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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Population Versus the Papacy

THE present occupant of the Vatican, Eugenio Pacelli, His Holiness Pope Pius the Eleventh (March 3rd, 1939—?), has just issued a canonical statement "upon Faith and Morals" which will certainly eventually wreck "The Rock of Peter" unless speedily rescinded. As the Papal declaration is one on "morals" and as such, would appear to be infallible according to the precise wording of the Vatican Decree of July the 18th, 1870, it does not seem at all clear how the Church of Rome is going to get out of the impasse which her present leader has created for her. We have long been of the opinion that the "Achilles Heel" of the Roman Catholic Church in the modern industrial world lies in the sphere of practical ethics rather than of speculative theology.

Briefly, His Holiness reiterated the traditional teaching of the Roman Catholic Church upon marriage, birth-control, and, in general, upon the whole question of the reproduction of the human species. It is a teaching which, like the whole animistic mental outlook of Catholic Christianity in general is a legacy from an older pre-industrial era. It is a legacy which cuts right across, not only all modern theories of sex and population but, it seems to be beyond dispute, runs counter to the most urgent needs of the modern world. Briefly, what the Vicar of Christ declared to be the teaching of his Master amounted to this; the primary purpose of marriage is the procreation of children presumably as many as possible, and no human authority, personal, legislative, and/or medical can have any moral right to interfere with the "primary purpose" of matrimony. From which it follows necessarily, and Rome prides herself upon her logic, that no artificial checks can be imposed under any conceivable pretext, upon the natural growth of population. Anything in the nature of "birth-control" is absolutely forbidden under the severest "spiritual" penalties in the next world and the severest ecclesiastical penalties in this one. Wherever Rome holds sway in such contemporary Catholic States as Spain, Ireland (Eire), the Argentine, divorce is, of course, absolutely forbidden. Whilst the Pope has just reaffirmed the traditional Catholic prohibition to the medical profession in fatal cases of childbirth, and has forbidden them to save the mother at the expense of the child's life.

This moral or, as most of us would probably regard it, immoral ethical teaching on the part of the Church and See of Rome, originated, of course, not in our crowded modern communities based on modern mass-productive methods but in the simple conditions of an older, predominantly agricultural world. We must not forget that the huge cities and vast conglomerations of population which characterise modern industrial civilisation, were, apart from a few favoured fertile areas (Egypt was the outstanding example in the ancient world), then entirely unknown. Man, like his present-day arboreal "cousins" the apes, originated as a very rare animal and remained

such for countless thousands of years. Nor were even earlier civilisations in general burdened with very large populations. With regard to even the Roman Empire, by far the most highly organised and, accordingly, presumably most populous society in the pre-industrial West, the entire population of the whole Roman Empire, which embraced half Europe, plus the Near East and North Africa, can hardly have exceeded the present population of Great Britain, some fifty millions in all. Such, at least, is the round figure arrived at after an exhaustive statistical survey of the available demographical evidence, by the eminent French classical historian, Mr. Ferdinand Lot, who severely criticised his predecessors in the field of Roman history (including Gibbon) for their excessively high figures (cp. Ferdinand Lot—*The End of the Ancient World*. The East was more populous than Europe).

Whilst in the agrarian Middle Ages where Catholicism formulated its present ethical doctrines, population was even scarcer. England under William the Conqueror probably did not much exceed two millions. Ten thousand men represented an enormous army in mediæval times.

The modern population question is a product of the Industrial Revolution, and is now spreading to Asia and Africa along with modern methods of production. The science of demography originated along with the Industrial Revolution in the writings of such pioneers as Adam Smith and Malthus. The present writer is not an extreme Malthusian in the strict sense of holding that the problem of the food supply is insoluble and will always necessarily be so, as was taught by the Reverend Robert Malthus and his disciples. Much of the "food shortage" problem is, in our opinion, due to defective social organisation which permits lavish waste on unproductive "goods"—e.g., armaments—and supports in idleness hordes of parasites—the clergy are included in this category!—who render no service to society in return. Moreover, who can predict what mankind will, or will not be able to do in the future? It is almost a definition of progress to say that it makes the impossible, possible and the insoluble, soluble!

Be that, however, as it may in the future, there can be no doubt at all of the very grave population problem, particularly in the "backward," pre-industrial areas where modern processes of production are leading to a phenomenal increase in population. Such outstanding examples as India and Japan may relevantly be cited in this connection. We trust, herewith, that we shall not be accused of palliating the undeniable crimes of Japanese Imperialism in recent years, if we make the commonsense observation that the best way to ensure peace is not to shut up eighty million people, increasing at the rate of over a million a year, in the arid Japanese Archipelago, whilst across the water in Australia and New Zealand, there lie huge, fertile, and sparsely-populated islands which rigorously restrain yellow immigrants. Similarly, the pressure in India and China and South East Asia, are producing population problems of "Asia's teeming millions" of appalling gravity. India, it is true, is belatedly encouraging birth-control but,

with remarkable inconsistency, has appointed a Roman Catholic, now under peremptory orders to forbid any and every form of population "planning," as Minister of Health!

In a world such as this, the policy of unrestricted breeding advocated by the Pope is insane, literally suicidal. It can only, if successful, lead to famine and to a series of terrible wars. *If persisted in, it must inevitably either ruin Humanity or the Roman Catholic Church:* it can only lead, ultimately, to the collapse of civilisation and to a new "Dark Age." It seems surprising that so shrewd an institution as the Vatican cannot see this. But, perhaps, after all, it does, and is *consciously* aiming at social catastrophe and the end of our increasing "pagan" and secularist civilisation: perhaps, by an ironic paradox, Rome relies upon modern science in the shape of the atomic bomb to supply all the "birth control" necessary? Such would certainly seem to be the probable result of her mediæval outlook in the modern world.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE STRUGGLE OVER SECULAR EDUCATION IN FRANCE

[Translator's Note.—In translating M. Pivert's article we have added, in square brackets, some explanatory comments upon points which may not be familiar to English readers. Italics, in all cases, are those of the author.]

LEGISLATION in the (French) Republic upon the subject of education dates from the years 1881-7; at this period *compulsory public education, secular* in character and free for all, was established for children between six and thirteen years of age. (The period of compulsory free education was prolonged until the age of fourteen by the Leon Blum Government in 1936). [M. Pivert was himself a Minister in this Government.] Religious schools are, notwithstanding, numerous, but they function entirely outside the control of the State; they are private schools. They call themselves "Free Schools" because the first establishments of this kind had been set up in opposition to the Napoleonic Universities, and as a protest against State Control. Actually, the Catholic Church had previously possessed a monopoly of education in France for several centuries. With every successive counter-revolution that has come to power since in France, the Church has sought to regain her lost control. In 1850, the law, named after M. Falloux [Minister of Education under Louis Napoleon, then President of the French Republic] restored to the Church complete control of the education of the children; Alsace-Lorraine has retained, thanks to clerical pressure, legislation similar to that of 1850, since the laws secularising education, which were passed between 1883 and 1887, did not apply there, since Alsace-Lorraine was incorporated in the German Empire throughout this period. [As a result of the Franco-German War of 1870-71.] Contrarily, all the revolutionary movements in France have included the secularisation of education in their programmes: from Condorcet to the Paris Commune (1871), including, en route, Victor Hugo who opposed the "Law Falloux" (1850) in a powerful and ever-memorable speech; they can be included amongst the pioneers of secular education in the service of intellectual emancipation. The men who actually carried it into effect—Jean Macé, Paul Bert, Jules Ferry, Ferdinand Buisson—are held in honour to-day as the best servants of popular education. Served by a staff

which believes in its social role and which has sprung from the popular masses, the secular schools have been accepted by the vast majority of the French people. *Out of every six French children between the ages of six and fourteen, five go to the secular schools, only one to the religious (denominational) ones.* However, it is in the most reactionary areas that the religious schools exercise their maximum influence. The educational map corresponds exactly with its political counterpart. In La Vendée, in the heart of Brittany, in the Central Massif, and, to a less degree, in the East, the inhabitants are more conservative and submissive to the political direction of their priests, who issue directives upon Polling Day. The Vichy Regime [of Marshal Petain, 1940-44] had planned to use the religious schools in order to augment its counter-revolutionary influence and obsolete mentality. It accordingly proceeded to destroy the "Ecoles Normales" of education (sometimes described as "lay seminaries") and gave State aid to the so-called "Free Schools." However, after the Liberation, these reactionary measures were abolished, and the First Article of the Constitution of 1946 ran as follows: *France is a united, secular, democratic and social Republic.*

Accordingly, in reviewing the secular laws of 1881-1887 (which are constitutional enactments and which define the exact scope of both public and private schools), or the law separating Church and State which proclaimed in the year 1905, that *the (French) Republic neither recognises, finances, nor assists any religious cult*, nor, finally, the Constitution of the Fourth Republic, one cannot find any justification for the new legislation which, thanks to the action of a reactionary majority, *has just decided to give financial aid from State funds by an indirect channel (that of the "Association of the Parents of Pupils") to religious schools.*

The grave character of this newly-created situation becomes still more obvious when we note the scandalous conditions in which a (clerical) section of the Republican majority (now rent with internal strife) has determined, at whatever cost, to impose its point of view in matters affecting educational legislation.

It is a matter of common knowledge that French public opinion is very divided, split into many factions between the two totalitarian extremes, which have, so far, sought in vain to include them: an electoral law, admittedly dictated by considerations of opportunism, has been in operation since June 17 last, with the object of simultaneously reducing the parliamentary representation of the "R.P.F." [the De Gaullist Party] and the Communist Party. Without its operation the two totalitarian minorities might, between them, have succeeded in getting more than fifty per cent. of the votes and thus have been able to prevent the formation of a stable government; a general social crisis culminating in civil war would then have been inevitable. Under existing circumstances, such a civil war would soon have been transformed into an international conflict. So serious was the current outlook that the partisans of democratic institutions formed an electoral alliance and obtained by a mutual agreement upon the allocation of parliamentary seats a relative success against the adherents of both De Gaulle and Stalin.

However, this arrangement has ended by profiting the traditionalists of the "Right" and the Conservative forces in French society. As a result, the "M.R.P.," the "Social-Christian" (Catholic) Party (which professes to have progressive views upon social questions!) set to work to secure the passing of anti-secular legislation: *with the support of the "R.P.F."* [De Gaullists, a party in opposi-

tion to the present French Coalition Government] *it succeeded in this aim*; that is, after having pretended to oppose the Gaullists, the clerical politicians of the "M.R.P." abandoned their electoral allies and thus brought into being an entirely new situation dominated by the clericals and the traditionalist "Right." [Our readers must bear in mind that, in France, religious and political divisions are synchronised in a manner which has no parallel on this side of the Channel.]

Clerical influence upon primary education is, however, limited to a certain number of districts. Contrarily, with regard to secondary education (ten to eighteen years of age) religious influence is actually much more powerful; for the Republic has been very slow in organising its system of secondary schools, whilst the Conservative Bourgeois class has always had flourishing educational establishments, to its own advantage, with the students of which it fills the vacancies in the higher ranks of the administration, financial direction, the Army, and diplomacy: the Church still controls about 42 per cent. of the effective secondary schools. But as the expenses of running these private schools without State grants becomes continuously heavier, the clericals are now applying to the State for aid *whilst refusing it any voice in the effective disposal of its own funds*, which, even from a juridical standpoint, can only be described as utterly monstrous.

To sum up what we have just stated: the French clericals, despite the fact that they represent only a minority of the population, have taken advantage of the post-war political problems in order, once again, to reassert their formerly dominant position.

But the battle for secular education is now joined with unshakeable determination: the Socialist Party and the Trade Unions which represent the teachers and Association of Professors are solidly behind it, in conjunction with the "League for Secular Education" and the "Association of Parents of the Pupils in the Public Schools" [that is, State-controlled schools]: the principles at issue in this battle are of an absolutely fundamental character: Upon the one side, a narrowly dogmatic conception of education and an arbitrary limitation of the potential development of the child, upon the other, an unqualified respect for the human rights of the child, of its freedom of conscience, and of its undeveloped potentialities. Upon the one side, also, a whole synthesis of hide-bound and reactionary ideologies and methods which seek to restrain the evolution of mankind towards liberty, upon the other, in striking contrast, an ideology and social forces which cultivate the human personality, open up indefinite horizons and prepare the way for a better humanity *devoted to its own self-advancement, without dogmas, without the arbitrary boundaries imposed by creeds and by divisions of races and of castes.*

Sooner or later this, at least, can be taken for granted *our fundamental philosophy will triumph over theirs.*

MARCEAU PIVERT

(Professor at the Modern College, Paris)

—Translated by F. A. RIDLEY.

THE PARTNERS

AT the opening of the present century, God and the Devil were resting on a convenient cloud and deploring the lack of religious zeal in the modern generation.

"We must never forget," observed God, "that close co-operation between us is essential to our preservation.

We stand or fall together. Once the human race learn to rely on their own strength and trust in their own reason, it will be the end of us."

"Give me a year or two and I will shake their self-confidence," replied the Devil. "I know the way to twist things and stir up their religion."

"You must do your part first," said God, "and then I will do mine."

"Give me fifty years," asked the Devil.

When the fifty years were passed, the partners returned to the same spot to consider the next move.

"Have I not been industrious?" boasted the Devil. "Wars and revolutions have shaken the world from end to end. Cities have been ruined and provinces devastated. Political and economic chaos threaten to engulf human society. What more fertile soil could one wish for for a religious revival?"

"You have done well, my friend," said God, "but the hardest task lies before us, and there I must play my part."

"What material have you found to work on?"

"I have great hopes of men like Aldous Huxley and Karl Barth and such people who follow that Danish chap, Kierkegaard."

"A vague and nebulous crowd," the Devil spoke with contempt. "They follow nothing but the fashion."

"Do not be too hasty in your judgement, but cast your mind back to the time we set Christianity going between us. What did I use then? On the one hand, I took the Gnostics, as woolly-brained a set of mystics as one could wish for, but they had a veneer of intelligence and I must have something to give the set-up a gloss of culture. On the other hand, I took a small sect of Jewish heretics who were ignorant enough to stand up and kill or be killed for their ideas, and they provided me with the backbone and popular appeal that is so necessary. On their own the two groups were nothing, but when I had fused these unlikely forces, what a power they became."

"I grant you this Existentialist crowd, or whatever they call themselves, are little worse than the Gnostics and you can work wonders with poor material, but where is your backbone coming from?"

"That will not be so easy, for people are always more ready to talk than act, but what do you think of the Jehovah's Witnesses?"

"They may be what we want. They are pigheaded enough for anything."

"They give me hopes, they and the Existentialists. What a master stroke it would be to combine these seeming opposites; then, indeed, we would have a religious revival."

"It is high time. Even the Anglican Bishops think so."

"Then I will to work. You, my friend, have prepared the soil, it is my task to raise the seed. Another fifty years and we shall see great things.

LESLIE HANGER.

ACID DROPS

The Churches in the United States have long since adopted modern publicity methods—plenty of advertising, cash prizes, and a determination to rope in more believing—or even unbelieving—members than the church round the corner. This has caused a protest from the Rev. J. A. Kay, a Congregational minister from Guildford, who is on a visit to the U.S.A., and who naturally thanks God that we don't do things like that in England, "in a race to get new members." Possibly not, but then here in England our churches don't get new members. It takes them all their time to keep those they have.

Our readers will, no doubt, recall the queer episode that occurred not so long ago in the South of France where, in a village called Pont Esprit, an epidemic of madness broke out, in which the victims ran about the streets crying out that blue devils and hissing serpents were chasing them without respite. Eventually, it was proved that the epidemic was due to the fact that a poisonous fungus called ergot had been inadvertently mixed up with the flour. Had this episode occurred in New Testament times, it would have been ascribed to devils and Jesus and his disciples would have had a high old time casting them out. To-day, however, modern cases of "possession" get a better press than did Jesus, and publicity seems bad for devils.

Aided by their wealthy Church, the Knights of Columbus have been taking big spaces in American journals with the caption "Yes—the Mother of God WILL help you!" Mary, you must understand, was and is no ordinary woman, but God's Mother, and if God's Mother can't do a little thing like that, who in Heaven can? In case you are still in doubt, the K.O.C.s have prepared a beautiful little pamphlet fully describing the place of the Virgin in our daily lives—just as the manufacture of a washing powder will explain why you must buy it for your weekly wash. Sweet are the uses of Advertisement!

We recently learned from a Canadian correspondent that in eastern Canada the Roman Catholic Church gave its blessing to the formation of a co-operative society for distributing fish. We cannot help thinking that the blessed St. Peter, the alleged first Bishop of Rome and founder of the Roman Catholic Church, would probably be very pleased to find his disciples practising his old profession. Anyway, the Roman Catholic Church has had nineteen centuries in the fishing industry.

Following upon the peace treaty with Japan at San Francisco, we learn that a move is now afoot in that salubrious island to restore the Shinto cult of Emperor-worship. Our readers will recall that, prior to the end of world-war two, the Japanese Emperor was worshipped as a God by his faithful subjects. Since which date, the former deity has become a respectable democrat. We can understand a God becoming a man—we have examples nearer home—but, to switch backwards and forwards like the unfortunate Mikado between Divinity and Humanity, must surely be an exacting occupation!

In an informative talk upon the B.B.C. on "The Night Sky in October," an astronomer, Dr. Porter, referred to the curious classical legend of Orion, who gives his name to one of the brightest constellations in the night sky. Dr. Porter added the true but, upon the B.B.C., perhaps rather unwise comment that ancient gods seemed rather peculiar in their ways. True enough! But what about modern gods? Do they not, also, "move in mysterious ways, their wonders to perform"?

We quote information received recently from a correspondent. Upon November 5, 1951, there landed upon our shores a potential "St. Augustine." None other than the Reverend Roland Brown, who, in the opinion of the Bishop of Worcester and other clergy, is "the one man who might arouse Britain and bring her back to the Christian Faith." Anyhow, this American Evangelist is remaining in darkest Britain until May, 1952, in order to light the fire of faith

in our hearts. With all due respect to the Reverend Brown, we doubt if he can succeed where such mighty men of God as his countrymen, Moody and Sankey, Torrey and Alexander, failed so lamentably. Anyway, what are the English clergy doing to earn their enormous salaries when they have to send to America for help?

In the year of Grace, 1605, Guy Fawkes, at the instigation of the Roman Catholic Church, attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament. Whereas in the year of grace, 1951, Roman Catholics pull every available political wire in order to obtain legislation from this self-same Parliament favourable to Roman Catholic schools. Yet the Church of Rome still claims that it is "Semper Eadem,"—"Forever the same." Curious, isn't it?

No one, of course, will be surprised that George Bernard Shaw has at last "come through." The lucky medium is Miss Geraldine Cummins who, in the past, has been in touch with Palestine when Jesus Christ was honouring the Jewish National Home with his Divine Presence. She has told us exactly what happened to Jesus from boyhood to the final climax—every word naturally Gospel Truth—so it is not surprising that the irrepressible George should have chosen her to give the world his ideas on "Summerland" where, among other things, he has joined forces once again with his wife. He has, naturally, met Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb and other Fabians, as well as Mrs. Annie Besant; but so far not Charles Bradlaugh or G. W. Foote, perhaps because these eminent Freethinkers are shovelling coal in another place.

It should be added that Shaw wants a message to be sent "to men generally"—"the serious and grave fact that death does not kill," though unfortunately there is one awful disadvantage in "Summerland" which we always thought was a veritable Paradise. It is loss of memory, for poor Shaw could not remember his mother's name! What a tragedy! On thing does happen, however, when these great people get together and that is regular debates. We can only hope they also get good audiences.

Another irrepressible Irishman, Mr. Shaw Desmond, who knows more about Spiritualism than even Shaw, has had the nerve to contradict "our Lord." It will be remembered that Jesus distinctly affirmed that there would be no marriages in Heaven, its inhabitants obviously being physically impotent. Mr. Desmond laughs this to scorn. Of course there are marriages and children born—exactly as in this dreary old world—the only difference being that there are no economic problems. The question of the pressure of food on an expanding population is unknown in Heaven as there are "no physical bodies." What a lovely debate there will be when Bernard Shaw meets Shaw Desmond—or even, perhaps, Jesus Christ—on this question!

The "Holy Year" 1951 has only just ended. For a special papal indulgence has kept it going in Portugal right up to now. Why Portugal? Because it was in that Blessed Land that Our Lady appeared in Fatima in the summer of 1917. Since which date, Portugal has been beset by poverty, disease, illiteracy, and now, dictatorship. But, Our Lady appeared there—Happy Portugal! Fortunate Fatima!

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

M. W. KRAMRISCH.—We sympathise with your point of view but your letter is hardly within the scope of this journal. Why not contact members of the World Government Movement?

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.

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.

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.

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

Mrs. Seibert wishes to thank all those friends who visited her husband during his long illness, and for the many letters of sympathy she has received. She also thanks those who were present at the cremation, and to say how much the kindly acts and tokens of friendship helped and encouraged her to face and meet all calls of the unfortunate position.

Birmingham readers can note that Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture for the local N.S.S. Branch in Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon Street, on Sunday, November 25, at 7 p.m. His subject, "What is Civilisation?" should be of interest to citizens of all opinions and so serve as a medium of introduction to Freethinkers and Freethought.

At the "Laurie Arms," Edgware Road, the West London Branch staged their usual Sunday evening meeting upon November 11. The speaker was that formidable scourge of Catholics, Mr. E. W. Shaw, President of the Lewisham and South London Branch. In a witty, provocative and hard-hitting speech, Mr. Shaw surveyed his subject, "Rationalism and Politics." Mr. Shaw drew attention to the immaturity of modern democracy, the danger of war, upon which he gave some alarming facts, and the growing menace of political Catholicism. A lively discussion followed, to which the speaker replied with his usual vigour. The meeting was chaired by the Branch President, Mr. Hornibrook, with his usual efficiency.

Two of our pamphlets, which have had a steady sale for years, are Mr. A. G. Barker's *Henry Hetherington* and Miss Ella Twynam's *Peter Annet*. Readers who have not yet acquired them, or those who would like to know something of the splendid work these pioneers of Freethought did in defying the authorities and the bigots should hasten to add them to their library. They are unlikely to be reprinted and stocks are low. Both Annet and Hetherington always fought hard for what George Meredith called "the best of causes," and they should never be forgotten.

JOHN SEIBERT

Seibert, farewell: though we can fill your place—
For we have earnest workers by the score—
This loss of courage, courtesy, and grace
Your friends and colleagues ever will deplore.

B.S.

"THE FREETHINKER" FUND

All donations are now acknowledged in this column weekly. Donations for the week ended, Saturday, November 10, 1951: N. Horler, 10s.; W. Scarlett, 2s. 5d.; T. Thomas, 5s.; M. Taylor, £2; P. Sniven, 10s.; Campbell Little, £1; H. Brown, £2; S. Wilde, 7s. 6d.; National Secular Society, £50; Mrs. M. Quinton, 10s.; E. Pankhurst, 10s.; F. W. Garley, 10s.; L. Starley, 2s. 6d.; J. W. H. Davis, J.P., £2; M. Baker, £1 1s.
Total received to date, £288 3s. 5d.

MARRIAGE—SACRED OR PROFANE

MOST modern English people think there is only one kind of marriage possible. The French, a nation which thinks less superficially, know better. There are of course two kinds of marriage ceremony, a religious and a secular, that is to say being married in some kind of Church or in a State registry-office. Or as the old words had it: sacred or profane.

But the distinction can, and should, go much deeper than the ceremony. It can, and should, go into the marriage itself. What is sometimes impudently and inaccurately called "a Christian marriage" (meaning thereby only a Catholic, Roman or Anglican marriage which is regarded as a sacrament though of course there is another type of Protestant non-sacrament Christian marriage) can be distinguished sharply from a truly secular marriage which is a civil temporary contract terminable at will, like all other contracts.

Taking the ceremony first. Women, naturally anxious to secure their valuable asset, a money-earning male bound by law to maintain them, as securely as possible, generally "want to be married in Church." They believe (or hope) that a religious ceremony will act as an extra fetter upon the fickle male. Men care less. In fact, speaking generally, they prefer less fuss. To a woman her marriage is a great rite, sometimes the greatest of her life, and she naturally makes a display of herself and the occasion. It is safe to say that the reason why so many couples are married in Church is not because they are sincerely religious or desire "a Christian marriage" as that it is "the proper thing to do," that is to say, the traditional and conventional and expected thing. In a word, it is the "done" thing. Marriage in a registry-office has a flavour, however faint, of impropriety, a suggestion of "not the first time" and "after divorce" about it.

This is a pity. But there it is. Secularists have to take people and things as they are. This involves realising that in England, on the whole, people tend to prefer Church-marriage.

To counter-balance this traditionalism and conventionality, it may be pointed out to intending spouses that the State marriage has great advantages over the Church form. In Church you are forced to take vows which no one can possibly keep, and which no one intends to. One such vow is that the male promises to endow his bride with "all"—actually *all*, his worldly goods. No English bridegroom, however besotted, has ever been such

a fool as to do this, leaving nothing for himself. Another such vow, equally dishonest, is the female promise of obedience and service—which some honest women nowadays refuse to take, uncensored.

A State marriage asks no bride or bridegroom to tell lies by making promises impossible to fulfill. Nor are State couples insulted by having their union stigmatised by its officiator as a preventative of fornication as is done by the Anglican Church.

But the vital distinction between religious and secular marriage lies in the marriage-state itself. Is marriage to be, as Catholic bishops and priests are fond of declaring nowadays, "a lifelong union, God-made, and impossible to break except by Death?" This is the cruel and extraordinarily wicked claim made by some modern religionists but bitterly contested by many fine Christians such as the great Christian poet, John Milton. Of course marriage is never a lifelong union. It does not begin until adult life and in the real sense, it ends with senility when husbands and wives cease to be copulating partners and may be no more than nurses, friends or companions.

And granting the religious assumption of an existent Deity, a God all-wise and all good, it is surely the most horrible blasphemy to say "Those whom God hath joined," of drunkards, syphilitics, mad folk, blunderers, deceit victims and the like simply because a priest for money has uttered a form of marriage over them. Obviously man can, and should, put ill-matched partners asunder as cheaply and as quickly as possible.

But against this Church concept of indissoluble marriage (completely false to the Miltonic Christian ideal of a terminable marriage) the secular concept of a civil terminable contract should be placed. This secular concept is little publicised nowadays, and it is the Church concept which gets all the space in the newspapers. Divorce, though widely practised, is always said to be wrong in theory. No religionist to-day speaks of divorce as "a godly doctrine and discipline" as many old-time Puritans did. Even the worldly do not recognise how many miseries are ended by its beneficent use.

Of course, in England, in conformity with our usual national humbug, divorce is made as difficult, expensive and unpleasant to the parties as possible. To divorce are attributed "broken homes" (although unhappy homes are better ended, these endings are spoken of as evil, invariably), and juvenile crime (though most young delinquents come from married households). Marriage on the other hand is made idiotically easy, and presented (especially by a celibate Roman priesthood with no experience of it) as a holy state to be persisted in, whatever its evils. Yet the best that Saint Paul—a saint from many of whose teachings modern Christians avert their eyes—could find to say of marriage was that it was "better to marry than to burn." Perhaps it may be, though there is another alternative.

The distinction between religious and secular marriage is not clear-cut on the question of permanence. Many Secularists no doubt believe in a permanent monogamy, for there are one-woman men and one-man women amongst them. The Tennysonian idea "To love one woman only, cleave to her" suits such people no doubt, but the Shelleyan ideal of variety and plurality may suit others. In this matter—as in so many—human beings believe in what they wish to believe in.

Of course, the Pauline and Miltonic ideals of marriage where the husband is the head, not merely of the house, but of the wife, is dying, if not almost entirely dead in England. Milton's pamphlet of genius is neglected to-day.

National poverty forcing women into the labour market; the mental effect of emancipation from feared child-conception given by contraceptives; long sustained feminist propaganda, and similar social and economic factors have killed these ideals. John Knox's "Monstrous Regiment of Women" has come into its own. Englishmen are rapidly becoming the under-dogs in marriage, being the money-providers by law while the woman is not. This of course may be a mere hang-over and a temporary phase, but it is not yet *de rigueur* for a wife to pay alimony or maintenance to her divorced partner in England. The contrary, of course, is the rule.

In the present state of affairs, what Secularists need to do is to work for civil marriage by explaining its real advantages over the religious ceremony and to maintain the respectability and necessity of divorce as an institution. Sitting as a divorce judge, the late Mr. Justice Swift, an outspoken and sensible person whom I knew well, said boldly: "The divorce laws of this country are wicked and cruel." This is still true. Compared with civilised laws like those of Scandinavia, they are quite abominable, and it is no exaggeration to say that their barbarity is due almost entirely to ecclesiastic and religious influence. But it is also due to the apathy of Secularists who seldom fight for decent divorce, being over-occupied with combating beliefs rather than actions.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

NEW TESTAMENT CRITICISM

IN recent years there have been many books dealing with the New Testament, the elements of truth and myth in its narratives, and the way in which comparative religion and the higher criticism have succeeded in disentangling these various skeins. But there have been few, if any, recent books which have summarised what scholars of varying schools of thought have had to say on such problems. Prof. A. M. Hunter, of Aberdeen University, remarks that a friend said to him that there should be a new book on the question every twenty or thirty years, setting down the present state of such studies and indicating present trends of thought. With this many of us will be in cordial agreement, and will, furthermore, agree that Prof. Hunter's *Interpreting the New Testament: 1900-1950* (S.C.M. Press, 10s. 6d.), granted the author's pro-Christian point of view, performs that function admirably.

Here are set out details of recent work on the Gospels, on the writings of St. Paul and the authors of the other epistles, and (of very special interest) a discussion of the respective merits of the various retranslations of the New Testament which have been published in the past fifty years or so.

Freethinkers, in common with others who are interested in religious problems, will find food for thought in its pages. It is the indifferentist only who will find the book of no importance; for, whatever most Freethinkers may feel about the matter, there can be little doubt that those who are genuinely interested in religious questions, no matter which side of the theological fence they may prefer, have more in common than is sometimes admitted. And certainly they will share a belief that a brilliant summary of recent research in these matters, such as that which Prof. Hunter has provided, is a book which can find a welcome place on their shelves.

J. R.

HENRY HETHERINGTON. By A. G. Barker. A Pioneer in the Freethought and Working-class Struggle of a Hundred Years Ago. Price 6d.; postage 1½d.

DOTAGE

I am become as the beasts of the field
That have no memory: they eat and drink,
They love and sleep, all things by them forgot.
Man is his memories; remembrance, man,
A chain that binds events, the then and now,
To which a link is added each new day.
I have no knowledge of the future state,
For men and beasts this ignorance still share.
I cannot hope that the next added link—
If such there be—will be forged bright and strong,
Nor much dissimilar to my long chain,
That chain that bound and made me, link by link.
Now is it snapped: I only eat and drink,
Love no one any more, and long for sleep.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

CORRESPONDENCE**EVOLUTION**

SIR,—In Mr. H. Cutner's article on Evolution in reply to me he says that the Bible says the earth was flat. I would be interested to know from Mr. Cutner where the Bible says that the earth was flat. I know of many places where the Bible shows knowledge of the earth being round and that it was suspended upon nothing; for example: Jesus Christ said that at the moment of his return like a flash of lightning to judge the world, in some parts of the world it would be night, and in others morning, and elsewhere afternoon. God's words to Job describe the earth turning on an axis and that this is the cause of the sunrise. There are many things in the Bible like this of which many people are willingly ignorant.—Yours, etc.,

E. K. VICTOR PEARCE.

SCIENCE AND RELIGION

SIR.—Many readers within the past eighteen months or so have tried to dispute my contention that a new period of accommodation or even friendliness between science and religion is upon us. I am therefore driven to write and to call their attention to the newly-published autobiography of R. A. Millikan, the great American physicist and expert on cosmic rays. It has just been published at 21s. by Messrs. Macdonald. This book, which is well-known in the U.S.A., is, I should stress, by one of the acutest thinkers in the scientific world. And here is what Dr. Millikan says on this issue of science and religion:—

"Religion and science are, in my analysis, the two great sister forces which have pulled, and are pulling, mankind onward and upward."

That is only one isolated sentence from a closely-argued chapter of the book. But, taken with statements from Einstein, Planck, and others which I have quoted in the past, it goes to show that the old idea of a war, hot or cold, between science and religion, is now far less strongly held than was the case fifty years or more ago.—Yours, etc.,

JOHN ROWLAND.

OBITUARY**JOHN SEIBERT**

A valiant warrior for Freethought has been lost to the movement by the death of John Seibert, which took place on November 5 in St. Columba's Hospital, Swiss Cottage, London, at the early age of 46 after a long and painful illness. His services to Freethought in an official capacity took the form of Secretary to the South London Branch N.S.S., Manager of the Pioneer Press, member of the Executive of the N.S.S., Director of the Secular Society Limited, and General Secretary of the National Secular Society, all of which he filled with marked efficiency, except the last; for directly after his appointment a rapid development in his illness necessitated a very serious operation which cut short all his activities. Coupled with his devotion to Freethought must go his wonderful, even remarkable, courage in facing his suffering. He never gave up hope in fighting back for health and duty, even when it was obvious to visiting friends that the end was fast approaching. The description of Atheist on his record sheet was well known in the hospital ward, where prayers were customary, many for his recovery; and among the last words he spoke were, "They have seen how an Atheist can live and now I will show them how an Atheist can die." Another example of his courage and devotion to principles

was shown when he served a term of imprisonment as a conscientious objector during the last war.

The cremation took place in the South London Crematorium, S.W. 16, on November 8 when, before an assembly of relatives, friends, representatives of the Executive N.S.S., Secular Society Ltd., Pioneer Press, and Branches of the N.S.S., a Secular Service was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

This Obituary would be incomplete without a reference to the never-tiring devotion of his wife, who was constantly in attention, caring for his every want, even to the verge of physical exhaustion. We honour her for her devotion and sympathise with her in her great loss.

R. H. R.

GEORGE J. WARREN

One of the old guard passed away by the death of George J. Warren, of Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex, which took place on October 25. No details were given by his daughter in her notice of his death to our office. His Freethought opinions, that he would wish for a Secular Service, that no clergyman should officiate, and that the N.S.S. would send a speaker, were pointed out to the daughter but no reply was received. One is justified in giving a guess as to what happened at his funeral. He was one of the original Directors of The Secular Society, Limited, on its formation in 1898.

R. H. R.

ANTI-CLERICALISM IN FRANCE

"This problem of secular education, however, is only an aspect of a far more profound conflict. It represents the effort of the (Catholic) Church to transform contemporary France into a Clerical State like Spain or Italy. What gives such extreme violence to this current conflict is that it brings out into the open the hostility between two fundamentally incompatible views of mankind and two rival philosophies of the Universe: that of the priesthood which wishes to enslave, and that of the Republic which seeks to liberate Humanity. Intermediate well-meaning attempts to find a workable compromise between these two fundamental standpoints are now clearly demonstrated as futile. A new war with clericalism has now begun. And its influence upon French politics opens up incalculable possibilities." Daniel Ligou in *La Revue Socialiste*.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.**OUTDOOR**

- 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. Speaker: G. WOODCOCK.
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: E. EBURY and W. G. FRASER.
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, November 17, 6-30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.
Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: Mr. J. BINNS, "19 On the Caspian Sea 19."
Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 20, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.
Glasgow Secular Society.—No meeting.
Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mrs. DORA RUSSELL, "The Soviet Women of To-day."
Manchester Humanist Fellowship (Onward Hall, 207, Deansgate).—Saturday, November 17, 3 p.m.: Mr. M. L. BURNETT, Editor, *Ethical News and Notes*, "Human Relations in Industry."
Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Mr. A. TURNER (S.P.G.B.), "The Only Way to Socialism."
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, November 18, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D.; F.R.S.E., "The Seeing Eye."
West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: Mr. VICTOR E. NEUBURG, "Humbug in Modern Education."
South London and Lewisham Branch N.S.S. (London and Brighton Hotel, Queen's Road, Peckham S.E.).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. LEN EBURY, "Secularism and Politics."

THE CURDSELLER

By HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

THE author of these quatrains is one of India's most gifted poets and dramatists; his poems, songs and plays which are popular among all sections of the Indian people, are a great contribution to India's struggle for national independence from the strait-jacket of her ancient traditions and feudal remnants.

The curdseller is a village bard who goes from village to village striking the time-beat on his bowl and between the quatrains to the refrain of "Come, taste these curds . . .", dances to a drum. He is a sort of walking newspaper—the acknowledged critic of existing conditions and his wit spares nobody and nothing.

REFRAIN:

Come, taste these curds,
They are white as snow,
They are white as birds—
Come, taste these curds . . .

O, come with me, my children!
To the sweet and holy town
And every king a clown!
Where every clown becomes a king
Come, taste these curds . . .

The world is full of paddy
And the world is full of wheat—
Yet there are tens of thousands
Who have no food to eat . . .
Come, taste these curds . . .

Go into any city,
Go into any town,
You'll find the prices going up,
The people going down.
Come, taste these curds . . .

And all things are expensive now
Because of war and strife.
The only thing that's really cheap
To-day is human life.
Come, taste these curds . . .

They starved and killed the poet,
And now, it makes me laugh
To see them bring their bags of gold
To buy his autograph!
Come, taste these curds . . .

P. G. ROY.

CHARLES WATTS

THE Freethought party has produced many men of great talent as lecturers, writers and debaters and who have with very great courage never been afraid to express their opinions in spite of fearful odds. By their perseverance they converted Christians—which was no easy task—to the Gospel of Freethought. One of the most noteworthy soldiers in the N.S.S. army was Charles Watts, who, on platform, lecturer or debater, was a mighty man. No matter what his subject, his audience was always delighted and as a writer he was superb. In Canada, he spent many years lecturing in Toronto to crowded audiences every Sunday. He was a personal friend of Col. Ingersoll who at the American Secular Union (1885) said of him "as Vice-President, Mr. Charles Watts is a gentleman of sound logical mind; one who knows what he wants to say and how to say it; who is familiar with the organisation of Secular Societies, and knows what we wish to accomplish and the means to attain it. I am glad that he is about

to make this country his home and I know of no man who, in my judgment, can do more for the cause of intellectual liberty." Truly a very great compliment. But after the death of Charles Bradlaugh he returned to his native land and became a Freethought missionary at Birmingham, doing great work in the Midlands for the cause he loved. Afterwards he removed to London and continued to write weekly for *The Freethinker* until he passed away.

"He was a scholar, and a ripe and good one;
Exceeding wise, fair spoken, and persuading;
A man take him for all in all,
I shall not look upon his like again."

—SHAKESPEARE.

JOSEPH CLOSE.

THEATRE

"Mrs. Basil Farrington" by David Tearle. New Boltons Theatre

Peter Cotes, who has done so much to establish the New Boltons Theatre Club as a home for good drama, is one of the most active and enterprising producers in the country. In *Mrs. Basil Farrington* we have the answer to those who complain that managements are not sufficiently enterprising to use their theatres as shop windows. The grounds for complaint are still there, for there are not enough discerning managements who are ready to try out new plays of promise.

This is the story of a young woman with a great future as a pianist. A fellow musician, also bent on a career as a pianist, wishes to marry her, and she accepts in order to get away from a dominating father. From then on she gives up her own career in order not to stand in the way of her husband. In fact, due to her devotion (for later she does love him) he meets with considerable success. But trouble starts when he begins a clandestine love affair with another woman, and his wife is extremely jealous. The highly dramatic manner in which she is the undoing of her husband has been ingeniously handled by the author. Finally, she is left a widow, alone but for a housekeeper, and friends she does not want to meet. This is a pathetic picture of a demented old woman whom nobody can console.

The interpretation of this star part has been given to us most vividly by Joan Miller, who makes us feel keenly the emotional upheavals of this wretched woman. David Markham gives a fine performance as Basil Farrington, a man too weak to stand alone. Pearl Dadswell is a forthright domineering housekeeper, and Avis Scott was very natural as the other woman.

The play is not perfect but it has good drama. I feel that Mr. Tearle should endeavour to restrict the number of characters, for some of the ten he has used seemed hardly necessary.

Peter Cotes has produced with his usual efficiency.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAPACY. By F. A. Ridley. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

PETER ANNET, 1693—1769. By Ella Twynam. Price 2d.; postage 1½d.

WHAT IS THE SABBATH DAY? By H. Cutner. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 2d.