

# THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

VOL. LXXII—No. 38

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL  
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Fourpence

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Inter-Planetary Theology

THE phenomenal development of aviation in recent years and mankind's rapidly-growing mastery of the air have opened up new vistas, new potential paths for human expansion and exploration in the immediate or near future. Lord Tennyson's pessimistic forecast, made already in the last century, of "aerial navies grappling in the central blue," having long become a melancholy fact, may not the time be now fast approaching when the more optimistic forecasts of inter-planetary flight and human contact with other worlds, made by such bold spirits as Jules Verne and H. G. Wells, be also approaching realisation?

The dream of inter-planetary communication made long ago by the ancient Greeks has been a recurring vision in the development of the human imagination. In recent years, it has been stimulated by mankind's actual attainment of the mastery of the air. Less soberly, by the recent crop of stories—"yarns" would be, perhaps, the more appropriate term—relating to the alleged swarm of "flying saucers" which some imaginations run riot have alleged to come from outer space. Some pseudo-scientific genius has even asked in print whether "other worlds are watching us." On a more serious plane, the *Inter-Planetary Society* is now compiling a literature of already substantial proportions on the technical possibilities of inter-planetary flight; a theme elaborately investigated at its international congress last September, of which the present writer was an interested spectator.

The prophets of inter-planetary flight have now, it appears, made a powerful and, certainly, most unexpected convert to their belief in the possibility of contacting intelligent life in other worlds. For the Holy Roman Catholic, and Apostolic Church has just issued a theological pronouncement on the subject, a definition which is not only of interest in itself, but which seems to indicate that Rome regards eventual inter-planetary communication as a serious possibility in the not too distant future. At least, it is not usual for this worldly-wise organisation to encourage its theologians to speculate on subjects that are never likely to have any practical bearing on human knowledge and on human behaviour.

For the Reverend Professor Fr. Connell, Dean and Professor in the Catholic University of Washington, U.S.A., has just opened a new chapter in the long history of Catholic theology; he has made a beginning in formulating what we may, perhaps, term the Inter-planetary theology of the Catholic Church. For Fr. Connell has made the notable declaration that, "there is nothing in the dogmas of the Church which forbids us to hold that there may be intelligent life on other worlds"—and this, presumably, includes the other planets in our solar system.

A notable pronouncement and one, as far as we know, without precedent in the vast corpus of Catholic theology. Moreover, this weighty dictum becomes yet more weighty

when we reflect upon its place of origin. For Washington is already the political, and may yet become the ecclesiastical capital of our planet. Moreover, the American capital is already the economic centre of the Church, besides being the centre of "God's own country." Where should we expect Truth from, if not from there?

Fr. Connell's statement is not, of course, infallible. At present, it is still merely in the class of theological *obiter dicta*. However, it is a straw which shows which way the wind is blowing, and Rome does not throw out straws of this kind lightly. Moreover, an infallible statement at this juncture would be risky as well as premature, and the Church has learned caution from her *faux pas* in the case of Galileo. For the Vatican must know that genuine scientific opinion is by no means uniform upon either the question of life upon the other planets of our solar system, or on the probability of the existence of other planets circling around other suns besides ours. For example, the present Astronomer-Royal, Sir Harold Spencer-Jones, in his recently reissued book, *Life on Other Worlds*, expresses himself very cautiously on both these fundamental astronomical speculations.

It would not do for the Catholic Church, again as in the *cause célèbre* of Galileo, to be proved to be definitely wrong on a question of scientific fact! However, it is very significant that the Washington theologian issued his statement now, when inter-planetary flight is—or soon will actually be—"in the air." Without committing herself too definitely, Rome is getting ready for all emergencies! For it is inconceivable that, what is from the point of view of Catholic theology, such a fundamental departure from tradition should have been made without the foreknowledge of the Vatican.

However, our reverend theologian not only thinks that life may well exist in other worlds besides ours: he also *knows* a good deal about its nature. For here, as so often before, theology has means of acquiring knowledge which is beyond the more mundane sciences, such as, for example, astronomy. Fr. Connell, indeed, has not made use of superior instruments to the telescope and to the spectroscope, nor does he add to our knowledge of the physical make-up and mental qualities of the citizens of the heavenly bodies. His "knowledge" is of a different, and higher type and the instrument by which he "discovers" it is one far more powerful than any such merely material instrument as a telescope could be: it is the incomparably more powerful instrument of deductive logic, as invented by Aristotle and applied with such incomparable flair to theology by the great St. Thomas Aquinas.

Following the inspired example of "The Angelic Doctor," Fr. Connell proceeds to classify, from the point of view, that is, of theology, the spiritual state of these unknown and hypothetical inhabitants of unknown and hypothetical worlds. We briefly summarise, with our merely incidental comments in brackets, his conclusions on this momentous subject.



According to our Reverend instructor, the spiritual state of the inter-planetary citizens is as follows, *seriatim*:—

Firstly, there are those who, like ourselves, "fell" in the Garden of Eden—or its equivalent—were tempted and fell from Grace, and, consequently, contracted that cancer of the spiritual world, "Original Sin." We do not, of course, know what plans, if any, God has made subsequently, for the "Redemption" of these unhappy people: whether Jesus Christ has been incarnated there also. Or whether it will later be necessary for *our* Catholic Church to launch a crusade to convert them by force, sending a new Cortez, and Pizarro to "compel them to come in," as the Church did so effectively in that other "New World" of the Americas a few centuries ago in *this* world (Incidentally, a policy of clerical Imperialism in the outer planets might assist the Church to solve what is, at present, perhaps its most urgent current problem, the population question?)

Secondly, declares our authority, there may be worlds where the Fall and, consequently, "Original Sin," never transpired, and where the innocent natives live still in guileless bliss. Eden in Mars? The Earthly paradise upon the Moon? Eternal spring within the rings of Saturn? Upon these blessed shores unspoilt humans retain their primeval innocence amid the luxuriant foliage of a perpetual summer, where the Adams and Eves of more fortunate worlds than ours live like primitive races whom Captain Cook discovered in the balmy islands of the Pacific; but (unlike Tahiti when the Europeans first arrived) in a Garden of Eden *before* the Fall! (We shudder when we consider the terrible effects of human intrusion amongst such guileless innocents: what will happen to their unspoiled souls if and when they encounter atheists and similarly misguided immigrants from less fortunate spheres?)

Last, but by no means least, from our point of view, there may be one or two planets inhabited solely by "fallen" angels, by those bright beings who "fell" with Lucifer long before Adam and who, as perpetual rebels against God, are irrevocably doomed to eternal damnation—"for whom hell-fire is expressly prepared," as Lord Clarendon wrote about Oliver Cromwell, the terrestrial prototype of the Miltonic demons in *Paradise Lost*, who would rather "reign in hell than serve in heaven." (It is, indeed, an awe-inspiring thought that, somewhere, shining down upon us from the immeasurable depths of space, is a planet inhabited entirely by devils, by fallen angels, in a word, by Freethinkers! As soon as we know their whereabouts, we will send them specimen copies of our *Freethinker*, not to mention fraternal greetings from *The National Secular Society*.)

Such is our reverend guide's celestial classification: they burned Giordano Bruno in 1600 for stating that the planets might be inhabited. Now, the Catholic Church "borrows" (without acknowledgment!) from the condemned heretic—not for the first time. A new science has been created, the "science" of inter-planetary theology, with Fr. Connell as its "Copernicus."

For our part, we burn with impatience to explore, not only the astronomical but, also, the theological mysteries of the skies. We eagerly await the dispatch of the first inter-planetary cruiser. All aboard for the Garden of Eden!

F. A. RIDLEY.

#### GOD IS NOT AN AMERICAN

From *The Christian Century*, an American Protestant magazine, now opposing the un-American Committee: "God is not a Republican, or a Democrat. He is not even an American, shocking as it may seem to say it, and it is just possible that He thinks no more of the 'Star Spangled Banner' than He did of the battle cries of the Philistines or the war whoops of the Navajos."

#### FINANCIAL DEVICES OF THE ROMAN CHURCH

THROUGHOUT the Middle and later Ages the revenue of the Papal see was drawn from most parts of the Western Christian world. Protests against the demands of the Curia grew more and more frequent during the 15th century, if it must be acknowledged that the Pontiffs themselves were not always enriched. Maladministration, costly military enterprises and other anomalies, at times impelled the Popes to solicit assistance from opulent princes and prelates. For instance, when Pius II contemplated warfare with the troublesome Turks, the 200,000 ducats required had to be borrowed before this adventure could be undertaken.

That vast sums reached Rome is undeniable, but there were so many recipients to satisfy, that the prices paid for appointments, when offices became vacant, appear at times to have been the chief resources of the Papacy. In these circumstances, when money was urgently needed, jubilees and indulgences became the means for replenishing the Papal treasury. Another way of obtaining funds was the creation of new offices which, when purchased, supplemented the Pope's income, but made more severe the taxation of the people subject to Rome. As von Ranke, the famous historian, avers, a register of the period survives which "enumerates nearly six hundred saleable offices, of which the income amounted to about one hundred thousand scudi. These were, for the most part, procurators, registrars, abbreviators, correctors, notaries, secretaries, nay, even messengers and doorkeepers, whose numbers were continually increasing the expenses of a bull or brief. It was indeed for that very purpose that their offices took the particular form assigned them; as to the duties connected with each, these were little or nothing."

The Church, then as now, was not only an ecclesiastical but a political organisation. As secular rulers, the Popes oppressed their provincial subjects, who were constantly at variance with each other. Despotism and frequent sanguinary conflicts convulsed Italy, both in the cities and the countryside. The military exploits of the Popes were conducted by mercenaries whose payments, frequently in arrears, were ultimately discharged by the civil population who were cruelly fleeced by the authorities.

Money was secured by the most discreditable means. Sixtus IV founded various institutions in which posts were sold to the highest or best favoured bidder, and the proceeds handed over to the Papal exchequer. Again, Innocent VIII founded colleges for pecuniary purposes, yet we gather that: "the embarrassments of this pontiff were such that he was compelled to give even the papal tiara as security." Of course, Pope Alexander VI continued the creation of sinecures for sale, while Julius II financed his campaigns by similar methods, while his newly-conquered dominions, considerably augmented the sources of taxation. But, perhaps, Papal extravagance attained its apex under Leo X, who as a Medicean Pontiff, obtained large sums from members of his affluent family. Like his predecessor Julius II, Leo was most reckless in expenditure and was seldom free from warfare. It is asserted that he squandered the revenues of three Popes: "that of his predecessor, from whom he inherited a considerable treasure, his own, and that of his successor to whom he bequeathed a mass of debt." Not only did he sell existing offices, but the charges he exacted for the creation of cardinals constituted a very goodly sum. More than 1,200 new appointments were made for selling purposes, and from these transactions it is estimated that



Leo X obtained the then stupendous sum of 900,000 scudi. The greatest part of the cost of these queer dealings was borne by the recently acquired provinces, most of the remainder being supplied by the Roman Custom House. But this apart, the multiplication of vendible offices became a heavy incumbrance both on Church and State.

Yet, despite the prodigality of the Papacy, industry and commerce in Rome itself were buoyant and prosperity seemed secure. But Leo's unexpected death brought ruin to his numerous creditors and the prosperity of Rome fell to zero. In this deep depression, Leo's successor, Adrian, endured a trying time. The financial disaster that overwhelmed the Papal domains compelled the new Pontiff to impose direct taxation. His hearth tax seems to have been most bitterly resented: its novelty rather than its oppression arousing indignation.

Later, when Clement VII was also driven to increase taxation, he chose its indirect form as less likely to cause discontent. Then Paul III, while imposing further direct taxation, to soften the blow he relinquished the salt tax which had previously occasioned considerable turmoil. The new impost was to terminate when three years had expired, but it was complained that it was renewed at the end of the triennial period and, as a matter of fact, it was never abandoned. Bologna secured freedom from this impost by the payment of a lump sum to the Papal treasury. Parma and Piacenza, however, refused payment, while other cities declared that they had been too highly rated, but despite these protests the Papal revenue, when Paul III died, had more than doubled from the time of Julius II.

Still, Julius III complained that his predecessor Paul had alienated the Roman revenue, but this did not prevent Julius from engaging in hostilities with France. He deprecated the meanness of the contributions of the Italian cities, so as to pay his mercenaries he imposed a flour duty. Further taxes on edibles were imposed by his successors. The creation of offices for sale continued and the nominal revenue of the Curia showed small decline, but by 1570 all the imposts barely covered the expenses of the Papal household. Again, the political ambitions of the Papacy were now seriously challenged by the Protestant heresy and the Turkish successes in Europe, while the repeated alienations of the past had rendered the Papacy virtually insolvent.

In earlier years the Roman State was the least heavily taxed in Italy, but now most other areas in the peninsula paid lighter imposts. Again, Peter's Pence and payments for indulgences and dispensations ceased to flow from Britain and other heretical communities. Even in lands still Catholic, angry remonstrances were common.

Administrative rights in Italy were frequently granted to some favoured prelate who possessed lucrative advantages. Pius V abolished this system under which the selected rulers delegated their powers to some legalist who performed their duties while they enjoyed the emoluments. He now appointed the rulers himself who were to employ no deputies. Other reforms he carried out, and the most sanguine ideas were entertained of Italy's future. But as the coming years proved, an ideal Italia was no more than a poet's dream.

T. F. PALMER.

**LLEWELYN POWYS: A selection from his writings made by Kenneth Hopkins (Macdonald, London, 16s.)**

To judge a writer during his lifetime is less difficult than to judge him when he is recently dead. Life, with its possibilities for further achievement, can make a judgment

only provisional. Death confronts us with the definitive edition, and there can be no future work to justify our proclamation. *Hic jacet*, especially when newly-graven, is a great deterrer. Llewelyn Powys died in 1939. For a number of years, he and two of his brothers formed a literary trio almost as well-known as the Sitwells. Of this trio, Llewelyn has perhaps the least formidable voice; but as a prose-writer he is almost certainly the best of the three. His words fall into their rightful places with a beauty and a consistency that cannot but be admired. He had an exquisite ear and a jeweller's eye. But he was not a creator. He himself was his sole character.

There are no great deeps, no ocean in Powys's prose. Rather is his writing a river in the sunlight, meandering gently into creeks and inlets, bearing along many pleasure craft, but knowing little of the storm and stress of tumultuous seas where savage winds go unrestricted. This is very pleasant. This is as seductive as a summer day, with the earth smells rising, the drone of bees, the excitement of birds, the susurrations of leaves, and the ploughman plodding, sweatily but content, towards his swill of ale. It is very pleasant, but it does not stir the heart profoundly: there is no pity or terror in it. It is acquiescent, for there was no conflict in Powys. His philosophy was simple, narrow, and sensual. Earth, sun, and physical love are enough for a man. There was much of Lawrence in his outlook, although he had none of Lawrence's tormented creative impulse. Like so many intelligent sons of clergymen, manhood found him broken away from his church-saturated upbringing; but he was a pagan rather than a rationalist, with all a pagan's great lust for life.

"The conditions of a man's happiness are circumscribed by the senses only. His love for another has its sole existence in the rush of the blood through his veins and the quivering of his navel. No possessions of the objective world beyond food and drink and raiment are essential to his own spiritual life-ecstasy in his moment of time. The senses, the senses, the senses—hold to the senses. They alone will not betray us. . . . The ultimate justification of life in earth, air, and water is to be found always in the simple primeval happiness of the immediate experience of being alive."

He had pulmonary consumption.

It is unlikely that Llewelyn Powys will ever have a large audience, but it is very likely that he will have an enduring one. He is not a great writer in the sense that Balzac and Dostoevsky are great writers, but he is an excellent employer of language. This is a rare thing, for dealers in words often overlook language, regarding literature arithmetically instead of musically. There are no arithmetics in literature. Mr. Kenneth Hopkins has made an admirable selection from Llewelyn Powys's writings, prefaced by his own personal reminiscence of the writer. The book itself is a treat to get hold of, so well is it produced. Not to possess it is a misfortune, for it is the quintessence of one of the most unusual writers of our time.

J. O'H.

#### THE BRASS GOD

From the Chaplain's column in *The Dolphin*, publication of the United States Submarine Base at New London, Conn.: "By what authority do petty officers, chief petty officers, and officers demand your obedience? This authority comes to them in a long, long chain of command that reaches back to God himself. Knowing that all authority comes from the Supreme Being makes your military obedience easier. Your superior is God's representative, even if he doesn't know it or believe it."

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



## ACID DROPS

Our very pious contemporary, the *Daily Mail*, is disgusted at the Malthusian opening speech made by Prof. A. V. Hill, this year's President of the British Association. How can he possibly talk about such an exploded doctrine with the Divine Promise of the New Testament in front of him? Such a speech shows "a wicked mistrust in the wisdom and mercy of Almighty God," for did not "our Lord" distinctly say, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" And if God looks after the little dears, what has man to fear? "Ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Instead of the Malthusian doctrine of "despair," let us look at the magnificent words in St. Matthew—"Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" That this kind of hopeless twaddle should be still considered a reply to Malthus in the face of droughts, famine, floods, plagues, tempests, and what not, together with our rapidly expanding populations in a world which cannot expand, and is more and more using up its natural resources, shows an ignorance almost hopeless to eradicate.

Still, it is true that when people are literally dying of starvation in millions—as they do every now and then in India, for example—the *Daily Mail* would gladly send them God's Holy Writ and give them this wonderful "Spiritual Food." And having done its good deed for the day, its writers would then fill a hollow void at the best restaurants in Fleet Street. We wonder whether they have seen (even in photographs) people, including children, actually dying from hunger? Did "our Lord," when he was giving out the almost unbelievable rubbish quoted by the *Daily Mail*?

An article in the "Radio Times" dealing with the possibility of life on other planets, a subject to be discussed later on the air, leaves God entirely out as a "Creator." This simply will not do. If God created life about 6,000 years ago as we have it around us on this planet, surely he might well have done the same on all the other planets? Surely Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and the rest, must have been designed for something? Was it not to glorify the Lord and sing Hosannas? We can only designate as blatant blasphemy any article or discussion on "life on other planets," without God as a beneficent creator, and as indescribably shocking. Cannot Lord Reith interfere?

In any case, an unscripted discussion was broadcast from St. Protasus' College—we may deal with it later—"to catch as much as possible the true accent of civilised conversation, which is not only informed, but informal, not only good sense, but good nonsense as well." We can only hope that the nonsense won't be an earnest appeal to bring the Blessed Creator into the discussion. Perhaps, however, a picture of God Almighty creating life on Jupiter and giving its inhabitants later the Bible as His Unerring Word, would be quite interesting "nonsense."

A charity show at Hanley, with the famous "telepathic" Piddingtons as the stars, and which might have raised between £300 and £400 for ex-prisoners and their families, has been sternly forbidden because it was to take place on Sunday, the "Lord's Holy Day." But what can the producers expect? It is they and people like them all over the country who make a point of never protesting when similar shows were forbidden in other towns. For some-

thing like 90 years, the National Secular Society has always protested in favour of Sunday shows, but what help has it ever had from those people who are now so very indignant when our ridiculous Sabbatarian laws hit them or the Societies they represent? None at all. In fact, they would rather knuckle under, than have anything to do with "Freethought."

One of the earliest pamphlets smiting the Sabbatarians hip and thigh, was written by Charles Dickens 116 years ago. It was entitled *Sunday Under Three Heads* and, so ashamed was his biographer, John Forster, of it that he utterly ignores it in his *Life of Dickens*. And even many earnest Dickensians have never read it. It is rarely, if ever, included in his "complete" works. It is this boycott of any attempt to abolish Sabbatarianism which we have to fight, and it is useless to complain if we do not fight it. Like all tyrannies, it has to be met and beaten.

## THEATRE

"Bells of St. Martin's," an intimate revue presented by Keyboard Productions. St. Martin's Theatre.

IN the past few years many revues have come to London and failed. They have not had enough strong material to attract and the leading parts have not been suitably cast. Others have succeeded because they had a liberal measure of the essential elements, which are high speed and originality.

This is a revue that deserves to run some time, for many original angles of life have been exploited and the humour is clean and—mainly—good. Most of the sketches and lyrics have been written by Richard Waring—a young man of considerable talents—but in one or two cases his themes are hackneyed and are nothing more than we expect. However, his two main sketches entitled "Influence of Radio" and "Blessed Union" are creditable works.

The music for most of the songs was written by Francis Essex, and it is of very suitable style for this kind of show. There are two ballet turns to music by Jack Jordan and Choreography by Peter Glover, and they are both creditable pieces of work. The second one entitled "Showcase for Dance" is notably pleasing and well executed by Peter Glover, Joan Elvin, Patricia Kelly (late of Pigalle, Piccadilly, where she danced under the name of Patricia Sinnott), Terence Theobald and Gillian Barton.

What the show lacks is sufficient stars with the right personality. Douglas Byng shows a remarkable range of expression in various solos and sketches, and he is certainly a first-class artist, but Hattie Jacques and Roma Milne are not able to back him up with sufficient strength to make this revue take its place with the best London has seen in the past two years.

W. Lyon-Shaw's production has been carried out with care. I doubt whether he could introduce greater speed into the existing material. It is pleasing enough to attract, but I would not like to say that here is a revue with an assured long run. The theatre is so indefinite, and shows more worthy have flopped.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

## ANIMISM

Xerxes beat the sea  
For hindering the passage of his ships;  
So, when young, do we  
Kick tables for the bruising of our hips.  
To child and savage man all things have life;  
He kicks a ball or table, beats his wife.

B. S.



# "THE FREETHINKER"

41, Gray's Inn Road,  
London, W.C.1.

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

T. G. KILNER.—Discussions on Cyrenius (or Quirinius) in Christian literature are endless. If Jesus was born before the death of Herod, it must have been about the year 4 B.C. But if the enrolment under Cyrenius took place as described in Luke, then Jesus must have been born about A.D. 7. Full details are in the Encyclopedia Biblica.

J. E. FLOWER.—Mary Roscoe was employed by Grellet. Later, when married as Mary Hinsdale, she entered the service of Willet Hicks.

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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.

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.

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.

## SUGAR PLUM

We must congratulate our Oriental contemporary, *The Indian Rationalist*, organ of "The Indian Rationalist Association," upon its second issue. The difficulties that confront any movement of Freethought and/or Secularism in the Indian sub-continent are, indeed, tremendous, and our Rationalist friends there are to be congratulated upon their present heroic fight. The second issue of our Indian contemporary contains several articles of intense topical interest to both Indian and foreign Rationalists. Incidentally, we observe that "The Indian Rationalist Association" has now issued as a pamphlet the remarkable address of its Vice-President, M. N. Roy, which we had the honour to publish recently in our columns. *The Indian Rationalist* is published monthly, price two annas, at 9, Broadway, Madras 1, and is edited by S. Ramanathan. May it continue to flourish.

## THE ISLE OF SAINTS

Report to the International Congress of Union Mondiale Des Libres Penseurs by Mr. F. C. Edwards, representing the Rationalist Press Association in Dublin, Republic of Ireland, at Université Libre, Bruxelles, August 22, 1952.

IT is as well to begin this report by stating that it applies only to that part of Ireland which can be called Eire or the Republic of Ireland and not to the smaller section of the country which is called Northern Ireland and constitutes part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain.

According to the recent census the total population of the Republic was 2,958,878 of which about 93 per cent. are nominal members of the Roman Catholic Church. Although members of other denominations can make their influence felt in the State in certain ways, the non-Catholic churches have little or no power and for all practical purposes it may be taken that I refer to the Roman Catholic Church when I make future reference to the Church in general. It is instructive to observe that in a Roman Catholic country the Republic's loss through emigration is now running around seventy-four thousand

persons each year and but for our comparatively high birth rate the problem of this annual loss would become acute, although the Government realises they must now do something to keep Ireland for the Irish, especially in view of the new but peaceable invasion of property buyers from England!

## THE POWER OF THE CHURCH

The Church wields enormous power which can be shown first of all by the Constitution of 1937 which stresses the special position of the Catholic Church and by the Laws which have been passed in the last 27 years such as The Censorship of Publications Act by virtue of which thousands of books and periodicals are banned, but all of which can be obtained in Great Britain. Other Laws prohibit the sale of Birth Control appliances, and the advocacy of Birth Control in any way is "Taboo." Divorce has been abolished and, of course, the marriage of previously divorced persons forbidden in the Church. All National schools are under the control of the Clergy who act as Managers. Roman Catholics are expressly forbidden in public statements issued each year in Lent by the Archbishop of Dublin to enter Trinity College, Dublin (this is modified to the extent that if the parents expressly desire their son(s) and/or daughter(s) to enter Trinity for some particular reason, they can ask permission of the Archbishop, who will give it in certain circumstances under "proper safeguards." I do not know precisely what these safeguards consist of, but I can guess), as the atmosphere is not Christian of the Roman persuasion, and the souls of the students who become adults in this University are imperilled by dangerous contacts! Needless to say all the other universities are dominated by the Church and are considered "safe" to use the Archbishop's own word. The Church is ably backed by many powerful lay organisations directed by the clergy such as "The Legion of Mary," which is a mass movement, and "The Kingship of Christ" whose members are mostly of the intelligentsia. There are many others such as "The Knights of Malta," "The Knights of St. Columbanus," and all the Catholic School Unions. All these combine to squeeze out of existence by economic and social pressure *anyone* who does not conform to the principles of Catholic Action. It may be safely stated that directly and through its many tentacles the Church covers every aspect of human activity from childhood to death.

## THE SUBSERVIENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT TO THE HIERARCHY

It has always been known in a generally understood way that before any Government of the Republic takes action in which the Church may have any possible interest, the Hierarchy have to be consulted. In the case of the Acts of Parliament such as previously mentioned they take the initiative, but for the first time in the history of the State this normally hidden power came to light in 1951 when the now famous Dr. Noel Browne, who was the Minister of Health in Mr. Costello's Inter-Party Government, brought before the Dail his "Mother and Child Scheme." This was a compromise between the British system of free medical service to everyone and the existing Irish system, or lack of system, of medical attention for those who can afford to pay, with the addition that *all* mothers and children under sixteen were to get free medical attention without a means test. He had the support of the Government until the Hierarchy made it known privately to the Prime Minister, Mr. Costello, that they objected to the scheme on various moral grounds. When Dr. Browne "dug his heels in" and refused to



withdraw the Scheme on principle, the whole of the affair came to the surface. This was the main factor that caused Mr. Costello to declare the last General Election, and during the campaign he admitted that he accepted the advice of the Bishops in preference to that of his Cabinet. The Minister of External Affairs at the time, Mr. Sean MacBride, openly disavowed Dr. Browne — actually upbraiding him at a Party meeting because the Minister had allowed himself to be photographed in the company of a Protestant Archbishop. The Inter-Party Government went out of power as a result of the election and there is a ray of hope for Rationalism in the fact that the people reacted to the attack on Dr. Browne who is a Catholic (Beaumont, England, and Trinity College, Dublin), by returning him with a very healthy vote to represent South East Dublin, while Mr. Sean MacBride just managed to scrape in towards the end by virtue of transferred votes in the system of proportional representation.

#### THE DIFFICULTY OF EXPRESSING FREETHOUGHT PUBLICLY AND OF ORGANISING A SOCIETY

Generally speaking, everyone expressing an opinion adverse to Roman Catholicism is called a Communist, and as there are very few people who wish to have this description conferred on them it is very dangerous to mention subjects which do not fit in with the slave mind mentality. The clergy are aided in this gagging of free opinion by at least two very strong factors. Firstly, the country is predominantly agricultural with about 55 per cent. of the farms of less than 30 acres. This produces a low standard of living among the country people and among the latter the Parish Priest is all powerful, no one daring to oppose his views. Secondly, the Press and Radio express only the viewpoint of the Church, and it is impossible to get anything published which conflicts with this policy. In the City of Dublin there is strong intellectual activity, as the normal proud and independent Irish man and woman resent the insidious restraints placed upon their liberty, but so strong is the influence of the Church that it is practically impossible for Rationalists to even rent a hall in which to speak.

There is no doubt, however, that eventually the time will come, as has happened to other European countries, when the inevitable reaction will occur and intellectual liberty will reign again supreme.

F. C. EDWARDS.

#### RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE 30th INTERNATIONAL FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS AT BRUSSELS, AUGUST 22-26, 1952

(1) Until Church and school should be separate, the Congress claimed that in schools where lessons of given religions are taught, there should be alternately secular moral instruction lessons given by trained specialists.

(2) The Congress further claims that in armed forces, in prisons and in hospitals qualified secular representatives should be appointed at public expense as guides and counsellors to the soldiers, prisoners and sick respectively on the same footing as religious representatives.

(3) The Congress considers that secular education is the best for youth.

(4) The Congress agrees that an universal language such as Esperanto can facilitate international relations and understanding.

(5) The Congress would welcome the establishment by national freethought bodies of social cultural centres and libraries.

(6) In reply to certain clerical attacks on U.N.E.S.C.O. for the non-religious character of its programme, the

Congress declare that this body would fail in its duties if any religious or dogmatic bias whatever coloured its actions, and trusts that far from yielding to the pressure exerted by sectaries, U.N.E.S.C.O. should demonstrate irrefutably its determination to rise above all sectarian differences in its plans for human betterment.

(7) The Congress would see established a Youth Movement based on the principles of Free Inquiry in the hope that freedom of thought would thus become the common attribute of mankind and not a privilege limited to an intellectual minority.

(8) The Congress having studied the terms of the encyclical "Humani Generis," discerns in it with pleasure a marked anxiety in the Papal milieu at the irresistible intellectual advance, and notes that the Catholic Church in order to maintain its authority finds itself forced to retain among its dogmas the ancient superstitions of the creation and of original sin in contradiction to the recent modernist and evolutionist tendencies to be met among Catholic intellectuals, and observes that the Church has very clearly declared its hostility to progressive teaching, notably rationalism, and that the Pope still holds, despite certain mere formal phrases, to the 1864 Syllabus; all of which demonstrate that the Church falls further and further behind the times and should inspire all Freethinkers to tireless warfare on the Vatican and to persevering diffusion of the emancipating ideas of modern science.

(9) The World Union of Freethinkers proclaims its anti-totalitarian position, which has led it to reject clericalism and fascism. To-day this position requires the Union to oppose all attacks on the Freedoms and Rights of the Charter of the United Nations Organisation, in particular the establishment of police states in any form and the suppression of opinion. The Union demands that the Charter Freedoms should be applied in all western countries without racial discrimination on any ground; and invites the national organisations to take all steps in their power to influence public opinion and national governments so that a genuine social peace based on justice and tolerance may be established.

(10) The Congress, having considered the use made of broadcasting in the different part of the world, protests energetically against the privileged positions given on the air to the Churches and to their allied organisations, so that the radio is made into an instrument of religious propaganda of which no criticism or discussion is allowed; and appeals to U.N.O., to U.N.E.S.C.O., and to the League of the Rights of Man to intervene with the authorities controlling the radio to bring about a free use of broadcasting as a means of free expression for minorities as proclaimed in the Charter of the U.N.O.

#### THE ABBOT'S CAMERA

"YES," said the bishop, "you're right—that photo has an odd atmosphere. It's an enlarged copy from a unique positive; and I get quite a thrill out of looking at it, even now. It reminds me of the happy days when the princes of the Church still acted—like princes.

"You see, when I was a young man I went to stay with the abbot of a rich monastery in the Balkans. It was an unconventional holiday for an English theological student; but then, you know, I've always had a feeling for anyone who's in the same business. I hope that even my worst enemy would not say that I am narrow minded. And, you know, I've always admired success. Anyway, the abbot was very nice to me.

"He arranged to take me for a picnic in the hills; and we set off on mules up the hairpin mountain tracks. We had an armed guard, too, for there was danger of bandits.



The guards looked like bandits themselves, and their leader had a positively comic-opera sword. All the same, amid the mountains, which also overdid their melodrama, our cavalcade seemed fittingly picturesque and opulent!

"In fact, as I looked down at the bowing tops of trees twisted by winter blizzards, I wondered if I was really in this world. I doubted it still more when the valley broadened and I saw the view. I was overwhelmed, and I told the abbot that among his treasures he possessed—for the monastery owned most of the land in those parts—the finest view I'd ever seen.

"He replied that he would give me the view. It was the custom, you know, for the great princes to give a guest anything for which he openly expressed admiration; and the abbot was an expert photographer who never travelled without his camera. He kept a monk—a one-eyed chap—to look after his equipment. So the abbot said he would take a picture of the view specially for me; and the one-eyed fellow set up the tripod. But when the monk opened the camera box, he found it empty.

"I can tell you, I felt sorry for him; but it was worse than that. Outwardly, the abbot was calm. He said to the monk, "Do you think that your abbot should break his word to our guest?" The fellow shook his absent-minded head glumly. Then the abbot ordered him to stand where the tripod had been placed and to look earnestly at the view which had pleased the English guest.

"The monk acted as if he were in a trance. He did as he was told, in holy obedience, but I could see that he was terrified. And while the wretch gazed at the view, the abbot beckoned to the leader of the armed guard, who drew his great sword and slashed off the one-eyed monk's head. 'It is only just,' the abbot said, 'that what this man has forgotten he should replace.'

"Yes, the abbot himself placed the monk's severed head most carefully in the camera box."

The bishop paused and looked at his friend, and the fine ash fell from his cigar.

"It's quite true," he said, in a well-contented voice, "that the last thing he sees is immutably photographed on the retina of a dead man's eye. That landscape was taken by a human camera. Powerful, isn't it?"

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### RUSSIA, WAR, AND MR. TURNER

SIR,—It is a delicate compliment to you Mr. Editor that Mr. R. D. Marriott and others find *The Freethinker* freely discussing events of momentous importance.

Before going further in dealing with the letters of Mr. Marriott and Mr. Lidaks, will those interested kindly refer to my letters of July 6 and August 3 published in *The Freethinker*. It is urgently necessary that we drop all beliefs and to remember that many ideas have been assiduously built up in our minds, both at school and since, by a false and unfree Press.

Mr. R. D. Marriott, by omitting the five main leaders, Churchill, Truman, etc., has given a false twist to my letter and he completely ignores my statement that the idea of war upon *atheistic* Russia is backed by the church, especially the R.C. He apparently agrees that individual Russian citizens cannot make a profit out of war-mongering or munition-making, but how on earth he connects such with slave labour passes my comprehension. If they are not slaves making munitions in England, then there is no tangible reason why they should be so in Russia, or of course elsewhere.

Let me repeat: as it is possible to make munitions in England without slaves, then it must be possible to make munitions in Russia without slaves; this applies to all kinds of work.

Mr. R. D. Marriott mentions Korea, Malaya, and Indo-China. Were it not for the terrible tragedies going on in those countries it would look as though he was joking. In these countries there are foreign Christian armies striving, at much loss of life to themselves, to destroy the native inhabitants, blowing up their houses, destroying their crops, burning, blinding, maiming and killing the

children, women and old people, in addition to the men of fighting age. The fearful destruction carried on in these countries by the Christian invaders beggars description.

He says: "What puerile nonsense to suggest that America would deliberately send troops to kill, ravage, and destroy in Korea." Perhaps so, but unfortunately the Americans, at least some of them, are there doing all these things and boasting about it. If they were not sent by the U.S.A. authorities, how did they get there?

Mr. Marriott brings in a red herring. He says that I should ask the gallant Leicesters. What am I to ask them? As far as I know no one has denied that the Leicesters were gallant and brave, but a brave soldier is only brave because he fights a brave and courageous enemy; there would be no bravery in fighting an enemy who lacked courage.

I did not specifically say that munition-making is a national loss to Russia, which of course it is; but what I did say: munition-making is a loss to all nations. Can Mr. Marriott prove to the contrary? The fact is munition-making is a terrible and mighty material loss and drag upon the whole world.

Whilst Mr. Marriott suggests slave labour, Mr. Lidaks plumps firmly for slave work in Russia and her associated countries. May I ask how Mr. Lidaks knows? Seeing that Russia is accused of complete secrecy, why is it so easy (if true) to know what would be to her great disadvantage to have known.

Even if all the slanders uttered against Russia were true, it would be no reason to start a war and get millions of brave British people killed and injured, with the probable destruction of Britain as a nation. As I can trace my British descent back many generations, makes me wonder whether most of those acting on behalf of the church, R.C. or otherwise, for war against Russia and the hoards of money-seeking financiers looking at the wealth of Russia with greedy eyes, are either foreigners or of foreign descent.

Time and space does not permit fuller answers to all the points raised, but Mr. Marriott thought he would have one last slap at me. He accuses me overtly of being a liar on a personal statement, but he has not denied being a Roman Catholic. But he can have a substantial donation to his church if he can prove me a member of the Communist Party.

My letters are nothing to do with Communism, Toryism, or any other ism, with the exception of Atheism; they are written to say the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, despite the attitude of the wicked war-crazy half-wits.

*Without comment.*—Two items of news in the *Daily Telegraph*, August 22, 1952: U.S. to build a strategic road across Turkey from the Mediterranean port of Alexandretta to the borders of the U.S.S.R., and a U.S. Trade Union leader's wages raised to £14,285; another already getting £27,000 yearly.—Yours, etc.,

P. TURNER.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

### OUTDOOR

MR. J. CLAYTON'S Lectures.—Friday, September 19, 7 p.m., Worsthorne. Saturday, September 20, 6 p.m., Enfield. Sunday, September 21, 7 p.m., Blackburn Market. Friday, September 26, 7-30 p.m., Oswaldthistle (near Library).

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park). — Every Sunday evening, 7-30 p.m.: H. DAY.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Plattfields).—Every Sunday, 3 p.m.: (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed 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: J. M. ALEXANDER. (Highbury Corner), Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. M. ALEXANDER.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, September 20, 7-30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

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, 6 p.m.: Messrs. WOOD, O'NEIL, and RIDLEY.

### INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, September 21, 11 a.m.: JOSEPH McCABE, "Juvenile Delinquency."

West Ham and District Branches, N.S.S. (Wanstead and Woodford Community Centre, Wanstead House, The Green, Wanstead, E.11).—Thursday, September 25, 8 p.m.: Meeting.



## FROM THE DEAD SEA

HOW much easier it is for our generation to learn the history of the world than it was for people living in the last century. Thanks to the uncovering of withered parchments we are becoming much more acquainted with ancient civilisations and, for us, this opens new horizons. We recall the famous discovery by Peliot in Tibet during the year 1908. In 1035 Buddhist monks had, under the threat of invasion, concealed their records and this enabled Peliot not only to obtain precise information regarding the languages existing at that period, but also a detailed account of Asiatic history in general. Twenty thousand manuscripts lay hidden.

A more recent analogous discovery is causing unrest in the religious world: perturbing the minds of the Christian community. It is always risky to discuss the "Holy Scriptures" because we well know that the Bible is a kind of tabu. The mere fact that men discuss it proves that they are no longer faithful followers of Jesus. We bring to mind the famous phrases "... *credo quia absurdum*" "... the ways of God are indivisible." However, in the face of the progress of science and technology in all its branches, the Church has had many times to revise and modify its attitude. We know what happened in 1896 because of the "Scripture of Damascus" found near Cairo. Which discovery, making known to us the manner of life of men living several thousand years ago, often helps us towards a better understanding of present-day man. Notwithstanding any possible "dangerous" disclosures, the scientist to-day steadily continues his work of uncovering the past—the true past.

For this reason, the discovery which took place in the desert of Judea is alarming organised Christianity.

As in Tibet, that is owing to the fear of invasion, a Jewish sect hid its library with the idea of one day reclaiming it. In Spring, 1947, a Bedouin of the tribe Taâmare stumbled upon a cave whilst looking for a lost sheep. The cave was located a mile and a half from the Dead Sea and nine hundred feet above the level of the Sea. It was situated West of the Dead Sea, near the source of the river Ain Feshka, and ten miles from Jericho. Suddenly the Bedouin found himself in a wide corridor which had the appearance of having been man-made. There stood clay urns in which were deposited ancient manuscripts in packages sown and covered with leather. A number of the urns had been shattered: this leading to the belief that a majority of the documents are lost. The Bedouin, failing to understand the value of his finds, tried to sell them for money. First he visited a Moslem antique dealer in Bethlehem; but this man refused to buy. Next they were offered to a Syrian merchant who, in turn, reported the affair to his colleagues in Jerusalem. Thus news reached the Syrian patriarch, M. Anatoso Samuel, who bought four of the best preserved scrolls.

Not understanding the Hebrew language he approached a professor, but this gentleman declared he had no interest in the matter. At the end of summer the patriarch inquired of a Jewish trader who subsequently notified the Hebrew University. The University sent two librarians, but they did not feel sufficiently competent to themselves decipher the manuscripts. Meanwhile, civil disturbances in the country delayed any possible research. Finally, on the 25th November, 1947, Professor Sukenik, who had recently returned to Palestine, heard the news, bought the manuscripts, and took them with him to the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem. After much endeavour he succeeded in tracing

the remainder. Shortly afterwards, someone from the American School in Jerusalem copied and photographed the documents and, with the unrest in Palestine as a pretext, they were transported to the United States. In which country the affair was publicly referred to in 1948. The famous Dupont-Sommer, Professor of Higher Studies, who already has written pamphlets on the subject, asserts that according to further discoveries made in the cave of Ain Feshka, the scrolls had lain there for more than two thousand years. The matter is of some delicacy because, although the earliest scrolls are written in the ancient Hebrew tongue, others are in New Hebrew, and a few, in the latter part, in Aramaic. Because some scholars doubted the authenticity of the find, fragments remaining in the cave were collected and an extensive study made of them. Judging by the number of urns standing there, one can confidently assume that at least two hundred and fifty scrolls at one time existed. It is somewhat amusing to study the affair, as the texts of the original manuscripts are not always in accord with the newest. We have already seen what happened with the Bible with its Greek, Aramaic, Syrian, and Latin translations. The official text, which lies in Rome, was translated by Saint Hieronimus. In the Dead Sea manuscripts there is frequent mention of one Master of Justice (More Haççedeq) and he has been given also the title Chosen of God (Bettir El). According to the Jewish writer Joseph Flavius, this refers to Aristobulus the Second, whom history says was incarcerated when Pompey conquered Jerusalem. Pompey had bound him to his chariot upon his triumphal return to Rome in the year 61. Aristobulus later escaped and fled to Jerusalem but he was eventually recaptured and died by poison in prison. A disciple of Aristobulus named Hirkan then assumed his later masters' office. Until now the portrait of Jesus, that is, such as we know of his person and deeds, is identical with that of Aristobulus. Thus there is confusion in the ranks of the Christians.

Esperantists well remember the articles of Dr. Zamenhof on the Rabbi Hillel, a Jewish scholar who formulated seven rules of conduct, a method for the interpretation of the holy books, and who collected the maxims of earlier scholars into one work which became the basis of the Talmud. Zamenhof intended to found a unique religion based on the teachings of this other Jesus.

Soon we shall read the consequences of the manuscripts which are being deciphered in the United States. We do not know whether the truth will be told or whether there will be silence on controversial points. Newspapers and books which have already reviewed the discovery say that it is revolutionary. Possibly religionists themselves are nearest to the truth—the religious truth! They simply say that even if new scriptures should arrive, bringing new light on Jesus, it would not really matter. One cannot destroy a religion which has already been in existence for two thousand years merely on account of wretched scraps of paper. Some even more categorically state that even if Jesus never did exist as the Holy Bible says, this is of no importance—because the Church must always have the last word.

Translated from the Esperanto review "Sennaciulo."

by B. J. EDGECOMBE.

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