

The Freethinker

Volume LXXXV—No. 42

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

APPARENTLY one the stormiest debates in the long-drawn-out Vatican Council, arose over the question of religious toleration. For while the still apparently (more or less) liberal majority of the prelates at the Council voted in favour of the unqualified right of the individual to choose his own religious persuasion, the diehard traditionalist cardinals (mostly, as one would expect, Italian or Spanish) opposed this crucial resolution strongly in a last ditch stand. The stand was only to be expected since, not only would the frank recognition of (shall we say?) the right of self-determination in religion *ipso facto* condemn much in the actual past practice of the Roman Catholic Church, but (as I shall presently argue) the admission of religious self-determination strikes at the very roots of the entire doctrinal system of the one true Church. Consequently, when a Spanish cardinal publicly stated that the Church of Rome alone had the right to preach the Gospel, and Cardinal Ruffini of Palermo reasserted the medieval doctrine that the Catholic Church had the right to suppress heresy by force and to prevent Protestant missionaries in Catholic lands, they were only repeating what St. Thomas Aquinas would have regarded as elementary and self-evident facts.

In support of the novel thesis of religious toleration, such American Cardinals as Cushing of Boston, and Spellman of New York, evidently took their inspiration from the American Constitution, the very first amendment of which asserts the complete independence of church and state along with its necessary corollary that the secular power cannot and must not intervene in religious questions. To be sure, American Catholics have accepted this view since 1824, when Bishop John England first made the historic declaration later popularised by the Irish Catholic Daniel O'Connell, that he "took his religion from Rome, but his politics from his country". Without venturing to anticipate the inspiration of the Holy Spirit who infallibly guides the Council, we think it is probable that this latter American view will finally prevail at Rome and that the days of the Inquisition are past, if only for the mundane reason that whilst the Vatican holds the Keys of Heaven, American Catholicism holds the Vatican's purse strings by contributing some 80 per cent of its total funds. And if money speaks all languages, Latin (and Italian) must surely be included amongst them. Today, the Almighty Dollar can extinguish even the *auto da fé*.

Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus Datur

The above sentence, "outside the Church there is no salvation", represents the key text in the evolution of religious persecution. Critics of Rome are far too inclined to treat the whole question of religious persecution empirically and not (as they should) doctrinally. For, however sadistic in practice, the monstrous millennial reign of terror which Rome unleashed against the supreme crime of heresy throughout the ages of faith, and which reached its height during the Counter-Reformation, it was not primarily due to sadism. Contrarily, its origin lay in the perversion of

the human intellect and of human logic by Catholic theology, then supposedly "the queen of the sciences". The then unchallenged masters of this regal science such as St. Augustine of Hippo (4th century), St. Thomas Aquinas (13th century), and their successors and imitators, argued the whole case for the judicial murder of heretics with impeccable logic in cold blood and in cold print; and their inevitable point of departure was precisely that of the cardinal quoted above: "Outside the Church, there is no salvation".

Once the truth implicit in this ecclesiastical aphorism was granted—and in the Middle Ages it was virtually an article of faith, to deny which was in itself heresy—the whole practice

and theory of religious persecution followed easily and indeed inevitably. Once concede that the eternal salvation of each and every person depends ultimately and exclusively upon his (or her) doctrinal belief, then any and every means are surely legitimate to keep the individual on the straight and narrow path of salvation or to constrain the living soul who had slipped off it into the mortal guilt of heresy, the supreme crime of the ages of faith. Nor, if it were necessary to employ them, were torture and death, the rack and the stake to be excluded from such redemptory agencies. Particularly since the worst agonies that the Inquisition could inflict, were merely temporary and ephemeral compared with the infernal torments and eternal agonies prepared by the devil and his angels for the infidel heretical souls who were *extra ecclesiam*, and for whom accordingly, "no salvation is given".

The Church in the ages of faith persecuted for many and various reasons: religious, political, even economic; but the mental, logical basis for all this gigantic pyramid of atrocities; for the unspeakable cruelties of the Inquisition and for the appalling miseries that it inflicted, lay in the single theological dogma of exclusive salvation. It was not until Luther first effectively challenged this dogma in his epoch-making Wittenberg thesis: "The Holy Spirit does not desire the death of heretics" (Cf. Isaac Taylor and *The Rudiments of Jesuitism*, 1848) that the idea of toleration made its appearance in Christianity, and to be sure it took even the Protestant Reformers themselves quite a while to learn to practise its implications.

Exit the Inquisition

If we are to judge from the recent proceedings of the Second Vatican Council, "the one true Church" in 1965 has now caught up with the arch-heretic Martin Luther in 1517! For the Holy Spirit in Rome also, no longer "desires the death of heretics". Apparently the dogma of exclusive salvation also goes with it, that terrible dogma which, as the Protestant historian Lecky tersely phrased it, has caused the Church of Rome to shed more innocent blood than any other recorded institution. But the possible inferences from such a revolutionary change are incalculable, so much so in fact that Rome's most audacious critics have hardly even begun seriously to consider their ultimate possibilities. What is Roman Catholicism

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Rome and Religious Toleration

By F. A. RIDLEY

going to look like in a few centuries time?

A Protestant Prophet

In 1848 a percipient Protestant critic, Isaac Taylor, soon after the publication of Newman's *Development of Christian Doctrine*, predicted that Newman's then novel and audacious theory would eventually be adopted by the Church of Rome and that once adopted, it could and would be used by the Vatican impartially either to pile on fresh superstitions in an age of superstition or to abolish superstition in an age of science. Today, more than a century later, the first of these predictions is already fulfilled: for Rome, hostile in 1848, has nowadays swallowed Newman's "development" theory, hook, line and sinker. Rome is, in fact, at present developing so fast as to make

the great Cardinal turn over uneasily in his Birmingham tomb! Is the second part of this far-sighted prediction also destined for eventual fulfilment and if so, how? In this connection, we note with much interest (as Isaac Taylor would surely have done) the recent dialogue between representatives of Rome and of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. Has the Vatican, with that serpentine wisdom with which it is so often credited, decided that in this secular age, Humanism is ultimately inevitable and invincible; and that accordingly it proposes to adopt and to make its own the apt maxim: if you can't beat them, join them? Rationalists often tend to forget that Rome has always claimed to be the *only* completely rationalist organisation in existence!

Religious Issue in Vietnam War

By C. STANLEY LOWELL

AMERICANS ARE generally aware that there is a religious factor involved in the rapidly escalating conflict in Vietnam. How has a religious issue been injected into this already complex situation?

It begins with the French colonialists who brought their Catholic religion with them when they settled in what was then called Indochina. The French were not avid Catholics at home but took it more seriously on the foreign field. The reason: they recognised that religion could be a useful influence in pacifying and administering the area. Roman Catholicism became a recognised force in the educational and cultural life of the country.

The Vietnamese war for independence from France was finally successful in 1954 with the victory of Dien Bien Phu. (The French had been 80 per cent financed by the United States.) What happened then is described in a careful article by Robert Scheer in the January-February 1965 issue of *Ramparts*.

There was a general exodus of Vietnamese Catholics from north to south. This was described by Dr. Tom Dooley as a flight from Communist atrocities. He issued his call for a crusade against the godless Communists.

About this time Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York injected himself into the situation. His house guest for some years, a man sitting out the war against the French, was Ngo-Dinh-Diem. Cardinal Spellman persuaded President Eisenhower that Diem was just the man to lead an anti-Communist régime in South Vietnam. It was US support that subsequently kept President Diem in power. US aid administered by Catholic Relief Services actually kept these mostly Catholic émigrés for three years. Local priests served as agents. Per capita outlay was \$89 per person compared with the country's annual per capita income of \$85.

Diem was a brother of the Catholic Archbishop Ngo-Dinh-Thuc of Hué in Vietnam and a devout Catholic himself. In erecting his administrative apparatus, he relied primarily on Catholics. The complaint I encountered again and again in Vietnam was that if one wanted to get anywhere in the military or in the civil administration he had to join the Catholic Church.

Added to this was the patronage lavished on the Church by the Diem régime. It is true that there was a long tradition of religious and political integration in Vietnam. Both Buddhism and Roman Catholicism were financially aided by the government. There can be no doubt that Roman Catholicism reaped the lion's share of these emoluments. Already the leaders in education as a

result of French policy, that Church received considerable government aid for its work in this field. The handsome Catholic churches in Saigon attest the hierarchy's success in tapping government funds. Buddhists, though far more numerous, were poorly organised and generally less knowledgeable in such matters.

When I discussed the situation with Archbishop Thuc he explained that the bad feeling between the two groups was inspired by Buddhist envy. "They are jealous of what we have," he said. He explained that this was French policy and his brother had merely continued it.

President Diem was anti-Communist to be sure, but he was other things as well. When Irish Catholics parade in New York City Protestant politicians are out there leading the way. But when Buddhists paraded in Vietnam Diem had his troops fire on them, break up the procession, and throw the leaders into jail. Of course this could not continue. The United States had to withdraw its support from Diem and he fell. (He never had popular support at any time.)

The unfortunate antipathy between Buddhists and Catholics has continued and even become worse. None of the succeeding governments has been able to discover a formula of reconciliation. The animosity has deepened and hardened to the point where the two groups are more hostile to each other than to the Viet Cong.

Dispatches from Saigon indicate steady deterioration of the religious situation. If a government satisfies the Catholics the Buddhists are resentful, and they arrange protest demonstrations. If the Buddhists are pleased the Catholics are unhappy, and they march in anger. Those who know Vietnam well insist that unless the two groups can find some basis for a working agreement the anti-Communist cause in South Vietnam is worse than hopeless.

When I was in Vietnam I made bold in several conversations to suggest separation of church and state. They looked at me as though I were out of my mind. Experts see everything but the obvious.

[Reprinted from *Church and State*, September 1965]

PAGAN HALOES

A TECHNICAL booklet (published by CIBA Ltd., Duxford, Cambridge) on the restoration of a large Roman mosaic discovered at Brantingham, a few miles west of Hull, contains some excellent illustrations of goddesses. "The haloes usually associated with Christian saints", the booklet explains, "appear at this period also in pagan art".

Agnosticism

By CHAPMAN COHEN

HAS THE AGNOSTIC when he says "I neither affirm nor deny the existence of God," anything in mind? Is his declaration of agnosticism intelligible to himself? Does it really contain anything more than a desire to guard against being identified with that terrible thing atheism? Candidly I can find nothing more than this. Even if we pass the very ambiguous word "spirit", the Agnostic cannot mean that he is in doubt as to whether there is a number of spirits controlling nature and human activities. That would bring him straight back to fetichism.

By some, agnosticism is described as a case of suspended judgment. Suspended judgment on what? Does the Agnostic suspend judgment as to whether God has ever meant anything other than a magnified man? Many modern religionists deny God the possession of a physically animal structure. He has not the shape of man. He has neither arms nor legs, he has neither a physical head nor a physical structure such as a man has. But he is still capable of love, anger, wisdom, etc. Yet these are as much animal and human characteristics as arms and legs. Intelligence, love, desire, are as human as red hair and side-whiskers. What is it about which judgment is suspended? It is no use to keep up a steady chatter, "we do not say that God is or God is not", if one has not the least notion of what God is, and would not know him if he were found. Looking for a black cat in a black passage on a black night is a very stiff proposition, but at least we do know what "cat" and "black" and "passage" stand for. The Agnostic is looking for a "what-you-may-call-it" in a "thingumajig" and a "whatsisname". If he ever found it he would never recognise his discovery.

The Agnostic warmly declares that he knows nothing about God. That is the foundation of his creed. But if that was all he implied, the statement would hardly be worth making. He obviously means more than this. What he says is, "I know nothing about God." What he implies is the justification of his own credo is "Neither does any one else." And, as we shall see, when he justifies this, he is justifying precisely the position taken up by the avowed Atheist.

Perhaps the most curious attempt to make the agnostic position intelligible was essayed by the late Sir Leslie Stephen. In his *Agnostic's Apology*, he solemnly informs us that "The Agnostic is one who asserts — what no one denies — that there are limits to human understanding." Of all the apologies that have been put forward this is surely the poorest and the weakest. Where is the necessity to coin a new word to affirm what nobody has ever denied? One might as reasonably establish a society of "nose-ites" and limit the human membership to those who have nasal organs. There might be a certain convenience in adopting a formula that puts one in agreement with everybody, but it is hardly worth while. After all, a definition must define — that is, it must exclude as well as include. And if the meaning of agnosticism is as given by Sir Leslie Stephen, in what way does it differentiate the Agnostic from the Atheist, or from anyone else? The Agnostic apparently believes nothing that others do not believe, and says nothing that all others do not say.

Let us, as the professional evangelist would say, get back to God. And I begin with something that everyone actually does believe. The world as we know it (which is the only world we can deal with) is made up of *things*, or as some would prefer to put it, of events. But all

events, whatever they are like, or wherever they occur, are single in their existence. We have collective terms such as "tree", "man", "bird", and so forth, but there is not a tree separate from particular trees, or "man" distinct from particular men.

I stress this consideration because a great deal of the confusion connected with "God" is due to its neglect. There are a multitude of gods in the world, as there are a multitude of trees, and in the earlier stages of civilisation gods are contemptibly common. Many of them have passed away, and many new ones have been created; but there is no such conceivable thing as a "God" that is distinct from particular gods. The gods can be collected, tabulated, and their common characteristics noted, just as one can collect different men, brown, red, yellow, white, tabulate them and indicate what features they have.

Abstract words are very often useful instruments of thought. Without them human thought could not get very far. But when we mistake abstractions for concrete existences, confusion is certain to follow.

Now the gods of the world are as well known and as well understood as the trees of the world. And if we were to take all the gods that have ever existed, and add to them the gods that do exist, the Agnostic would not hesitate to dismiss them one after the other as mere figments of the imagination. In the end he would become a deicide on the most elaborate and comprehensive scale. More than that, in terms of his agnosticism, he would deny the existence of any other god that any people could ever conceive or worship. The gods of existing savages, the gods of the Mohammedan, the Jew, the Christian, would all go. But if all gods, past and present, *and* future, are rejected as having no better existence than the ghost that haunts the old baronial castle, what has he in mind when he says that he does not deny the existence of God. He is denying the existence of any conceivable god, and an inconceivable proposition is just nonsense.

Or if, as is said, the Agnostic suspends judgment as to whether God exists or not, what God is it he has in mind? As I have written elsewhere, if I say that I don't believe in the existence of the only kind of bird, fish, or tree that is known to me, that I believe they are all creatures of the imagination, but add that I will not say that there does not exist anywhere a fish that has not the structure of a fish and does not live in the water, or that I think there may be in existence a bird that is quite unlike a bird in both structure and habits, or that there may exist somewhere a tree without roots, trunk or branches, etc., I shall quite properly be told that if I run across these things they are certainly not fish, bird, or tree. Can anyone think of a thing existing which is quite unlike any other thing of the same name or nature? The man who is looking for a god or a bird that is entirely unlike the bird and the god he knows would not know them for either god or bird if he ran across either or both.

We have not yet reached the end of the confusion and self-contradictions of the Agnostic. The only helpful definition of God that we could find was that God began as one of a company of spirits who exercised control over some part of nature. I accept that definition, not because it suits my own position, but because my position has grown out of the anthropological account of the origin of gods. Every god the world has known began existence

(Concluded on page 335)

This Believing World

IT would be fair, we suggest, to say that the four Reverend gentlemen who are also Professors and who gave us recently on BBC TV four lectures on the Gospels, might well have had the support of some Humanists, so little did they believe in what can be called old-fashioned Christianity. In the lectures we heard, we cannot remember one speaker who declared that Jesus Christ was the true and only Son of Almighty God, specially sent down from his abode in Heaven to save sinful man from the fire of Hell. In fact, we don't remember any one of them declaring that the miracles of Jesus actually happened.

★

INSTEAD one of them pointed out in the clearest possible way that the famous changing water into wine could not actually have happened, and was probably first written as a parable. On October 1st, they spent half an hour on TV answering viewers' questions, every one of which was in defence of the Christianity we all know. In every case the Professors explained that modern biblical scholarship could not accept the supernatural, and that nobody really knew what was meant by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, in dozens of cases. The Faith of our Fathers was the one thing none of the speakers believed in.

★

IT IS all very heartbreaking of course, but youngsters these days love "petting", and they indulge in it often among tombstones, much to the disgust of parishioners and the vicar in Holyhead, Anglesey (*The People*, 19/9/65). The youngsters, complains the vicar, Canon Davies, are "even found in the pews", and parents in the church "don't like their children to be around because of what is going on". And he pathetically adds that "the youngsters are let loose by their parents who I suppose are in pubs, or playing bingo". But after all, can we really blame the young people? Petting is far more exciting than listening to dreary sermons?

★

A PICTURE taken by an unknown photographer from an aeroplane over the Alps in 1958, which appeared then in the *People* is one which, we are told, "millions of people want to see again". And why? Well, in a "splash" of snow and earth in the centre, "they can see the face of Christ". We tried for half an hour to see his face, and completely failed, and so did every one else to whom we showed it. No doubt this is because we are confirmed sceptics—though turning the picture round, we got the representation of a dog. *The People* (19/9/65) calls it "a miracle in the snow". Alas, we do not believe in miracles, and so we have been unable to locate "our blessed Lord" in it.

★

SO THE desecration of the Sabbath day is becoming more and more complete. Next summer, county cricket will be played on Sundays—enough to shock the Lord's Day Observance Society into paroxysms of anger! Either the Sabbath Day is a "holy" day in the eyes of God, or it is not. Is not Sunday God's own special day of rest for workers and idlers alike? Yet cricket correspondents seem delighted. "The better the day the better will be the deed", said one of them.

★

CARDINAL HEENAN, that determined opponent of artificial contraception, has been "pleading" with the Vatican Council "to hold up discussion on marriage" (*Daily Express*, 1/10/65). He wants the Pope to receive "guidance from scientists and theologians" particularly on the Pill. How different this is from the guidance which used to be

asked for! Then, it was praying to God Almighty, and getting the guidance direct from Jesus and Mary. Does the Cardinal really believe any guidance from scientists can possibly equal that from heaven through prayer?

Call for Integration in Scottish Schools

"How long are we going to allow our children to drink in bigotry along with their school milk?" asked Andrew Fergus in the Scottish *Sunday Mail* on September 26th. He asked it in a week in which Scotland had been shocked by the news that police had to be called in to stop "open warfare between primary pupils of Protestant and Catholic schools".

And he pointed out that, in all the enquiries and recriminations that followed the incident, one pertinent little question had never been properly answered: "Who gave these children the idea that they were so different in the first place?"

Who—he asked the Education Authorities—first foisted the Billy-or-a-Dan complex on the children when they were five years old? Who first taught them that Protestants and Catholics never played in the same playground? Who imposed an apartheid so complete that it was impossible they should ever become friends?

We hear plenty from the County Councillors about Comprehensive Schools, Mr. Fergus said; about how shocking it is to segregate our pupils according to their intelligence.

But they seemed to hide their sense of shock easily enough when it came to the even greater evil of separating the children according to their religious persuasions.

We are pitifully short of teachers, of schools, and of modern equipment, Mr. Fergus continued. And, the present system causes a wasteful duplication of all three.

Yet never in all these years had the Scottish Education Department pointed out that "there is not one valid reason why Protestants and Catholics should not share the same buildings—that classes can be split just as easily for religious instruction as they now are for woodwork and domestic science".

Most of all, though, Mr. Fergus addressed the Churches themselves. "For years they have been assuring us they are moving closer together. For years they have been exchanging pleasant visits. For years they have been holding fruitless discussions on dogma and dearly-held convictions. And in all that time, the one field in which they could have achieved almost total co-operation has been wilfully ignored—that is the real tragedy of last week's incident.

"Far too many people are only too ready to pay lip-service to some academic idea of integration—but completely unready to accept the one concrete fact about it that is certain: That any integration must begin with our children. That the only place to start is in our schools. And that the time to do it is not tomorrow, but right now. While the idea of Comprehensive education is still on everybody's lips! While the new school buildings are still on the drawing board! While the terrifying shouts of those bigoted 10-year-olds are still ringing in our ears!"

The response of the Rev. Canon Peter Morrison, Roman Catholic co-opted member of Glasgow Education Committee, was reported in the same issue of the *Sunday Mail*. Religion, he said, "is as much part of life as education is. You can't just have half-an-hour set aside here and there for religious teaching. It must flow through the entire system".

THE FREETHINKER

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

Telephone: HOP 0029

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

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

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

OUTDOOR

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

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. J. W. BARKER, L. EBURY, J. A. MILLAR and C. E. WOOD.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday, 3 p.m.: MESSRS. CLARE, MILLS and WOOD. (Car Park, Victoria Street), 8 p.m.: MESSRS. COLLINS, WOODCOCK, and others.

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.

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

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (New Victoria Hotel, Corporation Street), Sunday, October 17th, 6.45 p.m.: MARY HILL, "The Causes of War".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 17th, 6.30 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, "Human Nature".

Manchester Branch NSS (Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street), Sunday, October 17th, 7.30 p.m.: A Meeting.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, W.C.1), Sunday, October 17th, 11 a.m.: H. L. BEALES, "Social Morality Today".

Tuesday, October 19th, 7.30 p.m.: FRANK THURGOOD, "The Need for an International Language".

Workers' Educational Association, Hampstead Branch, (Burgh House, New End Square, N.W.3), Sunday, October 17th, 2.30 p.m.: DAVID TRIBE, "God or Man?"

Notes and News

POPE PAUL VI's 14-hour visit to New York is now history and, we dare suggest, largely forgotten. Except, of course, by the 25,000 Catholic children assembled at Kennedy Airport by Cardinal Spellman, and by the Catholics who thronged St. Patrick's Cathedral and the Yankee Stadium, where the Pope celebrated mass. The speech to the United Nations was full of the expected platitudes about peace. We should seriously like to think that it has brought "peace on earth" a little nearer. But has it? Will President Johnson, who issued a joint peace appeal with Pope John, withdraw his troops from Vietnam? Will British troops quit Aden? Has the situation altered in Kashmir? It may be argued that the Pope has no influence in these matters. Fair enough. But he could order Roman Catholics of all countries to refuse to fight and to work genuinely for peace. Think of the effect in America alone.

★

THE New York authorities may remember the Pope's visit as "posing the biggest and costliest security problem" which the police department has ever had to face. It involved, according to Joyce Egginton of the *Observer* (3/10/65), "an extensive check on buildings, alleyways and

entrances along the 24-mile processional route . . . an investigation of the whereabouts and habits of known anti-Roman Catholic fanatics, and the stationing of police riflemen on rooftops". Within the city's 26,000-man police force all days off and holidays were cancelled to provide "the largest commitment of police in New York history for any single event". The cost in overtime alone was put at \$1 million.

★

"It is said", wrote Miss Egginton, "to be the Pope's idea that he should arrive here like an ordinary passenger on a regular Alitalia commercial flight". But who said such a silly thing? The *Observer's* rival paper, the *Sunday Times* exploded the ordinariness of the flight. The plane was in normal service, but part of its first class section had been turned into personal quarters for His Holiness. It was decorated in green velvet and had a crucifix and a bronze bas-relief of the Madonna of Loreto. There was also a bed on which the Pope could rest. Only one thing was ordinary: the fare. The Pope's first-class return ticket cost him \$890, as it would any ordinary person.

★

AS THE Archbishop of Canterbury was announcing the text of his sermon in the Church of Charles the Martyr at Falmouth on September 26th, an elderly man jumped up and shouted "Clean your church of false priests . . . stop the drift to Rome" (*Western Evening Herald*, 27/9/65). Church officials had some difficulty in reaching the interrupter, who had secured a seat in the centre of the main block of pews, but he was eventually "pulled out" and escorted from the church. Dr. Ramsey meanwhile stood "silent and impassive".

★

IN THE BBC Home Service broadcast by *The Critics* on September 12th, a member of the panel remarked that Professor Walter L. Arnstein's book *The Bradlaugh Case* didn't indicate what sort of man Charles Bradlaugh was. Eighty-four-year-old Mrs. B. Dorer of Hornchurch described him for *Radio Times* readers (30/9/65). "He was very tall and broad-shouldered", she wrote, "with a magnificent head and a fine countenance; and like most great men his manners were very gentle in ordinary life". Mrs. Dorer's father, Richard Green, who was subsequently Mayor of King's Lynn, and his brother Robert, had "adopted wholeheartedly the political outlook and atheistic views on religion of freethinkers like Bradlaugh" and "did not disdain being called 'atheists and infidels'". And, after the Second World War, when Mrs. Dorer became JP for the County of Norfolk, she affirmed instead of taking the oath.

★

Two 20-year-old labourers, Patrick Wilson and Cornelius Buckley, pleaded guilty at Balham to stealing lead worth £7 10s. from the unoccupied St. Giles's Vicarage, Camberwell, after being caught in the act. When arrested, Wilson told the police, "If I had known it was a vicarage I wouldn't have done it as I'm a strong Catholic". In court, he repeated: "We thought the building was a school. If we had known it was a vicarage we wouldn't have done it. I'm very sorry about it" (*South London Press*, 28/9/65). "I shouldn't worry too much", said the Clerk of the Court, "you are not being charged with sacrilege". Wilson was fined £25 and Buckley was remanded in custody for reports.

★

THIS week, in response to many requests, we reprint the late Chapman Cohen's views on "Agnosticism", taken from his pamphlet of that name.

Epicureanism . . . A Preparation for Christianity

By R. SMITH

IN THE nature of its spirit, and the procedure of many of its doctrines Epicureanism could very easily be looked upon as preparation for Christianity in the Greco-Roman world. For anyone who has taken careful study of the two creeds it becomes evident that they have much the same spiritual approach. Freidrich Nietzsche knew this only too well, as the teaching of Epicurus appeared to him to be a sort of pre-existing Christianity, because in his view both creeds were framed for the weak and timorous and debotched. For those who wished to escape from the hustle and bustle of life, and had no desire to take an active part in world affairs, Epicureanism was a haven of rest.

Like original Christianity it was a doctrine of renunciation, as it taught men to shirk living; it was a doctrine of escape, a running away from life. To a sympathetic scholar it seemed, "Like the twilight between the beliefs that were passing away and which rose after the time of Epicurus". Epicureanism, therefore, being the first missionary philosophy was quite a natural preparation for Christianity, one of the first missionary religions. Epicureanism had been detached from Greek politics and Christianity was to be detached from Jewish politics. Both doctrines were formed for men of peace who desired happiness and blessedness through renunciation.

The Christians, like the Epicureans, formed their ethics on love and friendliness, and the fellowship cultivated by the Epicureans was much the same as the communion of spirits fostered by the Church. Both creeds stressed the social virtues of mutual helpfulness, forbearance and forgiveness. The Epicureans distinguished very clearly between the inner life and the external life of circumstance; these correspond to the spiritual life and worldly life in Christian thought.

Both creeds also spoke of ignorance as darkness and knowledge as light, and both essayed to take the shudder out of death and deprive it of its sting. Hence the famous saying of Epicurus, "Death means nothing to us . . .". It is of course connected in a way to the Epicurean belief in gods. When you become like a god you do not fear death, as gods know no fear. For a Christian to show fear in the face of death is a sin, and a happy death is regarded as the true Christian death, although I must say this is in direct contradiction to Christ's own unhappy death in despair upon the cross at Calvary. The happy death was of course also the true Epicurean death. Both creeds were at one on that.

The two creeds were also singular in taking their names from their leaders and in pledging loyalty to those leaders, and both talked of following in the footsteps of the leaders. The two creeds also rejected the conventional education and founded their own schools, providing new texts. The Epicurean textbooks anticipated the textbooks composed by the Christians. In fact we can nearly be safe in saying that Epicureanism was a sort of Christianity without Christ, but not without Gods. The Epicurean never influenced the great world like the Stoics and Christians did; they had no wish to do that. All they desired was to be left alone to pursue their happiness. Like Christianity Epicureanism appealed to the world-weary, to slaves, and to those broken on the wheel of life. Even little children were made welcome in the garden of Epicurus outside Athens. Like Christ, Epicurus loved children, and like Christ he did not believe in sexual intercourse. "Sexual intercourse",

Epicurus declares, "has never done a man good and he is lucky if it has not harmed him". Even Lucretius follows him in denouncing sexual love. It was quite common for Greek materialists to do this. Democritus of Abdera said, "coition is a slight attack of apoplexy". Those Humanists who quote Epicurus to boost up their Humanism do so in complete ignorance of his philosophy.

Faith was a major factor in Epicureanism as it is in Christianity. Every disciple of Epicurus voluntarily took the pledge: "I will be faithful to Epicurus according to whom it has been my choice to live". Recently discovered archaeological evidence proves that even the honouring of Epicurus by the erection of herms devoted to deities was practised by Epicureans. It must also be remembered that Epicureans worshipped the popular gods of ancient Greece, and this was done because Epicurus thought all gods to be perfect. The Epicureans did not of course believe in the superstitions attached to the Greek gods, but they did believe in their existence.

Epicurus is the only Greek philosopher who defended the anthropomorphic interpretation of the gods. The Epicurean's gods lived in perfect happiness outside of the world, and did not interfere with the world. It would have been quite easy for an Epicurean to have turned a Christian. Both creeds promised a victory over death, the one by the denial of immortality, the other by the assertion of it. For Epicureans only the gods were immortal, Christianity went a step further and claimed man to be immortal. Epicurus like Christ was looked upon by his followers as a saviour, and indeed worshipped as such. In that sense and in many others I have mentioned Epicureanism helped to prepare the way for Christianity. Perhaps this short article will shed a little more light on Epicureanism in its relation to Christianity than has hitherto been shown in THE FREETHINKER.

EDITOR'S COMMENT

That there were similarities between some aspects of Epicureanism and some aspects of Christianity has never, so far as we know, been denied in THE FREETHINKER. And if these similarities happened to be with the better side of Christianity, this is no reflection on Epicureanism. It is a curious outlook that deplores love of children, the stressing of the social virtues of mutual helpfulness and forgiveness, or the association of ignorance with darkness.

It needs to be said, though, that Mr. Smith distorts both Epicureanism and Christianity to suit his case. Ignorance, for instance, meant different things to the Epicurean and the Christian and (without pursuing again with Mr. Smith the interminable argument about the shudder and sting of death) there is considerable difference between a mortal and an immortal view of man. The latter—related to the resurrection of Christ—was, of course, the central belief in Christianity. Above all, Christianity was a supernatural creed: Epicureanism a natural philosophy, and if Mr. Smith cannot see the difference, his outlook is even more curious than we thought.

TARGET ON BILLY GRAHAM

G. W. TARGET, the novelist, is writing a book about Billy Graham and the effect of his various crusades on the religious and social life of Great Britain. Mr. Target would be glad, he said in a letter to the *Observer* (3/10/65) to hear from anybody who responded to Dr. Graham's appeal but afterwards fell away.

Agnosticism

(Concluded from page 331)

as a good or evil spirit, and he was dreaded or loved because he was supposed to be capable of exerting a good or bad influence on human affairs. These are incontrovertible facts. No competent person seriously disputes them. Many of these gods have come down to us as fairies, goblins, etc., and many of them have died away altogether. The Agnostic has not the least hesitation in brushing aside whole galaxies of known or conceivable gods as figments of the imagination. He says they are the outcome of an unenlightened imagination, and I agree with him. By what rule does he dismiss these dethroned gods, and also all that are still ruling over very diminished territories, but still insist that he cannot deny the existence of something he knows not what, and would be in no better state of mind if he met it?

All my life I have been asking Agnostics to give me some justification for their "suspension of judgment". What is there on which we are to suspend? The Agnostic does pass judgment on the spirits he is told about, and in whom other people believe. Is there any better evidence, or any different evidence, for the probable existence of a spirit called God, than there is for another spirit who, instead of being called God, is called Mumbo-Jumbo? There is sincerity of belief with both these gods, and the evidence for the existence of each is of exactly the same character and quality. Why the differentiation? If I may paraphrase a line in Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*, whenever religion is concerned to be intelligible it is found out.

Still further. Less than two centuries ago the belief that men and women might hold intercourse with the devil was very generally held. Witchcraft was then a criminal offence, and many thousands of men, women, and children were tortured and killed for intercourse with devils, in whose existence there is the same religious and Christian warranty as there is for the existence of God. This belief in intercourse with devils was killed, for intelligent men and women, by the knowledge of the conditions that gave this belief being and authority. Yet one never heard an Agnostic say that he suspended judgment concerning that deposed god, Satan. Quite definitely he says with the Atheist that so soon as the origin and history of the belief in human intercourse with the spirit, Satan (God) was known and understood it was at once definitely rejected. He does not say I am agnostic on the subject of demoniacal possession. He says, I deny that any such being as Satan exists; he owes his existence to the imaginings of the uninstructed mind. The belief is condemned by its history.

And this is exactly what has happened to the gods. They have been found out. I do not mean that they have been found out in the sense in which we find out that someone is bad whom we have considered good, or as a liar one whom we thought truthful. The gods have been found out, as people discovered ghosts and fairies and demons to be mere "figments of the imagination". For the past three hundred years this idea concerning the gods has been gaining ground, and, with and since the publication of the epoch-making *Primitive Culture*, by E. B. Tylor, the gods have been tracked down and their origin exposed with a devastating accuracy. Such primitive peoples as exist have been carefully studied and the process of god-making has been fully exposed. The whole weight of modern scientific theory is thrown upon the side of the conviction that all gods, ancient and modern, savage and civilised, good and bad, have had their origin in the

uninstructed mind of man reading his own feelings into nature, personifying them, and then trembling before the creation of his own imagination. There are, of course, divergences of opinion as to the order of the different stages of this development, just as there are differences of opinion as to the precise nature and order of that organic evolution which traces the development of living matter from the simplest to the highest form. From all sides, from that of the study of culture in general, from the essential nature of such ceremonies as the Christian eating of the god, the incarnate god walking the earth as a man, the general conception of natural happenings as due to supernatural or superhuman beings, the whole of modern religion can be traced.

Now it is possible, although it would be supremely ridiculous at this time of day, for the Agnostic to repudiate the demonstrable findings of the anthropologists. But I have never met an Agnostic who takes up this position. With a lack of logic that runs the Christian Scientist very close for a front place in the race for the absurdity medal, what we find is an acceptance of the scientific account of the origin of the belief in gods, followed by an assertion that one must suspend judgment on the whole question as to whether gods exist. But if one really does accept the account of modern science concerning the *origin* of the belief in God, what is there left on which to express doubt? If all the facts of experience, subjective and objective, upon which primitive humanity built the belief in "spirits" are otherwise explained, the first interpretation is quite plainly ruled out of court. We cannot, at least we ought not, to accept a conclusion that follows from premises that are demonstrably false. If the mental hesitancy and illogicality displayed by the Agnostic in relation to the idea of God was manifested with regard to the ordinary affairs of life, existence would be impossible.

The Odium in Atheism

By GONZALO QUIOGUE (Manila)

GOD-BELIEVERS' aversion against atheism is so strong that atheists have to act accordingly. Disbelievers generally use various euphemisms in naming their respective groups. Some atheists call themselves secular humanists or naturalistic humanists. Other groups choose to be known variously as rationalists, freethinkers, ethicists, secularists, liberals, progressives, light-bringers and truth-seekers. These groups are just practical and human. They know that God-believers are hypersensitive to the word "atheist" or "atheism". The above euphemisms are not similarly offensive to the believers.

God-believers are people, too, who have feelings and are sensitive to criticisms levelled against their God and religion. Trying to convince them of the truth in godlessness and better living expounded in humanistic atheism is difficult, but not impossible.

Atheists consciously know there is no such being as God. But at the same time many of them share the God-believers' aversion against atheism. This condition happens if theism was embedded deeply into a child's subconscious mind. As the child grows into adulthood and naturalistic education, he realises in his conscious mind there is no God. But this fact is not pleasant to contemplate; atheism is a naked truth which must be clothed somehow. His reason has cleared his consciousness of a wrong belief; but his subconscious mind is

beyond the reach of his intellect, although the former serves as a repository of the conclusions of the latter. In due time, perhaps, as his atheistic knowledge is gradually stored in his subconscious side by side with his childhood theism, this sedimentary superstition will probably disappear for good and stop intruding into his conscious mind.

Many scientific and scholarly atheists do not want to be called atheistic humanists; they want to be known as "naturalistic humanists". Their attitude is understandable. They have to be practical. They live in a theistic community. We are all gregarious mammals. The community's approval or disapproval of our way of thinking affects our personality, social position and business connections. The impact on the theistic mind of "naturalistic humanist" is not instantly odious like "atheistic humanist".

Indeed, the naked reality of atheism has to be clothed with a euphemism, for we live among sensitive believers and tactful disbelievers. The claim that atheists should be courageously individualistic is easier said than done. The aversion against atheism will persist, unless we have the following conditions: 1. If godless scientists, scholars and thinkers will openly advocate atheism. 2. A majority of the population have become atheists.

CORRESPONDENCE

CATHOLIC-HUMANIST DIALOGUE

What bothers me most is not that Humanists should talk with the Roman Catholic Secretariat (I can think of several things I would like to say to it!) but that the Humanist organisations seem to consider it more important to talk with Catholics than to explain to their colleagues what they are up to. If, in fact, they have made it crystal clear that there can be no more co-operation between the Vatican and Humanist movements than, say, between the Labour and Colin Jordan's parties, then good luck to them. But what *did* they say? What was the point of it all? They cannot blame us for suspecting the worst if they consider it beneath them to help us to understand.

I deplore this sort of situation because it can only increase the gap between Humanists and Secularists, and I think the elimination of this gap is more important than the gap between Humanists and any Christians. But I want to know more details. Can the British Humanist Association explain to the readers of THE FREETHINKER or *The Humanist*, with as much courtesy as they explained to the Vatican Secretariat, what is on their minds? Co-existence is one thing. Co-operation between the fascist-anti-democratic-anti-feminist Vatican and any Secular Humanist organisation is, or ought to be, impossible. This is nothing whatsoever to do with relationships between individual Humanists and Roman Catholics. It is a matter of policy and the Humanist "image".

KIT MOUAT.

DR. WEATHERHEAD'S NEW BOOK

By all means let there be, in religious matters, more light, truth and honesty, and may the people be courageous enough to throw out the dead wood of ages past, when over-credulity and crass ignorance were the curse of humanity and impeded (since 325) its spiritual evolution.

The hierarchy of every denomination has known all along—and Humanists have said so for years—that the dogmas, with their pagan Trinity fable, were reason-insulting gibberish; that the crucifixion of a non-historical Jesus never took place, for it was an annual Egyptian mummery-play referring to the autumnal "death" of the Sungod whose light the "two thieves" (Anup and Aan) wanted to steal!

The fabricators of the New Testament never dreamt that, thanks to the Rosetta stone, scholars in the 19th and 20th century would be able to decipher the hieroglyphics on the walls of the Temple at Luxor and the papyri of the "Book of the Dead", and thus unveil the ecclesiastical frauds of the 3rd and 4th century!

Humanists have known all along that no Saviour was put to death who took upon himself "the sins of the world"; that the Virgin birth referred to the zodiacal sign Virgo, and had nothing to do with any woman; that the hocus-pocus of mass and communion were christianised versions of rather repulsive pagan rites (see Sir J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough*) indulged in by primitive

tribes who imagined that it would give them strength if they consumed the "body and blood" of their religious victim.

Those immature, and far too trusting churchgoers who were enamoured with the above described religious candy-floss and loved those priestly bubble-gums, are now furious that they have been hoaxed all along the line!

And, the wicked and cruel deception played on them, rankles.

But it was their own fault. They never challenged the silly fables of their faith and never questioned the authority of their priests and bishops, who could only sustain their spiritual hegemony through perpetuating the ignorance and superstition of their flocks.

Now, that Dr. Leslie Weatherhead has retired, he has joined the exclusive club of radicals and is prepared to make fun of those foolish and self-righteous churchgoers who—once upon a time—hung upon his utterances and swallowed his trivialities. His new book is entitled *The Christian Agnostic*—something of a contradiction in terms!

Yes, let there be more light and honesty, particularly amongst the top-brass of all denominations when, it is hoped, more deluded devotees will be blowing hot and cold about the wicked way in which they have been cruelly deceived; it should result in a good increase in the number of Church resignations and a corresponding increase in the number of Agnostics, Humanists and Secularists.

GEORGE R. GOODMAN.

VINCENT HALLINAN v. THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

At least once a year Vincent Hallinan makes his reasoned attack against the Roman Catholic Church.

Hallinan, an atheist, who once was within a lisp of entering a seminary for the priesthood, changed his religious point of view after reading Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*.

Each year, Hallinan spends a day in court in which he tears church dogma apart as "utter nonsense" and shows how the clergy scares the gullible into trying to "bribe their way into Heaven" by leaving their fortunes to the Catholic Church.

The Hallinan blast occurs in his suit contesting the will of David F. Supple. Supple died at 81 and left most of his \$200,000 estate to Catholic charities, Hallinan has demanded that the Church officials reveal the precise geographical location of the Heaven, Hell and Purgatory they talk about.

This year in his speech to the court Hallinan declared that the idea of life after death with rewards (Heaven) and punishments (Hell) is a recent one, invented by the Catholic Church itself "long after the death of Christ".

He said that the Church teaches that when you give money to it you are paving your way to Heaven.

The court appearances cause too much local talk for the papers to totally ignore them. So this year the *San Francisco Chronicle* carried a brief report. It was buried at the bottom of the last page of its third section.

—*The Independent*, New York, August 1965

WITHOUT COMMENT

Now, more than before, you have discovered the Church. You are not on the margin of the Church, in a certain sense you are at its centre, its heart. For the Church loves the poor, the suffering, the disinherited, the abandoned . . .

—Pope Paul VI to the gypsies (*The Guardian*, 27/9/65)

TWO IMPORTANT PENGUINS

Jessica Mitford's bestseller

THE AMERICAN WAY OF DEATH

For this documentary on the cost of dying in the USA, the author was accused of being a Communist, and personally threatened before an appearance on TV.

4s. plus postage

SILENT SPRING

Rachel Carson's warning against the "seemingly endless stream of synthetic insecticides".

"Essential reading for anybody who has not yet encountered it"—Colin McCall in THE FREETHINKER.

5s. plus postage

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

ABORTION LAW REFORM ASSOCIATION

The meeting to be held on October 14th, has been unavoidably cancelled.

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.