before I could bring myself to go through his things; and then I found the green envelope with the postcards. They are, I suppose, only mildly dirty: nude women on sofas, hearth rugs and eastern divans. But there is a pale one, with a flesh fragile and rosy. I wouldn't give tuppence for the dark toothy amazons with the yellow or marble skins, but the girl with the fragile rosy flesh . . . Well, I felt that my brother must have been stirred, although I did not believe that he had lost his innocence. There are men at the French ports who pester visitors to buy things before they know what they are buying. Nevertheless, I should have torn up the cards at once. But I couldn't. They are a souvenir, all I will have left after I've given the clothes to my poor parishioners.

I was thinking about my parishioners when I was standing in the hall and apparently looking at the newspaper which had just been delivered. My housekeeper came up behind me. "Is there any news, Father?" she asked in her soft lazy voice. I meant to give her a curt answer, but I suddenly realised that she has the same rosy skin as the girl on the postcard. So we were looking at one another for a moment without saying anything, and then my eyes

dropped towards her apron. "I'm going down to the village to buy some wool," she said; and I knew what she meant, that she'd be walking across the field with the bushes.

I heard her going down the back path, but it seemed as if she wasn't going away from me but coming nearer. I went into the garden to calm myself, as I felt ill and ashamed that I could think such thoughts with my brother so recently dead. Then I thought that he had died before he had had time to make love to women. Could it be that as I now reproached myself for having been a bad father to him, I ought to make amends by representing him in the fields where the bushes grow? Maybe . . . it is my duty . . .

OSWELL BLAKESTON

## The Father McMahon Controversy

*The Birmingham Post*, the paper in which Father Arnold McMahon's article defending contraception appeared, has naturally received a large number of letters on the subject, a selection of which were printed on February 26th. We, in turn offer a selection of points from the published correspondence.

The fact that I shall soon give birth to my ninth child in 12 years, proves to us that to have a large family is what God requires of us. We have done our best to limit our family by the rhythm method, but so far without success. Even the efforts of the Catholic Family Planning Clinic, so successful with others, have failed to help us so far. So we welcome each new baby with love and faith, and always our finances have improved sufficiently to enable us to cope.

—R.A.

My husband and I practise birth control but I, as the Catholic party, do not confess it, as I do not feel that I have committed a sin, as I have borne three children whom I feel able to care for properly. Not being worn out by indiscriminate child-bearing, my conscience is clear and I feel it is a matter between me, my conscience and my God.

—Mother of Three (Birmingham 17)

Fr. McMahon is regarded by his superiors as "inexperienced" and as having "no wealth of pastoral experience to draw from". One wonders, however, what experience can impel the Roman Catholic hierarchy to expound their tenet on birth control in this self-assured way. How can men who have no knowledge of the emotional and financial strains of marriage and of bringing up a family dictate on this matter?

—Derrick W. Mortimer (Sutton Coldfield)

The point is that, apart from the last six or 12 months, millions of Catholics have lived and died believing that contraception was wrong (and, in fact, seriously wrong). What sort of a Church of Christ would it have been all those centuries if it had been wrong about this major moral issue?

—Bill Ensor (Coleshill)

For over 2,000 years humanists have tried to see this world from a man-centred viewpoint and have said, in effect, that man himself makes his own gods to suit his needs. What is happening now in the Roman Catholic Church is inevitable. God's "image" is having to be reshaped to fit man's needs.

—F. G. Lyne, Chairman, Birmingham Humanist Group

To denigrate the young priest on account of his youth and academic background is hardly valid, however, when one considers that very many more mature clergy hold similar views. Archbishop Roberts, who is certainly not immature, was recently prevented from speaking at Foyles literary luncheon in connection with an article he had contributed to a book on the subject of birth control and with particular relevance to India. He has [a] wealth of pastoral experience . . .

—Cradle Catholic (Staffordshire)

I am putting forward what I believe to be the ordinary, accepted viewpoint when I say that the Roman Catholic conception of

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marriage is regarded as backward and lacking in the ideals and humanity which are now accepted as a part of marriage elsewhere.

—Lucy Shires (Tasley)

We deplore the fact that the *Birmingham Post* is making front page sensationalism out of what has proved to be an injudicious article by a young and inexperienced Catholic priest. "Summoned to Rome" in large headlines meant no more, when one read further, than "advised to go to Rome to discuss what he had written with his superiors"—

(Mrs.) Adelaide Burns

(Mrs.) Margaret M. Byrne (Birmingham 15)

Jesus Christ was a young man with "no high academic qualifications; no long experience in the care of souls; no graduate degrees in theology; no wealth of pastoral experience to draw from". He, too, upset his "superiors" by expressing His own views instead of just being a mouthpiece for theirs.

—(Mrs.) Kathleen N. Foden (Streethay)

## CORRESPONDENCE

### MARXISM

Mrs. E. Ebury in her letter (26/2/62) seems to think I am up against my old bogey, but I can assure her that Marxism is no bogey for me.

What Mrs. Ebury says in her letter about Calvin and Hitler does not in the least affect any of my arguments. In fact, what she says about Calvin is elementary. What a Calvin would be today has nothing at all to do with my case against Marxism regarding the individual.

We all know that there must be certain circumstances present for exceptional individuals to arise, but you just can't explain exceptional individuals through material conditions. The material conditions could be there without producing the exceptional individual.

Mrs. Ebury brings chance into the Marxist view of history. Her problem now is to reconcile chance with historical laws. Perhaps when it suits her she will be all for chance, and when otherwise historical laws.

History may not be as scientific as Marxists make out after all, especially from Mrs. Ebury's view.

Of course, one could play acrobatic tricks with the dialectic and prove practically everything. Maybe that is what Mrs. Ebury had in mind when she brought in chance.

R. SMITH

R. Smith in his letter of February 12th criticises F. A. Ridley's views on Marx's Historical Materialism and, apart from asking a few questions, does little or nothing to point out where he thinks that Mr. Ridley is wrong. I fail to understand why Mr. Smith bothers to ask these questions at all, particularly when he gives the impression that he will reject the answers whatever they are. However, in spite of this, I think that some comment is necessary.

"To say that exceptional men influence history insofar as they reflect the ideas of their epochs becomes a piece of rubbish when at the same time you claim that the historical process would evolve essentially the same way independent of their existence or influence", Mr. Smith says. And he goes on to ask, "In what sense do exceptional individuals influence history, if as you have claimed in one of your letters, the whole historical process would evolve the same way independent of them?"

For Marx and Marxists the first guiding principle of Historical Materialism is that change and development in society, as in nature, take place in accordance with objective laws. As Newton revealed the Law of Gravity, so Marx revealed the Law of Social Change. In short, Marxists accept that everything that happens has a cause or causes, and could not have happened differently unless something in the cause or causes had also been different.

For materialism, matter and the material world is primary, while mind or thought is secondary and derivative. The existence and interrelationship of material things does not depend on our ideas of them; on the contrary, our minds and the ideas in our minds depend on the prior existence and interrelationship of material things. Applied to society, this means that the origin of all the views current in society lies in the conditions of material life of society, and not the other way round.

A common error made when considering these things is considering only external causes, only forms and their appearance. The material of society is an objective reality existing independently of the will of men, while the "spiritual" life of society, is a reflection of this objective reality. Hence the source of formation of the "spiritual" life of society, the origin of social ideas, social theories, political views and social institutions shouldn't be sought in the ideas, theories, views and social institutions themselves but in the conditions of the material life of society, of which these ideas, theories, views, etc., are the reflection.

However, this does not mean that, having arisen on the basis of material conditions, ideas play no part in the social activity whereby material conditions are changed. On the contrary, having arisen on the basis of material conditions, ideas become an active force reacting back upon material conditions. In considering such aspects of historical change, a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of society, which can be determined by objective laws of social transformation, and the political, religious, aesthetic etc., forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out.

"Exceptional individuals" whilst using their influence to exploit a particular event in history only do so within the economic framework of a given society and, whilst this in itself may bring about a *qualitative* change, it does in fact, do nothing to bring about the real transformation that history has produced.

STAN MILLS

### ROBERT F. KENNEDY ON CHURCH AND STATE

I do believe, as my brother did, in the importance and vitality of the Constitutional direction that there be a separation of church and state and a freedom of religion which is real and sacred. I firmly endorse the views which the Supreme Court expressed during the last few years concerning this subject. I disagree with those of the Court's critics who seek Congressional action to undo what these Supreme Court decisions have accomplished.

Religion is, I believe, essentially a private affair. No person, and certainly no government, should interfere with the religious freedom of any person. Especially in a heterogeneous country such as ours, religious tolerance must be a commandment which we all follow. In sum, I believe in the fullest and most substantial support of the policies of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

—ROBERT F. KENNEDY

[Reprinted from *Church and State*, USA, January 1965.]

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