

The Freethinker

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AT THE time of the first Vatican Council which, on July 18th, 1870, proclaimed the infallibility of the Pope as an article of faith, a book was issued under the title of *The Pope and the Council*. The author was a leading Catholic scholar, Ignatius von Dollinger, a German professor from Munich, and his express purpose was to oppose the attempt then being made at the Vatican Council to proclaim the dogma of personal infallibility. His attempt failed, for the Jesuits and their allies (amongst whom the English Cardinal Manning was especially conspicuous) eventually steam-rolled the famous decree through the Council with only two dissentients (one of them an American). Professor von Dollinger himself eventually submitted, but a number of his followers formed an Old Catholic Church which still exists.

The argument put forward against papal infallibility by the German professor was not a rationalistic one. Had it been so, von Dollinger would presumably have left the Church! It was, in the main, an historical one; for historians of the first Vatican Council tend to ignore that the authentic conservatives in the Church of Rome were not the supporters, but the opponents of papal infallibility. Prior to 1870 the vast majority of Catholic authorities had confined infallibility in faith and in morals solely to the general councils of the Church, which were only held at intervals of centuries.

General Councils v. The Pope

The first universally recognised general council of the Church was held at Nicaea in 325 in the reign of the first Christian emperor, Constantine, who was actually present. The last one before 1870 was the Council of Trent (which launched the Catholic Counter-Reformation) in the mid-sixteenth century. Prior to the infallibility decree, as von Dollinger had no difficulty at all in demonstrating, it had been the unvarying belief of the Church since at least the 4th century, that only the collective decisions in faith and morals made by universally recognised General Councils were to be regarded as infallible. The individual pope was not regarded as infallible in his own papal capacity; he could even be lawfully deposed by the superior power of a General Council of the Church, as one actually was at the Council of Constance (1416) only one century before the Reformation.

So universally was this fact recognised, that a Catholic catechism issued in England around 1800 declared that papal infallibility was merely a Protestant calumny. And a Bavarian professor, Adam Mahler, in his famous book, *Symbolism*, described papal infallibility as *ipso facto*, a Protestant belief which subordinated the collective judgment of the Catholic Church to the mere private judgment of an individual pope, an argument which upon Catholic premises appears to be logically unanswerable. For the Church, as such, is superior to any of its individual members. (Mahler, incidentally, died before the meeting of the first Vatican Council).

However, the dogma of papal infallibility was rushed

through the Vatican Council by a heterogeneous alliance of Manning and his persuasive Jesuit allies; and Newman's theory of development—unlike older theories—gave the Church power to define new dogmas which had previously been minority opinions. Since 1870 it is an official dogma that the Pope *is* the Church.

From 1870-1961, the period between the beginning of the first and the end of the second Vatican Council, has seen the high water-mark of papal power. For throughout this near-century, the Pope has been the undisputed and unlimited ruler of the Church; in actuality, the Pope was the Church. When the Pope spoke, the Church spoke! and when the Pope kept silence—even a shameful silence like that of Pius XII over the gas-chambers of the Nazi Third Reich—again the whole Church kept silent.

Council v. Curia

However, if the first Vatican Council proclaimed the infallibility of the pope (and thereby committed ecclesiastical suicide by making itself superfluous), it looks at present as if the second Vatican Council is beginning, if not to abolish the dogma (which would be technically impossible on Catholic premises, since the Holy Spirit who inspired the original proclamation in 1870 cannot err!) at least to whittle it down substantially in current and future practice.

For what is perhaps the most important decree now accepted by both Pope and Council and consequently now embodied in Canon Law, provides for the permanent establishment of a senate or council of bishops from all over the world to advise the Pope.

This is (or at any rate could be) a most important innovation, even a revolutionary step. For at least since 1870, the government of the world-wide Church has been rigidly centred in the Vatican, in the papal Curia which, like all long-established bureaucracies, tends to be traditional, unimaginative and intensely conservative. In recent years, for example, the main opposition to Pope John's "papal revolution" came from the Roman Curia, led by Cardinal Ottaviani. The non-Italian bishops, the vast majority both in the Council and in the Church at large, are reputed to have long groaned under the rule of the Roman Curia. Hence the importance of the decree constituting the episcopal senate; far more important than the much-publicised, but actually meaningless, piece of verbiage absolving the Jews from their alleged crime of deicide—for killing a hypothetical diety at an unknown place and date.

Papal Infallibility and the Second Vatican Council

The proposed creation of an episcopal senate in which Italians will presumably be outnumbered by foreign prelates, unquestionably marks an important step for the Church. For it may well come in time to modify, or even at length to supersede, the virtual dictatorship of the Roman bureaucracy, predominantly Italian and conservative hitherto centred in Vatican City. It may even

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Pope and the Council

By F. A. RIDLEY

in time come to fill the role of ecclesiastical parliament, with the national churches nominating their bishops—a long step from medieval autocracy to the modern analogy of constitutional government in secular states.

What bearing will this perhaps far-reaching decree have upon the future of the Papacy itself? Surely, a profound one. For infallibility is incompatible with any form of co-existence. Hence, in time, we may see the gradual re-emergence of something like the pre-1870 General Councils, which effectively shared power and even infallibility with the Papacy. It will perhaps be eventually seen that

the former Franciscan monk, Fr. Anthony, who lived to become an eminent rationalistic critic of his former Church, Joseph McCabe, was not only an accurate historian of the Papacy but also an accurate prophet of its future. At the turn of this century, McCabe (in his *Twelve Years in a Monastery*) predicted that, by its end, the President of the Catholic Church would bear the same relationship to Leo XIII (then Pope), as the future Socialist President of the German Republic in 2000 AD would do to the then autocratic Kaiser, Wilhelm II! Things appear to be shaping that way at Rome.

Window on the World

By OTTO WOLFGANG

TIMES CHANGE—as the Latin adage had it. Even religion, which strives to be an exception to this general rule, has from time to time to make some concessions. Without the addition of new and viable contents, ancient institutions become empty, ludicrous rituals.

Take for instance the Freemasons—now a meeting place of reactionary busybodies, social snobs and others who, for lack of a proper goal in life, remain romantic and immature.

The Americans—according to the French the only people who never reached the state of civilisation but slipped from barbarism into decadence—turned even Freemasonry into a mass movement with noisy street processions and all the showbiz paraphernalia possible.

In a special article *Le Nouvel Observateur* (September 15th) gives the number of Freemasons in the world as six million, of which about five million alone are in the USA. Most of the American presidents were members and Gordon Cooper, the cosmonaut, carried into the stratosphere a blue masonic pennant—which is now exhibited and kept as a trophy by his Lodge. In this country, many members of Royalty (among them Prince Philip) and the Church dignitaries are Freemasons. Once when the movement had a progressive content, the Vatican persecuted it with satanic hatred; now that it has become respectable and tame (or, should we say, senile?) bridges have been built. The Holy See is now prepared to give its benediction provided the Freemasons refrain from being a competitive Church, drop the bombastic address to the “Sublime Architect of the Universe,” and revert to the simpler old term “God.”

The October issue of the *Churchman* deals with “The Role of Churches in Politics” and “Peace in Veitnam.” It acknowledges in an editorial that politics permeate everything in our lives, therefore it has “never been possible completely to segregate religion and politics”; nor has it been possible to “keep religion out of all state activities.” With regard to religion in schools, it goes on:

It would be well to remember that in the 1830s religious instruction was discontinued in the New York public schools because of the protests of Roman Catholics and Baptists! The Roman Church objected to the use of the King James Bible, the Baptists because the pupils were not taught they were sinners who needed salvation!

On September 9th, the Bishop of California, James A. Pike, accused of heresy by some Arizona clergy, was absolved by the Episcopal House of Bishops. To the charge that “he repudiated our Lord’s Virgin birth,” he answered that, according to the official reports of the Commission appointed by the Archbishops of York and Canterbury, literal belief in the nativity story was not obligatory. To the charge that he denied the bodily resurrection and ascension story, his answer was that only

a “spiritual body” could be meant since the “ascension in any other terms would be an incongruity in a post-Copernican view of the universe.”

The *Saturday Review* of September 11th complained that “the budget for the space programme which is supported on military grounds” is \$2 billion more than the total annual cost of all educational costs in the USA, and less than \$1,000,000,000 is appropriated now for the “great war” against poverty, as against \$50,000,000,000 put annually into defence.

Dr. H. Gough, English-born Archbishop of Sydney, welcomed the stirrings inside the Anglican Church because it revealed a revolt from the complacency and self-satisfaction of the past. It is true that revolutions may get out of hand but, he said, perhaps “the greatest need of the Church of Christ to-day is to relate its doctrines, its worship, its customs to the problems of the 20th century. The trouble is that the Church tends to live as if this were the 16th or 17th century instead of the 20th” (*Sydney Morning Herald*, September 7th). In Ghana they have gone the opposite way. A new publication in London to further the struggle of African immigrants in this country, *Crisis and Change*, of October 15th, quoted from the *Ghana Evening News* a report how during a heavy rainstorm “the Osagyefo, the son of God and the Holy One appeared . . . he looked up as if in prayer, and behold! a miracle happened.” Slowly but surely the rain ceased, the sun came out, the crowd became happy “and with the presence of the Holy One, they danced and sang more vigorously than ever . . . Kwame, the Holy Messenger of the Almighty, had done it again!”

Der Spiegel on July 27th carried a special article on conditions in Israel. There also exists a colour problem between the whites, who occupy all the dominant positions, and their coloured brethren who not only are uneducated but resent sending their domestic help (i.e., their own children) to school unless paid for this loss of labour. Another problem is the fanatical religious minority who must be appeased for the sake of financial help from US Jewry.

The Army as a state institution is compelled to give religious instruction (of 500 classes there are 65 on scriptures); the Sabbath and kosher laws must be strictly kept with all the dos and don’ts of the canon. At 6 pm on Friday until next day 6 pm the Sabbath reigns supreme; there is no railway or air service, no public convenience is open, and even tourists who—to the annoyance of the orthodox minorities—can still land their foreign planes on Tel Aviv airfield, have to be satisfied with cold snacks in their rooms. On this day of wrath the zealots would not even call the ambulance or fire

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Is All Matter Aware?

By DOUGLAS BRAMWELL

"LIFE" and "thought" mark two important stages in the development of matter. In the course of evolution non-living matter becomes organised in increasingly complicated ways until it begins to feed, to move and to reproduce; to show, in fact, the behaviour patterns that we associate with life. By further development this living matter becomes organised into organisms of increasing complexity until it begins to think.

Philosophies that take evolution seriously—and these include naturalism, emergence and Marxism—have paid a great deal of attention to the problems posed by this sequence of development in matter. The similar organisational dependence of life on matter and matter on life, has led to neglect, in these philosophies, of an important, indeed categorical, difference between life and thought.

Robots That Think?

This difference can be brought out by considering an experiment that might be carried out by one of those "round the bend" scientists of the popular horror film. Let us suppose that in his laboratory he were to construct an unthinking robot from synthetic materials that looked exactly like human tissue. Suppose, too, that the robot behaved exactly like a human being, including making statements about fictitious "thoughts." If this robot were then released into society it would not be possible to detect that it was devoid of thought. It would be accepted as human in all respects.

If it is suggested that a machine behaving so much like a human being must, in fact, have thoughts, another interesting experiment can be suggested. It is theoretically possible for an electronic machine to be constructed to simulate many activities of the human brain, and as the brain becomes more adequately understood it will become possible for machines to simulate more and more of its functions. To equip such an electronic brain with walking and talking facilities so as to allow it to act like an organism is an easy task for a competent engineer. Now, in the light of the above possible objection, would such a machine be said to think? We must not allow the difference of appearance and construction to influence us too much: thought may not be confined to creatures constructed on the basis of the carbon compounds.

The point behind these two grotesque examples is to show that it is never possible to be sure that thought is occurring in other entities. In turn this illustrates the categorical difference between life and thought. What we call "life" is a pattern of behaviour observed in our own and other material bodies. Thought, on the other hand, is not an observable pattern of behaviour: the only thought that I can experience is my own; the existence of thought in other organised material systems can only be inferred from their behaviour. I hear other people talk and see them behave as though they are having thoughts like my own; I therefore infer that they are, in fact, having such thoughts.

Atoms that are aware?

The neglect of the categorical difference between life and thought has probably been due to the fact that the philosophies of evolution originated in the 19th century when conscious thought was widely taken to be the only form of experience. Since then psychology and psychiatry have made us aware of levels of experience below consciousness, and it is now widely accepted that some

form of unconscious awareness could be a common property of all living matter.

Such an unconscious awareness would vary in its complexity and organisation to match the structure and specialisation of the organs of perception and integration of the organism concerned. At the level of the single-celled animal or plant, where no specialised nerve tissues are present, awareness would perhaps be vague and uniform throughout the whole of the organism.

However complex or however simple the unconscious experience of an organism might be it would, like conscious thought, be impossible to detect directly. Like thought, it could only be postulated as a result of inferences from the behaviour of the organism. Let us pursue this undetectable quarry a little further.

There seems, today, to be considerable doubt as to what is alive and what is not.

The whole class of *viruses* comprises non-cellular creatures whose behaviour and properties place them squarely across the frontiers of the living and the inert. Chemically, they represent simple associations of proteins and nucleic acids. They can be analysed and synthesised, extracted and dried, just like the most undoubted inorganic crystals; and, if they were never known except in that form, one would not hesitate to label them as "inorganic" and "inert." Yet, if placed within a host-cell, they exploit the new environment, and multiply themselves just as though they—rather than the original nucleus—were the focal objects directing the activities of the living cell: in this capacity one is compelled to accept them as the simplest type of parasitic organism. So the distinction between living and non-living things can no longer be drawn in *material* terms. What marks them from one another is not the stuff of which they are made: the contrast is rather one between systems whose organisation and activities differ in complexity. If we are free to think of cell-parts as species of giant molecules, we may think of individual atoms as extremely simple organisms*.

Is there an elementary form of awareness in that virus which cannot make up its mind whether it is alive or not? And what of those yet smaller organisms—the atoms? If, as the quotation above indicates, it is now difficult to draw a firm line between the living and the inert, then it is equally difficult to divide the aware from the not-aware. Some basic experience may be present at the level of the molecule, the atom, or even the electron.

The suggestion here is not, it must be emphasised, that an electron thinks or has complex unconscious experience like a highly organised animal. It is simply that the most elementary equivalent to a thought or an experience might be present—a mere trace of subjective awareness. This subjective side of an electron would be as different from human thought as its observable physical side is different from the human body. The physical unity of the human body is something over and above the particles that make it up; likewise human thought, as the subjective aspect of that unity, would be something over and above the subjective aspects of the constituent particles.

Conclusions—none!

There have been a number of philosophers who have advocated that the universe is homogeneous in the sense that, through and through, from the particle to the man, everything has both an objective side that can be observed and a subjective side that cannot. They have held that it is not possible for totally non-aware matter to begin to be aware at a certain level of organisation: impossible, that is, for a categorically new aspect of matter to be added at a certain stage in its development. High

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This Believing World

WE WERE informed on one of the religious broadcasts for children the other day that the way Jesus tackled a problem was very different from the way mere mortals faced it. In John (9, 1) we were told that he saw a man "blind from birth," and his disciples wanted to know what he had done, or what his parents had done, "that he was born blind?" Jesus did not waste time in dealing with any "speculations" of this kind. He immediately cured the man. That is how "our Lord" acted at once. But what the teacher did not say was that the cure was due to a miracle. Given miraculous powers one could cure all ills. In fact, Jesus could have cured every blind man in one go. Why didn't he?

★

SLAVERY IS as rife as ever, according to Mr. Douglas Glover, the Chairman of the Anti-Slavery Society (*The Observer*, 7/11/65). The slave spots are in Asia and Africa, and it is reputed that there are "over one million slaves in the world today" in what is ironically called the "free world." The Anti-Slavery Society "has knowledge of cases in 20 countries," and reminds us that only 62 out of the 117 States in the UN have signed for the abolition of slavery.

★

DR. STOCKWOOD, the Bishop of Southwark, has just returned from a visit to Germany, where he found that "the practice of religion was slightly higher than in this country," as it no doubt was even during the Hitler regime. In particular, the Bishop was "deeply impressed" by a Roman Catholic Church in West Berlin (*South London Press*, 5/11/65) which "commemorates the hundreds of Christian martyrs who were killed by the Nazis." "Hundreds" in his connection is a perfect key word.

★

THE WELL-KNOWN journalist Bernard Levin has been doing a trip round the world for the *Daily Mail*, and in his article on November 8th he discourses valiantly in favour of the "Gideon Bibles" he found in so many hotels. They were all there—quite free—if never read. And if such a Bible has done nothing else, he remarks, "it must at any rate have saved many visitors from going raving mad from boredom . . ."

★

MANY CLAIMS have been made for the Bible—but boredom is surely about the last thing it is likely to cure. We would ask Mr. Levin if he could find anything whatever more boring than huge parts of, say, Leviticus, Zedakiah, or Obadiah? Does anybody, alone in a strange country hotel, go to the Hebrew prophets for enjoyment? Did they write to entertain anybody?

★

LORD DONALD SOPER, a former president of the Methodist Conference, was greatly shocked at Dr. Ramsey's "armed intervention," if necessary, in Rhodesia (*London Evening News*, 27/10/65). The Roman Church, on the other hand, "officially supports Dr. Ramsey's view," as does the Rev. Nicolas Stacey. It seems, in fact, that the Churches are hopelessly divided on the issue. But what would Jesus have done? Nobody knows, or cares two hoots!

WINDOW ON THE WORLD

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brigade. Mixed marriages are banned, some couples get married abroad (in Cyprus for instance) and have some trouble on returning to get legal recognition of the marriage. So long as the country is not self-supporting but dependent on assistance from US Jewry there can be no question of separation of state and church, and the rabbinical tribunal is on the way to becoming another Vatican.

The latest battle between the modernist and fundamentalist sections of the Ecumenical Council rages about whether "the body and blood of Christ are really present in the consecrated bread and wine of the mass, or whether they are present in the Eucharist only in a symbolical sense" (*Public Opinion*, Jamaica, October 8th). The Pope in a recent Encyclical came down heavily on the conservative side, whilst the reformist wing is mostly represented by the Dutch, who "have relations not only with Protestant sects but also with atheistic movements."

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level awareness and conscious thought must be developments from something already present, in an elementary form, in elementary matter.

Because experience, at all levels from conscious thought down, is totally undetectable and can only be inferred, the suggestion of awareness in elementary matter is totally valueless for science. If no scientific experiment or observation can detect whether or not a human being or a robot is having experiences, still less can science tell us whether an electron has a subjective aspect.

The suggestion is, however, relevant to metaphysical philosophy. For naturalism and the evolutionary philosophies it would eliminate the difficulty of explaining how experience arises, out of nothing, part way through evolution. There would be no need to use such lame-duck ideas as the doctrine of emergence.

The suggestion might also be of use in argument against those theists who bring in God to explain the supposed sharp differences between the human "soul" and the animal mind, and between animal minds and inanimate matter. If we can deny these sharp differences we undermine their need for God.

This article has reached no firm conclusions. Indeed, it is difficult to see how conclusions can ever be reached in an area so inherently immune to experimental exploration. But if the argument leads to a doubt or two on questions to which everyone seems certain of their answers, it will have more than served its purpose.

* *The Architecture of Matter*, S. Toulmin and J. Goodfield, Hutchinson, 1962; Penguin, 1965.

DAVID TRIBE ON TV

Mr. David Tribe, President of the National Secular Society, appeared in the programme *Week In, Week Out* (BBC Television, Welsh Region), on Friday, November 19th. He discussed religion in schools with Dr. F. H. Hilliard, Reader in Religious Education, University of London.

Mr. Tribe is the author of *Religion and Ethics in Schools* which was recently published by the National Secular Society, price 1s. 6d., and will be reviewed next week by Margaret Knight.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

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

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, MCRAE and MURRAY.
London Branches—Marble Arch and North London: (Marble Arch). Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY 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.

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

INDOOR

Brighton and Hove Humanist Group (Regency House, Oriental Place), Sunday, December 5th, 5.30 p.m.: DANIEL SNOWMAN, "Religion in the USA."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, December 5th, 6.30 p.m.: T. K. MUKHERJEE, "India and the West."

Marble Arch Branch NSS (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, December 5th, 7.30 p.m. Speaker: F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT. Subject to be announced.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall Humanist Centre, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, December 5th, 11 a.m.: Dr. E. A. SEELEY, "The Humanist Approach to Social Problems." December 7th, 7.30 p.m.: EDA COLLINS, "Can we be Rational about Sex?"

Notes and News

THERE IS, as Mrs. Avril Fox, of Harlow, has said, "a strong need for people to speak out against the strange puritanism of the Clean-Up TV Campaign with its known affinities with Moral Re-armament" (*The Observer*, 21/11/65). Mrs. Fox and the supporters of her Movement for Enlightened TV do not believe that there is excessive sex or violence on television, and they consider the standard of BBC programmes has improved since Sir Hugh Greene became Director-General. Their only regret is that the Corporation sometimes takes a step forward only to retreat later with an apology . . . that it sometimes wavers in its convictions as soon as they are challenged by a vociferous minority." There was no need, Mrs. Fox said, for it to apologise for Kenneth Tynan's four-letter word, "because the BBC accepts the desirability of live television and that word was used in a completely sensible context."

★

FAR TOO much publicity has been given to Mrs. Mary Whitehouse's absurd allegations of a BBC conspiracy to corrupt and undermine the country's morals. Mrs. Fox hopes to build up a nation-wide committee whose aim will be to provide some consistent opposition to the Clean-Up TV Campaign, and we wish her Movement every success. Her address is 23 Glebelands, Harlow, Essex.

THE ROMAN Catholic Church must—in spite of its motto—change in order to survive. Plans for the reform of the Curia are well under way, the Pope has told the Vatican Council, and the Holy Office is soon to be reorganised. When the reorganisation takes place, the 75-year-old arch-conservative, Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, is expected to retire (*The Sunday Times*, 21/11/65). Head of the Holy Office for many years, the Cardinal has fought a rearguard battle against all the Council's attempted reforms. It was a sign of the times that another Cardinal should accuse the Holy Office of trying and convicting persons without trial, and of acting not very differently from the way it did in the days of the Inquisition.

★

NOT THAT the "progressives" are having things all their own way at the Council. And many bishops, the *Daily Telegraph* reported (18/11/65), are "becoming increasingly concerned they may go home without any statement by the Pope on birth control." Bishop Hengsbach, of Essen, speaking on behalf of another commission, told the Council that he did not want to prejudice the report of the Pope's special commission on birth control. It is clear from the Bishop's statement, the *Telegraph* said, that, until the special commission has reported and the Pope has spoken, "the rules on birth control as laid down by Pius XI and Pius XII still prevail."

★

TWO DAYS earlier (16/11/65) the *Guardian's* Rome correspondent, George Armstrong, announced that the "Papal pill commission" had not met since March, and had not submitted any new evidence to Pope Paul, "contrary to reports published . . . in the United States." A prominent member of the special commission said, however, that he hoped the Pope would say something soon. "The parish priest must be told what practical advice he can give married couples when they ask him about the pill. Something can be said now, and I hope the Pope will speak, whether using our findings or not."

★

AS FAR as Pope Paul is concerned, however, announcements to help the parish priest and his parishioner must take second place to those on the beatification of Pius XII and John XXIII. There has, the *Sun* informs us (19/11/65), been "a great popular clamour for Pope John to be made a saint"; and, theological considerations apart, the last Pope did seem to be a good or virtuous man. But Pius XII is—in the *Sun's* words—"a more controversial figure." The image of the "Pope of Peace," first attacked by Freethinkers, is now badly tarnished. The Devil's Advocate should, in fact, have an easy task.

★

ON NOVEMBER 21st, in *Horizon*, BBC 2 gave us a profile of the Hungarian scientist, Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, Nobel prizewinner, for his discovery of Vitamin C; later noted for his muscle research, and now—at 72—engaged on isolating a substance which inhibits natural cell growth, thereby causing cancer. Szent-Gyorgyi cannot regard science as non-moral (he emphasises the honesty involved in its pursuit) and strongly supports the peace movement. He is not religious and believes (*The Observer*, 21/11/65) that there is no inherent meaning in life, though man has had to put meaning into it."

★

LORD SILKIN'S Abortion Bill was due to be debated in the House of Lords on Tuesday. Lord Iddlesleigh, a Roman Catholic, had put down an amendment to reject the Bill.

Not Waiting for Godot

(with apologies to Samuel Beckett)

By PHYLLIS K. GRAHAM

(*HE'S* here at last. The long-desired interview has been arranged. Spamme has been elected in place of Richard Dimbleby, probably because he looks ethereal and still retains a touch of choir-boy freshness. He is, in fact, eager, excited, but distinctly nervous.

In honour of the *Aggiornamento*—and possibly to console the 10,000 clergy condemned to their laborious chastity,—the Name of the Exalted Interviewee is rendered in Italian—as below.)

SPAMME

Am I correct in assuming, sir, that we can dispense with the formality of an opening prayer? Not, I assure you, out of any disrespect to your august Person and Presence. Simply that—well, I've become a little rusty about such matters . . . I'm sure you'll understand . . .

GODOTTI

(affably) Not at all, not at all, my dear Spamme. To tell you the truth I should find it a refreshing change to be addressed—for once—without the vocative O. The human maw presented like the mouth of a drainpipe does become a little monotonous at times.

SPAMME

But you do enjoy being serenaded? Musically, I mean?

GODOTTI

(shrugging) Well, it's an old human custom, certainly. Rather played out, though. "New Every Morning" at ten-fifteen *every* morning almost approaches the farcical, don't you think? And all those grotesque human mugs on your telly-screen . . . gaping in unison like gaffed fish . . . ugh! There's still some good stuff in the Cathedrals, though. I'll admit to a partiality for plainchant.

SPAMME

More appropriate to your dignity, certainly. But I'm relieved to know that we can cut out the preamble. May I take it that, for the purpose of this friendly discussion, the gulf between us is temporarily non-existent? That we can talk man to man, as it were, without reservation?

GODOTTI

Why—ah—certainly—provided, of course, that you don't become too—ah—embarrassing. There are limits, you know.

SPAMME

To what, though? If we're going to deal with the illimitable (yourself, I presume) and the all but limitless relations of man to yourself and the universe and life in general . . .

GODOTTI

Good heavens! My dear chap, what a programme! I really don't think I'm equal to it—at this stage of my career. There's been too much of all that—far too much, I'd say—for the last couple of thousand years. Can't you ease off a bit—get on to something a little less—well, harrowing?

SPAMME

What, for instance?

GODOTTI

Well . . .
Look here, my boy, I'll be frank with you from the

start. I'd like to emerge from the clouds of Sinai for a breather. Being a Mystery palls, you know, in a thousand or so generations. It's not much fun being worshipped with the same old tripe year in year out, by the same old herds with never an original idea among 'em. How would *you* like it?

SPAMME

Er—I hardly know, it's completely beyond my experience.

GODOTTI

Exactly. And that's why *I* have to endure it. Nobody's got the guts to think himself in my place and find out just how deadly boring the whole situation is.

SPAMME

I say, I'd no idea how much you had to put up with. I'm awfully sorry.

GODOTTI

Decent of you.

SPAMME

But may I remind you there are at least a few of us who don't run with the herd? Some of us haven't been to church or uttered a prayer since—

GODOTTI

Since you found out the truth—that I'm a Humbug?

SPAMME

(faintly) . . . You quite overwhelm me, sir. I wasn't prepared to employ such a devastating description.

GODOTTI

Hang it all, man, don't drivel. I thought you wanted a patch of plain speaking.

SPAMME

Y-yes, I do, sir . . . it's just—well, a bit sudden. You've taken the wind out of my sails, so to speak.

GODOTTI

Saved you the trouble of a blasphemous argument, you mean. I tell you, my boy, I'm through with the whole corny business. I've been whittled away and vapourised till I don't know whether I'm coming or going . . . and they *still* expect me to snuff up incense, gobble up prayers, wallow in amatory worship: in short, sit up there like a moron with nothing to do but bask in a lot of ecclesiastical bally-hoo.

SPAMME

You sound—if I may venture to say so, sir—astonishingly bitter about this regrettable state of affairs.

GODOTTI

Bitter! Not on your life. Gall is concerned with reality: you should know that. What I'm speaking of is pure farce. And what I mean is, any sort of show gets boring after a time—brings on exasperation. Makes me dive for the open air—anywhere away from masks and antics and artificiality.

SPAMME

Yes. I can sympathise there. I chucked the whole thing up because I felt asphyxiated.

GODOTTI

Precisely. And now, my dear fellow, having established, as it were, a mutual understanding, we can

go ahead. In my opinion—and no doubt in yours too—this “Honest-to-God” piffle comes off as a dead flop. I propose to follow it up with a spectacular “Honest-to-Man.”

SPAMME

My God!

Oh, I beg your pardon. I—I’m shattered. I’d absolutely no idea you could be so—sporting, sir. The idea is simply great. It’s what I’d like more than anything but wouldn’t have dared to hope for.

GODOTTI

Well, now you’ve got it, straight from the horse’s mouth. Or—to be more exact—from the ape’s skull.

SPAMME

. . . I beg your pardon?

GODOTTI

(irritably) *Don’t* beg. That’s the second time you’ve done it. I’ve stopped pardoning and all that stuff. I can’t stand any more “miserable sinners.”

SPAMME

Oh—yes, of course . . . I only mean’t—I didn’t quite follow your meaning. About—the animal you mentioned . . .

GODOTTI

Oh, that. Well, does it surprise you, boy?

SPAMME

You mean . . . I hardly dare to formulate in my mind—

GODOTTI

Come, come, now, why so much maidenly confusion? You knew you were a primate, didn’t you?

SPAMME

Well—yes, of course, sir: I know my Darwin and—and all that’s happened since. But—I—I don’t quite see how that affects you, sir . . . I mean—

GODOTTI

Nothing complicated in it. The primate family has primate gods. Naturally.

SPAMME

(after a stupefied pause) D’you mind taking over, sir? This is more than I can cope with.

GODOTTI

You want me to make a speech, eh, while you get your wind back. All right, I will. A short one, straight from the shoulder.

Now then, you lords of the earth who owe your lordship to your squat pelvis—what d’you think you know about making gods? Gods, indeed. I’ll admit you’ve accomplished a certain amount since you got off your front paws, sharpened your snout and started to use your loaf: namely, a reasonable minimum of progress plus an irrational maximum of mischief. In fact, senior primate or no, you’re still very much involved with your poor relations. Your common ancestry’s hung around your neck like a bell on a cat’s collar. As one of your sager scribes put it, “The substance of man is ape still.”

Now consider: these Objects of worship you’ve been creating for yourself, ever since you first felt the need to propitiate Something, and the urge to rationalise it into Someone . . . what sort of stuff could they be made of? Out of ape-substance cometh forth ape, *n’est-ce pas?* That’s logic, biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, *et al*—and a cul-de-sac for philosophy.

Got your breath back, my dear fellow?

SPAMME

I—still—feel—a little faint. I was quite unprepared, you see, for such a revelation. I mean, coming from yourself. I must admit the idea had occurred to me, in a general way; but your enunciation of it, with such remarkable candour, puts the whole thing on a—well, personal plane. It’s rather a shock.

GODOTTI

You’ll get over it. As soon as your numbed faculties start work again you’ll begin to see quite a lot of light.

SPAMME

Y—yes. It’s dawning already. The—er—ape-theology, if I may so term it, might explain a lot of things that puzzle and perturb the non-conforming mind.

GODOTTI

You’ve said it. Now sit quiet and relax and let your imagination run riot. Just bumble all around the whole subject like a honey-bee. You can ask me any questions you like.

SPAMME

You’re being awfully kind and accommodating, sir. I appreciate that. But—I can’t help feeling you’ve taken the whole situation out of my hands. Your—ah—admission has in no way lessened your assumption of authority—

GODOTTI

Why the hell should it? I’m your boss still, you know, even if I am a self-confessed Humbug. Apes can’t expect to get quit of apishness, now can they? Stands to reason.

SPAMME

But—look here, sir, we can’t go on from this. If you’re just a hoax, it’s futile asking questions. And I’m not a mere ape, I’m a man, which is considerably more.

GODOTTI

More apish, you mean? Quite possibly. Ultra-apishness is a common symptom throughout your species. But don’t let that worry you. Accept it as a beautiful proof of the Brotherhood of Man.

SPAMME

(perilously near to tears) I thought this was to be a solemn and portentous interview. A great step onward for mankind. And now you go and . . . This cynical treatment of a sacred subject really *hurts* me. And there’ll be the most ghastly public outcry. The BBC will be absolutely ruined.

GODOTTI

Rot. It’ll do Auntie a world of good to have a clean sweep through. As for the public, they’ve had it coming to ’em for a mighty long time. And see here, young man: solemn and portentous I will not be, I’ve been stuck on the straight and narrow too long; why, I’ve never even had so much as a chuckle since the dear old gods of Olympus went down the drain. But if you’re in any doubt as to this jolly interview being a “great step onward”—let me assure you it jolly well is. The senior primate hasn’t had such a jolt since Darwin discovered the family tree. You see why? Don’t you. Well, isn’t it obvious?

SPAMME

(much agitated) Yes, yes, I know what you want me to say. But, oh sir, must it be said in public and on the air? Can’t we leave people in peace with their—their happy illusions? What are they

going to feel—if they know that—that—he breaks down completely).

GODOTTI

Well, of all the ninnies. Fancy him taking on like that. Really, the vanity of this species is the absolute limit.

(A moment of wild confusion in the TV studio as the directors hastily decide, divinity or no divinity, to terminate the interview. But a sort of spell falls on everyone as Godotti produces a bunch of bananas from his robe, picks out a splendid specimen and presses it into Spamme's nerveless hand, with the friendliest and most unselfconscious gesture. There is something about this that makes it the most moving and most significant moment of the entire occasion. Many eyes are now wet besides those of the unfortunate Spamme.)

GODOTTI

There, there, my good fellow, don't take it to heart so. Eat up that banana—food of the gods, y'know—and you'll see things differently. What you need is a far broader outlook—more tolerant, don't y'know, and cut out the squeamishness. What's wrong with being an ape, anyway? If I don't object to it, why should you? There's worse things than furry origins . . . but not much that's worse than high-faultin' snobbery. Which you humans suffer from pretty badly, I must say. However, your cure is beginning, and I'm out to see it through.

Have another banana, do . . .

(An extraordinary illusion supervenes on the final fade-out. The banana-charm has reduced the whole setting to a jungle dusk, wherein the two squat like happy buddies munching their ripe horns of plenty . . . a scene strongly reminiscent of Regent's Park tea-parties, yet undeniably profound with immortal significance . . .)

(To be concluded).

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CORRESPONDENCE

"THE PASSOVER PLOT"

Your contributor under the heading "This Believing World" in your issue of November 19th seems to have picked up his information about my book, *The Passover Plot* from a garbled and prejudiced review by an orthodox churchman published in *The Observer*.

If he had read the book himself, and in many respects it would have delighted him, he would have discovered that it does not answer to his description. In the first place it is a work of history, not theology, and fully explains the evidence of the manner in which Jesus came to be deified. Neither have I relied entirely on the Gospels. I have utilised all the available sources of information which throw light on the Christian story, and have given in English passages from the relevant documents, including of course the Dead Sea Scrolls.

One of the important points I have established is that the death of Jesus occurred in 36 AD, several years later than the traditional date, in the last year of Pilate's administration.

The statement of Dr. Parkes, which your contributor quoted, is a travesty of my argument, and ignores my detailed survey of the circumstances. My book was bound to be attacked by ardent Christians, and has in fact come in for quite venomous comments, some of them in anonymous letters by fanatics. The effect has been that the book is being bought by thousands of people who want the kind of information I have uniquely furnished. They have rightly ignored the accusation that I am attempting to undermine the Christian Faith by reviving nineteenth century Rationalism; but, believe me, there is plenty of fresh dynamite in "The Passover Plot."

(Dr.) HUGH J. SCHONFIELD

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