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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Vatican Leopard Changes His Spots

IN the pages of past issues of *The Freethinker* we have frequently had occasion to refer to the chameleon-like adaptability to changing circumstances which has been a recurring feature in the chequered history of the Roman Catholic Church. In a book written some years ago, the present writer endeavoured to indicate not merely the ability of that Church to modify its religious policy when occasion demanded, but also its equally remarkable adaptability in the political and cultural spheres. This ability to adapt itself to the needs of a changing world is, beyond any reasonable doubt, the most powerful cause for the formidable stand against the spirit of contemporary history which the Vatican has so often made in the past and is making so conspicuously to-day.

In the publication referred to above—*The Jesuits—a Study in Counter Revolution*—the present writer endeavoured to apply the methods of the sociological school to the (in modern parlance) totalitarian activities of the Jesuit Order and of the modern Church of Rome under the leadership of Loyola and of his successors. Our conclusion, to the substantial validity of which we still adhere, is that Rome, particularly in its Jesuitical post-Reformation phase, embodies the genius, the spirit incarnate of counter-revolution; of, that is, the genius for adaptation to the spirit of the age, of knowing how and when to abandon non-essentials in order the better to defend essentials; the art of how to survive by the Lamarckian art of deliberate adaptation to the changing environment. Indeed, it can hardly be regarded as an accident that Lamarck, the founder of the biological theory of deliberate adaptation to the environment as the result of a conscious effort of the "Will-to-Live," was himself a pupil of the Jesuits. To arrive at his celebrated theory of the giraffe which deliberately and of set purpose "grew a long neck" in order to survive the changing milieu, all that the eminent French biologist had to do was to study the evolution of the famous Order. For the length of Jesuit "neck" can give space to any giraffe!

It is, we would add, this extraordinary and recurring ability of the Vatican to change its line in face of changing circumstances that separates it sharply in its capacity as the genius of social revolution from merely negative reaction. As and when considered as simple monuments of mere negative reaction, one could name other religions, Islam and Hinduism for example, and even other Christian Churches, which are actually much less adaptable to modern ideas, and which are much stiffer in their negation of all contemporary progress than is the Church of Rome. To give one striking example, the present-day "Reformed" (*sic*) Dutch Church of South Africa, with its fantastic combination of Nazi racist theory and Calvinistic predestinationism is, to-day, much more reactionary—in the literal sense of the word—than is the Vatican. For that self-same reason it is much less dangerous since such an impossibly atavistic outlook cannot possibly last in-

definitely. It is precisely because of its unequalled powers of adaptation, because of its truly extraordinary ability to adapt itself to circumstances, to change with the times as and when occasion demands, that the Roman Catholic Church, in the 20th century as in the 16th, still remains the most formidable antagonist of human progress in every contemporary sphere of human activity and is, beyond any reasonable doubt, the major antagonist of both Freethought and Democracy.

We recently had occasion to witness at first hand a remarkable example of this chameleon-like faculty for change, in this instance, in the sphere of contemporary politics. For the writer was recently at a well-known London speaking-pitch where the "Catholic Evidence Guild" has for many years past carried on its propaganda. The speaker on this occasion was a woman, a very competent speaker, who put over her case in a technically efficient and intellectually plausible manner. A Socialist in the audience, obviously seeking to pin down the speaker and her Church to an open support for the contemporary political reaction, asked a question about the attitude of the Catholic Church to the recent strikes in Barcelona against the Franco regime. Whereupon the speaker immediately launched out into an ardent defence of Trade Unionism, which she declared to be derived from elementary principles of Catholic sociology and of the right of the workers to combine and, if necessary, to go on strike on behalf of social justice. The speaker followed this up with some not very complimentary remarks about the Franco regime which had provoked the aforesaid strikes, and with the assertion that the Catholic Church in Spain only continued to give qualified support to Franco with the express objective of softening the rigours of his Fascist regime.

The leopard changes his spots! Those who recall the language habitually used by the Catholic Press in the not-so-distant Spanish Civil War (1936-39) about "the great Christian gentleman," will certainly notice a notable change. Whilst as for Catholic sociology and its recognition of the inalienable right of the worker to combine, and if necessary, strike on behalf of his economic status, it was not so long ago either that the then Archbishop of Westminster, the late Cardinal Bourne, denounced the British General Strike of May, 1926, over the radio with the categorical assertion that, "a strike is a crime against the community, whilst a General Strike is a crime against God."

The fact, of course, is that the times have changed and that, as so often before, Rome is changing with them. The regime of the "Christian general" has long since shed the lustre with which his Catholic defenders acclaimed Spain's erstwhile "Saviour." Its cruelty and corruption stink to heaven and the medieval Franco regime is now a crumbling anachronism in the modern world, which even the "Christian general's" own secular supporters regard as a worn-out liability which they will be only too delighted to drop overboard as soon as occasion offers.

The shrewd politicians who run that far-seeing business enterprise, "Vatican Ltd.," know this quite well and are obviously preparing to quit the sinking Franco regime along with the rest. Monarchy, dictatorship, conservative republic, all find favour in the eyes of the Catholic Church provided that they are prepared to safeguard her spiritual and secular interests.

Similarly, with regard to the contemporary workers' movement. As Leo XIII (1878-1903), the political genius of the modern papacy, evidently saw when he promulgated his famous encyclical "*Rerum Novarum*,"—"The Workers' Charter" (1891)—the modern international labour movement, whatever may be thought of the political theories associated with it, is a great and growing power which, granted the continuation of our present industrial civilisation, is unlikely to diminish in the future. Willy-nilly if the Catholic Church hopes to survive in the future she must come to terms with this powerful movement, since the narrow caste-basis of past societies is no longer adequate in our present "century of the common man." Hence, the determined current fight which Rome is putting up *inside* the international labour movements against anti-clerical communist and socialist movements; hence her insistence upon "moderate" Trade Unionism and the rights of labour. Whoever stated that the leopard could not change his spots obviously did not foresee the Vatican!

F. A. RIDLEY.

A RECENTLY ISSUED BRONTE BIOGRAPHY

A FULLER record of the relations of the Brontë sisters and their brother Branwell than any previously published, is the product of the pens of Lawrence and E. M. Hanson. This fine study, *The Four Brontës* (Oxford University Press, 1949, 25s.) is excellently illustrated and obviously every care has been taken to ensure accuracy of statement. Preparations for its publication date back twenty years, but its appearance was delayed by the authors' anxiety to master all that had been written on the subject and to consult several Brontë documents hitherto unexamined. Also, Mr. Hanson was convinced that the various biographies available tended to exalt or belittle the personality of the people delineated. He avers that, "in the biographies of Charlotte, the portrait of Emily is often subordinated to the central figure, while those of Anne and Branwell are frequently mere sketches. . . . This leads inevitably to a distortion of truth. Such treatment, however, natural as it may seem, is unnecessary and defeats its own ends."

American libraries and collections; British Museum manuscripts and other treasures, have all contributed to the volume under review, while its authors' indebtedness to other sources of information, including Clement Shorter's painstaking studies, is gratefully acknowledged.

The father of this remarkable family was an Irish clergyman whose original name was Brunty—perhaps a corruption of O'Brunty—while its mother was a Cornish lady. Their first offspring, Maria and Elizabeth, died at an early age. Mrs. Brontë after giving birth to three other girls and a boy left her husband a widower, and her sister, Miss Branwell, replaced her as housekeeper and custodian of the surviving children at Haworth parsonage in bleak Yorkshire. The school to which Charlotte and her sister Emily were sent was at Cowan Bridge and is vividly portrayed by the former in *Jane Eyre*. It has been asserted that the school's repulsive character has been magnified, but our authors' references to it com-

pletely justify Charlotte's condemnation. "The school," it is stated, "was situated in a low, damp, unhealthy valley. The girls worked and slept in a cold, badly ventilated building. They were rarely given enough food, and the cooking was deplorable. The school had been founded by William Carus Wilson, a narrow evangelical, vain, bigoted, and covering his sadism and love of power with scriptural quotations and appeals to the Deity. Carus Wilson, while the Brontës were there, was absolute master. The rigorous discipline and harsh teaching—intended to mortify the flesh and subdue the spirit (the only suitable training, in Wilson's opinion, for poor girls with a humble future) compared unfavourably even with the normal school of the time. His own writings testify that Charlotte in her savage indictment of him . . . 'exaggerated nothing.'"

At the lonely Haworth parsonage, the children, who were forbidden companionship with the rustics around, assisted their aunt in her domestic duties. In their spare time, they invented and told one another romantic stories and soon began to write both in prose and verse. Branwell, as a boy showed marked promise in music and painting, as well as in composition, but he soon discovered too many boon companions who, originally impressed by his brilliant conversational powers, encouraged his liking for intoxicating liquors, dissipated his energies and plunged him into debts which his by no means affluent father and frugal sisters were compelled to pay. And as the years rolled on, Branwell, who never retained a situation long, went from bad to worse, and the onetime pride of the family came to a humiliating end.

Not too successful in their educational enterprises and experiences, and with periods of depression, the three sisters ultimately decided to publish a volume of their respective poems at their own expense. Although their poetry found three reviewers, two copies only were sold. Emily's contributions, which were most favourably noticed, appeared as those of Ellis Bell, while Charlotte's were printed as those of Currer, and her sister Anne's as the work of Acton Bell. The three Bells then turned to fiction, but Charlotte's *The Professor* was rejected by the publishers, while Anne's *Agnes Grey* and Emily's *Wuthering Heights* were accepted, and the latter masterpiece found a ready sale.

Charlotte (Currer Bell) now thirty-two, was very dependent, but she sent the manuscript of *The Professor* once more on its travels. Meanwhile, Anne's *Tenant of Wildfell Hall* appeared in print and proved far superior to her earlier *Agnes Grey*. Charlotte's manuscript novel was returned, but at last it was accompanied with a note from Smith Elder, the Cornhill publishers, stating that it was too brief for the customary three-volume novel, but that if Mr. Currer Bell were to submit a story of the requisite length, more dramatic in character, they were willing to consider it. Charlotte then enlarged the MS. of *Jane Eyre* which was immediately accepted. It appeared in 1847 and sold rapidly. Very soon the second and third editions were exhausted and the demand continued. In truth it became the novel of the day.

Charlotte was now persuaded to inform her father that she had written a novel, as Mr. Brontë knew nothing of his daughters' literary achievements. Having advised her not to publish as she was certain to lose by it, he was amazed when he learnt of her success. So ignorant was the clergyman of his girls' activities that, at least on one occasion, he had returned to the postman "a packet of proofs on the ground that no one called Currer Bell lived in the parsonage."

Anne was deeply devout and at times suffered painful depression from her fear that Calvinistic predestination, which worried the poet Cowper so terribly, might involve her own damnation. She presumably had her depraved brother Branwell in mind when she penned *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and, of his fiery punishment after death, there seemed little doubt. Emily, on the other hand, was a religious rebel whose outlook appears Pantheistic, but in our authors' opinion, she also had Branwell in view when in *Wuthering Heights* she described "in the relations of Heathcliffe and Catherine" her suspicion of what the relations of her brother and Mrs. Robinson really were.

Emily caught a severe cold at Branwell's funeral and died shortly afterwards. Anne was also the victim of tubercular disease, and all three were dead and buried within a year. During her fatal illness, Emily, perhaps the greatest genius of the family, refused all medical aid and insisted on working to the very last. She looked upon death as a happy release from life's ills and rejected all the alleged consolations of religion. To cite her words:—

"Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,
Worthless as withered weeds
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main."

Charlotte alone of the sisters married, and was comparatively contented during her very brief wifedom. Her husband, her father's curate, Nicholls, was very attentive but intellectually he was far inferior to his wife and she had small sympathy with his Puseyite beliefs. Moreover, the worries and anxieties of her chequered career had weakened her so seriously that, when wandering on her beloved Yorkshire moors, she was overtaken by a pitiless storm, took a severe chill, and soon died. She was pregnant, but it is idle to speculate as to what might have happened had she survived to become the mother of a family of gifted children.

She had long been subject to periods of depression and, during one of these, she wrote to an intimate friend that: "at this moment I feel an irksome disgust at the idea of using a single phrase that sounds like religious cant. I abhor myself—I despise myself—if the doctrine of Calvin be true I am already an outcast. You cannot imagine how hard, rebellious and intractable my feelings are. When I begin to study on the subject I almost grow blasphemous, atheistical in my sentiments."

The much vaunted teachings of Wesley's Methodism hardened Patrick Brontë's disposition, and brought nothing but unspeakable distress to the gentle Anne; resentment to Charlotte, and contemptuous disdain to the stoical Emily.

T. F. PALMER.

LANGUAGE ASSOCIATIONS AND "RACE"

THE various alphabets of Europe derive from the ancient Egyptian and Phœnician alphabets. The Keltic has 13 consonants and 5 vowels. The Greek has 24 letters; the Latin 25, the Romans had only 23, having the same letter for i and j, and also for u and v. German has 26 letters, with an increasing use of the Roman characters. Russian is an enlarged Greek alphabet, formerly of 36 letters, now 31, with B for our V, I for E, H for N, II for P, P for R, C for S, etc., while their script gives more variances. Polish has 23 Roman characters plus 10 double letters representing single sounds, with point modifications on some letters. Different languages have different pronunciations and count of syllables. All, in common, root in the past, elsewhere, and Grimm's Law reconciles connection

in change in some words, viz., p becomes b; b, ph (f); f, p; t, d; d, th (s); s, t; k, g; g, ch (y); and y, k; e.g., German polster, English bolster; dieb, thief; bischof, bishop; and so on. Similarly, in Gaelic, "a very good boy" is likely to be pronounced "a fery goot poy."

As for race, it is a term extensively and insistently misused. Professor F. Giddings, in "The Principles of Sociology," 1896, says: "both philology and history were perverted by an uncritical assumption of the identity of race with language, and it is not strange that distinguished scholars have been disposed to set aside the conception of race as being little more than a figment of the imagination." He mentions Renan, Darmesteter, and Sayce as such scholars (p. 254). "Such a thing as a purely homogeneous population was never known" (p. 96). Dr. W. Z. Ripley, in his *Races of Europe*, 1899, says: "Still greater confusion arises if we attempt to discuss the origin of the people of the U.K." (p. 127). Dr. E. B. Tylor, in his *Anthropology* says: "Our own extremely mixed nation shows every variety" [of pigmentation, etc.] (p. 72) and he details various writers in geology and archæology, physical and descriptive anthropology, philology and civilisation. Professor T. H. Huxley, in *Man's Place in Nature* (1894 ed.) considers "the common practice of speaking of the present inhabitants of Britain as an 'Anglo-Saxon' race . . . is, in fact, absurd" (p. 266). Count A. de Gobineau, in *The Moral and Intellectual Diversity of Races*, 1856, is, like many other references to race, terrible stuff to read. "The nobility of France are of Germanic, and the peasantry of Celtic origin . . . the Frankish noble and the Gallic boor" (p. 174 note). "Scripture is said to declare against difference of [human] origin. . . . Human reason, in its imperfections, must bow to faith. Better to let the veil of obscurity cover a point of erudition, than to call in question so high and incontestable an authority. If the Bible declares that mankind are descended from the same common stock, all that goes to prove [sic] the contrary, is mere semblance, unworthy of consideration" (p. 337). The Rev. C. Kingsley, in *The Roman and the Teuton* (1887 ed.), regards, with Menzel, the Teutons as "of a royal race, and destined to win glory for all time to come" (p. 5). "The Teuton thought it mean to use surprises and stratagems, or to conquer save in fair and open fight" (p. 11). "It was his purity . . . which enabled the Teuton to crush the decrepit and debauched slave nations, Gaul and Briton" (p. 46). "The welfare of the Teutonic race is the welfare of the world" (p. 305). "The hosts of our forefathers were the hosts of God" (p. 306). R. Knox, M.D., in *The Races of Man* (1852 ed.), boosts the Anglo-Saxon, "of whose origin nothing is known" (pp. 45-46) for his "eternal, unalterable qualities of race" (p. 9), despite his fact that "the Boor is peculiar to the Saxon race" (p. 54) his "hypocrisy, unscrupulous selfishness . . . to Saxon war a vulgar, low, and mercenary spirit . . . his Saxon plunder in India, his doings there said to be without a parallel" (p. 80). Such is the morass of books on "race"; more ass is he who swallows them or accepts them.

GEORGE ROSS.

(To be concluded)

AGE OF REASON. By Thomas Paine. With 40 page introduction by Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 3s. 9d.; paper 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

AN ATHEIST'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY. A Survey of Positions. By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 6d.; postage 1½d.

ACID DROPS

An English traveller expressed surprise on seeing a portrait of H.H. Aga Khan as the central object in an Indian shrine. To the more ignorant worshippers Aga Khan was a god. Religious faith might stand the strain of an immaculately dressed god on a race course as an owner of racehorses, but imagine the situation had Aga Khan been a professional jockey.

The Convocation of Canterbury recently discussed the Christian practice of burial as against the pagan method of cremation and scattering of the ashes. But why should they worry over such trifles, if the resurrection is a fact, as they believe, omnipotence could handle a bucket of ashes as easily as a bag of bones?

Spiritualists in a South American conference settled a question of the utmost importance to humanity. Delegates from Latin countries believed in reincarnation, whilst from Anglo Saxon countries they believed that the dear departed went straight to "Summerland." To settle the question a certain spirit was consulted and asked how Summerland suited him? Full of indignation came the reply: "I'm not in Summerland; I'm a bull in the Argentine."

Mr. J. E. Mason, Director of Education for Notts, is reported to have said that seventeen educational officers who visited 240 county schools in Notts to observe how the act of worship, laid down in the 1944 Education Act was observed, gave the complete lie to the allegations of Godlessness of county schools. We ask: Who are the liars? And invite Nottingham Christians to answer.

It is reported that the Swiss Guard in the Vatican City looked extremely picturesque in their Renaissance uniforms and medieval pikes during a review by the Pope. Of course, the guards and their pikes are just show-pieces, the real fighting stuff in Christian countries to-day use colossal battleships, jet bombers, atom bombs, poison gas, flame throwers, and an urge for discovering even more horrible weapons for peace.

We are not in a position to deny a current rumour that Dr. Malan, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, has been holding spiritualist seances with the ghosts of Calvin and Hitler, and that the current racial legislation in the Union is based on advice from the distinguished departed.

We were intrigued to see that Mr. E. H. Carr, who has been lecturing for the B.B.C. on "The New Society," received a severe rebuke from an all-believing Christian. Mr. Carr had the temerity to say—and on the wireless, too—that many Christians do not believe "in the intervention of God in the course of history." A Mr. Clarke took him up at once and insisted that Christians "believe that God has decisively intervened in history in the person of Jesus Christ, and that in Jesus Christ, his life and teaching and ministry, the meaning and purpose of history are to be found."

We quote this to show that the primitive animism which accounts for this kind of protest from Christians still exists, and exists hugely all over the world. If Mr. Carr chooses to shut his eyes to such thorough-going supernaturalism, that is his affair; but as long as it lasts it does give us some justification for carrying out our own

warfare—the warfare between science and religion. It was never needed more than now.

Speaking before the Catholic Young Men's Society in Nottingham recently, Archbishop Godfrey had a few things to say about "freedom of speech," a subject which, in general, Catholics have always avoided like a plague. Needless to say, the Archbishop was not exactly in favour of what we mean by the term; for him, the right of propagating Catholic views is absolutely paramount—but no one should be allowed to propagate views contrary to "the Faith"—such as, for example, easier divorce. R.C. Archbishops get red in the neck when they read the possibility of easier divorce—not, be it emphasised, for Roman Catholics, but for non-Catholics. But Roman Catholics all believe in "freedom of speech."

The way to combat Communism, according to the special Commission organised by the Church of Scotland, is "to cultivate a far greater flexibility of organisation," and also "a new willingness to experiment in meeting the challenge." If this does not annihilate the Communist Party, then "this teaching must be extended to cover such things as voting in Parliamentary and local elections," and that ought to do the trick. Trust a Church Commission to be as silly as its religion!

In the third World Forum of Youth held recently, the Church took a leading part, or perhaps we ought to say that it took care to enjoy a leading part. The Archbishop of York waded in with the usual religious clichés about the futility of great scientific discoveries without God and that it was "God's will that all races should live as one family of which he is the father." If it really was God's will it is about time he did something about it instead of telling the Archbishop of York to tell the World Forum of Youth. Surely, Dr. Garbett should first explain why God never does a thing in this world and appears to be as helpless as an African pigmy.

Six years ago a spirit from Summerland told a Mr. E. Deeping that he must practise Black Magic or he would die on May 20 this year (1951) in a motoring accident. As Mr. Deeping refused the Black Magic order, and as the fatal day approached he became very frightened, insured himself for £25,000—an almost infallible remedy against this kind of prophecy—and locked himself in on May 20. Result—Mr. Deeping is still alive, and the spirit must be hiding his head in shame. In any case, Mr. Deeping still believes in the spirit, and perhaps at a future seance the ethereal denizen of another world will explain his failure to bump Mr. Deeping off. Or will he?

Freemasonry has become a big subject for the Church and may be hotly discussed by the powers that be. It is a fact, of course, that an Atheist, in most lodges, cannot become a Freemason with its hotch-potch jumble of invocations to pagan and Christian deities—who are all, by the way, on the same footing, as indeed they should be. The Rev. W. J. Torrence claims that Freemasonry is not a religion but that it is highly religious which, with its many Gods, it surely is. And he adds that Christians mostly just sit and listen in church while "in Masonry they have lots of things to do." Mr. Torrence's fellow Christians will hardly appreciate his sly dig that Christians do nothing but sit and listen.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Will correspondents kindly note to address all communications in connection with "The Freethinker" to: "The Editor," and not to any particular person. Of course, private communications can be sent to any contributor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, giving as long notice as possible.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 19s. 2d.; half-year, 9s. 7d.; three months, 4s. 11d.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), COMMON SENSE (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FRIEDENKER (Switzerland), DON BASILIO (Italy).

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, and not to the Editor.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

Readers will no doubt be sorry to learn that the Pioneer Press has been obliged slightly to increase the prices of all the books it publishes—as well as the postage. The latter has been increased by the Post Office and the increasing cost of paper, printing and binding makes it impossible to sell at the old prices. We hope the increases will not prevent readers from buying any book they want. They no doubt are aware that Freethought is a propagandist movement and our books, our chief propaganda.

The Summer Number of *The Plain View*, so very ably edited by H. J. Blackham, keeps up its excellent standard, and will again appeal to all who believe in intellectual progress. Mr. Blackham gives the first of two articles dealing with the present situation "of all those rationalists and progressives who may be called liberals," and deals most effectively with "the seriousness of the challenge from Communism and from Christianity." He put their cases very clearly, and shows why they both have been widely accepted. And in another article, he hopes to deal with the line of development required to meet the challenge from Communism and Christianity. He calls this the "Humanist Alternative."

The article on "Interpretations of History" by John Katz is full of both suggestive and provocative reasoning and all who revel in Hegel and Marx, in the Absolute, and in Dialectical Materialism and Idealism will certainly enjoy every line of such a stimulating article. From the *American Humanist* is reprinted "Must Religious Humanism be Thin?" and there are some excellent reviews. The subscription to *The Plain View* is 4s. 6d., and the address is 4a, Inverness Place, Queensway, London, W.2.

SPECIAL

MR. CHAPMAN COHEN, in announcing his retirement from the editorship of *The Freethinker*, informed readers that The Secular Society Ltd., would take over the G. W. Foote Co., which includes the Pioneer Press and *The Freethinker*. A new Board of Directors, consisting of Messrs. R. H. Rosetti, W. Griffiths, A. C. Rosetti, and J. W. Barker, has been appointed to the G. W. Foote Co., with Mr. Frank Kenyon as Secretary. The new Directors are well known, all have business experience, plus a long record of faithful service to Freethought. They are all Directors on the Board of The Secular Society Ltd., serve on the Executive of The National Secular Society, and in every case their services are given voluntarily. Mr. Frank Kenyon, who will act as Secretary to the G. W. Foote Co., has had a long experience as a responsible official in a government office, and is well known as a writer on Freethought topics in book and article form. Mr. F. A. Ridley will be sole editor of *The Freethinker* with Mr. H. Cutner on the editorial staff. The policy of the paper will continue to be clear-cut uncompromising Freethought, and non-party political.

The introduction of new features is under consideration, and the Board's decision to keep the paper as a weekly, with no increase in price, is, considering the increased financial difficulties to be met, a bold move from the Head Office and it now rests with the readers to follow it up with generous contribution to the appeal which is now open. Cheques and Postal Orders should be sent to *The Freethinker*, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and to those who wish to help by way of bequests the following, as a clause to be inserted in their Will, may be helpful.

"I give and bequeath to the G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd., of 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, proprietors of *The Freethinker*, the sum of (state legacy) free from Legacy Duty for all or any of the purposes of *The Freethinker*, and I direct that a receipt signed by the Chairman and Secretary of the said Company shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said legacy."

R. H. ROSETTI.

(Chairman, G. W. Foote & Co. Ltd.)

RELIGION AND FREETHOUGHT

IN his recent article, Mr. John Rowland states that the main attitude which I have seen fit to criticise in my discussion of his previous articles is his feeling that there are two kinds of knowledge—scientific and religious—and that these are not so much contradictory as complementary. In an effort to make this feeling—or belief—appear more tenable, he says: "In other words, my opinion is that we live in two worlds—a purely material world which is the domain of science, and a world which I can only describe as spiritual. The spiritual world (which most Freethinkers do not admit to exist at all) is the world of values, the world of the arts, the world of religion."

The chief difficulty in dealing with an argument of this description lies in finding out exactly what it means, or what it is intended to mean. If Mr. Rowland wished to express in other words the belief that there are two kinds of knowledge—scientific and religious—and that they are not so much contradictory as complementary, it seems to me that, to be consistent, he should have said that we live in two worlds—the world of science and the world of religion—and that there is no antagonism between the two. But, expressed in this form, the reply would have been too obvious. Religion and science are not concerned

with two separate and distinct worlds, but with the same world—the same set of facts, to which each gives a different and contradictory interpretation. At first this world was wholly the world of religion. With the advent of science, and the gradual substitution of scientific for religious explanations in the realm of natural phenomena, that world has become less and less significant. Every step forward that science has made has meant a step backward for religion, until to-day we find an acknowledged champion of the latter content to ostensibly hand over to science the whole of the material world provided he is allowed to retain that world which he describes in the vaguest of terms as the “spiritual.” I say “ostensibly” advisedly, because, as we shall see, what Mr. Rowland professes to openly give out with one hand he surreptitiously takes back with the other.

It is necessary to note that when Mr. Rowland puts his belief that there are two kinds of knowledge—scientific and religious—into other words, he refers to the world of science, but he does not refer definitely to the world of religion. Instead, he refers to a world which he can only describe as “spiritual”—“the world of values, the world of the arts, the world of religion.” According to this the world of religion is but a sub-division of a wider “spiritual” world, which also includes the world of values and the world of the arts. After handing over to science the whole of the purely material world, Mr. Rowland then limits this to such things as may be measured with a foot-rule, or weighed with a pair of scales, and calmly appropriates the rest.

Mr. Rowland has befogged the issue by his misuse of the ambiguous term “spiritual” which, according to its context, may relate either to the “natural” or to the “supernatural.” By using it in one sense he has been enabled to drag in “the world of values” and “the world of the arts”; by using it in another “the world of religion”; and by joining them together he has persuaded himself that they may all be included under one head. Nothing short of such a delusion could account for the strange statement that because most (I should say all) Freethinkers do not admit the existence of the spiritual world, neither do they admit the existence of the world of values or the world of the arts!

Still animated by his delusion, Mr. Rowland goes on to state that we cannot *prove*, by any scientific laws of which he is aware, that Beethoven is greater than George Gershwin, that Raphael was a greater artist than the man who draws the illustrations to his small boy's weekly “comic”; or that moral and ethical behaviour of a purely personal (as opposed to a social) type is good and right and proper. “Yet,” he says, “except for that small minority which is spiritually blind, these things are admitted by all.”

But, even if they are admitted by all, what justification is there for the assumption that these scales of values are established in the spiritual world, and for holding that theological values, which are definitely not admitted by all, are established in a similar fashion? If Mr. Rowland had fully realised the real distinction between the world of thought and the world of feeling, he would never have been led into such logical absurdities. Even in the world of thought there are many things that cannot be *proved* and which not only are, but *must* be, admitted by all. Such are the axioms of mathematics. If the fact that they cannot be proved establishes their spiritual nature, then the whole of physical science, which is built on them, must be regarded as spiritual also. And in the world of feeling we know, for example, that one pain is greater

than another. We cannot *prove* it in the scientific sense, but we do not, on that account, ascribe it to a spiritual source. Both the world of thought and the world of feeling have their sufficient reason in underlying physiological conditions. If we prefer Beethoven to Gershwin or Raphael to the illustrator of the weekly “comic,” it is solely because of the evolved complexity of our own thoughts and feelings. If Mr. Rowland wants *proof* of this let him ask his small boy why he prefers his weekly “comic” to Raphael.

With regard to Mr. Rowland's second point we may admit that international conditions have grown steadily worse, and also that there has been a concurrent decline of religious belief, but we need not, on that account alone, infer that either one has been the cause or effect of the other. Before we can do that, we must be shown that there is some *necessary* connection between the two. Even if they are both results of some single cause we ought to discover a connecting link before jumping to conclusions.

Finally, Mr. Rowland finds fault with me because he considers I have been insufficiently impressed by the religious twaddle of some of the leading scientists of the day. There can be little doubt, he says, that the average Freethinker is living, philosophically, in the past. “The fact that Herbert Spencer is still regarded by most Freethinkers with an attitude not far from reverence is, to my mind, the fact which damns the philosophical outlook of Freethought more than anything else.”

Spencer was, first and foremost, a philosopher. That he was out of touch with the way in which science has developed since he died, which is one of Mr. Rowland's charges against him, is not a very remarkable fact, and I feel sure that had he been living to-day the findings of modern science would have had little effect on his philosophical conclusions. As regards Spencer being out of date and dull, and difficult to read, I should like to refer Mr. Rowland to my article “Herbert Spencer” in *The Freethinker* of December 17, 1950. To this I should like merely to add that no philosopher has had a greater influence on the thought of his time than Herbert Spencer who has still a message, not only for the people living to-day, but for generations still unborn.

FRANK KENYON.

A PLAY YOU SHOULDN'T MISS

“A PIN TO SEE THE PEEPSHOW” at The New Boltons Theatre Club, Drayton Gardens, is a play which should appeal particularly to Freethinkers, Rationalists and Liberals everywhere. It has, for its theme, the famous Thompson-Bywaters Murder Case which took place some 20 odd years ago, and this play is a most scathing denunciation of capital punishment. The abolition of capital punishment is one of the principles laid down by the National Secular Society.

For the guidance of the younger generation of readers—Mrs. Thompson and her lover Bywaters were executed for the murder of Mr. Thompson. Although the woman did not actually participate in the murder, the Crown held that she had influenced Bywaters to commit the crime.

Mrs. Starling is magnificently played by Joan Miller, supported by a cast in which everyone is good and a production which does Mr. Peter Cotes as much credit as did his “Pick-up Girl.”

Despite the number of theatres in London, there are very few, except private theatres, which give us well worth while plays, and it is the aim of The New Boltons Theatre Club to produce masterpieces of Shaw, Ibsen, Somerset Maugham, Shelley, and other well-known playwrights.

Theatre Membership of The New Boltons is only 5s. a year, and, in addition to week-day performances, there is a matinee and an evening performance on Sundays. This should appeal to some of our readers; and seats are priced to suit every purse. F. A. HORNIBROOK.

CORRESPONDENCE

INDIA

SIR,—I have read with pleasure the article on the "Most Religious Country in the World," by Mr. F. A. Ridley in *The Freethinker* of April 22, and I wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Ridley in his analysis of the situation in India and his indication of the tremendous nature of the task before the newly-established Rationalist movement in India. By way of illustration of what is happening in this sub-continent, which is supposed to be ruled under a political constitution which guarantees that the State shall be "secular," I am herewith enclosing two cuttings from the *Hindu*. On the sea coast at the western corner of India lie the ruins of the temple of Somnath, demolished six times and not been rebuilt for the last nine hundred years. The President of the Secular State of India played the leading part in the revivalist ceremonies. Cabinet Ministers of the Central Government, Governors and Ministers from the States took active parts in promoting the scheme to build a costly temple paved with marbles and gold, while the masses of India were starving and millions were on the verge of death. The temple of Ayyappan is in the extreme south of India in the State of Travancore-Cochin, which is one of the worst affected areas in the prevailing famine. But the rebuilding of this temple has gained precedence over the measures to fight the famine.

True enough as Mr. Ridley says, "India must first cast off the dead hand of Hinduism."—Yours, etc.,

S. RAMANATHAN.

(Vice-President, Indian Rationalist Assn.)

WITCHCRAFT

SIR,—In his article "Mr. Chuter Ede's 'Blot,'" Mr. Cutner says that the recently repealed 1735 Witchcraft Act was "based on Holy Writ," and apparently includes it amongst the laws which "should have been abrogated when judges began to see that witches, as such, were myths."

But surely that is precisely what the 1735 Act achieved. It abolished trials for witchcraft, conjuration, etc., as such, but, in order to prevent the exploitation of superstition and to protect the "witches" themselves from mob violence, it imposed penalties for pretending to exercise these powers. Disbelief in witchcraft was widespread among the educated classes by that time, including orthodox Christians. In this connection Boswell reports an argument between Dr. Johnson and a Scottish advocate, who held that it was blasphemous to believe that witches could frustrate God's intentions by the agency of evil spirits. Though the Doctor would not have this, and contended in favour of the abstract possibility of witchcraft, he admitted that, for some unknown reason, the cult had ceased to exist. (*Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, 16th August, 1773.)

I am not, of course, attempting to defend the retention of the Act on the Statute Book in modern times. It makes no distinction between the sincere medium and the charlatan, and, if strictly applied, would hamper legitimate psychic research.—Yours, etc.,

D. BEAR.

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN

SIR,—Two good articles appeared in *The Freethinker* recently under the heading "Say What You Mean." They would seem, however, to have fallen on stony ground so far as "Acid Drops" are concerned, and I am wondering how the writer, J. Effel, is bearing up under the impact of the words "real truth" which appeared in a recent issue.

If he rallies sufficiently to read on, he will certainly be shaken by the recommendation in "Sugar Plums" to "go over to a registry office."—Yours, etc.,

(Mrs.) ELEANOR TRASK.

DISTRIBUTIONISM

SIR,—In his article on Douglas Hyde, P. C. King refers to "Distributism" as a "new ism."

It is not, however, so very "new." As long ago as 1926, G. K. Chesterton was advocating "Distributism" in an essay, "The Beginning of the Quarrel," which was first published in a weekly paper, and later included in his book, *The Outline of Sanity*.

"G. K. C." was a very ardent disciple and propagandist for the Church of Rome, and his "Distributism" was, naturally, based on the "Church's social teaching," particularly "Rerum Novarum," which Catholics publicise as "The Workers' Charter."—Yours, etc.,

S. BROOKS.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting Held May 31, 1951

The President, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Griffiths, A. C. Rosetti, Ridley, Hornibrook, Morris, Shaw, Ebury, Woodley, Johnson, Cleaver, Corstorphine, Barker, and Mrs. Venton.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial statement presented.

New members were admitted to Sheffield, West Ham, North London, Nigeria, and to The Parent Society.

An L.C.C. reply to the Executive's inquiries concerning the use of public funds for religious equipment of a R.C. Church was read and further instructions given.

At the request of The Glasgow Secular Society its association as a Branch of The National Secular Society ceases, and there is now no connection between the Glasgow Secular Society, and the Glasgow Branch of the N.S.S.

The official Guide Book of The Thomas Paine Exhibition at Thetford in connection with the Festival of Britain, issued by The Borough of Thetford, contains reproductions from exhibits sent by the Executive of the N.S.S.

Matters arising from the conference were dealt with; the Executive's Annual Report will be printed and circulated to all members of the Society. Acknowledgments for motions sent to appropriate government departments were read. Suggestions for meeting Mr. McCall's conference resolution were discussed and a plan agreed upon. Messrs. Griffiths, A. C. Rosetti, and Mrs. Venton were appointed as The Benevolent Fund Committee. Mr. R. Johnson was co-opted as a member of the Executive.

The Executive expressed its deep appreciation of the work of Mr. Chapman Cohen as editor of *The Freethinker* and wished him a long, happy and restful retirement.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for June 21 and the proceedings closed.

JOHN SEIBERT, General Secretary.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Market Place.—Sunday, June 10, 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.: JACK CLAYTON.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park, Bradford).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK.

Also Lectures at Platt Fields, Sunday, 3 p.m.; Alexandra Park Gates, Wednesday, 8 p.m.; St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site, Sunday, 8 p.m.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: L. EBURY. Sunday Evening, 7-30 p.m. (Highbury Corner): L. EBURY. Friday Evening, June 15, 8 p.m. (South Hill Park), J. M. ALEXANDER and L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, June 9, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE. Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A. SAMMS.

South London and Lewisham Branch (Brockwell Park).—A LECTURE.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: C. E. WOOD.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 10, DR. HELEN ROSENAU, "Modern Man as Seen in Art."

Notice To Subscribers

Owing to increase in Postage Rates by 50% as from 1st. June, 1951, it will be necessary to increase subscription rates as from that date. The new rates will be as follows:

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| One Year | 19s. 2d. |
| Half Year | 9s. 7d. |
| Three Months | 4s. 11d. |

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AND POLITICAL FREEDOM

READERS of *The Freethinker* will—in the main—be very well acquainted with the claim—so often repeated by Roman Catholic spokesmen in England—that the Church never at any time interferes with the political opinions of the laity, or indeed attempts to influence Catholics to vote for any particular political party or individual. This statement, completely untruthful, as it undoubtedly is, has been repeated so very many times by influential Catholics and the more ignorant non-Catholic members of, for example, the modern Labour Party, that large numbers of non-Catholics are actually beginning to believe it to be true. The present writer believes that the time has come, when the few freethinking papers left in this country should make every effort to denounce this lie whenever it is made. The object, therefore, of these articles is to prove beyond any possible doubt that the modern Roman Catholic Church is not merely a religious organisation concerned with the souls of its members, but is in actual fact a very powerful international political organisation concerned absolutely in obtaining temporal power on a world-wide scale. This is not to say that the Roman Church does not use to the full the weapon of superstition, indeed the weapon of superstition is one of the greatest successes in the armoury of the Church. The only defence against this menace is knowledge, and knowledge in this case means a sound understanding of the real aims and objects of the Roman Catholic Church.

This article is the first of a series of special articles which will appear in *The Freethinker* from time to time and the reader is recommended to collect the articles when he will have a series of facts—all from Catholic sources—which will prove beyond all reasonable doubt the precise aims and objects of the Roman Catholic Church.

The pseudonym "Peter's Finger" covers the real name of a person who was himself an active member of The Catholic Evidence Guild until a few years ago, and each article will give the fullest reference regarding the sources of his information and citations.

In the *Catholic Standard*, vol. 23, No. 21, dated May 25, 1951, there appears the following:—

"The so-called 'Irish Workers' League has nominated its chairman, Michael O'Riordan, of 37, Victoria Street, South Circular Road, Dublin, as a candidate in the Dublin South-West constituency in the general election. O'Riordan is a native of Cork and an employee of C.I.E. who fought in the Communist International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War. He contested a bye-election in Cork in 1946 as a 'Socialist,' etc., etc. Catholics in the constituency have been warned by their pastors of their strict obligation not to vote for O'Riordan nor to assist him in any way in his campaign."

In the same edition of the same paper appears the following:—

"On the eve of a general election we should try to set down the principles for a true Christian Social Order in Ireland. The speeches and advertisements of the different candidates might usefully be checked with these—"Political life is a field for the widest charity of all, the field of political charity, of which it can be said that none other is superior, SAVE THAT OF RELIGION."

It should be noted that the speeches of the candidates are to be checked with the words of an address given by

Pope Pius XI to the Federation of Italian Universities in 1927, and it is noteworthy that in 1928 (May 17 and September 2) a new electoral law was approved in Italy. The fascist political, syndical and cultural associations—through their leaders who were all appointed by Mussolini—were asked to present candidates among whom the Great Council (also appointed by Mussolini) chose those who were to be nominated. The electors had only the right to accept or reject the whole list. New elections on this basis took place in 1929 and 1934.

The reader will note that an electoral law in Italy (which everyone knows has full Papal approval) was created very shortly after a Papal address, the text of which is being used in the Irish General Election in 1951—a law, moreover, which brought into being absolute dictatorship in Italy.

The Papal path is more clearly followed when one reads in the same edition of the paper publishing the text of the Papal address, the attack upon O'Riordan who is one of the candidates who does not meet with the approval of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is with justice that the Roman Catholic Church claims to be never changing. If the aims and objects of the Church are properly understood, it is indeed perfectly true to say that the Church of Rome never changes, and let no one doubt that the aims and objects of the Church are as they always were, World Domination by the use of any political means which lends itself to that object.

"PETER'S FINGER."

MR. EFFEL AND THE ALTERNATIVE

I SEE Mr. Effel is on the warpath again. While welcoming his re-appearance, I feel it is my first duty to justify myself. In my use of alternative to signify more than one solution, the latest authority I have seen is the pamphlet *Plain English*, issued by H.M. Stationery Office. There is no word "deuternative" or other word to imply a number of various solutions; in default, therefore, we use alternative; hence the qualifying phrase "the only alternative" to signify the existence of but one solution. If Mr. Effel does not accept this he is not only being pedantic, but formalistic. Then he must say that the phrase "Ruling classes are selfish" is impermissible, on the grounds that self can only apply to the individual and not to a group. Does Mr. Effel reject "railway time-table" on the grounds that it is the trains and not the permanent way that keeps time, or, alternatively, that it is British Railways Executive that makes up the schedules?

As regards his perturbation at the use of "either," surely the case he mentions is descriptive of the mental processes involved. I don't look straight up the river and squint outwards; I look first at one bank and then the other and thus record in my mind, at different moments in time, that each bank is crowded. I don't think of both banks at the same time. "On either side, as I walked up the lane, the hawthorne was in bloom" is surely as clear and certainly more elegant than "on both sides, etc."

I am relieved that Mr. Effel does not use the awful pedantry, "Is it I?" for "It's me, isn't it?"

P. C. KING.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 3s. 9d.; postage 3d. Ninth edition.

THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.