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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Cant, or Cunning, from Canterbury?

THE world, and in particular, the long-suffering British public has been recently entertained by a comedy staged in the Metropolitan Church of Canterbury, the archiepiscopal See of the Anglican primate. The protagonists in this bizarre spectacle were "The Most Reverend Father in God, Geoffrey, Archbishop of Canterbury and Primate of all England," and "The Very Reverend the Dean of the Metropolitan Church of Canterbury," Dr. Hewlett Johnson. To be sure, both these exalted personages have been otherwise described in other places. A distinguished contributor to the columns of this journal recently described Dr. Fisher as "a hardened worldling," whilst Dr. Hewlett Johnson—if we simply called him "Dr. Johnson" this might provoke a mighty Shade to explosive wrath!—is widely and familiarly known as "The Red Dean."

The trouble was, as we all know, started by the Dean who, a modern "Canterbury pilgrim," had journeyed to "far Cathay," like his mediaeval predecessors, "The Canterbury pilgrims" of Chaucer. Having returned from "Red" China, the "Red" Dean promptly endorsed the accusations that our Communist contemporary, the *Daily Worker*, has now been charging for some time against the "United Nations," or, more precisely, against the American participants in the present unhappy conflict in Korea: the accusation in this case boiling down to the precise charge of using "bacteriological arms" or, in plainer English, of infecting enemy territory with plague, pestilence and, perhaps, not so sudden death.

The Dean claims that he has in his portfolio positive and on-the-spot proofs that this terrible weapon—one "outlawed" in "civilised" war (whatever that is?)—has been actually used against the Chinese and their North Korean Allies by the American military authorities as part of their deliberate strategy for eventually winning this now two-year-old war and thus making Korea—or what is left of it!—"safe for Democracy." It may be relevantly added, or so we understood from reading the *Daily Worker*, the Dean's own organ (upon the Board of which Dr. Hewlett Johnson is advertised as sitting), that the Dean does *not* charge the United Nations in general, nor the British Government and military authorities in particular, with being privy to this alleged atrocity. He claims that, as in the recent bombing of the power plants on the Yalu River, the U.S.A. Supreme Commander and his American advisers have employed germ warfare *without* consulting their Allies in the camp of the United Nations.

The truth, or otherwise, of the Dean of Canterbury's charge cannot be discussed here, it is a matter of evidence and, at that, of scientific evidence of an unusually technical nature, which requires expert opinion of an unbiased character to pass any definitive judgment on its validity. We must confess here, however, that the universal howl of horror with which the Dean's accusa-

tion has been received in non-Communist circles appears to be somewhat extravagant. After all, it is a matter of common knowledge and, we believe, a matter of undisputed fact that most, if not all "civilised" [sic] nations do spend money and employ scientists on experiments and preparations for bacteriological warfare. The United States admits to possessing such experimental stations; so does Great Britain (the British laboratories for bacteriological warfare are, we understand, at Porton, near Salisbury, in Wiltshire, a place familiar to the present writer). Other nations, no doubt, have analogous institutions, including Russia and China. Modern military "secrets" usually become "open secrets" before very long: "secret weapons" soon become public property—or even "public nuisances."

Under such circumstances we regret to have to state frankly that, if the Americans have not yet used germ warfare in Korea—and upon this charge we are not in a position to pass an opinion—they, or if not them, someone else will use it at some period in the probably not very distant future, somewhere else. For if one fact may be said to stand out with transparent clearness from the history of war in general, it is the facility with which new weapons, at first regarded as "unspeakable" and "inhuman," soon become acclimatised on and to the battlefield. Humanity has, it seems, as part of its adaptable make-up, a virtually unlimited capacity to become acclimatised to horrors, even to the most unexpected horrors. We may recall that, in the Thirteenth Century, the then newly-invented cross-bow was denounced as too devilish to be permitted in battles between Christian men, and Popes and Councils thundered against it. Whilst as for the originally oriental weapon of gunpowder, this was held for centuries to be the work of Satan and gunners were refused the sacraments of the Church and were immediately hanged upon capture, as wizards, not bona fide soldiers.

On modern battlefields the cross-bows and guns of the Middle Ages would be merely useless toys: modern military science, which has launched successively, the maxim gun, poison gas, the bombing-plane, the atomic bomb, and, now, napalm bombs, is not likely to say "Halt" for ever before the, at present, untried spectre of germ-warfare. We may, in such a connection, relevantly recall Leonardo Da Vinci's truly prophetic warning, already quoted in these columns, as to what destructive use the human race would make of the then undiscovered submarine.

However, it is proverbial that amongst the generality of mankind, "emotion is common and reason is scarce." This axiom of general application appears to be largely true of our exalted Houses of Parliament wherein the case of the Dean was hotly debated by irate legislators in both Houses. In the Commons, angry Tories, temporarily oblivious of their Party's long connection with the Church of England, once so close that the Church was actually styled "The Tory Party at prayer"!—used

most unparliamentary language about the Dean of its Metropolitan Cathedral, whilst the august Chamber of the Lords beheld Labour peers' demand the intervention of the criminal law against the "Red Dean." "A Spectre is haunting Westminster, the Spectre of Communism!" Fortunately, the Government has, so far, retained enough sanity or sense of humour not to lend itself to enacting the role of a comic opera "Star Chamber."

In this "Comedy of Errors" perhaps the most comic part was played by the Dean's own exalted colleague, His Grace of Canterbury. Whilst deprecating the intrusion of the police into the Cathedral precincts of his own Metropolitan City, Dr. Fisher took the opportunity to castigate the Communist views of his Very Reverend colleague; a theologically debatable proceeding in view of the recorded fact that the Early Church to which, incidentally, Anglicans are always appealing against the later pretensions of Rome, apparently practised Communism in an unequivocal manner. So much so, in fact, that St. Peter, Dr. Fisher's earliest episcopal predecessor, actually struck Ananias and Sapphira dead for a temporary relapse into "private enterprise." (As, no doubt, the Dean's legal advisers would point out if his episcopal superiors were to charge their client with "heresy?")

And, whilst we are all very pleased to learn that the Primate disapproves of germ-warfare, his protests would, we submit, have been more impressive if his predecessors in the See of Canterbury had similarly recorded protests against *British* governments who forced opium down the throats of Chinese at the point of the bayonet (1839-40), and when *British* soldiers blew their Sepoy prisoners *alive* from the mouths of guns during the suppression of the "Indian Mutiny" (1857-9), horrors of which every decent-minded British patriot must now be ashamed, but which then passed without protest from Dr. Fisher's predecessors at a time when the Established Church was far more powerful than it is now. Denunciation, like charity, begins at home!

The spectacle of two prelates in the same church and even the same cathedral at loggerheads is sufficiently comic. To the Archbishop, Communism is the work of Satan; to the Dean, true Christianity! But, perhaps, after all, the current comedy conceals a more serious purpose. Dr. Fisher, at least, is a "hardened worldling," an astute politician; saintliness alone is unlikely in this hard world to get a man to Canterbury. Perhaps what we are actually witnessing is an up-to-date version of *The Vicar of Bray*, that patron-saint of Anglicanism. Capitalism and Communism "may come and go," but there will always be an Archbishop—or a Dean of Canterbury, whichever side wins! Cant from Canterbury or Cunning?

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE GOD-MUDDLE

"The United Front of Militant Atheism Advances."—
Pope Pius XII (December 24, 1949).

RECENTLY President Truman made himself and his Government a perfect laughing-stock to the enlightened public opinion of the whole world, but particularly to his atheistic colleagues of the U.N.E.S.C.O., when, on the occasion of the American Independence Day, he officially confessed (by implication) his utter lack of wisdom in the present world situation and exhorted his fellow-countrymen to "beseech God to grant us wisdom to know the course which we should follow. . . ."

The proclamation was hilarious enough to every intelligent man, woman and child, but it could be more so (and more particular in its references), to the greater merriment of the world's galleries, if Mr. Truman had more closely followed that spectacular prayerful consultant of God, his former subordinate, the late General George Patton. "Sir," began Patton in a prayer on December 23, 1944, the eve of the Ardennes offensive, "this is Patton talking. . . . Rain, snow, more rain, more snow—and I am beginning to wonder on which side they actually are in Thy headquarters. . . . You must decide for yourself on whose side you are standing. You must come to my help, so that I can annihilate the whole German army with one stroke as a birthday present for your Prince of Peace." (*Time*, January 10, 1949, p. 23).

All this is surely entertaining, but as soon as you begin realising the sad cultural implications of such pronouncements you can't help turning from a hearty laugh to an uncomfortable shudder. Here is the head of a nation, claiming to be the leader of the free word, who thinks this medieval *magical recipe of a prayer* to be still appropriate for influencing his voters, confronted with an impending world disaster!

To the enlightened public of the world President Truman's proposed *shift of responsibility* on to God's advice must appear nothing but a brazen example of intellectual dishonesty.

Well, if such top-ranking politicians can still reckon to get away safely with a recourse to plain magic in palliating their own *eventual* bungling of world affairs, then the cultural implication is that there is a terrific need for emancipating the *whole* American public from this favourite bunkum of all-time obscurantists—the GOD-MUDDLE.

By the way, Mr. Truman's theology appears to be somewhat backward because, as a recent survey of philosophical thought in U.S.A. shows, many liberal Protestant clergymen have completely abandoned a theistic interpretation of the universe in favour of scientific humanism.

Now to spread this dissolution of the Christian superstition to the non-theological public, I suggest that the method of the atheistic argument must be revised: *the prevailing way*, in most Rationalist literature in regard to the Christian religion, of simply arguing against GOD, leaves the muddle half-solved.

This unsatisfactory state of affairs is notoriously exploited by Catholic obscurantists, such as Jacques Maritain in France, who "diagnosed" this atheist's inadequacy as coming not from incomplete handling of objective facts, but from an act of faith: "That is the first internal contradiction of contemporary atheism. It declares that all religion must disappear, but it is in itself a religious phenomenon" (*Listener*, March 9, 1950, p. 416).

The philological and logical reasons that, in my opinion, urgently demand a revision of the atheistic method of attack towards a greater precision and impact appear to be as follows:—

(1) The Old Testament philology has long ago shown that the individual or proper name of the god (in Hebrew, *el* or *eloh*) of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Hebrew *chief* god, was YAHVEH (formerly written: Jehovah). Because of a primitive taboo on pronouncing sacred names, the Hebrews have always used instead *Adonai* (=Lord). This superstitious usage has gradually eliminated the proper name Yahveh from the cult, until now the Christians (excepting Jehovah's Witnesses) almost never mention their own *chief* god by his proper name. The class (generic) names, "Lord" and "God," wrongly

written with a capital letter, and which never has been, in the English language, a proper name of a particular Anglo-Saxon god, have supplanted "Yahveh" in all biblical texts commonly used in the Churches. This has happened not only in English, but also in other European languages where the class-names *theos*, *deus*, *Dieu*, *Gott*, etc., or *kyrios*, *dominus*, *Seigneur*, *Herr*, etc., stand as substitutes for the same original proper or individual name, *Yahveh*. In some languages, however, Christian translators found no *generic* (class) name corresponding to the Hebrew *el* or Greek *theos*, and simply borrowed the *proper* name of the most important local god. Thus in Latvian the proper name of the ancient Latvian sky-god, "Dievs" (originally meaning: the sky) was usurped by the Low German missionaries from the heathen Latvians and incorporated in the Latvian translation of the Bible as a "translation" of the Hebrew *el* to refer to *Yahveh*! In the Hungarian language it was the individual name of the ancient Hungarian *chief* god, *Ishten*, that was substituted for the Hebrew *el* in the Hungarian Bible. This Christian sly trick of both concealing and confusing the identity of their own chief god was in line with building churches on the sites of pagan temples and holy groves, and with putting Christian holy days on to pagan festivals, and thus it immensely boosted the spread and acceptance of the Israelite-Christian brand of religion. Says the Christian theologian, Professor Cook (*Introduction to the Bible*, p. 38, Pelican edition, 1945): "The divine name *Yahveh* was translated 'Lord,' thus giving Israelite religious ideas a less national and immensely wider application."

GREGORY S. SMELTERS.

(To be Concluded)

CHRISTIANITY AND HERESY

ONE of the most noteworthy characteristics of medieval Christianity was its rigidity in matters of doctrine and its relentless, and often atrocious, persecution of "heretics," or, to use the modern jargon, deviationists.

It is, furthermore, to be remarked that these so-called heretics, where *they* held power, as in the case of King Theodore, showed more toleration to their opponents than they received from them. This, perhaps, was due to the fact that these heresies or deviations usually represented the more rational and progressive approach, where the orthodox held to some bewildering phantasy.

These remarks particularly apply to three of the most famous heresies of the first millenium of the Christian era, those of Arianism, Nestorianism and Monophysism.

Arius, archdeacon of Alexandria, advanced the sensible view that the *one* Supreme God could not become one individual amongst the numerous human beings of His creation, that Jesus, therefore, was only a divinely inspired or endowed man and not the One God himself. This was rejected by the triumphant Catholic Orthodox section in favour of the incomprehensible mystique of the Trinity.

Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople, was an exception to the rule of tolerance referred to above, as he had quite a bully time persecuting Arians. It should be admitted, however, that this was during his earlier, orthodox stage, before he revealed those deviationist tendencies that eventually brought him so low. For, later, he put forward the reasonable theory that Mary might be the mother of the man Jesus, but it was a terminological inexactitude to describe her as the mother of God (or one-third of Him!) His thesis that, for God to be created and born of a human being, was an impossibility, lost him his job and very nearly

his life as well. The Catholic point of view of a Mary raised to divinity as the mother of the eternal and indivisible Trinity, has prevailed for the enjoyment of posterity.

The Monophysites, whose leading apologist was Severus, bishop of Antioch, laid down the logical tenet that Jesus, being a man, must have a corruptible body and a human mind of limited capacity. This theory of the one "nature" (*physis*) had been rejected at the Council of Chalcedon (to which the Monophysites contemptuously referred as the "Chalcedonite heresy").

But the mystical contradiction of an incorruptible body that perished on the cross and a divine-human dual nature, has survived for the benefit of humanity.

It is remarkable that the Protestant "heretics" accepted all the worse phantasies that had grown up—incarnation, trinity, dual nature, etc.—with the exception of Marolatry, which they threw out as part of the Vatican-priesthood power set-up (which was what *they* were after!).

The consequences of this pursuit of rigid orthodoxy and persecution of deviation has been acclaimed by some historians, as having "saved" the Byzantine Empire, the Papacy and Christianity generally. No greater travesty of historical fact could be made.

The Nestorians, for instance, spread from Jerusalem to China, and, according to some authorities, at one time outnumbered the Greek and Latin communities together. The cruel persecution of these and the Monophysites was one of the principal factors in the easy defeat of the Byzantine Empire by the Arabs, while this tremendous missionary effort was practically wiped out. Similarly, the persecution of Arians, when nearly all the Barbarian kings and their people were of that persuasion, led to wars, more wars and devastation on a scale which a more liberal and conciliatory policy could have spared the unhappy Europeans of that epoch.

We rationalists, however, have something to be thankful for in this recital of the tragedies of human stupidity. For Christianity would be far more widespread and powerful to-day had the Catholic-Orthodox set-up been a little less grasping and intransigent.

P. C. KING.

REX ET REGINA EXEUNT

Eva is dead: this matters not a jot,

Except to one sad man, a grieving husband.

What is important are the laws she planned:

Will they now fade with her who them begot.

Are Eva's "shirtless ones" a worthy lot?

She turned to them from England's hostile strand,

(The Palace clique this able woman banned),

Turned to the poor and ragged, whom kings know not.

Also Farouk is gone, and gone for good;

Good for his country; maybe good for him.

He was too fat, and if he gets less food

There is a chance he may become more slim.

But Eva fought for women and the poor:

Unfashionable folk her death deplore.

B. S.

MISTAKES OF MOSES. By Col. R. G. Ingersoll. Price 3d. postage 1½d.

THE MOTHER OF GOD. By G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; postage 1½d.

ACID DROPS

One of the many Catholic newspapers in America, making a desperate bid to keep their religion alive in the face of so much indifferentism, not to say actual hostility, let readers into the secret of Henry VIII's "Reformation." It points out that the real reason was "the laxity of morals among the people of England and some of the clergy," the operative word no doubt being "some." Henry was, of course, the arch-villain who hanged and disembowelled Catholics and even burned Protestants for denying "the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist." If it had not been for Henry, England—that is, everybody in England—would still be basking in the sunshine of the Pope. But if England was so thoroughly Catholic before Henry, why were the morals of the people and some of the clergy so lax?

The same journal tries to show that whatever the attack on the Church may be it always survives. This is a very disingenuous argument. One may rightly ask, "What survives?" Whatever Roman apologists may say, the Church now is *not* the same Church it was hundreds of years ago. Its "dogmas" have had to be brought in line with modern scientific teaching—when it faces science. The Pope has thrown completely overboard, for example, the Mosaic cosmology and has been forced to agree that this earth of ours has been in existence for countless ages.

How much modern science has forced the Church to be on the defensive can be seen in the late Fr. Thurston's admission in his book on *Superstition*: "No Catholic, for example, is bound in conscience to believe that a cure at Lourdes, even when fully approved by ecclesiastical authority, is necessarily of supernatural origin." But admissions like this, of course, are almost unknown to the laity, and they only come out when the Church has to face science. For the laity, the Church still teaches its out-of-date twaddle, and therefore still "survives." But, in face of modern discoveries, the old Church has *not* survived. It is as dead as the dodo.

So we were right! The *Daily Express* for July 18 admits that the doctors who, before they went to Dublin, were in favour of divorce and who changed when surrounded by Irish doctors, "wanted to avoid a public clash on divorce in the capital of a Roman Catholic country"; for most of the doctors "who collaborated in the meeting were Roman Catholics." That settled it. To avoid anything "embarrassing" everybody gave in to Popery, at its worst—and the Roman Church ought to be proud of its victory over a weak-kneed crowd of medical men. And what a crowd! Thus the rights or wrongs of divorce had nothing to do with these people. All that mattered was not to "embarrass" our Roman Catholic colleagues, and positive reform could go to hell!

Faith Healing has never had a better Press than it has now, and Spiritualists are cashing in on it with all their might. It is due to "spirit doctors" working through mediums, or it is due to "spiritual rays" unknown to blatant Materialists. You can take your choice. Or, if a priest lays on hands and cures completely incurable cases, then it is due to Jesus Christ. Or the cures are due to the intercession of innumerable saints through their "relics." But the *Daily Mail* reported the other

day miraculous cures through drinking water from St. Walstan's Well, Bawburgh, Norfolk, dating back from the tenth century! This takes our breath away, especially when we learn that the water is "contaminated" and the local Medical Officer of Health is "loath to let people drink it, as there were physical reasons why they should not do so." But will believers in "faith healing" explain how water, unfit to drink because it is badly contaminated, manages to cure incurable diseases and has done so for nearly ten centuries?

THEATRE

"Sweet Madness," by Peter Jones. Vaudeville Theatre. THIS first play by a young actor has much to recommend it. Although it is slight it has original humour and the situations are good.

A wealthy young man, Valentine Crisp, wishes to marry and goes to a Professor Klein who specialises in bringing together people who are psychologically suited to each other. But in this case the girl appears to know nothing about it, and unsuspectingly applies to Valentine for a post as secretary. Of course, she is engaged although Valentine has some misgivings as to her suitability.

These three main parts are played by Richard Attenborough (Valentine), Geraldine McEwan (the girl) and Martin Miller as Klein. Mr. Attenborough sails through the part easily, but he never smiles and wears the expression of a spoiled child bored with his wealth. Miss McEwan, who made her London debut at this theatre last year, continues to impress us with her peculiar quality of voice and capable acting. Martin Miller gives us the finest performance of the play by a single entry in the last act, which makes us wish we could have seen more of him earlier in the play.

Then there is Robin Bailey, who plays Valentine's best friend and who almost upsets his plans. There is Sheila Burrell who is Valentine's well-trained secretary, and there is a very charming and likeable butler played by Laurence Naismith, in the best part of this kind written since J. M. Barrie.

Jack Minister Production is well finished. Elizabeth Taplay has given us an ultra-modern setting.

The play has a quality that can lead us to expect much from Mr. Jones's future work.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

[The author of "The Innocents" at Her Majesty's Theatre is William Archibald and not Stephen Mitchell as inadvertently stated in last week's issue. Mr. Mitchell presented the play.—EDITOR.]

OLDEST RATIONALIST?

"Higher than this world there is none. There is no heaven and no hell. The world of gods is an invention of impostors. When once a man is dead and his body is burnt to ashes, how can he return again? If he who departs from the body goes to another world, how is it he comes not back again restless for the love of his kindred? The holy rituals and sacrifices are all merely means of livelihood for the priests destitute of manliness. If a beast slain in the holy sacrifice will go to heaven, why does not the sacrificer offer his own father? If the offerings to the priests produce gratification to the persons in another world, in the case of travellers it is needless to give provision for the journey. If beings in heaven are gratified by our offerings to the priests, why not give food in a similar manner down below to those on the house-top?"

[Brihaspathi, ancient Hindu sage.]

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Will Miss Freda Peckman kindly let us have her address as soon as possible? Would all contributors in future be good enough to put their names and addresses on their copy.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s.; half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

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 Secretary of the N.S.S. at this Office by Friday morning.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS

Under the energetic direction of the General Secretary: Mr. P. Victor Morris, the N.S.S. goes from strength to strength. As a result, we are happy to say, of our recent advertisement in *The Freethinker*, the General Secretary has received, and continues to receive, applications for membership of the N.S.S. Meanwhile, we are able to report new forms of activity. Every Friday, Mr. Harry Cleaver, the indefatigable Secretary of the West London Branch, ably assisted by a branch member, Miss Nelham, sells *The Freethinker* in Piccadilly Circus: an example which, we hope, will be widely imitated in other parts of the country. Meanwhile, N.S.S. propaganda continues with unabated activity. The N.S.S. has been fortunate enough to secure the services of several able propagandists. The most recent of these recruits to the N.S.S., Mr. J. O'Neill, has been a freelance Secularist for some years and has recently joined the West London Branch, N.S.S. He reports highly successful meetings in Kingston and Hyde Park. Mr. O'Neill is not only an experienced and capable exponent of Freethought, but has studied the Bible so thoroughly that members of his audiences have even been heard saying that he must have written it!

Some months ago we wrote an editorial entitled *Religious Terrorism in the Middle East*. In this article we dealt with the then current crop of assassinations by Muslim fanatics of prominent personalities in the Middle East. To-day, in Persia and elsewhere, the religious terror appears to be stalking abroad again. Having lost his position as Prime Minister by constitutional means, M. Mossadeq has returned to power with the aid of the dagger of the assassin.

The socially reactionary character of the Muhammadan Church has just been strikingly exemplified by a theological declaration of the University of Al Hazar in Cairo, the most famous of Muslim universities, that the social emancipation and the political enfranchisement of women are contrary to the Divine Law as laid down in the Koran. Islam is, next to Catholicism, still the most powerful religious force in the world. Recently these two powerful reactionary forces have displayed a tendency to forget their age-long rivalry and to unite against

the common enemies, Secularism and Atheism. For example, the Virgin Mary's most recent appearance was at Fatima, a place named after Muhammad's daughter.

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

A CERTAIN amount of correspondence has arrived at this office in recent months which indicates that there are some readers of *The Freethinker* who have a rather confused idea as to what this journal actually stands for. Thus, we have—sometimes, actually by the same post!—received letters objecting to some of our articles as too Left-Wing in the political sense, whilst others threaten to stop reading the paper because of the presence of articles which are critical of Russia and of Left-Wing policies.

We wish to make it perfectly clear that, now as always in the past, this journal has *no* political programme in the party sense of the term. This, however, does not mean that no issue other than religion can be discussed in our columns. This would be to reduce Secularism to the narrow, purely negative role of "anti-religion." Secularism is a *positive* philosophy and, as such, touches life at many points.

In the above connection all serious articles will be published in our columns which, in the opinion of the Editor, are of interest and/or importance to Secularists. It is further to be understood that all writers who appear in *The Freethinker* have complete freedom to express their point of view of whatever nature. A periodical which practised censorship and continued to call itself *The Freethinker* would, surely, be a contradiction in terms? Naturally, the individual contributor is solely responsible for any controversial views which he or she expresses, and all articles are open to criticism in our columns.

The above policy has always been that of this journal in the past and the present Editor has no intention of departing from it whilst he retains the confidence of the Directors of the "G. W. Foote Company," the proprietors of this journal.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE LETTERS OF INGERSOLL

The Life and Letters of Robert G. Ingersoll. Edited, with a Biographical Introduction, by Eva Ingersoll Wakefield. Edition for the English Reader edited, with a Preface, by Royston Pike. Watts & Co. 1952. 21s. net.

THIS is the English edition of the book published in America last year and reviewed by me in these columns then. It is good that readers in this country can add it to their library of Freethought literature—for Ingersoll has now become a classic with us, and his letters, sparkling with wit and wisdom on many subjects, are a joy to read. What he had to say in his lectures and essays was also a joy to read—indeed, to read over and over again—and here we have his many brilliant opinions on art and literature and music as well as on religion and politics.

Ingersoll let himself go on many questions, and was never afraid of saying exactly what he thought to his correspondents. For example, there is a magnificent passage in his "Liberty of Man, Woman, and Child" on Napoleon for whom the French have built a magnificent tomb which all visitors to Paris make a special point of seeing. Ingersoll did not like Napoleon—"I thought," he said, "of the orphans and widows he had made—of the tears that had been shed for his glory, and of the only woman who ever loved him, pushed from his heart by the cold hand of ambition. And I said I would rather have

been a French peasant and worn wooden shoes. . . . I would rather have been that poor peasant with my loving wife by my side . . . than to have been that imperial impersonation of force and murder, known as Napoleon the Great."

This passage appears to have upset a Dr. J. B. Reed who sent Ingersoll a pamphlet to show that "Napoleon the Great was a Christian, and that he believed in the divinity of Christ." His reply was, "Admitting that Napoleon did believe in the divinity of Christ, I think you can see that such belief did not prevent Napoleon from living the life of a cruel monster. This belief did not prevent his sacrificing all that was best and greatest in France on the altar of personal ambition. I am perfectly willing to admit that Napoleon was a Christian and that he acted like one." Until he was made a prisoner, Ingersoll saw active service fighting the Confederates in the American Civil War, and what he saw made him hate war "and all its monstrous and unmentionable cruelty," as Mrs. Wakefield points out, "with every drop of his blood." He contended that "every good man, every good woman, should try to do away with war, to stop the appeal to savage force." And of course he was in favour of "a world court of justice."

Ingersoll was—like Bradlaugh, Foote and J. M. Robertson—a Malthusian. Writing to Senator Ralph Plumb, he pointed out that, "Thousands and thousands of people are incapable of taking care of themselves. The world is filled with deformities. Poverty and want and vice beget children. In the great cities, the gutter is a nursery. The tendency to commit crime is transmitted. This is one of the terrible facts. We must have, before the world is saved, a religion of the body. . . . There must be a public sentiment so strong, so powerful, that criminals will not be allowed to perpetuate themselves. . . . Society must protect itself." And he said elsewhere that "Science must put it in the power of woman to decide for herself whether she will or will not become a mother. . . ."

Shakespeare was for Ingersoll the greatest genius of all, but he also insisted that "Byron was one of the greatest poets this world has produced"—and he "regarded Byron as a gallant and fearless champion of liberty." As for Dickens, he was "the greatest novelist who has ever written in the English language" and "the greatest observer since Shakespeare"; while "the supreme work of fiction" was *The Tale of Two Cities*. He strangely regarded Ouida's *Ariadne* almost as high. Some of us do not go quite as far as this with Ouida, who was, however, a much better writer than modern critics agree.

In music, Wagner was the great master, though Schubert "he held especially close to his heart." And in art, he loved Rembrandt, Titian, Rubens, and Franz Hals and, of course, "the titanic power and grandeur of Michel Angelo."

He admired both Charles Watts and George Jacob Holyoake; but when the latter sent him his *Warpath of Opinion* Ingersoll found it difficult to reply. His letter to Holyoake is given in this collection and must have made that writer squirm. The *Warpath* showed up Holyoake, in his old age, as little and mean, and Ingersoll saw through it.

In one of his letters, he points out that "Every religion teaches a code of morals, plus something else, and it is this 'something else' that determines what each religion is. Buddhism is a code of morals plus belief in the transmigration of souls; in the illumination of Buddha, in

certain prayers, ceremonies, genuflections, and superstitions. So, Christianity is a code of morals, plus the belief that the God of the Old Testament is the Creator of the Universe; that the Christ of the New Testament is the same God, and that his death and atonement were made for all who should believe in him in a certain way, plus certain ceremonies and superstitions." Ingersoll had little sympathy for any religion but thought "Buddha sublimely great of soul." He thought the same of Jesus at one time, but radically changed with the passing of years.

On the question of God, Ingersoll declared that: "I do not say that there is no God—that is, no infinite personality—because I do not know. But I do say, that I do not believe there is; I have no evidence upon that subject. To my mind an infinite personality is an infinite absurdity. Neither can I conceive of a conditionless being. Still, I do not say that no such being exists—I simply say that I do not believe such a being exists." It has always seemed to me better to say that an infinite, conditionless being up in the sky does not exist, and could not exist; but it may have been difficult to say it as plainly as that during the nineteenth century.

In these letters, Ingersoll touches upon so many subjects and illumines them so wittily with his gentle wisdom that I can only advise all who can buy the book forthwith to do so. All who love his incomparable lectures and essays simply cannot afford to do without this book—it sheds a flood of light on his many-sidedness as well as on the things he loved and hated.

The book is beautifully printed and readers should ask for it in their libraries. You cannot find his single essays and lectures there, no doubt because they were so often vilely printed in pamphlet form, in type almost impossible to read. There can be no such excuse for this splendid volume of his letters.

H. CUTNER.

RICHARD CARLILE

IT is a good thing to remember pioneers. It is a hard thing to preserve a balanced attitude to them. On the one hand there is a tendency to idolatry, and on the other, to amused tolerance. Mr. Guy A. Aldred comes into the former category, and the third edition of his *Richard Carlile* (The Strickland Press, 6d.), shows the strength and weakness of such an approach. There is no doubt at all that Carlile should be remembered as one of the leaders in the fight for freedom to publish heterodox opinions; here, Mr. Aldred's obvious devotion to the memory of his subject stands him in good stead, and the best part of his biography is the sincerity with which it is written. But there is a tendency to overestimate the part played by Carlile, and to ignore the part of other no less doughty champions.

The publisher who invites most immediate comparison with Carlile is William Hone, who to-day is probably best remembered for his *Everyday Book*, and similar compilations. The achievement of Hone has been discussed in F. W. Hackwood's somewhat indifferent biography, and analysed at greater length in a now forgotten book which deserves to rank as a classic on the subject of freedom of thought and expression, James Routledge's *Popular Progress in England*, which was published in 1876.

Probably because Carlile has never received such attention from biographers and historians, Mr. Aldred wishes to redress the balance, and his little book is rather more of a plea for Carlile than a biography in the accepted sense. No harsh criticism is implied by this, because the patent sincerity of the author is apparent in

every page. The result is, however, a far from balanced view of Richard Carlile. He was no colossus to bestride Fleet Street, with Lord Justice Ellenborough peeping from behind his giant legs. He was a guerilla fighter of more than usual courage; if he fought with a bludgeon, it was because he understood the bludgeon, and wrote and published for those to whom tyranny was real, and for whom rapier shafts of sparkling wit would have been no defence at all.

If this biography gives a tribute that is perhaps over-excessive, it is none the less worth reading, and it would be a pity not to mention Guy Aldred's edition of Carlile's *Jail Journal*, and C. W. Brook's *Carlile and the Surgeons*, both of which can be had from the Strickland Press, 104, George Street, Glasgow, C. 1, at very moderate prices. Freethinkers, above all, should prize the memory of men like this, and should be grateful to Mr. Aldred for making these and other works so readily and cheaply available.

VICTOR E. NEUBURG.

THE WEEK AT WESTMINSTER

Much platitude, and many downright lies.
With vacuous laughter, three per cent. of sighs;
For which M.P.s a thousand quid a year
Are paid—one thousand quid too dear.

B. S.

CORRESPONDENCE

MR. ROWLAND'S "EVIDENCE"

SIR,—Some years ago, Mr. John Rowland deliberately libelled Edgar Allan Poe, and when I asked him for contemporary evidence for his libels, he pleaded that contemporary evidence was hard to get. In other words, he perpetuated the dirty, Christian lies of the Rev. R. Griswold. In his autobiographical book he deliberately charged "the elder statesmen" writing in *The Freethinker* with advocating the dropping of atom bombs on an "Eastern" enemy. I naturally asked him for his evidence, and in reply we get the assertion that this was done in "scores" of places, that we show "complete" misunderstanding of Marxism, and that I wrote an article in which I said that "the way to meet the threat of armed warfare is to be prepared to hit back." May I say that in the whole 50 years of my Freethought advocacy I have never encountered such a deliberate Christian lie as that given such publicity and such a start as this one by Mr. John Rowland—a statement he was not only utterly unable to substantiate but one which, alas, we may never catch up with. I trust his Christian friends are now proud of him.—Yours, etc.

H. CUTNER.

WHAT IS A MAN?

SIR,—In July 13 issue R. J. Jackson seems to disagree with the idea "that man is merely the physical product of environment." What's wrong with such a notion? Are we not the product of heredity and environment, physical and mental? Is there any other contributory factor? If so, what?—Yours, etc.,

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

RUSSIA AND WAR

SIR,—Referring to your correspondent W. E. Nicholson of July 20, it is incredible to what lengths of mental contortions some will go with their stupid but evil ideas upon this subject. Mr. W. E. Nicholson has certainly flung a lot of mud, and one cannot help wondering if he was (to use his own words) "full to the eyes with ideological rum and water and staggering on his dialectical legs and accusing the Communists of being drunk with ideas."

First of all, Communism was advocated a great number of years before Russia thought of it, let alone made a serious and determined effort to bring it into being.

As to international leaders (which, incidentally, I do not believe in) let us see what happens with those opposed to both Russia and Communism. Churchill, Truman, Pinay, M. Adenauer, King Paul, Syngman Rhee, Menzies and many other leaders are banded together with the idea, backed up by the churches, especially the R.C., of imposing the horrors of war upon the only atheistic country in the world; the only country that does not allow munition manufacturers to make thousands of millions of pounds out of the production of war instruments; the only country that officially

preaches peace, and whose individual citizens cannot make mighty profits out of war-mongering and, of course, all munitions-making to all countries is a national loss.

Grace Matson, to whom Mr. W. E. Nicholson was replying, was telling the simple and absolute truth; there are no Russian soldiers fighting, slaying and killing people on foreign territory. Let Mr. W. E. Nicholson say, without abuse, what is wrong with the idea of *Communism*, not Communists.

As to actual fighting on foreign soil, may I remind Mr. W. E. Nicholson that American soldiers have been brought thousands of miles from their own country to kill, so far, 3,000,000 people, injure many more, to ravage and destroy the country, smashing and destroying thousands of towns and villages, all the wonderful works of men, hospitals, factories, schools, libraries, town halls, cinemas, pleasure parks and all the amenities of a highly civilised race of peaceful people.

Little children have been blinded, burnt and maimed in this ghastly war run by Christians, despite the opposition by the "Dean."

May I say that I have never been a member of a trade union, nor the C.P., and am both an employer and a property owner. Therefore, let me add as ending to this: any man himself or by proxy who burns, maims, blinds or injures a child to save his own skin, his fortune or his *ideas* is a skunk, coward and criminal.—Yours, etc.,

P. TURNER.

OBITUARY

RICHARD MASON

Another life-long Freethinker of the Bradlaugh school—Captain Richard Mason, of Heswall—has joined the great majority at the age of 80, leaving a widow and daughter to whom the sympathy of readers will be extended. Uncompromising in the fight with superstitious creeds and unyielding in the face of authority, he was tolerant, kindly and understanding to his fellows of all opinions sincerely expressed. A letter he left addressed to the Secretary of the N.S.S. reveals the quality of the man better than any description:—

"Dear Friend,—This letter will be sent on to you at my death. I wish for a Secular Service and burial, and trust you will arrange for a reader for me. If you do this it will help those here to see that my wishes are carried out. I have been since a boy of 14 a staunch follower of Freethought. I would not like any hitch at the last. I want all to know I died as I have lived, an unbeliever in ignorant superstition and a follower of the great unbelievers of the past whose aim was to spread the gospel of truth."

His interment took place at Landican Cemetery on Saturday, July 26, and the privilege of delivering an address as requested fell to the undersigned.

WALTER PARRY, Chairman, Merseyside Branch, N.S.S.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Mr. J. CLAYTON'S Engagements.—Worsthorne, Friday, August 1, 7-30 p.m.; Clitheroe, Monday, August 4, 7-30 p.m.; Hapton, Tuesday, August 5, 7-30 p.m.; Baxenden, Thursday, August 7, 7-30 p.m.

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: JACK CLAYTON: A Lecture. (Market Place) Sunday, 8 p.m.: The Rev. B. JACKSON (Methodist), Aff. JACK CLAYTON (N.S.S.), Neg.: "Do the Dead Live?"

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday evening, 7 p.m.: H. DAY.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Plattfields).—Every Sunday, 3 p.m.: (St. Mary's Gate, Blitized Site), every Sunday, 8 p.m.; (Alexandra Park Gate), every Wednesday, 8 p.m.; (Deansgate Bomb Site), every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: F. A. RIDLEY; (Highbury Corner), Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, August 2, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE: "Things Christians Ought to Know."

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: Messrs. WOOD and O'NEILL.

HANGED, DRAWN AND QUARTERED

WHILST to-day, the abolition of Capital Punishment—one of the objects of the N.S.S.—is a cause championed by the more enlightened members of society regardless of denomination, it is perhaps only the secularists who care to remember the determined opposition offered by the 19th Century Christians to Sir Samuel Romilly's efforts to abolish that relic of medieval barbarism which afforded:—

“That the offender be dragged to the gallows; that he be hanged by the neck and then cut down alive; that his entrails be taken out and burned *in conspectu eius et ipso vivente* (in his sight and while yet alive); that his head be cut off; that his body be divided into four parts and that his head and quarters be at the King's disposal.”

Women were never treated in this ghastly fashion, as it was considered immoral to expose a woman's body in public. As a concession to modesty, therefore, women offenders were burned alive, at least, until 1790, when Parliament—probably motivated more by the high cost of burning (usually about £10), than anything else—decided that clemency was called for, and cut public expense by commuting the sentence to one of hanging.

Hanging; drawing and quartering was devised during the reign of Edward I, as a befitting punishment for David Prince of Wales, who had been foolish enough to “profane Christ's Passion,” according to a special King's Council held at Acton Burnell, by following in the footsteps of his biblical namesake and causing assassinations.

The execution of this abominable sentence was followed, so Lingard informs us, by a heated argument between the citizens of Winchester and York over the right shoulder of the unlucky Prince, and in view of the facts that the Bishop of Winchester was at the time the licensee of numerous brothels situated in London and known as the “Stews” and that Pope Gregory IX had recently proclaimed it an act of grace to marry a prostitute, it is understandable that the “flock” should deem the Prince's shoulder a further piece of Christian evidence. In a later reign, Lord Coke waxed pious in an attempt to justify this savage mode of punishment: “All these several punishments are found in Holy Scriptures,” he wrote in his “Institutes of the Laws of England” and then gave chapter and verse to prove that Job was drawn, Bigham hanged, Judas disembowelled (this, on the dubious authority of Acts i, 18), Sheba beheaded, and Rechab quartered. In view of this overwhelming evidence of divine will it would be undoubtedly heretical to deem the punishment anything but God's judgment.

Indeed, in 1812, the year before Romilly sought to persuade a Tory Parliament to abolish hanging, drawing and quartering there appeared a work which volunteered the information that torture was perfectly consistent with religion (I Chron., xx, 3) and suggested red-hot pincers and breaking on the wheel as a Christian solution to crime. At the time, however, crime was rather an elastic term, and there were some 200 offences meriting capital punishment and ranging from treason to impersonating a Chelsea pensioner. That Romilly's long list of penal reforms in 1813 were not greeted with cries of jubilation is not surprising in view of the fact that the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of London, and five other Bishops were backing up the Lord and the hangman with might and main, and that Lord Liverpool's administration was not one to smile sweetly upon reforms in any shape or form.

Romilly met with a veritable avalanche of opposition. Lord Ellenborough, whose claim to fame lay in having

thought up ten new capital felonies, assured the House of Lords that any reforms would cause crime to increase by leaps and bounds. The former Lord Chancellor of Ireland stated that “to throw the bowels of an offender into his face was one of the safeguards of the British Constitution.”

Sir William Garrow illustrated the terrible effect of clemency by relating the case of Colonel Despard, who was hanged and beheaded in 1803 on a very improbable charge of treason, the King having graciously allowed his body and entrails to be left intact, the outcome of which was that instead of the good Colonel being spread all over London he was taken in one, or rather two, pieces and deposited in St. Paul's Cathedral.

The regrettable part of the affair lay in the fact that a dignitary of the church happened to pass the hearse and being unaware that it was the funeral of a traitor, *removed his hat.*

After a long and bitter fight against both Church and State, all that Romilly achieved was the abolition of disembowelling, and so the “pleasure” of disposing of the mutilated parts of an executed criminal was retained for the young Queen Victoria, and the penalties of hanging, beheading and quartering remained on the Statute Book until 1870.

Man's memory is short, and to-day it is a common occurrence to hear clerics speaking in favour of the abolition of capital punishment as though it was one of the causes for which Christians were martyred; perhaps Christ's Passion can no longer be profaned, or maybe Holy Scriptures were wrong—who knows?

MICHAEL J. BARNES.

IT'S A NEW SPANISH CUSTOM!

FRANCO SPAIN is Catholic Spain, and this salient fact should never be forgotten. I was graphically reminded of this when I recently attended, at the request of the Editor of *The Freethinker*, a meeting to hear the report of the legal observers at the recent Barcelona trials. The acquittal of several of the defendants and the surprisingly light sentences inflicted on the others, are indicative of the effect of world opinion.

This is the answer to those who doubt the value of protest resolutions like that recently passed by the N.S.S. Executive. In view of the thousands of political prisoners in Spanish prisons and the heavy sentences in the past it is a victory for free ideas that the heaviest sentence (on Raimondu Lopez, the leader of the Barcelona strikers) was only four years. In effect, this means release in a few months as, under Spanish law, the period in prison awaiting trial is part of the sentence, and there is a two-year amnesty because of the recent Eucharistic Congress!

David Widdicombe, the young lawyer sent as observer at the trial by the League of Labour Lawyers and the Friends of Republican Spain, gave his impressions, and said that the Military Court (Spain is under Martial Law) was most fairly conducted and they appeared to fall over backwards in the attempt to show the world how democratic Spanish justice really is. Special seats were even reserved for the foreign observers! Great credit, too, must be given to the defence counsel, including a Professor of Law at Barcelona University, who undertook the defence after others had refused, and put up such a brilliant fight. The court even allowed political speeches from the dock. This, indeed, is progress and proves that unseen public opinion can exercise effective pressure on the military dictatorship.

J. MARTIN ALEXANDER.