

**PUBLISHED IN THE FREETHINKER DECEMBER 1997**

The bishops here in Ireland have been meeting to discuss the vocations crisis, among other things.

As an atheist, I am certain that for anybody to encourage vocations to the priesthood is a terrible mistake – for it is asking young men to become slaves to a religion that is neither believable nor truly good.

The Catholic Church demands huge sacrifices and even martyrdom for her sake, she has no right to do this for she has no honest evidence for her doctrines. Her using of miracles as evidence is clearly fallacious. When she says we cannot understand why evil exists, it is clear that she is only guessing; she says that miracles are done to support her teaching, but it may be that we cannot understand their purpose either.

When God's ways are so mystifying, why shouldn't Satan's be the same? Why can't Satan do good miracles for an evil purpose that we will never be able to discover?

An all-good God would not ask you to suffer for a religion that has no evidence.

Catholicism following Christ condemns doubt as sinful. You cannot help what you sincerely think, so, though doubt can be evil, it can never be sinful.

The Catholic Church praises the good works of venial sinners, though they are simply informing God that they will do good when it suits them. The good is just a pretence. The prayers of sinners are insults. Catholicism is an immoral religion.

Anybody who supports the Catholic Church by giving her money or going to Mass is to blame for the suffering of those who have been abused by her priests. The Church must hold that the priests should not be exposed and be punished, for it does grave spiritual damage to her and she believes the soul comes before the body. By assisting her, you are assisting a cult that would have abuse covered up for her sake, which is detestable for has no evidence that she is the right religion.

Now you will see that the fall in vocations is a cause for celebration!

**PUBLISHED IN THE FREETHINKER JULY 2002**

Has anyone noticed that belief in God makes a person worse morally despite outward appearances? If I hit my brother without believing in God I am hurting the brother and not God. If I believe in God my act is even more malicious because I am also intending to affront a being of infinite goodness who therefore must hate sin infinitely meaning as far as intent goes there is no limit to my evil. I mean it is an infinite insult. Those who propagate belief in God are soldiers of evil. Religion will answer it makes the good we do infinitely valuable as well and that redress the problem but the trouble is that only a handful reach sainthood level early in life and the Church says anybody can become a saint so we are more sinful than good when we fall short. All sin must be equally bad when it is all infinitely offensive to God for infinite means cannot be any greater and is unlimitedly great.

The doctrine of God implies that since God is the law and is not subject to the law that people must agree with him for to honour God because he is God is not really to honour God but to honour goodness but God wants us to honour him in reality and as Jesus put it with all our hearts and souls and minds. They must not divorce goodness from God but fuse the two. Since God is supreme there can be no law over him to punish him or reward him for what he does which raises the problem of how we know we can trust him. Christianity says just trust him. But it is immoral and downright bigoted and arrogant to just trust a being that makes such serious demands on us: love me with all your heart and do what I say and condemn what I condemn even if my rules make no sense to anybody. It is like marrying somebody within seconds of meeting them. The god concept then is inherently violent and intolerant and bloody. Believers insist that we atheists have no business judging God and finding him guilty of abusing the human race if he exists for we are not above God in order to sit over him in judgement.

The Catholic priest, Anthony de Mello, wrote in his famous book Awareness that to need anybody is not to love them because if they won't give you what you need then you refuse to be happy so it is manipulation. He says we should be detached from all things to be happy and to be really capable of love. I say to work, this advice requires that we should not need God. Yet Jesus said we should prefer him even to the parents who made us and love God with all not some of our faculties. That makes Jesus one of God's biggest enemies and the craftiest purveyors of misery that ever lived. The frightful unnaturalness of what he asked is plain for you cannot put God first when you are more sure you exist and that others do that you are that he exists. If Jesus rose from the dead the Satan was responsible and perhaps Satan hypnotised the soldiers to take Jesus out of the tomb and dump him and forget about him while he pretended to be the risen Jesus. Jesus was the

one who said you know the Devil's disciples by their fruits. God and Jesus make mental health a sin.

Religion says that God is all-good even though he allows evil to bring good out of it. It follows then that evil is necessary for good or at least certain kinds of good to happen. Good is just good and it is unintelligible to say that good is better when evil has produced it. God destroys the desire to make human life pleasurable and long.

How the God-cultists with their dark implications can expect to make a lasting contribution to world peace is beyond me.

PUBLISHED IN THE FREETHINKER FEB 2003

With regard to the Catholic priesthood claiming that they are not all bad in the wake of the clerical child sexual abuse revelations I have this to say.

Child abuse is a part of Roman Catholic doctrine which they support and promote. They want children to honour a man whose historical existence is not as certain as say that of Adolph Hitler as God, who is to be loved with all our powers to their entirety, himself. They are even to die for that man rather than blaspheme him like the apostles allegedly did. The Bible tells them that a being some old men says exists has to be put before themselves and their parents and all love must be given to him and a depraved old book commanding murder and hatred and hypocrisy in the name of love must be accepted as the word of God.

It is child abuse to tell children that it is God's business what they do. So they are left to worry more about what God wants than what they feel they should do. That is no way to teach a child responsibility and imbue self-esteem.

The Bible commands child-abuse for it says that anybody who does not know that their sins murdered Jesus who had to atone for them by his death and rise so that we could rise too will be damned forever in the agony of Hell. These are awful things to tell a child. It is the kind of stuff that would make some children kill when they grow up on the basis that they have committed murder anyway and when it is committed once it is easier to do it again.

The Church likes to keep the fact that the Torah, the Law that God dictated to the evil Moses, did nothing about the Hebrew tradition of marriages being arranged between men and girls who were just children under the mitre. The Law railed murderous venom against adultery and homosexuality but it's God turned a blind eye to this perversion. He did not even have the decency to lay down a minimum age.

There is no end to the self-destructive conditioning that the Church pumps into children. The Bible is a palliative for the conscience of the paedophile. The priest claims to be giving you the most important thing there is, faith in God and in his true Church. But the priest takes no responsibility for what harm this does. He will not compensate you for that or if you can prove you were misled by his Church. If giving him money is not letting him steal off you then nothing is stealing. That is the kind of respect the priests have for you! Tell them where to stick their apologies.

PUBLISHED IN THE FREETHINKER MAY 2003

Steuart Campbell (Freethinker, March 2003) justly objected to a letter of mine that said that the existence of Jesus was uncertain by saying that the same was true of most historical characters. However, the point I was trying to make was lost in the editing. What I originally wrote was that the Catholic priesthood disrespect children by trying to condition them in their impressionable state "to honour a man whose historical existence is not as certain as say that of Adolph Hitler as God ... himself. They are even to die for that man rather than blaspheme him like the apostles allegedly did".

There can be no doubt that if Jesus claimed to be God or the Son of God he was claiming that he should be trusted and obeyed for as a supernatural all-knowing being he knows what is best for us and we should put our reservations aside. All I meant was that it is crazy to make Jesus an authority on morality and to put him before yourself and your own thinking when his existence is not capable of absolute proof. Christianity says that there would be no room for faith if we could prove beyond a doubt that Jesus was the Son of God. But there is still room for faith if Jesus could be proved to have existed for his existing does not mean he was what he claimed to be. But to make such serious claims for Jesus that he was God or the Son of God would mean you would have to be totally sure that Jesus existed otherwise you are insulting God. We can't be sure enough so the Church is guilty of that gross blasphemy. Jesus was certainly a false prophet (and therefore condemned by the Law of Moses as a fraud at Deuteronomy 18 which he regarded as God's inerrant word) for when he made his claims he was promising that the evidence for his existence would be of the highest calibre and it is not. Personally I am certain that Jesus never existed.

PUBLISHED OCTOBER 2003 FREETHINKER

Keith Porteous Wood in his article Religious Fundamentalism Rules the Roost (Freethinker, August 2003) has frightening

insights into the strength and growth of fundamentalist religions.

I believe that the Christians are right that prayer develops their faith and makes them take it more seriously and that people fall away from the faith when they stop praying. That is why I think it is very important that prayer be exposed for the superstitious uncharitable activity that it really is. If people get ashamed of praying it will lead to a downslide in religious influence.

It is certain that human life is absolutely valuable. The biggest essential for human life is consciousness. Consciousness is more important than free will or memory or virtue. This means that nothing ever justifies suffering for consciousness is hurt by suffering. Yes, we have to cause some suffering for a greater good but it would mean that a God would have no justification for making suffering possible for he has the power to prevent all suffering unlike us. For example, he should not have made viruses to cause agonising diseases. Prayer implies that God needs to make us suffer for a good reason which is therefore a total insult against the dignity of human beings.

Everything we get in life comes about as the result of a worldwide process for all events effect each other. When you are praying you intend that a lot of things will happen both bad and good in the world to make the forces of chance give you what you ask for. Is it not fanaticism and criminal then to ask for the gift of patience when so many terrible events and deaths had to happen before you could get it? Is it not fanaticism to ask (indirectly) a God you only believe in but do not know to kill people to give you what you want? You are trying to get people killed over a belief because that is all that God is. God makes life cheap when you can try to kill just for the sake of a belief when you need proof.

If prayer does any good it does it in spite of itself.

SENT TO FREETHINKER FOR DECEMBER 2003

K Moore's letter complaining about the use of the word bright to describe freethinkers is interesting (Points of View, November 2003). He finds it "Disneyesque". I think bright is wonderful. It's open and friendly. It's catchy. And when all is said and done, to think carefully for yourself without letting yourself go along with the unjust bias that religion connives to implant in us from childhood is being bright. To me, the word bright is about being an independent thinker and recognising that any religious group or God has no right to order us what to think.

After all, why let another think for you when you can do it yourself and when somebody had to think up the dogmas religion tells you to believe in the first place? Deep down we want to decide all things for ourselves it is just that some of us are too scared to do it and end up exploited by religious people. It is bright to recognise that universal need.

K Moore says he'd prefer a word that described his beliefs and not his disbeliefs. But to believe x is to deny whatever contradicts it. To disbelieve x is to affirm what is against it. Disbeliefs are more important than beliefs because if I believe say that there is no God, I will have more disbeliefs than beliefs. I mean I will disbelieve in pantheism, theism, deism, agnosticism and all those other countless isms. The belief in atheism then is less important because it is one belief while the disbelief is more important for it is disbelieving far more propositions. So there is nothing shameful about any term that emphasises disbelief. A disbelief is a belief itself. It is believing that something is untrue. It is easier to unite people in what they do not believe than in what they do believe. If people want to use a term that emphasises their disbeliefs then good luck to them. But there is no doubt that bright does not do this. It emphasises belief in yourself, that you can be free from religious conditioning and think for yourself.

LETTER 3 January 2008

· Do parents who are members of a religion, have the duty to raise their children in it?

They have the right to instruct their child in the religion but also to let the child know of alternatives. No parent has the right to tell their child, "This is the only right faith. Keep away from anything that contradicts it. just believe what we tell you." this is the parents claiming as adults to have the right to decide what religion to deem true and then preventing the child making decisions of her own. It is a form of psychological violence. It is indoctrinating the child and bullying the child.

Parents do not have the right to prevent exposure of the children to faiths and ideas that contradict their religion.

Psychological harm has been done to children through religious indoctrination and even simply instruction. The damage has been far more destructive than the harm done by slapping them or beating them up. Being told that unbelievers go to Hell forever has led Christian children into terror in relation to their unbelieving friends and family members. Being told that God punishes is a way of forcing a child to do right rather than letting the child do right freely.

Parents might have the right to inform their children that rudeness and stealing etc are bad and shouldn't be done and maybe to say that they are against the religion. But to say parents have the right to tell their children that Mary was the mother of Jesus who was God is silly. Buddhist parents don't teach their children that and the children turn out good. It makes more sense that basic philosophy of right and wrong should be taught to children. It is better to teach them to treat others well than to waste time teaching them stories from the Bible or telling them that the pope is the head of the Church who must be obeyed.

Parents do not have the right to convert their children for the sake of pleasing the priest or making a new addition to the Church. Their concern should only be the welfare of the child. If they have the right to convert their children that then should be the motive.

The thought that a Buddhist parent has the right to make a Buddhist of their child or that Christians have a duty to make a Christian of their child is ridiculous. Both religions cannot be right. Also, why can't the Christian make a Buddhist of their child? If the parent has a right then clearly the parent should pick the faith that he or she thinks is best for the child not just the faith that the parent follows. If parents have a right to pick a faith for their children, they have the right to pick a suitable one.

Even if parents do have this right, it certainly does not follow that they have the right to make the children members of the religion.

The more decent a religion is the more right the parents would have to propagate it among their children. The scientific outlook gives a child a sense of wonder and respect for differing views and tolerance. It is religion that seeks to stop people thinking independently.

If parents have the right to indoctrinate their child, they have a duty to help the child look other places if the child gets older and wishes to do so. They claimed the right to make the child a Catholic or whatever so now if they care about what is best for the child they will stop doing that and start thinking about what the child wants.

· Do parents have the right to have their babies baptised to make them members of the Church?

Some believers say that you are made a member of the church of your parents simply by being born and baptism merely recognises that fact and is not conferring membership on you. The thought of a baby being made a member of a Church is as silly as a baby being a true member of a golf club. It would be a member only in name. Besides, what if the father is a Jew and the mother is a Christian? But if a baby can be a real Church member it follows that the baby should be indoctrinated. This is wrong so making babies members of a Church is wrong.

Parents are forcing their religion on their child and that isn't acceptable. They have no right.

· Do parents have a duty to raise their children without instructing them?

It seems parents have the right to provide instruction for their children but not necessarily to provide it themselves. A suggestion would be to bring in the influence of an atheist, Christian and Buddhist.