

The Freethinker

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IN 1493, Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia), issued a papal bull by which the just discovered New World was divided between the Iberian empires, Spain and Portugal. For this was the decade that witnessed the epoch-making voyages of discovery to East and West that inaugurated modern, as distinct from medieval history. Only the previous year, the Genoese mariner, Christopher Columbus, flying the flag of Castille, had discovered (or should we now say rediscovered?) America when *en route* to the Far East. To the end of his days, Columbus persisted in the belief that all he had done was to reach Asia by the Western sea route. And in 1498, the Portuguese navigator, Vasco da Gama did actually succeed in reaching India by the Cape route. In 1493, accordingly, the famous (or infamous) Borgia (1492-1503), who had originally bribed the cardinals to elect him as pope, divided the entire present and prospective New World between Spain and Portugal. Incidentally, this decision of a Spanish pope (for the Borgias are stated to have been of mixed Spanish and Moorish origin) did not meet with universal approval among the rulers of Christian Europe. For one royal theologian, Francis I of France, went on record with the notable comment that he "would like to see the clause in the will of Adam which divided the New World in perpetuity between Spain and Portugal".

New Worlds for Old

Early in the last century, the English statesman, George Canning, made the historic remark that he "had called a New World into being in order to redress the balance of the Old". Whilst this remark itself was original, it will be seen that the fact behind it was far from being so. Throughout the 16th and subsequent centuries, the Roman Catholic Church had done just that in the Americas! For those devout and utterly ruthless sons of Holy Church, the Spanish Conquistadors, Cortez, Pizarro, etc, who conquered South and Central America throughout the 16th century, actually conquered a New World in both the geographical and spiritual sense. They ruthlessly tortured the unhappy Indian subjects of Montezuma (of Mexico) and the Incas of Peru, in order to save their immortal souls! For the Spanish Conquistadors looted America with such drastic thoroughness for "the greater glory of God" (as their Jesuit allies phrased it) and for the temporal profit of Holy Church, no less than for that of His Most Catholic Majesty the King of Spain.

Between 1500 and this present date, Rome has recovered a "New World" in compensation for the loss of so much of the Old World to the Protestant Reformation. In Paraguay, between 1600 and 1768, the Jesuits controlled what is still probably the most complete clerical theocracy ever ruled by men of European origin, whilst at least until recent years Rome was by far the greatest landowner in Latin America, just as she had been in medieval Europe before the Protestant Reformation. In actuality the Middle Ages have only ended in Latin America within living memory.

However, it would appear that nowadays the Middle Ages are no longer synonymous with the ages of faith. This at least is the very definite conclusion of an article that has just appeared in the (presumably Catholic) Dublin *Sunday Press* (10/10/65), entitled "Crisis in South America". Its place of origin is surely significant, for the Irish are the Catholic missionaries *par excellence*. (This self-same issue tells us that there are at present 1,400 Irish missionaries in Africa alone!) This crisis is of a spiritual, or more precisely, Catholic kind. For the article is written by a Roman Catholic missionary in Brazil who had formerly worked in Africa, Fr. John Jordan.

It is, it may be added, singularly frank and out-

spoken, and the clerical author is presumably an adherent of the Ecumenical movement within the Catholic Church, his numerous references to contemporary Protestant activities in South America are entirely without the ecclesiastical intolerance which would undoubtedly have marked references to the intrusion of Protestant "heretics" into the traditional domain of the "One True Church" in those regions only a few years ago.

The Reformation reaches South America

For it becomes abundantly clear from the numerous facts and figures that he quotes, that as in Europe during the 16th century, the Protestant Reformation has arrived in Latin America during the second half of this 20th century. Moreover, to judge from his own frank admissions, the Church of Rome in this year of grace is as ineffective, if not as corrupt, as it was when the Protestant Reformers first raised the standard of revolt in the days of the Borgias. Today, to add insult to injury—according to this Catholic missionary author—Protestant missions (he does not specify which precise denominations) are currently trespassing with conspicuous, even spectacular success upon the very American terrain which in 1493 Alexander bestowed "in perpetuity" upon the Iberian Catholic empires of Spain and Portugal. Trespassing on the Borgias' terrain!

A Spiritual Vacuum

It would appear self-evident from this outspokenly frank admission, that Fr. John Jordan, is that perhaps *rara avis*, a completely honest cleric (or else a crypto-Protestant!). For he does not mince matters at all. He refers to the present crisis of the Catholic Church in Latin America as "a spiritual tragedy, to my mind the greatest of all", and adds that the current position of Rome in South America can only be described as "desperate". Latin America, he says, "has one third of the baptised members of the Catholic Church—about one hundred and sixty million in all, in material and spiritual need". Then, after discussing a recent Protestant report on South America shown to him by a Protestant missionary friend, he adds: "The conclusions of the report were that the Catholic Church had had the South American for four centuries, and at the end of that vast period of time had left him exactly where it had found him, in the ditch without pastors for his soul, without schools for his mind, without

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Drift From Rome

By F. A. RIDLEY

hospitals for his body and without skill for his hands”.

In brief, Rome had found a vast spiritual vacuum in South America and had maintained one there ever since; surely a succinct outline of history from a Roman priest who is an eye-witness of what he describes.

Nature, however, abhors a vacuum, and so apparently, do Protestant missionaries. For, according to the Catholic man on the spot—who is surely in a position to know—the Protestant Church “is organised for missionary work in a way in which Rome today is not”, and the Protestant Churches are at present concentrating their activities upon South America in an all-out missionary drive.

According to Fr. Jordan, this drive is now meeting with spectacular success, for he states that Protestantism has ten million adherents in a part of the world where fifteen or twenty years ago, it had practically none. In a few years time, the “Reformation” in South America will be as successful numerically as it was in Europe four centuries ago. In Fr. Jordan’s own spiritual territory Brazil, by far the largest South American country, Protestantism “claims a conversion rate from Catholicism of 1,000 a day. My estimate of the situation—and I am a missionary in Brazil—is that 25 years from now, it will have 50 per cent of that mighty land if the Catholic Church outside Brazil does not evolve a new and dynamic missionary policy”. Surely this surprisingly frank confession that one third of the baptised members of the Catholic Church are

on the way out, is simultaneously a shot in the arm for the Protestant Churches here, which habitually complain of falling congregations.

The facts and figures quoted above are of extreme interest and importance, not only because South America is nowadays one of the major areas for economic and cultural evolution, but more specifically in connection with the present Vatican Council and its advertised plans for ecumenical Christian reunion. For here in the remarkably frank disclosures (which might surely have been included in the recent book, *Objections to Roman Catholicism*) by a working Catholic missionary who is obviously both honest and intelligent, we have perhaps the clearest evidence extant why the Vatican is at present so concerned with the present and future of Rome. The fact of course is that under its imposing facade of world unity and power, the Roman Catholic Church is now faced with imminent prospects of rapid decline and of ultimate disintegration. For it is probably not only in South America that harassed missionaries are besieging the Vatican with lugubrious complaints and with Cassandra-like predictions of coming doom. The Reformation did not end in Europe nor, despite its apparent current growth in a specially backward area like Latin America, do we think it will end with Protestantism either. It is now surely up to Freethinkers to cash in on this so promising situation in a major centre of Roman world power.

Not A Holy Book—Just A Book

By F. BARON

I HAVE RECENTLY participated in a discussion with several theologians in the paper, *News and Comments*, published by the Philosophical Society of Great Britain. The theologians have, I pointed out, themselves done away with the Bible. They admit that the devil is non-existent, that the Old Testament is Jewish history, and that Christ, as a risen God, is no more than one of the ancient myths of the priests of Egypt and Greece. The Bishop of Woolwich offers a God in whom rests the philosophers’ idea of The Absolute, crossed with the attributes of the old Jehovah. But the reverend writer goes even further. He offers us a God who is full of sin and not responsible for His actions. We are told that if God was all goodness then goodness would be no credit to Him. This sounds very like something from *Alice in Wonderland*, or perhaps the reverend gentleman has read Madame Blavatsky and become a Theosophist, and instead of believing in the devil, now believes in ghosties and ghoulies, and things that “go boop” in the night. I also fear, according to the Rev. F., “that Christianity has more in common with other faiths than has ever been admitted”. Why not instead say that the theologians are so bankrupt of ideas that they are stretching out in desperation to other faiths to fill their churches. Surely, in order to fill these churches, the Rev. F. does not wish to take over the trinity of the Ancient Egyptians, Isis, Osiris, and Horus. Perhaps he hopes to see, now that the decay of Christianity has set in, a return to the worship of the old gods the philosophers of Greece were busy denouncing two thousand years ago. So long as the churches fill is this the one and only idea in the minds of the theologians? If so they are spiritually destitute. Perhaps we might also ask what has happened now to the Christian doctrine of free will. Has this idea also been jettisoned?

It is also asserted that Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were philosophers who upheld the gods of the state. But is this so? Was not Socrates accused by the Athenians of not worshipping the gods the city worshipped, but of introducing divinities of his own, by which ideas he was corrupting the youth of Athens, and incidentally depriving the priesthood of a lucrative livelihood? Protagoras is another Greek philosopher, mention of whom was not made, who was forced to flee from Athens and his books burnt, because he did not worship the gods of the state, but declared that life was too short to decide whether gods existed or not, and man’s knowledge was too limited for him to find out. As for Plato and Aristotle, it was quite in keeping with their method of “double think”, to agree that the masses be kept in ignorance whilst their superiors discussed more transcendent gods than stone statues.

Is this view still upheld by the Church? If so, the Church is antiquated, and the accusation of the Humanists that organised religion is against both progress and truth, is more than verified. The Church can no longer hold back the truth from the people. It has too often been pointed out to those with eyes to see and ears to hear that the theologians have no knowledge of God. We might point out that the knowledge of the Humanist too is limited, unless Nature is fundamentally spiritual, which the Humanist denies, but too great a debt is owed to the overthrowers of superstitions to demand proof either way of this.

Theologians call themselves “Men of God”. As men of God let them speak the truth from their pulpits. Let them confess to their congregations that the Bible is Jewish history and ancient myth, and start anew to seek God, or a knowledge of God — if such knowledge exists.

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The Teaching of Sex in Schools

By E. G. MACFARLANE

AS A TEACHER of over thirty years' experience in junior secondary education I have seen, or heard, how, time and again, a legitimate youthful interest in sex knowledge is ignored or turned aside by teachers who have absorbed the Christian taboos about sex. And I have come to the definite conclusion that the difficulties which self-proclaimed Christian teachers say they have in even approaching the idea of teaching about sex, stem from the doctrines of the Christian faith more than from anything else.

May I give just one example, from a published source, of the way a fairly typical Christian will approach the subject of teaching sex in schools. For the first time, to my knowledge, the *Scottish Educational Journal* (the official organ of the Educational Institute of Scotland, which is our largest trade union organisation for teachers) carried a leading article urging the teaching of sex in schools. This appeared under the title "Facts of Life" in the issue for August 6th, 1965.

At this point I would like the reader to lay this article down and try to imagine for himself what the first sentence might be on such a subject from an orthodox Christian writer. As an experiment do not read any farther than the end of this sentence and use a few moments to speculate how you think it might be done.

The article opens with these words: "It used to be believed that unchastity was both self-degrading and anti-social, in fact a sin. In the moral climate of today these beliefs no longer command the unquestioning acceptance they once did but among readers of this *Journal* at least we are old-fashioned enough to believe there is no need to argue the point."

I wonder how many of my Humanist readers estimated that sin would be brought into the first sentence? There are no prizes of course. It was too easy a prediction to make! Sin and old-fashionedness are what we have grown to expect from the orthodox spokesmen of Christian education.

I might have added presumption as well, because the Editor of the *Journal* must know quite well that there is a growing number of teachers in Scotland who are readers of his paper but who no longer take this old-fashioned view. I am one of these, and I know a number of others who are of the same frame of mind. There are probably many more who are lying doggo for economic reasons connected with hopes of promotion which they realise is so very largely in the hands of unelected members of Education Committees, i.e. ministers of religion and other representatives of the Churches. (How I wish such people who hide their Humanist opinions would be honest and outspoken instead of being so tacitly hypocritical towards these guardians of Christian education in Britain! Can they not see that they are practising a form of dishonesty which is bringing the whole teaching profession into disrepute and probably infecting the whole of the rising generation with tendencies to deceit and such forms of dissimulation and dishonesty?)

After quoting figures from a recent report published about "immorality" in England the writer of the leader continues, "The really shocking thing about the English survey is the extent of the ignorance on sexual matters and the lack of comprehension it reveals among young people. This is primarily the fault of the parents, but if they shirk,

or are unequal to, their responsibility for moral instruction, then it devolves by default on the schools or some other agency. This indeed is an educational need which has been strangely neglected. We talk of 'educating the whole child' and 'learning for living' but in regard to some of the most acute of all human problems, on their ability to cope with which the happiness of every boy and girl, as well as the well-being of society as a whole largely depends, we do very little."

This "neglect" is not "strange" to most Humanists. It is quite clear to most of us that this "neglect" of sex education in a "Christian" society stems directly from the highly artificial and improbable accounts of the hero of Christian teaching. When a man (God?) starts his life without there having been sexual contact between his mother and a man; when he (He?) lives without marrying a woman or (apparently!) having sexual intercourse with any woman or fathering any children; it is not surprising to a logical Humanist that the movement which bears his (His?) name should have a deeply ingrained aversion to sex activity of any kind. I, at least, can see some logical connection between these things, and I think it is perfectly clear that the sexlessness of Christ is the rootstock of all the ideas about the glory of "celibacy", which has been proclaimed for hundreds of years by the Roman Catholic and some other Churches, as well as of the unhealthy attitude to sex which is implicit in all the writings of orthodox Christian educationists in Britain and elsewhere today.

This particular article I have quoted from also says that, "In recent years there have been attempts to fill this gap in our education service and more and more schools are now giving some attention to health and sex education. The difficulty is that such teaching does not have a recognised place in the school curriculum: the teacher training system does not produce teachers to cope with this difficult subject, nor is there an agreed syllabus to guide those who are nevertheless willing to attempt to give children instruction and moral guidance on sex on their own initiative or their head teacher's. It has all to be done more or less unofficially and for the teacher who tries in these circumstances to instruct children in sex matters, the risk of being misunderstood by conventionally-minded or prudish parents could be a serious one."

This particular paragraph (except perhaps for the emphasis on difficulty) could have been taken straight from some Humanist pamphlet on sex education in schools and may be taken as a tribute to the effect that Humanist propaganda is having on people who apparently cannot see how what they are now saying conflicts with Christian ideology.

The article concludes: "If the education service is to deal with the problem and to deal with it effectively, the first essential is to determine officially what is to be taught at a given stage and how, and by whom. Possibly the new consultative committee on the curriculum which the Scottish Education Department is preparing to set up in the autumn would be an appropriate body to undertake this enquiry. Certainly the sooner some official body gets down to really hard thinking on this subject the better."

Thinking I would perhaps be able to help these people with their "hard thinking" I wrote to the Editor of the
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This Believing World

WITHOUT discussing the Rhodesian problem here, we should like to draw attention to one fact which appears to have been overlooked. A few days before Mr. Ian Smith landed in England, the Pope went to America with his plea for "no more war" and "peace by negotiation", for which he was acclaimed all over the world. Yet a few days later, the United Nations were roundly telling Mr. Smith to do as he was told by them, and the UN gave a 98 per cent vote for military action to be taken immediately if he didn't. The Pope was completely ignored. We wonder why?

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SO, AFTER insisting that the Jews collectively—that is, for over 1,900 years—were responsible for the death of Jesus, the Vatican Council has now ruled "that the Jews cannot be held collectively responsible for Christ's death". The Council has declared by 2,000 votes to 200 that "Responsibility for the death of Jesus must not be attributed indiscriminately to all Jews either of Christ's time or ours. Jews are no more to be considered reprobated by God or accursed" (*Daily Mail*, 16/10/65). This will be a blow for the societies for converting Jews to Christianity. Their greatest card was to blame *all* Jews of all time for putting their own Messiah to death. What work is there to do now?

★

THE Rev. J. Baggs of High Wycombe appears to be very depressed. He is quoted by the *Daily Express*, (14/10/65) as describing God's masterpiece "this Earth of ours" as "a nasty, rough, brutal, world we live in. A jungle, red in tooth and claw". So, he added "millions retire into the world of fiction and fancy and make believe". Still, it was created by God—so who is to blame if a mess was made of it?

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IN SPITE of being on the Primate's staff, the chaplain to Dr. Ramsey has, with his wife, joined the Roman Church. Canon Brigstocke was an examiner, whose job it was "to test men newly admitted to Holy Orders". Whether it was this experience which caused the couple to give up the Church of England in despair, we cannot say, but it does seem strange that the influence of Dr. Ramsey himself to keep them on the straight and narrow path of Anglicanism was as naught. Anyway, it is a prize conversion for Rome.

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THERE is nothing more stimulating than to see "a clash" over Church freedom, especially if it is a Roman Catholic one. As an example of what Spain has to endure from its priests, take the pompous nonsense of Cardinal Beniamino de Arriva y Castro—"Only the Catholic Church has the right to preach the Gospel". What he would do to the Mormons or the Christadelphians if he had the chance we shudder to think about!

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THE Vatican's proposed declaration, that "everyone has the right to freedom of worship" was of course bitterly attacked by several powerful cardinals, and no doubt would have been attacked by the lot had we been living in 1565 and not 1965. But those happy days when Rome ruled the roost have gone for ever. Its own days are probably numbered now. The "Space Age" in which we are living has demolished the theology of the Vatican, and even were Catholics given the right to think for themselves now in religious matters, the end is inevitable, even if Spanish cardinals don't realise it.

THE Archbishop of Canterbury described William Booth as "one of the greatest Christians of all time" at a thanksgiving service in Canterbury Cathedral on October 17th, to mark the centenary year of the Salvation Army. On the same day, Dr. Ramsey was criticised by the Rural Dean of Greenwich the Rev. Nicolas Stacey, for not giving a lead on the moral issues of the Rhodesian crisis. Preaching at his installation in St. Alfrege's Church, Greenwich, the new Dean called on the Archbishop to lead a multi-racial team of bishops and church leaders to Rhodesia on a peace mission. What a hope he has! It's much easier to praise a "blood and fire" campaign of a hundred years ago.

NOT A HOLY BOOK—JUST A BOOK

(Concluded from page 346)

Let them turn their faces against cruelty, whether to man or animal, and not gloat at egg factories and milk machines, or the herding of cattle into pens in which their lives are spent, until their brief time on earth is ended in the slaughterhouse. Until the theologians turn their faces against such horrors, they are not Men of God, but Men of the good Old-Fashioned Devil. A book just recently published, *All Heaven in a Rage*, points out, that animals "have no souls". It is not the animal who is without soul, but those who thought up this hideous teaching, and those who still teach it. It is they who are without soul.

If the Rev. F. still considers me "antiquated", better to be so than to believe in myths, or that "animals have no souls". And if man has no soul either, then man is no different in this respect from the rest of the animal world, save that the so-called lower forms of life have not brought suffering into the world by means of priesthoods given over to the telling of myths which produce cruelty instead of goodness in mankind. Better far to follow the philosopher in his pursuit of goodness, truth and beauty; of the poet and the artist in their interpretation of the universe, which is full of the fruits of heaven if people only look for them.

THE TEACHING OF SEX IN SCHOOLS

(Concluded from page 347)

Journal and offered to contribute an article entitled "How to Broach the Subject of Sex in the Classroom", but my offer was refused.

I have paid particular attention to the letters, etc., in the *Journal* since the leader under consideration appeared, and nobody appears to be interested in the subject of getting down to teaching sex knowledge to the younger generation. It seems a pity that an enlightened Editor of this kind does not get any support for his leaders! Of course other individuals like myself with "minority" views may have written to him and he did not think that their views were important enough to be published.

Meantime the need continues to exist for some action on the subject but I cannot really see anything concrete emerging at the official level until the Christian directors of education are replaced by people with overtly Humanist views. After all one cannot expect a man who is trying to dig a grave, and whose whole ideology has been connected with preparing for death, suddenly to turn round and build a decent house for the living!

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. J. W. BARKER, L. EBURY, J. A. MILLAR and C. E. WOOD. (Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY.
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

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 31st, 6.30 p.m.: Debate: Rev. BILL MATTHEWS and F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT, "The Influence of Christianity has been Restrictive rather than Enlightening".
Richmond and Twickenham Humanist Group, (Room 4, Community Centre, Sheen Road), Thursday, November 4th, 8 p.m.: S. D. KUEBART, "Pope Pius XII and the Nazis".
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, October 31st, 11 a.m.: Dr. JOHN LEWIS, "Religion, Curse or Blessing?".
Tuesday, November 2nd, 7.30 p.m.: LOIS HIEGER, "Conflicting Claims of the Individual and the Group".
Surbiton and Kingston Branches NSS (The White Hart, Kingston Bridge, Hampton Wick), Friday, October 29th, 8 p.m.: J. A. MILLAR, "The Economic Power of the Vatican".
Worthing Humanist Group (Morelands Hotel, The Pier), Sunday, October 31st, 5.30 p.m.: Dr. A. SLOMAN, "Rationality in Morals".

Notes and News

THE Ecumenical Council's declaration on the Jews received its final approval on October 15th, and, after the formal ratification of Pope Paul VI, will become part of the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. Jews will no doubt be gratified to learn that the Church has decided, some 1,900-odd years after the supposed event, that "responsibility for the death of Christ is not to be attributed indiscriminately to all Jews then living, nor to the Jews of today"; and they are "not to be regarded as rejected or accursed by God". Alas, the *Observer* reported (17/10/65) that the declaration had received a "mixed world reaction".

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IN ROME, the international Jewish organisation, B'nai B'rith, hailed the declaration as an act of historical justice which would help to eliminate prejudice and discrimination. But the American Jewish leader, Dr. Joachim Prinz, while welcoming it as a manifestation of goodwill, was disappointed that it was not "as clear and forthright as it might have been expected". In Cairo, a spokesman for the Egyptian Roman Catholic Patriarchate said that it would "provide Jews with a moral weapon which they would exploit for their own ends against Arab countries". And in Syria, Patriarch Theodosius, head of the Greek Orthodox Church for Antioch and the Near East, rejected the declaration. All believers in the Jewish faith should be held responsible for Christ's death, he declared.

WHILE there was a shortage of priests, all monks and friars with the exception of enclosed contemplatives, should be ready to take up pastoral work, Cardinal Heenan told the Vatican Council, in what the *Sunday Times* (17/10/65) called one of the most straight-from-the-shoulder speeches yet heard. "It is surely better to preach the Gospel to the people of God", he said, "than to stay at home to write articles about the people of God", a remark for which he was loudly applauded. Religious orders quoted their constitutions to show why they couldn't undertake pastoral work but, the Cardinal added scathingly, "they are allowed to teach the humanities to boys of good family—a task the laity could do equally well—or to preach retreats for nuns". But the Holy Rule forbade them to "go out and give religious instruction to the ignorant and take the Bread of Life to the poor".

★
CARDINAL HEENAN also made a plea for a more realistic understanding of the problem of "lapsed" priests—of which there are many more than the Roman Catholic Church normally acknowledges. "Among priests everywhere there is a heartwarming tradition of compassion for the fallen brethren", Dr. Heenan said. But this was not enough: The priest had a duty to try to forestall the failure of a weak or wayward colleague. "When a wretched man has made a shipwreck of his priestly life, it is not at all uncommon for his closest associates to express no surprise", the Cardinal continued. "Surely it is the duty of a priest to be wise before, not after, the event, and to warn the bishop or vicar-general so that the unfortunate priests may be moved from temptation before it is too late". This, we suggest, is naive in the extreme: thinking like a child and regarding men as children. One doesn't remove doubts by moving the priest who has them. Nor is it a satisfactory remedy if sex be the "temptation".

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TALKING of sex, reminds us of an article by Norman Mackenzie on Baden-Powell (*New Statesman*, 15/10/65). For B-P had his own Puritanical formulae for suppressing the sex-urge. Wash the "racial-organ" daily in cold water, he enjoined, as a preventive for "the natural overflow" that may occur in dreams, and as a general means of "fighting down the desires that come upon you in the course of Nature". Young fellows who get "nervy and unsettled" should take things calmly(!) and "try to get over it as they would the measles or any other youthful complaint". B-P also frightened the boys with pages (in *Rovering to Success*) on venereal disease, reminded them of their mothers and exhorted them to get out in the fresh air. But when their time came to marry and perform "bodily for the service of God in carrying on the race on the best of lines", Girl Guides would make wives who "can be better pals because they have got the same keenness on camping". After that, we need some fresh air.

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"LOCAL government is too often a closed book", writes Martin Ennals, General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties, in his preface to the Council's latest publication, *Local Government and Civil Liberty*, by Albert Chapman (2s. 6d.). Yet local government affects us all, and to be effective it needs "active and informed citizens" and "communication between the electorate and its representative". Who is entitled to vote? When are elections held? Who may stand for them? How much power does a local authority have; how may its decisions be challenged? These are the kinds of questions dealt with by Mr. Chapman, who is Lecturer in Local Government Law at the Lanchester College of Technology, Coventry. We recommend his 32-page booklet.

When Greek Meets Priest

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

FATHER BERNARD was well endowed and could afford to give himself rewarding holidays abroad and indulge his hobby of archaeology. The good father had invited poor old Father Joseph to come and spend his last days in a comfortable presbytery; but often Father Joseph wondered if Father Bernard did not regret his generosity and wish the old man out of the house. Of course Father Bernard had to save his face and pretend that an act of charity was not too severe a penance, but Father Joseph would have taken many a hint if he had anywhere else to go apart from the grim diocesan home for the superannuated.

Well, one night when Father Joseph was alone in Father Bernard's charming sitting room, he heard the telephone ring. A voice that was strangely familiar asked for Father Bernard. Before Father Joseph could say that Father Bernard was in Greece, the voice cried, "Bernard, come at once, for the love of Heaven!" The voice evidently thought that Father Joseph was Father Bernard. There was a house he wanted Father Bernard to go to. He described it pretty well. It seemed to be one of those fake Gothic lodges, which delight the John Betjemanites; and it stood in a meadow which had not yet been seized by the jerry builders. The voice said the front door was open. Then the voice broke, and Father Joseph could hear gasping.

"For the love of Heaven," the voice cried, "don't forget what to do. Go through the hall with the antlers on the walls. At the end of the hall, under the staircase, is the door to the kitchen. In the kitchen is the trap-door to the cellar. It has fallen. The catch is on the outside. Unless you come to help me, I can't get out. And then . . ."

Father Joseph pulled himself together and said, "Who the devil are you?"

The voice laughed, and the old priest didn't like the sound of that laugh. Then he heard the voice say, "This is Father Joseph speaking."

In a flash, the old priest knew why the voice had sounded familiar. It was his own voice, and he was terrified. But he argued with himself that it must be a damnable practical joke, a really elaborate practical joke in which somebody had gone to the trouble of learning to imitate his voice. It still upset him frightfully.

Five days later, Father Bernard came back. He looked as fit as a crozier, and he said he was shocked to find Father Joseph looking so pale. He told the old man that he really must get out into the Autumn sunshine. He said he knew a very pleasant ramble and would draw a map. Moreover, he had a crony, another antiquary to whom he sometimes sent in his charity some of his findings at a dig, an eccentric who lived along the route. The crony would be delighted to give Father Joseph a cup of tea.

Father Joseph sensed that Father Bernard wanted to get him out of the house while he worked up his notes on his recent trip; but the old man felt that he had to accept the presence of the other's concern. So he found himself on the first of what Father Bernard promised would be many amiable rambles following the course of a little known river on the outskirts of London. Father Joseph was not particularly impressed with the Betjemanesque landscape of desolate meadows dotted with occasional factories, and the whole thing seemed to be taking so much longer than he'd expected.

Then the river twisted, and all of a sudden the old priest found the path blocked by a small Gothic villa. In the low

rays of the sun it looked humoresquely sinister. This must, he felt, be the eccentric home of Father Bernard's crony. Then Father Joseph remembered the telephone call.

So the joker had been a friend of Father Bernard. How cruel! And what should Father Joseph do about it? Should he hurry on and leave well alone, or should he go in and take a welcome cup of tea and give his host a piece of his mind?

He found that he had his fingers crooked round the bell before he realised that the front door was ajar. Then some demon — the psychoanalysts call it the automatic reflex — prompted him to push the door open. Inside, the hall was hung with antlers. Well . . . a good priest was protected by God and should exorcise a nightmare. He called out, "Is anyone there?"

On the right of the hall he saw an open door leading to an empty room, but a fire was burning in the hearth. The occupier, the priest thought grimly, must be cold-blooded to need a fire on such a pleasant day. Then he saw the door under the staircase; and almost against his will, he was drawn to it. With a rising sense of distress, he saw that the kitchen, too, was empty; yet a maid's cap lay on the floor and it had obviously been dropped in haste.

What had happened in this house? A fire smouldering, a starched cap on the kitchen floor, and nobody about? Then Father Joseph noticed the trap-door. Muttering a prayer and clenching his fists, he bent over the closed aperture and shouted, "Anyone there, anyone there?"

He thought he heard a faint cry from below. Well, supposing there was somebody in trouble in the cellar? Supposing he'd been appointed by some saint to help? Messages from the spirit world often did get muddled, just as if they were not too bright up there. But that was nearly blasphemy. Maybe it was simply Father Joseph himself who had misinterpreted some warning.

The old priest jerked at the trap-door and peered into the vault below. An electric light was burning down there; and now he could be almost certain that someone was calling him, very faintly. Automatically, thinking that it was a priest's obligation, he put one foot on the tread of the stone stairs; and then, automatically, his other foot sought the second tread.

Now he could see the cellar. It was a meticulously arranged private museum and store room. Well, of course, there would not be much spare room in the little lodge. The owner would have to improvise. He had even arranged a writing desk and a telephone. He could ring up the authorities from his study to check points without going up the stairs. A wreath of smoke rose from an ashtray.

Father Joseph's feet went on, down four more steps; and he could see a packing case with a label on it, *Athens*. Fragments of classical statues were neatly disposed near it. Was this something that Father Bernard had sent on to his crony from Greece?

The old priest was almost at the bottom of the steps, but still he could not see the curator of the private museum and workroom. But there was a statue dumped aimlessly, a full-length figure which had not yet found its niche. What, in God's name, was it doing in modern dress in the lair of an antiquarian? It was as if a man had been photographically reproduced in stone, dressed in clothes, given a wig and eyelashes. It was ghastly, and . . . there

was a look of unutterable horror in the eyes.

Father Joseph glanced in the direction in which the horrible stone eyes were staring. The stone man was apparently transfixed by what appeared to be the largest of the classical statue fragments, partly covered with a voluminous handkerchief. The priest could see through the handkerchief the peak of a nose and the shape of some features; and he was weirdly reminded of pictures he had seen of the Medusa's head. Medusa — the woman who turned men to stone!

But that was pagan superstition, and his God was stronger than any pagan myth? Yet his God had let him be led into this unbearable situation. Was Medusa stronger than his God? It could only be if . . . there was no Christian God. Oh yes, he'd heard theologians say that the old gods had power because they had accumulated the faith which men had directed at them. They were, in fact, merely focus points for human energies. So . . . in an age of jolly television parsons there was less strength behind the idea of a Christian God than behind that of Medusa who represented a legend deeply rooted in the psyche?

Thoughts darted through Father Joseph's consciousness . . . things that the mind could do . . . telepathy, hypnosis, faith-cures . . . There was no need to invent spirits!

Oh God, curling snakes of hair peeped under the handkerchief; and as the priest watched he thought he saw the snakes move and the cloth begin to billow as if the lips were breathing behind it. He could have sworn that the head gave a little shake, as if it were trying to rid itself of the handkerchief which perhaps the victim had hurled towards the transfixing head in some last paroxysm. Father Joseph, who had prayed to statues of the Virgin Mary, now believed that if the handkerchief fell, if he met the Medusa's eye, he too would be turned to stone.

Behind him the trap-door fell, and . . . the catch was on the outside. What a damnable arrangement; but maybe the curator wanted to lock up his treasures when he left them for the night. Lock up the things which Father Bernard had sent him . . .

Father Bernard! Was he so exacerbated by the old priest's company that he had been driven to extremes? Had he become so ruthless that he was willing to sacrifice his crony in a plot to get rid of Father Joseph?

There was that telephone on the desk. But Father Joseph found . . . that his own voice answered him. He was making the call just as he had received it a week ago. His own voice asked him what the devil he meant by this farce.

The sweat flowed in rivers over the geography of his poor body. He could no longer believe in saintly intervention. This was some kink in the fourth dimension.

He tried to prevent his neck muscles from turning or from looking up at . . . the dreadful battery of mental power; but . . . but they seemed to be developing a will of their own.

Oh God, he thought, it is not only my mind which is sick but my soul . . . But he knew that he had no soul . . . He knew only that the rich priest . . . that Father Bernard had a heart of stone.

SILENT SPRING

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

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The United States Visit of Pope Paul VI

WHAT a show! Certain of America's leading broadcasting networks went "all out" to make the longest television and radio coverage in history—more than thirteen hours—of a single event. I refer, of course, to Pope Paul VI's one-day visit on October 4th, 1965, to the United States.

That was a papal binge of pomp and pageantry which has left most of Americans reeling, non-Catholics as well as Catholics. And it must be said for the world's most prominent and powerful witchdoctor, Pope Paul VI, that he, with the indispensable and able support of numerous followers, lay and clerical, put on an act which has given the Roman Catholic Church, at least in America, a new and "better" public image. This holds true even though the Pope said nothing for the betterment of international relations which had not already been said long before by non-Roman Catholics, including atheists. They who jump onto the bandwagon frequently steal the show and get the credit.

I strongly suspect, however, that the change of face which the Church of Rome has undergone during the last year or so does not really indicate a change of heart. It is true that even Cardinal Spellman, at the Vatican Council in September, joined with the many prelates who spoke for and voted to uphold the natural right of the individual to freedom of conscience in matters of religious belief, even to the extent of including atheism. But I do not forget that Spellman placed his *imprimatur* on a book entitled *Catholic Principles of Politics*, a work which is "designed" as its preface states, "not only for the general reader but also as a college text", and which has been published by the Macmillan Company since 1940. That book, which is based on, and which has as one of its chapters, the text of Pope Leo XIII's intolerant encyclical *Immortale Dei* of 1885, unequivocally denies the individual's natural right of freedom of conscience.

Moreover, that work asserts, albeit somewhat guardedly, that where Roman Catholics are a substantial majority in a country, the civil government of that country ought to give preferential status to the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy even to the extent of prohibiting the propagation of doctrine and teachings by other religious sects or by secularists which are not in harmony with those of the Church of Rome.

One may justifiably feel certain that the impression which Pope Paul's October 4th *tour de force* in New York City has made upon many non-Roman Catholics who are unacquainted with the history of the Roman Catholic Church will serve to induce the Congress of the United States to broaden and deepen the breach, already made under President Johnson's "leadership" of the nation, in this country's constitutional wall of complete and permanent separation of religion and government.

ROBERT H. SCOTT, (USA)

CORRESPONDENCE

THE WOMANIST

In her article "Secularism and Glamour" Kit Mouat says that she would prefer being labelled a "Hellenist", but not being a scholar, cannot claim it. I just wonder if she can tell me what a "Hellenist" is. She also says that she has an attraction to Epicurean as a label, but this sounds too masculine for her. This is, of course, her anti-male complex showing itself again, as it usually does in quite a few of her articles. I thoroughly advise her to go and see the film *How to Murder your Wife*, as she will hear what the man has to say about it all.

I suggest the best label for Kit Mouat would be "Womanist" not a "Humanist", although in some ways they mean the same thing, as I don't suppose the editor of the *Humanist* would allow anything anti-female in his journal. However, now that the editor of THE FREETHINKER has published my article dealing with Epicu-

reanism, Kit Mouat will perhaps never mention the word Epicurean again, as in it I have laid bare the essence of Epicureanism. What I should like to know is the essence of Mouatism. Where are all the women philosophers?

R. SMITH.

CHRISTMAS

A regular reader of THE FREETHINKER, I was interested in the letter by Mr. R. G. Caldwell published in the October 1st issue. I also do not share his abhorrence of the word "Christmas" (as the editor commented) purely because many of us use the word from force of habit without thinking about its analysis. However in the Scandinavian countries, (which are Christian), the word for Christmas is Jul, which is the name of the pre-Christian pagan ceremony. Therefore any people not wishing to speak of Christmas can always refer to it as "Yuletide" although this word does not enjoy the usage of the word "Christmas". Is there any possibility of free-thinking greetings cards being published with the word "Yuletide" being substituted for the word "Christmas"?

A. BLOOD.

I am interested in Mr. Caldwell's letter, re Christmas cards, and think that my own method may be of some help to him.

I do not buy cards at all for adults but find I can get calendars a bit bigger than a post-card from the local shop of a very big and world-wide chain of stores. I can write my greetings on the back of these, choosing my own words, and I always include wishes for the New Year.

A Christmas superstition renders it "unlucky" to leave up decorations, etc., after January 6th (another Christian feast) and the Christmas cards perish on or before this date, being thrown away or perhaps burnt. But frequently, on visiting a friend during the following summer, I find my calendar hanging up on the wall and thus still displaying its utility.

A. R. WISE.

WHY MAKE THE WORLD A HUMAN ANTHILL?

"We want to stand upon our own feet and look fair and square at the world, its good facts, its bad facts, its beauties, and its ugliness; see the world as it is, and not be afraid of it. We want to conquer the world by intelligence and not be slavishly subdued by the terror that comes from it.

"The whole conception of God is a conception derived from the ancient Oriental despotisms. It is a conception quite unworthy of free men. When you hear people in church debasing themselves and saying that they are miserable sinners, and all the rest of it, it seems contemptible and not worthy of self-respecting human beings.

"We ought to stand up, and look the world frankly in the face. We ought to make the best we can of the world, and if it is not as good as we wish, after all it will still be better than what others have made of it in all these ages.

"A good world needs knowledge, kindness, and courage; it does not need a regretful hankering after the past, or a fettering of the free intelligence by the words uttered long ago by ignorant men.

"It needs a fearless outlook and a free intelligence. It needs hope (and work) for the future, not looking back all the time towards a past that is dead, which we trust will be far surpassed by the future that our intelligence can create".

The above words are those of England's Bertrand Russell. I would add that the most crying need of the world today, is not Billy Graham's, Fulton Sheen's, or anyone else's Christianity, but more birth-control knowledge. This is still opposed by the one Church which stands to gain the most by such opposition, at the expense of all others. A change in doctrine would indicate whether this Church is more humane than political, but such a change is needed now, if we are to avoid making this world a human anthill. Most of the problems of the world today are people problems.

WILLARD E. EDWARDS, (Honolulu).

FRIDAY THE THIRTEENTH

Mr. Hill's article (8/10/65) on superstitions was very interesting. I have questioned many people on their apprehension of Friday the 13th, and have often been told that "it's very rare".

We always get one such 13th a year, sometimes two, and even (but never more than) three. Days repeat themselves, as to month, date, and last two year figures, every four hundred years. This cycle is known as the Gregorian cycle, (after we know who!).

There are 4,800 months in this cycle, each of which has a "thirteenth". More of these Fridays than any other day, which was the basis of a mathematician's (B. H. Brown's) assertion that "the thirteenth of a month is more likely to be a Friday than to be any other day of the week".

Incidentally, I once asked a superstitious dunderhead whether Friday the 13th was rarer than Thursday the 5th, and was solemnly assured that it was!

P. A. WEBB.

OBITUARY

Mr. Fred Brown who died recently after a long illness was a life-long freethinker and reader of this paper. He was aged 76.

A secular committal ceremony was conducted by the General Secretary of the National Secular Society at Reading Crematorium, on October 6th. We extend our sympathy to his relatives.

Books of Interest

- Ten Non-Commandments *Ronald Fletcher* 2s. 6d. postage 5d.
 The Thinkers Handbook *Hector Hawton* 5s. postage 8d.
 The Humanist Revolution *Hector Hawton* 10s. 6d. postage 8d.
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 The Freethinker bound volume 1964 30s. postage 2s.
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 117 Days *Ruth First* 3s. 6d. postage 5d.
 Has Man a Future? *Bertrand Russell* 2s. 6d. postage 5d.
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