

The Freethinker

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A CURIOUS case, *In re G, Infants*, (*The Times*, July 29th 1965), has just reached the Court of Appeal and should not be without interest to Freethinkers. In 1950, Mr. G married Mrs. G. The husband was a non-Catholic whilst the wife was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. There were three children and it was agreed that they should be brought up as Roman Catholics. In 1962, Mr. G left the matrimonial home to live in adultery with Mrs. X. As a result, Mr. X was granted a divorce which took effect in March 1964. Mrs. G refused to divorce her husband upon religious grounds, took proceedings before the magistrates and obtained custody of the children. Mr. G was granted a limited access to them on condition that they were not brought into touch with Mrs. X. In another series of wardship proceedings, since in this case the divorce had become absolute, Mrs. X was allowed to have her children to stay with her. Mr. G now tried to obtain an order from the Court of Appeal conceding the same permission to his two eldest children. The appeal was dismissed on the grounds that the failure of Mrs. G to obtain a divorce suggested a state of continuing adultery and that this was a serious matter as the children were brought up as Roman Catholics.

Religious Motive

Lord Justice Salmon agreed upon the religious grounds with Lord Justice Willmer though stressing that, since *Ward v. James*, (1962) (2 WLR455), there could be no doubt that the Court of Appeal had a discretionary power to vary an order made originally by the justices. Lord Justice Winn agreed though suggesting that, if he had been called upon to exercise the discretion, he was far from certain that he would have exercised it in the same way. Mr. G therefore lost his appeal from the original refusal to interfere with the justices by Mr. Justice Buskley in the court below. The result is that the couple, Mr. G and Mrs. X may have Mrs. X's children to stay with them but that the same concession cannot apply to Mr. G's two eldest children.

Treating the matter from the angle of ordinary life, the decision is clearly unsatisfactory and can scarcely make for the desirable emotional readjustments necessary in the general tangle, so far as the two families of children are concerned. But there are also other considerations to be taken into account which go beyond this point. There can be no doubt that the Court of Appeal is correct in law. It has a legal discretion in the matter and it has an absolute discretion as to the manner in which this shall be exercised. But, in view of the results produced in the present case, it does seem desirable that some more detailed position should be reached with regard to the rules by which this discretion shall be operated. Both Lord Justice Willmer and Lord Justice Salmon took into consideration the fact that these children were being brought up as Roman Catholics. Lord Justice Salmon said that he spoke with diffidence in religious matters but he pointed out that, in any assessment of adultery, it would have made no

difference if the children had been brought up as Anglicans; "he was certain that adultery was not looked on more favourably in one religion than another". The final decision of the court was clearly guided by this religious motive.

It cannot be gainsaid that the Court of Appeal was within its rights in allowing itself to be so guided in the present case. But grave issues are thereby raised. In itself, adultery does not fall within the ambit of the criminal law. Its major concern

is as a matrimonial offence and the damages which the divorcing husband may receive from the correspondent belong historically more properly to the law of matrimony than to that of tort. They are clearly related to feudal and property con-

siderations rather than to outraged feelings or tortious damage. The most that could be said is that irregular sexual relationships are illicit at civil law and that no contract could be based upon them. The common law of England since the early years of the last century has refused to concern itself with the conception of a supervening moral or natural law but is chiefly concerned with the objective application of the general will of the body politic. Transcendent moral consideration would seem therefore to be alien to a case of this type and to be in danger of cutting deeply into the conception of the absolute supremacy of Parliament, which lies at the root of the British Constitution. With respect, it may therefore be submitted that, in view of the gradual elimination of such legacies from the common law, it is a pity that the Lord Justices allowed vestiges of the older conceptions of natural law to raise a ghostly form in the present case. Dealt with objectively, the sole issue would seem to be the well-being of the children concerned and the desirability of a full emotional and paternal contact with the father, a contact which incidentally would be permitted if Mrs. G divorced her husband and he married Mrs. X legally. In other words, religious consideration on the part of Mrs. G again bedevil the whole picture.

Canon Law and Common Law

But it is likewise serious that the question of Roman Catholic teaching has also come in. As in so many other cases, the G marriage in 1950 would have seemed to suggest all of the tensions and strains which attend a mixed marriage. It must take place in a Roman Catholic church and agreements concerning the future religious teaching of the children must be entered upon. These dictates are based upon the Canon Law of the Roman Catholic Church and frequently bear considerable weight with the many who have no legal training. The Roman Catholic Church is of course the last body to point out that its much-vaunted Canon Law has no validity of any sort in the eyes of the law of England. In cases concerning foreign elements, it does not rank as a foreign legal system which has a right to be accounted where relevant. Any appeal to Canon Law is absolutely null and void in the eyes of English common or Statute Law. It might be asked whether the religious bargain made at the marriage was

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Roman Catholicism and the Law

A Practical Example

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

not invalid on account of undue influence, whilst it certainly has no legal significance. Anybody who has been put into this position owing to the stresses of the moment, has a perfect legal right to ignore it for the future. Again, it is not all clear that, with all respect to the opinion of a very eminent judge, the cases of Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism stand on the same footing. So far as the United Kingdom be concerned, the Anglican Church has, as Sir Alan Herbert and others have pointed out, a very mixed history with regard to divorce and remarriage. The Court seemed to consider that the divorce of Mrs. X brought to an end the marriage of Mr and Mrs. X, with the result that her children might fittingly visit her. So far as she is concerned, it is now impossible on her side for her any longer in law to commit adultery. But this is not the position of the Roman Catholic Church which would not recognise the divorce as existing with the implications which it carries. It might, however, be the position of some members of the Church of England to concede this recognition. Once again, a tangle arises which becomes very relevant if the court looks upon Mrs. G's private religious convictions together with the religious upbringing of her children as other than a wholly private matter.

Constitutional Danger

Once again, it must be stressed that the Roman Catholic Church in England is not the established church. It is a mere episcopal set-up which is in fact a private dissenting body. For some centuries, it was visited with legal penalties because its main propositions were looked upon as endangering the constitutional state in England. These penalties were mainly removed in 1829 and the last legacies disappeared in 1927. But it was the penalties which disappeared; Parliament did not unsay the motives which had originally prompted their imposition. The ordinary citizen is still justified in looking upon this body as something which, by trying to be an *imperium in imperio*, is endangering the constitutional position in this country. It is at least justifiable to claim that the allegiances adopted by members of this body, or their moral assessments of conduct, are their own private concern and that these should in no way hamper the discretion to be exercised by an English court of law. In the same way, the attitude of Mrs. G over divorce illustrates the confusion which prevails in English divorce law and the very real harm that has been done by taking into consideration Roman Catholic claims when Parliament has sought to estimate these matters in practice.

Objective and Secular Law

A general conclusion may be permitted. It is that the present case is an excellent illustration of what must happen in a democratic state when religious teaching is permitted to become entangled with the administration of the law. Religious beliefs should be regarded as a private matter, and the intervention of the state should be upon a purely secular plane, guided by the purely objective and secular claims of the law. The case of Mr. G affords yet further encouragement to strive for the secularisation of society and of the state as representing society upon its governmental side. Perhaps it may be added that it is also a warning against mixed marriages. Where these arise, it is customary for the Roman Catholic Church to exercise far-reaching demands. It is just as much in order, and possibly even more legal, for the non-Catholic party to make a series of counter-demands upon his side. Of one thing he may be sure. If he is weak enough to give way to the demands of the Roman Catholic Church, he is not improbably sowing dragon's teeth which will reap a whirlwind harvest at some time in the future.

The Devil-Tamer of St. Mark's

By F. H. SNOW

MY CHIEF grievance is that I was born a lot too soon. One reason for that grievance is the mentality of the television-viewing public. For I feel sure that the broadcasting people would not dare risk insulting the intelligence of their customers with such stuff as was filmed in *Our Man at St. Mark's* on July 19th, if they had cause to rate it at all highly. I have generally liked the series whose principal character is an honest and genial Church of England vicar, but feel that those viewers who have the capacity to think in accordance with the popular conception of modern reasoning, will agree with me that the denouement of this particular episode was an intellectual disgrace.

Does the ITV directorate really credit its public with intelligence so low as to deserve being offered rank superstition for its mental delectation, as was the case when the devil-worshippers quailed at sight of the cross displayed by the Man at St. Mark's, and dropped on their knees in abject submission? Was this incident designed to present the medieval Christian belief in the ability of the clergy to exorcise the Devil, as holy truth? Apparently those responsible for the kind of fare prescribed for the viewing public are still ignorant of the fact that belief in Hell is virtually moribund. It is rarely, if ever, referred to from the pulpit, and the normal person regards the place of everlasting burning as a joke. And how, if there's no Hell, the domain of the damned where the Devil presides and resides, can there be a Devil, or devils, to be exorcised?

The mere display of the vicar's chief ornament so scared Satan that he shrank into the shoes of his devotees, and skedaddled when the Man of God and St. Mark's pronounced the exorcising formula. Down on their knees went the devil-worshippers, with terrible fear on their faces, and the triumph of the Cross was complete. The story inferred the Devil's reality and the truth of the hoary belief that the confronting of him with a cross had power to make him quail. It assumed his taking possession of persons and that clergymen could rid them of him by uttering a certain form of words. It had a distinctly propagandist complexion and was undoubtedly aimed at the intellectual paupers who, in the evident view of its sponsors, preponderate amongst television viewers.

I think it highly unlikely that those who put on this show would confess to belief in what it implied, and take the view that they were just unscrupulous in the matter, so long as religion was given a boost. It seems to be a case of "everything goes" with regard to superstitious nonsense, despite the fact that there would be many children watching the programme. Indeed, the possibility of children, as well as adults of childlike mentality, being impressed in favour of religious belief, however nonsensical would certainly gratify those responsible for the episode.

Just where are we going, in this advanced age? I charge the television authorities with hindering the progress of rational thought concerning beliefs which science and common sense condemn as absurd. They feature much that is instructive, but in the field of religion pander to the primitive. They all but prohibit the voice of free-thought from being heard through their medium. They load the dice so heavily against atheism that the case against the reality of God, Heaven, angels and even devils, is kept from the ears of the television public. They treat their viewers as children, where religion is concerned. By all means, let us have stories like *Our Man at St. Mark's*

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A Meditation on the Crucifix

By PHYLLIS GRAHAM

(Continued from page 263)

ALAS, the story is not ended. We are still in the throes of this denouement. And we cannot know what twist of fate will resolve it for us—or against us.

However, minds that have freed themselves from the slavery to "revealed truth" which is the root cause of muddled thinking and its inexhaustible crop of evils, can at least examine our situation objectively. It is clear to them that this total collapse on the world front of the "Christian morality" persona has exposed without mercy the real schizophrenic character of Christianity. This violent disintegration of the system of ethics which has formed our culture and held our society together, by dubious means but with passable efficiency, is directly caused by disruptive forces inherent in its nature. For beneath the facade of "peace and goodwill" has always worked "not peace, but a sword". Behind the smiling mask of "God so loved the world" glares the Eichmann horror of "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire". And so, logically and unsurprisingly, beneath the surface beauty of Christian culture have bred and multiplied and flourished the vandal forces that negate human values. History is littered with the ruins of their frequent and inevitable eruptions, which the saner elements in Christian consciousness have been powerless to suppress. "A city divided against itself . . .". And this was a city half built on the shifting sands of infantile concepts, half on the volcanic ground of power-hungry passions. As the former weakened before the onslaught of new knowledge and mental freedom, so the latter strained more desperately towards the final cataclysm that destroyed them together.

For they are destroyed, as a living whole, even if their haunting ghosts still try to get a grip on the world of flesh and blood. Their appalling end has demonstrated too clearly that no system of morality based on infantile concepts and ruling by dictatorship can ever again dominate our intelligence so disastrously; still less could it ever cement our societies, heal our international relations, give coherent unity to world politics. Unless indeed history repeats itself in another total eclipse as fatal as the shadow of the cross that blotted out the sun of man's achievements two thousand years ago and once again Homo sapiens is reduced to the state of infancy and the need for infant diet. Putting aside this grim threat of possibly even more hopeless regression (atomic assaults may leave him, for instance, a raving lunatic) it is clear that only sane philosophy and Humanist ideals in practice can cater for him at his present age.

But a further insight awaits this clarity of vision in unbiassed minds. The impact of it is grave, terrible. There is a horrifying sense in which vanquished Christianity is the victor, for while its defeat has set us free from the "moral" side of its split personality, the profound immorality of its darker depths has bequeathed itself to us in the very moment of its self-destruction. It placed in our hands the ultimate weapon of the Church Militant, that principle inherited from Jehovah, practised with such zeal throughout the history of Judeo-Christianity, brought to such perfection in the religio-political struggle of the Second World War: namely, the grandly simple policy of mass-extirpation.

No sooner was it placed in our hands than we used it.

We too became the victims of the psychopathic underworld of that Nazi-Fascist system which has mis-shaped our destinies for twenty centuries. Our final retaliation on the German cities, all pretence of bombing military targets abandoned for the sole aim of wiping out populations, was the first-fruits of our deadly inheritance. With the unequivocal total-massacre of Hiroshima we entered into the full recognition of our legatee-ship. The mantle of the Nazis fell upon us with all the mystical solemnity of that old yet startlingly new in its modern interpretation: "Thou shalt not kill . . . but ye shall slaughter with limitless ferocity on as cosmic a scale as your evolving power-knowledge shall enable you".

Thus it is clear that the very disintegration of this evil system—which I equate with the "crucifix-mentality"—has thrown up evils more appalling than the viciousness of its apparent self. And it is also tragically evident that the days of its power are not over; that the more deeply sinister elements from its subterranean darkness have erupted to the surface of our world scene and are very much alive. "The evil that men do lives after them . . .". What then of that sum-total of evil which is the legacy of millions of men, of generations, of centuries of generations? For systems are nothing but the thought-forms and the thought-conformings of multitudes of men. No wonder then that our excruciated century of transition should be faced with a legacy of evil so all-pervading and so ghoulishly alive.

Our Meditation on the Crucifix has led us along sombre paths. More sombre, and certainly more meaningful, than the imaginings of our little nun, which skim the surface symbolism of the guilt-fear-gloom-and-blood image that she holds in her hand, but have not the faintest perception of the guilt-fear-gloom-and-blood realities it has stamped on our world.

Nevertheless, as I watch her, observing on her rapt face the reflection of her fervent but misplaced devotion, it occurs to me that this unprofitable contemplation could indicate, to us who are free, a way of action. That perpetual shaping and moulding of her personality on the idea of God which she calls prayer, and which indeed has power to shape and mould human disaster, since the God to whom she prays is the cruellest of the gods; does it not suggest to us an inner process by which we too could accumulate power, towards an altogether antithetic end?

We who have attained mental freedom, and long to share this priceless treasure with all our fellow men, so often feel stunned and helpless beneath the colossus of ancient imbecility that bestrides our world. There seems so little we can do, individually or collectively, to shake off this Old Man of the Sea whose burden grows heavier on the bowed minds of men as they struggle through deep waters to what appears inevitable doom. We do all we can, through any active means open to us; but our very concept of freedom forbids and prevents us from impressing it with any kind of force on the minds of others, even—to borrow that most noxious of dogmatic excuses—"for their own good".

But there is surely a way, a quiet way, serene and confident in that inner citadel of our own possession commanding the vistas of illimitable freedom.

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This Believing World

IT IS worth noting that the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition, though both practising Christians, leave God Almighty out of their speeches. There was a time when our Parliamentarians hardly ever spoke on what they were going to do for the country without bringing into their speeches, "with God's help", or "praise the Lord", or "thanks to Jesus", or some other similarly divine expression. But these days it is Secularism which holds the field. Both Government and Opposition alike emphasise that what they want is the good of the people here and now. And this is exactly what secularism has always stood for. Here and now and not "up there" in the future.

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WE NOTE—not without a little amusement—that the Bishop of Southwark "welcomes" the promotion of Dr. Cowderoy, who is the Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark, to Archbishop. Dr. Stockwood wants his Anglican congregation to meet the Roman Catholic one as often as possible (*Daily Express*, 2/8/65) and hopes a similar friendship "will spread to every parish". We cannot help wondering whether Dr. Cowderoy is just as enthusiastic about it?

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THE Roman Church has, and always has had, one object in view with the Anglican Church. It is to devour it. There cannot be two masters in the Christian household. The Church has never really changed on this. A Roman bishop could meet an Anglican bishop quite courteously of course, but when it comes to meeting each other not socially but on the Christian religion—that is quite a different kettle of fish.

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ANYONE who has visited Speakers' Corner in Hyde Park in the past, particularly before the last war, will have noticed how little love was lost between the speakers for various sects of Christians, and how violence, if there was any, was mostly against unbelievers. Nowadays, as the *Daily Mail* (3/8/65) has remarked, it is the racial question which may well break out in "physical violence". Lord Soper, who knows Speakers' Corner, warned the House of Lords about it. "There were now there", he pointed out "as many coloured as there were European people". But—and this is interesting—"And there were as many people inciting to racial hatred or discrimination the colour of whose skin was dark, as there were those who were similarly inciting to racial hatred others whose skin was white".

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IN OTHER words, when it comes to tolerance of other people's views, about the only ones who really practised it were the Freethinkers and Rationalists, precisely because they put reason before religion or race. Nothing breeds intolerance as much as religion or racism.

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SOME MONTHS ago (*Daily Express* 31/12/64), the then mere Rev. Dr. Donald Soper's great "dream" was "to ban the Bible". Now that he is Lord Soper, has he suggested this to the House of Lords? "The present situation with regard to the Scriptures is intolerable" he says. We are not quite sure what he means. Does he mean that the Bible is no longer God's Precious Word for the Salvation of Mankind—or what? He does suggest that the Bible "represents an intellectual incubus"; and he calls for a "new start" to be made with "this most controversial document". But "new starts" have been constantly made with the Bible, and they generally end up at the same

place. If he really wants to make some headway, however, his Lordship might inform the Upper House of the new start made by Thomas Paine in *The Age of Reason*.

The Greatest Story Ever Told?

JOSEPH LEWIS, Editor of the American *Age of Reason* magazine, reports in its May-June issue that, some years ago, when his book *The Bible Unmasked*, was first published, he received a most cordial letter from Fulton Oursler, praising the work.

Shortly after, Fulton Oursler became a "convert" to a particular religion and proceeded to write a book, using the same text and quotations from the Bible which Mr. Lewis had done, but with the opposite conclusion! Fulton Oursler called his book *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, and he made an enormous sum of money out of the sales.

Here is the text of Fulton Oursler's letter to Mr. Lewis, written in his own handwriting:—

My dear Lewis:

Thanks for writing *The Bible Unmasked*. I hope you will write more like it. One of the greatest New York book retailers told me last night your book was filthy and he would not order it—realising that all the filth is quoted from the Bible. I hope to have the pleasure of meeting you sometime.

Cordially,
FULTON OURSLER.

When Fulton Oursler's book was published, Mr. Lewis sent him a letter, asking the question: "What Price Fulton Oursler?" He received no answer.

Several years ago, it was publicly announced, that Carl Sandburg had been commissioned to write the scenario for the motion picture of *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. Upon learning of this, Mr. Lewis wrote Mr. Sandburg the following letter:—

Dear Mr. Sandburg:

It is with much regret we have to remind you of what you are undertaking in helping produce *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. Creating this mythical character was the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the human race, setting civilisation back two thousand years. Now, without realising what you are doing, you are setting it back another century by glamourising it in technicolour. It's unthinkable that a man of your intellect can believe this mythical tale of Jesus. Pope Boniface VIII confessed it a fake by stating: "What profit hath not this fable of Jesus brought to us".

Sincerely yours,

JOSEPH LEWIS.

Shortly after the receipt of this letter, says Mr. Lewis "there appeared in the press an item, to the effect, that Mr. Sandburg had relinquished this lucrative assignment". But Mr. Lewis adds, "Now that the picture has finally been made, another cruel hoax has been perpetrated upon the people".

THE DEVIL-TAMER OF ST. MARK'S

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Parsons are so often jolly good fellows, but Freethinkers must fight with unrelaxing energy against their being made the vehicle for forcing superstition down the mental gullets of television watchers.

I regret indeed having been born long in advance of the time when audiences of the broadcasting services will have been emancipated from religious brainwashing. For that time is not near, however much we wish it. We must step up our efforts to hasten the inevitable day when the intelligence of viewers is no longer insulted by such shows as that which I have designated "The Devil-tamer of St. Mark's".

THE FREETHINKER

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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, 3 p.m. and 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead)—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY. Every Friday, 8 p.m.: L. EBURY and J. A. MILLAR.

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

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, August 22nd, 6.45 p.m.: A Meeting.

Notes and News

THERE is a disturbing possibility, the *New Scientist* reported (8/7/65), that the bald eagle, official emblem of the United States may become extinct in its homeland. "Not only have the numbers of breeding pairs been dropping steadily for some years, but reports of infertility and nesting failure have multiplied". The Florida Everglades and Alaska are the only places in the US where nesting success is normal, and readers of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (THE FREETHINKER, 18/6/65) will not be surprised to learn that DDT residues from unhatched eggs have provided "strong evidence that organochlorine pesticides are at least partly responsible for the sudden drop in numbers" of the species. Recent comparative surveys have shown that, whereas Vancouver Island eagles fail to produce young in about 20-30 per cent of nests, the figure for the US (excluding Alaska) is about 60 per cent. And the "most obvious difference between the two populations is exposure to pesticides".

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AN analysis by the US Fish and Wildlife Service of 53 bald eagles recently found dead, sick or shot in the USA, outside Alaska, revealed that they all contained DDT residues. And some of the "found dead" birds had larger concentrations of DDT in the liver than the known fatal level for experimental captive bald eagles. The American government is now consulting with ornithologists to prepare "a continent-wide management programme for their national bird". But is the government prepared to tackle the real problem—that of the enormous insecticide industry?

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It is doubtful", said a *Catholic Herald* editorial (7/8/65) "whether anyone foresaw the volume of bitterness and anger which the decision and even more the manner of its

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged £67 14s. 11d.—G. M. Faulkner, 2s. 6d.; C. Holmes, 10s; C. Morris, 6s; R. J. Hale, 12s. 6d; J. W. Robinson, 10s; J. A. £1; M. Pye, 7s. 6d; L. Brewer, 5s; D. Gloak, 7s. 6d; N. Tosh, 12s. 6d; R. Tungate, £1; W. Mawhinney, 2s. 6d; E.J. Rosie, 2s. 6d; T. W. Archer, 15s; P. Marsden, £1; D. Ferrier, £5 17s. 6d; A. Ungherini, £3 10s; J. McMahon, 2s. 6d; K. G. 1s; J. C. & E. C., £10; C. Cullen, 6s; J. G. Burdon, 9s. 6d; B. A., 1s; C. Cunelli, £1 1s; R. Atherton, 4s; H. Alexander, 10s. 6d; J. F. Gentry, 10s; E. S. Barker, 12s. 6d; H. Haas, £1 14s. 4d; J. Freemont, 10s; D. Starkey, £1; S. Merrifield, 16s; C. Jones, 5s; H. Madoc Jones, 10s; A. W. Coleman, £1 2s. 6d; G. D. Rodger, 2s. 6d; L. H., 1s; I. Gulick, 4s; A. Fenton, 12s. 6d; T. F. Stringer, 5s; R. Brownlee, £1; J. F. W., 1s; Mrs. D. Behr, £1; R. Gilliland, £1; A. E. Smith, 12s. 6d; H. Milne, 10s. 6d; R. C., £10; N. Myrick, £1; T. W. Harris, 5s; I. Barr, 12s. 6d; G. S., 1s; R. C. Mason, £2 1s; D. Taylor, 6s; E. C. R., 6s; J. Tiley, 2s. 6d; W. H. Day, 7s. 6d. In memory of Wm. Ingram, £2; O. A. P., 10s; J. Buchanan, £1 2s 6d; L. J. Ford, 2s. 6d; M. Rodger, £1; A. T. Browne, £1; A. T. Foster, 11s; T. H. Lee, 5s; T. N. 1s; W. M. £5. Total to date 20th August, 1965. £136 14s. 3d.

announcement, has provoked". The *Herald* was referring to the proposed absorption of Beaumont College at Old Windsor into Stonehurst College in Lancashire, which has brought protests from the parents of Beaumont's 260 boys, as well as a letter to the *Times* from "old boy" Lord Justice Russell. The Society of Jesus, which runs both schools, has been accused of "submitting to the dictates of Rome", behaving in a manner that "smacks of the Inquisition", and of performing a "gigantic confidence trick".

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THE decision to close Beaumont (which is still being contested) followed an 18 months' investigation by a Canadian Jesuit, Fr. Gordon George. It was approved by the General Congregation of the Society largely foreign, meeting in Rome, and was finally ratified by the recently elected General, Fr. Pedro Arrupe. And many parents and old boys argue that none of these parties could understand "the important place a public school like Beaumont commands in Britain" (*Sunday Times*, 8/8/65). But the order has a perfectly reasonable explanation for the amalgamation. The number of Jesuit teachers in Britain has declined to the point where "we can no longer continue our present commitments without the risk of serious harm to the work and those engaged upon it".

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THE Loyal Orange Institution of England has no time for ecumenical talk. In a leaflet protesting against the proposed visit of Pope Paul to consecrate the new Liverpool Cathedral, the Liverpool Province explains that it doesn't object to the Pope as a person—"he may be a very good man"—but to his office and blasphemous titles; not against "the Pope in his sin but the Pope in his splendour". And the Province cites the Scriptures (Gal. 1, 8) to "denounce him". More pertinently, the leaflet recalls modern papal action—or inaction—towards Fascism. Pope Pius XII could have excommunicated both Hitler and Mussolini, instead there were concordats; Father Tiso, the Jew-baiter, was promoted to Monsignor. Pius "honoured Marshal Petain and gave to the dictator Franco the highest papal honours". Even John XXIII, "who made strong protests against the persecution of his people behind the Iron Curtain, did nothing to relieve the Protestants of Colombia, although he was regularly informed that hundreds had been martyred . . .".

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WE SEND our best wishes to the American Rationalist Federation, which will be holding its tenth annual convention on August 27th, 28th and 29th, at the Naprstek Bohemian Freethinkers School in Chicago.

A Meditation on the Crucifix

(Continued from page 267)

The power of wrong thought chiefly shapes events on our planet; but opposing and corrective thought-forces maintain our precarious balance towards survival—or have done up till now. The vast malevolence of the former is thus itself a striking proof of the latter's efficiency and power. Now if we, who have freed ourselves from the tyranny of falsehood, could dedicate ourselves to these living thought-forms as totally as our nun to her contemplative prayer, making them the very substance of our life, our reason for living; could we not, working at this truer *opus dei* in the solitary cloisters of our own minds, set up a power-house of mental energy that would infiltrate, gradually transform, and ultimately conquer the mind of humanity?

I think there can be no doubt as to the possibility, particularly if considered from the purely scientific viewpoint of the nature and activity of thought. But there is one great threat, and there are limitations. Time is against us. And the weakness of human nature, even enlightened nature, can fatally limit the production of this vital energy.

To achieve what the mental power-houses of Christianity have achieved with such devastating thoroughness, deforming the shape of world history to their own malevolent pattern, demands the same undiluted output of thought-energy, and more. Not indeed in any sort of fanatic frenzy, or with the de-humanised mind-immolation of our praying nun. But through a quiet, untroubled, yet watchful and perpetual, direction of the whole inner being along the way of freedom: the peaceful yet unrelenting *willing* of it on the whole of mankind; the concept of universal mind-liberty realised, here and now, as the alpha and omega of our own individual existence.

The "contemplatives" amongst us will understand this without difficulty—and there are many more contemplatives in the world than the world has any idea of. In actual fact, any mind that has shuffled off the mortal coil of falsehood and fought its purgative way into freedom has ipso facto entered the ranks of the "Illuminated". The obscurity of what I am trying to say—and saying it very badly, I know—should be no more obscure to them than the "ray of divine darkness" penetrated by the god-worshipper. The obscurity lies in the words that struggle and fail to express, not in the reality.

It can be a serious temptation to any of us to give up the effort in face of the monstrous opposition, almost universal, to the truth of freedom. Still easier to succumb to a world-weary desire to "let it all go" and enjoy (lightheartedly if we can) the riches and pleasures of our personal release from servitude. That "blissful feeling of utter relief" so commonly experienced and expressed by those who have shed the supernatural from their lives and turned their backs on savage gods for ever, can prolong itself unduly in a self-bound, unprofitable dream of Arcady.

But dare we yield to either temptation?

Today, as tensions tighten in so many troubled places of the earth; while every hour men are killed or maimed in some mortal struggle somewhere on the globe, and women and little children share the horror and are shown no mercy; as our fear grows that these scattered fires may meet and flare out in the final conflagration that will engulf us all, and our planet with us, in the most hideous form of self-annihilation; face to face with apocalyptic warfare on our freedom even to exist, can we bear—or afford—

to play the role of the collaborator, or sink into the feather-bed of dreamland?

"There can be but little liberty on earth", said Robert Green Ingersoll, "while men worship a tyrant in heaven".

If men continue to adore these monsters, who are nothing but projections of their own evil passions and pernicious thought-forms, and to obey their "commands", which are willed upon men by authoritarian exploiters of human stupidity, not only will there be little liberty, there will be none at all, for no one will be left alive to enjoy it. (To a hypothetical handful of survivors in a radioactive gehenna, the sole prospect of "liberty" would be a quick death). If therefore we refuse or neglect to do what we can towards the dethronement of idols, we condemn to the frightful results of their tyranny not only their misguided worshippers but ourselves. The serfs of all the earth's hoax-forms of guilt-fear-gloom-and-blood, and the sons of freedom, will perish together in the holocaust.

Looking for the last time on our little nun, through whom, it would seem, we have learnt many things, I am startled to see the white veil glimmer into grey shadow, the dark habit shrink into nothingness, the face go out like a lamp extinguished. Nothing is left but the hands, and the stark, crude outline of the Thing they hold.

As I watch in awed horror the hands change. They change again and again, an endless concatenation of subtle transformations; but their grip is constant on the hard bone of what they hold, and this never changes.

I recognise these hands as their plasma forms and re-forms, curving round the cross in their individual moulds, betraying the secret of their ownership. I distinguish the jewelled hands of popes and prelates, the amethyst of bishops, the thin gold bands of the consecrated; the rough knuckles of peasants, the hard fists of soldiers; the racked bones of the tortured; the trembling clutch of the condemned, the grip of the despairing, the weak clasp of the dying. And gradually, though its form never changes, the substance of What is held is transmuted: from an idol it becomes a weapon. And now the hands that come to it have it in a vice-grip, hard, coarse, cruel, merciless ringed or ringless, hands deformed to the talons of vultures, the claws of wild beasts, the wily paws of great cats that torture their prey before the kill.

Until from the last dreadful fingers, which have lost all semblance to humanity, materialises—not the shape of a vampire or hyena—but the form of a man. I recognise the Franciscan habit, then the curiously veiled eyes and fanatical face above it; and as I stare the habit changes to a military uniform; the face changes also, horribly, but it is still Brother Filipovitch, only now in charge of a concentration camp somewhere in the hell-on-earth of a tortured, desecrated Europe.

And now I see that he has two weapons: the crucifix held high in his left hand, and strapped to his right shoulder the *mauser*—the throat-cutting knife shaped like a crescent and sharpened to the last razor-edge of efficiency.

Thus doubly armed—and which is the more terrible weapon of the two?—he sallies forth with a group of fellow-murderers on a throat-cutting competition among his wretched prisoners, the victims being chosen at random and the honours awarded for the neatest, most dexterous severance of the jugular vein.

The hideous scenes of carnage fade, the last screams of

mortal terror, the groans of that atrocious agony, die away. Brother F melts away also, no doubt to that limbo of safety and comfort which engulfed so many of the same ilk who slipped mysteriously, through inexplicable holes in the net of international justice . . .

I am back again in the cloistral silence. The last rays of evening sunlight bathe the walled patio, red-gilding the fretted stonework of gracious windows. They linger on another human form, so very different, yet likewise in uniform, for she belongs to one of the multitudinous regiments of the Church Militia. She is armed with the Franciscan's left-hand weapon, which, if it lacks the deadly sharpness of the *mauser*, has far more sinister business to accomplish than the mere slitting of human throats like slaughtered pigs.

I watch her as she lifts it to her lips. They imprint, with reverent passion, a kiss on each wound of the Crucified.

And it seems to me, in the dark flush of the dying sun, that her lips bleed, that her pale face, her white veil, and her whole person are bathed in blood . . . not from the "wounds" of the "Son of God", but from the mad butchery of insane self-martyrdom needlessly endured by the sons of Man.

(Concluded)

The Scientific Method

WHAT hopes and fears does the scientific method imply for mankind? I do not think that this is the right way to put the question. Whatever this tool in the hand of man will produce depends entirely on the nature of the goals alive in this mankind. Once these goals exist, the scientific method furnishes means to realise them. Yet it cannot furnish the very goals. The scientific method itself would not have led anywhere, it would not even have been born without a passionate striving for clear understanding.

Perfections of means and confusion of goals seems—in my opinion—to characterise our age. If we desire sincerely and passionately the safety, the welfare and the free development of the talents of all men, we shall not be in want of the means to approach such a state. Even if only a small part of mankind strives for such goals, their superiority will prove itself in the long run.

—ALBERT EINSTEIN.

[The above was the conclusion of a recording made by Einstein for a Science Conference in London on September 28th, 1941. It was included in Out of My Later Years, published by the Philosophical Library, USA]

The True Ecumenism

THE Dutch government has paid Fl. 100,000 (£10,000) into the Defence and Aid Fund for the victims of South-African racial legislation. This led immediately to a spontaneous unity between all the "Christian"—i.e. the Catholic and the diverse Protestant—parties.

Without exception and in perfect harmony, this united front, extending from the Catholic clericals to their antipodes of the fervent anti-papist minuscule Protestant groups expressed its disapprobation of the governmental act. The Defence and Aid Fund (recommended by the UN) was alleged to be a Communist and subversive organisation. A Protestant MP as all his political friends, a hater of "dirty" materialism, feared that the gift might endanger our economic relations with South Africa.

Suddenly and for a moment the reactionary nature of Christian politics peeped out of the usual democratic phraseology.

A. M. VAN DER GIEZEN.

Shakespeare and Freethinking

MODERN RESEARCH scholars tell us that Shakespeare was the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer of his time, employing an army of ghost writers. These ghosts, in their turn, were not above making use of anything that was available—slipping in, say, existing poems which would correspond today to popular verses on a popular calendar. Indeed, the erudite have been able to demonstrate that there is hardly an original word in some of the plays. Yet all of this does not discountenance the fact that Shakespeare acted as a creative editor of the material. It is, therefore, perfectly legitimate for David Tribe to prove textually that The Bard was both a freethinker and a humanist.

He points out, with a most happy sense of mischief, that it would not be in the interests of those who gloss grammar school texts to reveal our national poet as both a sceptic and a queer. Then, in his *Freethought And Humanism In Shakespeare* (Pioneer Press, 2s.), Mr. Tribe demolishes the pretensions of the "respectable establishment" one by one.

The Catholics, for instance, try to claim Shakespeare; but Mr. Tribe argues convincingly that "Shakespeare's reaction against Puritanism was a tribute not to Catholicism but to Humanism." In the plays, the angels and demons, so dear to the miracle and morality plays, are replaced with spirits and classical gods and goddesses. "In Shakespeare's world there is no place for either original sin or divine grace"; and amid an amplitude of supporting reasons, Mr. Tribe mentions how many of the great characters commit suicide. Again The Swan of Avon never recommended the Bible as inspirational reading, and when it came to the "after-life" he took the brave stand that "The rest is silence". If he used the word "God" he employed it "as a word full of sound and fury, signifying nothing save to the character who spoke"; and if he introduced "sin" and "heaven" into the sonnets, it was surely because "antisocial behaviour" or "psychological region" are hard to fit into imabic pentameters.

Mr. Tribe's contribution is a closely reasoned and brilliant paper, and everyone should study it to see why Swinburne declared: "Shakespeare was in the genuine sense—that is, in the best and highest meaning of the word—a Freethinker." The paper was originally read in the Alliance Hall, London, on the evening of May 19th, 1964, when the National Secular Society celebrated the quater-centenary of the birth of William Shakespeare; and the author pays a tribute to this occasion when Richard Ainley and Joan Miller and other famous and gifted performers read the poetry. Now, with the booklet, there is the consolation of a most attractive production, the cover reproducing the portrait by Martin Droeshout and quoting from Harold Pinter.

One hopes that in the same way that David Tribe has viewed "Shakespeare" through the texts, other freethinking scholars may be moved to view Shakespeare through the family. So much can be learnt, for example, from The Bard's change of attitude towards his "heroines" when his brother became too old to play the roles. This is a task which should not be left to "religious commentators", but one which should be tackled by someone who will interpret history and not read "an interpolation" into the facts.

OSWELL BLAKESTON

Details of membership of the National Secular Society and inquiries regarding bequests and secular funeral services may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717.

CORRESPONDENCE

NEW MORALITY OR NONE AT ALL

Mrs. Ebury's analysis of Christian morality is not only indisputable—it never was in dispute!

I maintain that to start a family before completing the training which should enable one to support it is bad sense.

The remedy is effective birth control.

The Roman Catholic complainants to the Frank's Commission think the remedy is Christian morality. Indignant at this idea, I wrote an article in an attempt to refute them. Mrs. Ebury, by further underlining the nihilistic and masochistic nature of traditional Christian sex morality, strongly reinforces my original arguments.

For this, I thank her.

GILLIAN HAWTIN.

[This correspondence is now closed—Ed.]

RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

I notice (*The Guardian*, 6/8/65) that the Minister of Education has replied to a parliamentary question by saying that he will only interfere concerning the present position of RI in schools if there is consensus of opinion with regard to the desirable changes. Such an answer is curious and permits of little hope for the Freethinker at the moment. Despite much verbal parade of meetings between Christian and Humanist educationalists, it is less than likely that any consensus of opinion will be reached which will satisfy the Secularist. In fact, there is very real danger that a so-called consensus might be reached which could have the sole effect of paring away some of the difficulties which Christians find within the practical outcomes of the 1944 Education Act. At the same time, it is nonsense to pretend that the present situation has been reached by any past consensus of opinion. It was reached in fact by Cardinal Hinsley and Archbishop Temple cashing in on the wartime situation, assisted by various "Free Churchmen" who hoped that, by putting their historic principles concerning religion and the secular state into pawn, they might gain something for themselves.

There is a lesson in this parliamentary reply for Freethinkers generally. They must continue with an all-out and long-term campaign for secular education whatever *soi-disant* Christian educationalists may say. In the end, a consensus of opinion may not be reached, but it might well be that a volume of radical protest could be roused which would sweep away RI, religious assemblies and other state educational panderings to the Churches for good and all. In the meanwhile, it is up to parents and teachers of rationalistic views to take the fullest advantage of the "contracting-out" machinery as it exists at the present time. Various chores and burdens attend the inculcation of religion in the schools, such as the policing of assembly. The rationalistic teacher should contract out and leave such work to those who support RI in the schools. As they believe that they have the help of the Holy Spirit in their task, they cannot complain that they are put at a disadvantage.

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRIORITIES

In a recent letter in THE FREETHINKER Glenn P. Turner of Wisconsin shows that he shares a common misunderstanding of the importance of having a loyalty which takes precedence over other loyalties. As I see it a person has to preserve an attitude to life which has regard to several levels of interest. Working from the centre outwards, personal survival comes first, then family matters, then city matters, then state matters, then continental matters and finally world affairs.

If we now consider the relations between these various levels of interest, we will see that the higher levels must take precedence over the lower levels. For example the family man is obliged to forswear selfishness in the absolute sense if the family is to become a friendly group—and of course this also applies to all other members of the family if it is to live harmoniously. The same principle applies to other levels "above" the family according to the scale I have suggested. For example, city councillors cannot expect to gain special privileges for themselves or their families without the question of justice to all families being raised by other family men in the city. Thus, at this level city loyalties have to take precedence over family loyalties. Similarly national politicians cannot be allowed to put the interests of their own city above the interests of other cities: national loyalties must take precedence over city loyalties if the nation is to work as a friendly or co-operative group.

The point I was trying to make in my letter "The Way Forward" was to indicate that the civic consciousness of most human beings breaks down at this point and that common sense and logic requires the human beings of our time to understand this situation

and do something about it.

In other words I am not to be understood as advocating that, as Mr. Turner puts it, we must "fight nationalism and love of one's country". It is a question of establishing a new *chief* loyalty to extricate mankind from the national interests. A "my country right or wrong" attitude of mind is prevalent all over the world, and Dr. Arnold Toynbee, the eminent historian, has rightly pointed to nationalism of this kind as being the greatest existing danger to human survival. In a recent letter to me he wrote, "I agree, as you realise, that we must have a world society . . . and have it on a basis of a loyalty of individuals to the world community that will be paramount over their loyalty to their local states". I don't think the issue I am concerned with can be put any more clearly or succinctly than that.

I would now like to turn to another sentence in Mr. Glenn Turner's letter which indicates some misunderstanding. He writes, "I hope some day to be able to say that I am a citizen of UN and loyal to all humanity". But if he reads the constitution of the UN he will find that there can be no question of any person ever becoming a UN citizen. The only members are, by the constitution of that organisation, sovereign states. Thus the UN is designed to perpetuate international anarchy rather than to provide a supra-national focus for the loyalty of all human beings. This is why the present constitution must be scrapped as a proper basis for world peace and means found for merging nations under supra-national government.

If the members of the European Common Market were to succeed in setting up a European Parliament to which all matters relating to issues between the states concerned could be referred for supra-national decision we would have moved effectively nearer to the ideal of a world-wide supra-national set-up.

As regards Mr. Turner's own attitude, it is significant to my mind that he says "I hope some day to be able to say that . . . I am loyal to all humanity". I think we should all be saying that we are *now* in this position. In other words I think the personal decision must precede effective working for the end condition posited by the statement from Dr. Toynbee. When a majority of the persons in the world make a clear decision for giving their top loyalty to mankind we will have taken the first necessary step on the way forward to world peace.

I. G. MACFARLANE.

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