

# The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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SOME little time back, General Eisenhower, former "Supreme Commander" in the prospective defence of "Christian civilisation" (*sic*), and now Republican presidential candidate, delivered himself of a weighty historical dictum. He declared that modern France is decadent because half the French nation are Atheists: a remark which is, in any case, scarcely polite to the General's former hosts and which, in addition, has the further demerit of being strictly untrue. In which last connection, whilst one hardly expects a general or, for that matter, a presidential candidate, to be an authority on Universal History, a Polybius or a Gibbon, one could, at least,

expect a man who has attained such a position in life to measure his words before doing what Edmund Burke once declared to be impossible, "indicting a nation."

In considering this unfortunate statement, one must, of course, bear in mind the personal and professional background of the former allied war-leader. The connection between the Army and the Church has always been very intimate. Is not the Jewish-Christian Deity a god of battles, "The Lord of Hosts" ("Jehovah Sabaoth"), and in any case, there are weighty practical reasons which make the dogmas of religion dear to the military heart and profession—reasons aptly summarised by one of our American general's "decadent" French Atheists, the great satirist, Anatole France (1844-1924), when he depicted his fictitious but true-to-life colonel as declaring that without a belief in another life, his soldiers could never be expected to obey his orders and lay down their hopes of continuing in this one! Perhaps Eisenhower, in uttering his diatribe against contemporary French Atheism, had this military reasoning in mind. Atheists, as we have been recently reminded in this journal, can, where necessity drives, die as bravely as other people: in fact, more bravely, since they have no hope in a Hereafter to sustain them. (Though, there again, Anatole France has aptly suggested that there is really not much point in demanding another life when most of us don't know what to do with this one!) None the less, if one is sincerely convinced of the truth of the Secularist view that this life is the only one that we are ever likely to enjoy, one would tend to be reluctant to throw it lightly away on the battlefield in pursuance of some puerile dynastic quarrel or outmoded nationalist wrangle. For which reason, it is eminently probable that Atheists will not make good soldiers, and that this reluctance to convert themselves into cannonfodder will cause Atheism to be unpopular with generals who are usually anxious to fight "to the last man": always assuming that this solitary hero belongs to "other ranks." For "generals die in bed" or, at least, usually did so before modern "total" wars introduced some degree of democracy into death on the battlefield.

In the present case of Eisenhower, it must also be recalled that he comes from "God's own country" and

is himself from religious stock. For his mother is said to have been a "Jehovah's Witness," and Jehovah is an old patron of the military art; even if his own record as an amateur strategist, as depicted in the wars of the Old Testament, was not particularly impressive, if we are to judge from the frequency with which his chosen people got the worst of it in their tribal brawls.

Whatever the former Supreme Commander's merits as a military commander may have been—and it must be conceded that his operations ended up more successfully than most of Jehovah's—it is evident that European history is not his strong point. For a more glaring

historical *faux pas* than Eisenhower's would be difficult to imagine. For, far from proving French "decadence," the greatest age in French history, the 18th and early 19th century, when France led the world, alike in science, politics and literature, coincided precisely with the rise and diffusion of Freethinking and Secularist ideas, of which Atheism was the logical outcome. It was the writings of the Deists and anti-clericals, Voltaire and Rousseau, which made France the intellectual leader of Europe in the 18th century: incidentally, it was the ideas propounded by these men which formed the basis for a document of which our presidential candidate has probably heard: "The Declaration of Independence," and which led to the creation of the first Secular State in the modern world, which, again, was not France, but the "United States of America," the First Amendment to the Constitution of which lays it down that Congress shall make no laws for the purpose of regulating religion. Does Eisenhower, if elected President, intend to try to repeal this strictly Atheistic legal principle?

Whilst as for France herself, it was the great French Freethinkers, Atheists and Materialists of the 18th and early 19th centuries who made France the intellectual leader of her contemporary civilisation. Again, it was the ideas of Freethought which created the great French Revolution and thus laid the foundations of modern democracy in the political sphere. Hardly convincing proof of "decadence."

Indeed, if one directs a glance at the history of modern Europe, including France, since the French Revolution, one can state that the acceptance or rejection of Rationalist and Atheistic ideas forms the dividing line between European progress and European reaction. Where anti-clerical ideas have prevailed, one has witnessed unexampled intellectual and scientific advance in "the century of stupendous progress." Where such ideas, derived from France and, ultimately, from the French Revolution, have made headway, one sees modern civilisation, with all its faults, the most advanced and the richest in further potentialities that our planet has so far known. Where, contrarily, the influence of the France of the "enlightenment" and of the revolution has failed to spread, or has been forcibly repressed, one gets the Spain

## VIEWES and OPINIONS Eisenhower Misreads History

By F. A. RIDLEY

of Franco, the Portugal of Fatima, and the barbarities of Fascism.

With regard to France herself, an eminent English historian has pronounced this judgment upon her modern evolution:—

“On the one hand there is the republican tradition dominant and established in France, evident though overmastered in Spain [Written in 1911.—F.A.R.], partially transfused into the national institutions of Italy. On the other hand there is the Catholic Church, the ally of the Bourbons in France and Spain, the enemy and the victim of the French Revolution. The gulf is clear, the incompatibility absolute, the war truceless . . . a French child must either be brought up a Roman Catholic or he must be brought up a Republican” (cf. H. A. L. Fisher. *The Republican Tradition in Europe*, p. 253).

Which of these two Frances is “decadent”: the medieval Catholic, or the modern Secular and Republican

one? General Eisenhower opts for the latter. That is, in his self-chosen amateur capacity as a historian. Fortunately, in his professional military capacity, he acted in drastic opposition to his pseudo-historical judgments. For it was the armies of which General Eisenhower was the Supreme Commander on “D-Day,” 1944, which overthrew the clerical-Fascist régime of Marshal Petain, under which French clericalism had temporarily succeeded in obliterating Secular France and had effaced Free-thought along with other vestiges of the “enlightenment” and the French Revolution. In fact, Eisenhower actually restored French Atheism. His practice was better than his theory! Let us hope, however, that, if elected President—and the result will be known before these lines appear—he will prove a better judge of contemporary than of past history. Otherwise, both he and we may live to see “decadence” engulf nations which are neither French nor Atheistic. *Verb sap!*

## Review

By STEPHEN YORKE

A FEW days ago there come into my hands a book\* dealing with the life and work of a distinguished woman doctor, of the name and title, Miss Christine Murrell, M.D. This little book of 133 pages is not much more than a monograph by Miss Christopher St. John, one of Dr. Murrell's non-medical friends, but it tells in a succinct and friendly fashion the story of a woman medico who made history by becoming the first woman member of that august body the General Medical Council of Great Britain. She was also the first woman to be elected to the Council of the British Medical Association, generally referred to as the “B.M.A.,” the “Trade Union of the G.P.s.” Dr. Murrell also played a prominent part in the activities of the Medical Women's Federation, of which she was at one time President. From the foregoing it is obvious that “Our Christine,” as she was affectionately termed by her poor patients, established a unique reputation in her profession, and it is altogether fitting that her friend and medical colleague Lady Barrett, C.H., C.B.E., should have contributed a preface to this story of her “loyal friend and gay companion.”

It will be guessed that such a woman, who forced her way to the front of her profession against masculine prejudice, was, to use a Runyonism, “more than somewhat” of a feminist. Indeed, she was; for she took a prominent part in the struggle for Women's Suffrage (“Votes for Women”) and the removal of disabilities from women's work in all spheres. She joined the Women's Social and Political Union, led by Mrs. Pankhurst, though not necessarily approving of all the activities of that militant body of women. She was, as a professional woman, not called upon to be a prisoner, and a hunger-striker, but she endorsed such methods and put her medical skill at the service of the hunger-strikers. Those who recall the “Cat and Mouse Act” will readily agree with her author that in this way she was best serving the women's movement.

The purpose of this article is not to dwell upon her political and medical career, both in social and war work, but to refer to, and, perhaps, rescue from oblivion her attitude towards the general English superstition of Christianity. Surprise, says her author, was expressed by some people that Dr. Murrell's great services to medicine, which are often officially recognised by the bestowal of

an “honour,” were not so recognised. Miss St. John says that she (Dr. Murrell) has often been quoted as a typical example of the woman deserving an official honour for public services who did not receive it. Other “Suffragettes” had been so honoured. How it is that Dr. Murrell was overlooked?

Well, when Freethinkers read what follows they will not be surprised, we know only too well that “kissing goes by favour” and favour in this connection is in the hands of a monarch who has as one of his titles “Defender of the Faith.” Let us read Miss St. John's circumspect remarks in this matter. After emphasising the Doctor's strong, resolute character, which is shown in the photogravure facing the title-page, Miss St. John continues dealing, with deprecatory and apologetic words, with Dr. Murrell's opposition to Christianity.

“She was, by the way, not at all religious in the accepted sense of the word. Her attitude towards the dogmas of the Christian religion was not that of the agnostic. She seems to have had an absolute certainty that they were erroneous. . . . Another remark reported to me reveals a similar confidence [that Christianity had weak foundations]. ‘Some people need religion as they need an opiate. They cannot bear the pain that life gives without it.’ I have observed that people whose religious training in youth has been narrow and rigid often react against religion in a way which shows the influence of this training. A possible explanation of Christine Murrell's attitude towards dogmatic religion. . . .”

“Her conception of human welfare was sharply defined. She thought that it could be realised and was impatient of anything that hindered its realisation. It is very likely that she was impatient of religion as a hindrance. She would, in spite of her conservative tendencies, have endorsed the opinion of the Russian Communists that ‘religion transports the realisation of man's welfare into an illusory, imaginary world of unreality, and so hinders its really being attained. . . . It holds out illusory consolations and therefore it sanctions injustice, poverty, and weakness in earthly life. Heaven is the arch-enemy that prevents earth from being set right.’”

Enough! Now we know why there were no “honours” from the Defender of the Faith. We also know why there was “a body-snatching” Christian memorial service for this great and truth-loving lady.

\* *Christine Murrell, M.D., Her Life and Her Work*, by Christopher St. John; published by Williams & Norgate, London, in 1935.

# An Eminent Victorian Humanist

By T. F. PALMER

DR. C. P. BLACKER'S *Eugenics: Galton and After* (Duckworth, 1952, 25s.) contains a discriminating survey of Sir Francis Galton's important services to science and freethought in the 19th and 20th centuries. This study is succeeded by a critical account of the eugenist movement since the death of its protagonist. Still, the first part of Dr. Blacker's volume, which is devoted to Galton himself is the most attractive, as it concerns the personality and achievements of a scientist who was eminent as England's leading authority on heredity.

Our biographer acknowledges his deep indebtedness to Karl Pearson's three-volume study of Galton, which he deems invaluable, while many others have been thanked for their assistance in the preparation of his work.

Galton was born in the reign of George IV in 1822 and lived until 1911, so that his 89 years extended from the 19th to the 20th century. Of Quaker parentage, he was intended for a medical career, but the death of his father when Francis was only 23 made him a wealthy man. Travel became more enticing than medicine, which he abandoned, and he visited Egypt, Syria and the Sudan, while later his explorations in savage Africa became famous. In 1849 as Galton testifies: "Blank spaces in the map of the world were then both large and numerous, and the positions of many towns, rivers, and notable districts were untrustworthy. The whole interior of South Africa and much of that of North Africa, were quite unknown to civilised man." Galton, however, discovered a new route to Lake Ngami, despite the obstruction of the Boers, while further expeditions were successfully accomplished while he made friendly contacts with scarcely-known or previously unknown native tribes.

Returning to England, he found it necessary to recruit his strength, but his scientific studies were soon resumed. These were versatile and included weather lore; indeed, he coined the term, anticyclone. He became also a pioneer of blood transfusion, as well as composite photography, and the investigation of finger prints, while his researches concerning identical twins are summarised in his *Inquiries into Human Faculty*.

This remarkable work appeared in 1883 and aroused considerable interest. It was partly republished by Dent in 1907 and the Eugenics Society in 1951. As our author observes in these reprintings, "three of the original chapters were omitted; their titles are: Theocratic Intervention, Objective Efficiency of Prayer, and Enthusiasm. Galton notes these omissions in his preface to the Everyman edition which he concludes with the words: 'After all, the omission of these chapters, in which I find nothing to recant, improves, as I am told, the general balance of the book.'"

Yet, as Dr. Blacker observes, these suppressed chapters reveal Galton's convictions concerning religious beliefs. They prove that he rejected the idea of divine intervention in physical affairs and that prayer has any objective power. These rational conclusions arose from Galton's reading of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, for previously he had been deeply depressed by the doctrine of man's inborn sinful character. Now, it became evident "that if the laws of planetary motion, of gravity, of light, heat, sound, etc., were subject to arbitrary suspensions, or reversal through the intervention of divine or demonic agencies, there could be no science. The same may be said of the laws of heredity. If, for example, it were proved that the birth of intelligent and healthy children

to parents lacking these qualities could be promoted by the exercise of prayer, there would be no object in studying the laws of heredity. Prayers would become a substitute for eugenics."

Galton was convinced that ethical sentiments were purely secular in origin. Natural Selection would favour sexual, parental, filial and social development. "Those," he declares, "who possess all of them in the strongest measure, would, speaking generally, have an advantage in the struggle for existence. Without sexual affection there would be no marriages and children, without parental affection, the children would be abandoned, without filial affection they would stray and perish, and without social affection, each individual would be single-handed against rivals who were capable of binding themselves into tribes."

Galton's inquiries relating to the efficacy of prayer indicated that prayerful patients recovered no more frequently from illness than those who refrained from supplication. Again, royal personages for whom special prayers were offered "are literally the shortest lived of all who have the advantages of affluence." Missionaries also, among savage peoples, very frequently die before they have mastered the languages of the natives they try to convert.

Again, as Galton notes, Life Assurance Companies before granting policies "do not include among their confidential inquiries questions such as: 'Does he habitually use family prayers and private devotions?'" Moreover, lightning conductors on places of worship were once regarded as profane, but statistics clearly demonstrate their necessity. Many long venerated beliefs are now relegated to the realms of superstition and Galton concludes that the proof of the efficacy of prayer rests upon those who claim it. No wonder that such sceptical avowals disappeared when a popular edition of *Inquiries into Human Faculty* was published.

Galton, fairly late in life, married into an intellectual family, but the union of an almost ideal couple proved childless. It is in truth one of Nature's ironies that the founder of Eugenics should leave no offspring.

Galton was a man of noble character with many friends and no known enemies. Mrs. Sidney Webb regarded him very highly. She was known to nearly all the elite of her time and to her, as she states, the ideal man of science was not even her "guide, philosopher and friend Herbert Spencer but Francis Galton."

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## INVOCATION

Thou, whose mercies art psalmed and sung,  
Whose compassion is cried by all creatures;  
I bless Thee, Lord, that I lost my teeth young—  
Who mightest have bitten Thy preachers.

A. E. C.

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The occupant of the Chair of Systemic Theology in the Free Church College, Edinburgh, is Professor Roderick A. Finlayson, whose generous nature finds scope for expression in the *Monthly Record* of the Free Church of Scotland. Following the recent abandonment of efforts to raise a memorial fund to the late George Bernard Shaw, he writes with true Christian charity of the dramatist: "He had no reverence for life and poured contempt on much that was sacred in the human heart. If any life can be assessed a failure, the life he led surely can be. There is a book which George Bernard Shaw knew but scoffed at, and its verdict is this: 'The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot.'"

## Acid Drops

At last the Pope, with Heaven's blessing, has spoken on the flying saucers and the possibility that there is life like ours on other planets. It appears that if it is men who are operating the saucers, they do not come under the dreadful disability we all suffer from here—namely, Original Sin. This being the case, Our Lord Jesus Christ need not be their saviour, though, if only Vatican theologians could meet the "space-dwellers," the encounter would be "religiously fertile." The Vatican would be able to teach them the Ten Commandments and they would all collaborate "in serving and glorifying our common Maker."

This incredible twaddle is the result of many years' meditation on the problem by the finest brains in the Vatican, and will, no doubt, be wholeheartedly accepted by Catholic converts particularly, for they are much more prone to accept Vatican imbecilities than those born into the sect. But what a picture it gives of attempting to amalgamate a little science with a mountain of Oriental credulity and superstition! And the joke would be a bigger one if the "Flying Saucers" should prove as big a myth as Christ's Miracles.

American T.V. is making a big splash of a new evangelist, Billy Graham, who is in the direct line of liars like Dr. Torrey, and fools like Mr. Moody. Billy specialises in putting "religion on a salesmanship basis," we are told, as if that were something new. The Christian religion has only prospered because it has always been on the "gold standard." The directors and managers always voted themselves huge salaries and magnificent palaces (or near-palaces) to live in, and whoever went on short rations it was never they.

Just as the radio can reach an enormous audience and is therefore of the greatest benefit to the Churches—a veritable godsend—so television will still further boost up what was beginning to be a dying religion. Graham, who was almost unknown until the Hearst journals discovered him, now reaches "the largest audience ever available to an evangelist." And he "doesn't miff his opportunity. He gives his audience first-hand glimpses of Heaven, Hell and Judgment Day"—we are quoting literally. Even Billy Sunday could not have done more. We can only suggest to the ineffable Graham that a few first-hand female angels all dressed up in the latest Paris nighties might even bring more converts than Heaven, Hell, and Jesus Christ put together.

The United States have just issued a new stamp to commemorate the printing of the famous Gutenberg Bible which appeared 500 years ago. This was, we believe, the first book printed with movable type—but it is by no means clear whether the U.S.A. is commemorating the art of printing, or just the Bible—though perhaps had Gutenberg first printed the *Decameron* or *Gargantua*, there would have been no stamps for this great pioneer. And we must not forget that most U.S. stamps bear the likeness of Abraham Lincoln, and many that of Benjamin Franklin—both unbelievers in Christianity.

What are the qualities that make a modern novel a best seller? This question has been effectively answered by the literary editor of the *Chicago Daily News*. It should combine two elements, sex and religion, "which are sure-fire in the hands of a good craftsman." But sex has always

been identified with religion—indeed, at one time, religion was actually "sex-worship," and both Judaism and Christianity have many sex elements craftily hidden in them even now. Other religions, like Siva-worship, are almost exclusively sex-ridden. When a nun passionately "adores" her saviour, or a priest reverently talks about "Our Lady," we have two precious examples before our eyes.

Have you the Seven Capital Sins? Pride, Anger, Sloth, Envy, Covetousness, Gluttony, and Lust? Then write immediately to the (R.C.) Knights of Columbus and be shown how to get rid of them. The advertisements of the Knights of Columbus on this read exactly like those patent medicine advertisements which show how you can get rid of, let us say, lumbago, or headache, or even constipation.

## What Does Science Mean?

THE letter written by Miss Freda Peckman complaining that "scientific words and phrases" are as meaningless to her as those of orthodox religion is, I regret to say, typical of some received in *The Freethinker* office. And it may interest many readers also to learn that on occasions we get letters from readers complaining that most, if not all our articles are far too elementary, and when are we going to grow up?

The fact that *she* does not know what the words "Nature" so revered in science mean is surely no reason why *I* do not know?

When I first attended art classes, the distinguished artist who taught me was never tired of saying, "Always go to Nature, my boy, she'll never let you down." He never questioned by ability to understand him when he used the word "Nature," and indeed I knew, young as I was, exactly what he meant. Does Miss Peckman? Would she understand me if I called James Thomson, the poet of the *Seasons*, a "Nature" poet and would that be as meaningless as if I called Francis Thompson a "religious" poet?

If Sherrington says, "Man is a product of the play of natural forces," he takes for granted that his readers know at least some elementary science.

Man is certainly "a product of the play of natural forces"; but if anybody wants to know "why" these forces produce the phenomena in the Universe, the answer cannot be given. We simply do not know "why" two parts of the gas hydrogen, and one part of the gas oxygen can, under certain conditions, produce water. We can produce the water just as we can produce electricity, and we can show a magnet attracting iron, or we can see a tree gradually growing fruit in our garden, and we know that some trees will produce a lovely apple, and others an uneatable one. That is "Nature," and that is all we know. But when a Theist says, "God does it," he does not mean what the scientist means when he uses the word "Nature." For the Theist, the word God is an *explanation* of the process; for the scientist, all he can do so far is to record the fact.

God, for the Theist, is a "Person" to whom we can pray. God is of the masculine gender and has parts and passions. When we are told that "God made the stars also," the idea of the writer was to use the word "made" as a carpenter uses it to "make" a chair. The whole conception of a God is absolutely different from the conception of "Nature" as used by science; and how anyone could have written, "Let us not be arrogant because we talk of Nature instead of God" writing as a reader of *The Freethinker* for some time, is something I cannot explain.

H. C.

# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

C. E. RATCLIFFE.—Mr. Cutner writes: "I would prefer to say that Collectivists, Socialists, and Communists are often *anti-religious*."

V. J. BERRY (Paris).—Thanks for your letter. The French Free-thought paper, *La Raison Militante*, is published at 6b Avenue Marigny Fontenay-sous-Bois (Seine), editor, J. Cotereau. They will put you in touch with the French organisations that you require.

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. In U.S.A., \$3.50.

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

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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: F. A. RIDLEY.

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

### INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: HILDA FROOM, "For a People's Democracy in Britain."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 18, 7 p.m.: Dr. R. DOLL, "Modern Problems of Medical Ethics."

Glasgow Secular Society (Branch N.S.S.) (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. J. CORINA (Bradford), "Behind the Iron Curtain."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Miss DIANA PURCELL, "Literature and Socialism."

Manchester Branch, N.S.S. (Onward Hall, 207, Deansgate).—Tuesday, November 18, 7-30 p.m.: COLIN MCCALL, "The Menace of Religion To-day."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: J. ELLIS (N.U.M.), Wages, Prices, and Profits."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, "Forty Years of South Place."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: VICTOR E. NEUBERG, "Freethought and Politics: A Critical Survey."

## Sugar Plums

Wonders never cease! Everyone seems to read *The Freethinker* nowadays. The present Editor has just received what must be a compliment unique in the annals of this journal. Our contemporary, the Malta Catholic journal, *The Faith*, organ of "St. Paul's Apologetic Circle," has just reprinted in full Mr. F. A. Ridley's Editorial of May 18, 1952, on "The Universal Man," Leonardo Da Vinci (1452-1519). Further, our editorial is described in these flattering terms: "This year being the Fifth centenary anniversary of Leonardo Da Vinci many articles all over the world have been written to celebrate the great event. Among these articles we consider that published by the Editor of *The Freethinker*, Mr. F. A. Ridley, on May 18, to be one of the best." (The article is then reproduced). Our Catholic contemporary,

however, finds one "impardonable fault" in our article: we did not tell our "atheist readers" that Da Vinci was "a staunch Catholic." Was he? In an early editorial we propose to reply to this and some other criticisms raised in *The Faith* in the course of its last few issues.

Readers of this journal and, in particular, members of the *National Secular Society* will be intrigued and, perhaps, alarmed to learn that, following upon his recent visit to their public lecture, subsequently recounted in our columns, Mr. P. Victor Morris has been personally approached by the *Seventh Day Adventists*, with a view to joining that organisation. Their fears are, we are pleased to report, groundless. We understand that the General Secretary, N.S.S., informed his unexpected visitor that his advent to the "adventists" would not take place until after that of Jesus Christ.

The Manchester Branch commence their winter session on Tuesday, November 18, at the Onward Hall, 207, Deansgate, when Mr. Colin McCall will speak on "The Menace of Religion To-day." The meeting will commence at 7-30 p.m. and both speaker and subject should command a good attendance. The change of day to Tuesday after more than 30 years of Sunday lectures is to be regretted but is unavoidable owing to the difficulty in securing a suitable hall on Sunday evenings.

## Report of Lecture by J. McCabe

At the invitation of the West London Branch, N.S.S., Mr. Joseph McCabe lectured at its usual weekly meeting at the *Laurie Arms*. The eminent speaker took as his subject the intriguing title of "Religion, Crime, and Secularism." With a vast array of statistics drawn from many lands, Mr. McCabe developed his central thesis: that, whilst religion has continued to decline in the number of its adherents, it has greatly increased in power since the First World War, and that this increase in religious influence has been paralleled by a startling increase in crime and in criminal statistics.

Everywhere, declared Mr. McCabe, the ratio of crime and the religious beliefs of the criminal are the same: Roman Catholics have the largest number of criminals; Protestants come second; Jews third; and people of no religion fourth. Amongst the statistics quoted by the lecturer was a report by the Roman Catholic chaplain at Sing-Sing prison, in New York. Protestant countries have a better criminal record than Catholic. Mr. McCabe considered that religion makes for criminality by substituting theological for social sanctions of good conduct. The Roman Catholic institution of the Confessional directly encouraged anti-social conduct by the facilities which it offered for repetitive forgiveness.

Some of the lecturer's statistics were rather astonishing: e.g., in Britain only 48 per cent. of the population believe in a personal god, whereas the percentage in U.S.A. is 90 per cent. Mr. McCabe severely criticised the American legal system and quoted startling figures for the incidence of crime in "God's own country." In France, to-day, the political influence of the Catholic Church was again considerable. The lecturer contrasted Russian criminal law very favourably with codes, West of the "Iron Curtain," and indicated the Secularist basis of the Soviet code.

Questions, and an animated discussion followed. In his final reply, Mr. McCabe emphasised the reactionary character of the "Butler Act" of 1944 in promoting the teaching of dogmatic Christianity in British State schools.

Thanking the lecturer for his brilliant address, the Chairman, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, declared that the name of McCabe is a household word amongst Rationalists everywhere: a statement warmly applauded by the

crowded room. Replying, the lecturer revealed that he was within a few days of his 85th birthday. His robust appearance belied his years and strongly suggests that he (Mr. McCabe) is destined to carry on his great work for Freethought for many years yet, and is due to attain eventually, if not the years of Methuselah, at least, those of, say, Bernard Shaw!

F. A. R.

## The "Hibbert Journal" and Jesus Christ—1

By H. CUTNER

MR. KENT'S excellent article on the Jubilee of the *Hibbert Journal* sent me to my copy of the special number issued as a Supplement in 1909 entitled *Jesus or Christ?* Whatever one might think of religion in general, the *Hibbert Journal* has always tried to stand for fine scholarship in the highest tradition and I must confess that many of its articles have been exceptionally interesting even if sometimes the particular aspect of religion dealt with had to be given up later as out of date.

As far back as 1909 the Rev. R. Roberts managed to get an article into the *Journal* perhaps because he was a clergyman and the Editor was unaware that he believed in Christianity about as much as did Charles Bradlaugh. If my memory does not fail me, Mr. Roberts was a member of the R.P.A., and he wrote regularly for the *Literary Guide*. But this is now almost beside the point. His article was a bombshell—or, as it would be called these days, an atom bomb. He innocently asked whether Jesus was just a man, or a Man, or a Very Great Man, or was he Christ the Messiah, the Son of God, and God himself? What was it, he asked, that Christians *really* believed? Was it Jesus or Christ? He went even further. He was "embarrassed" when people talked about the "historical Christ." This now applies particularly to "Unitarians" who mouth an "historical" Christ in the hope that they will still be considered Christians of a sort, but who almost always take refuge in the "one" God of the Jews directly they are tackled about Jesus the God.

Roberts, of course, had little difficulty in quoting from the leading theologians of his day, and in showing either that they were unintelligible, or that they disagreed violently with each other, or that they were ready to prove that Jesus *was* the Christ, that he was *not* the Christ, that Jesus Christ may have been the Son of God, or he may have been Divine *without* being the Son of God, and so on.

Here, for example, is one quotation from Dr. Percy Gardner's *Historic View of the New Testament*:—

The more closely we examine the documents of early Christianity, the more fully do we acquiesce in the dictum of Dr. Edersheim that the materials for the life of Jesus in any objective sense do not exist. . . . In speaking of the early life of the Master, I call him, with the Evangelists, Jesus; in speaking of the exalted Head of the Christian Society, I use with Paul the term Christ. In cases where the meaning is between these two, the phrase Jesus Christ is applicable.

From this, I have never been able to understand how Dr. Gardner ever escaped the wiles of our Jesuits.

Edersheim was a converted Jew who wrote a life of Jesus (or at any rate tried to write one) entitled *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* in which he showed the naïve credulity of the kind indwelling generally in the more enthusiastic members of the Salvation Army. He covered up his completely deficient knowledge of Jesus with a detailed account of the "times" of Jesus, and so filled two portly volumes. They are almost forgotten these days.

Roberts was smart enough to leave the much-debatable question of the historicity of Jesus (the man) alone, for he

knew that it was the one subject which had to be boycotted if possible in the *Hibbert Journal*. He never mentions Dupuis or Volney or John M. Robertson. (I suspect that he had never heard of Robert Taylor.)

He does, however, mention Pastor Kalthoff who, in Germany, was arguing for the non-historicity of Jesus before Prof. Arthur Drews, and who is always being contemptuously attacked by German theologians pretending that he is about the only writer in the world who has the impudence to say "our Lord" is a myth. Roberts points out that in the New Testament "we have a body of literature whose evidential value has been and still is, the riddle of Christendom. Close and careful reading of its documents reduces our knowledge of the actual facts of the life of Jesus to a small and, it must be added, a narrowing compass. . . . Following it [the story], we pass along narrowing areas of admissible statement, through the textual territory marked by Dr. Schmiedel's 'pillar' passages, till we reach the position of Kalthoff, from which the figure of the historic Jesus has completely vanished."

For this, the Editor adds a note, "Amended sentence." It would certainly be interesting to learn whether it was Mr. Roberts or the Editor who "amended" this sentence which is one of the few in which he hints that Jesus may not be an "historical" figure. It is obvious that the *Hibbert Journal* always ready to accept an article on the Man Jesus, or the God Christ, or on both together in the same Person, indignantly refuses to discuss his non-historicity.

John M. Robertson was at his most virile period then, and probably knew more about early Christian history and theology than the whole of the *Hibbert* writers put together; but Dr. Jacks, as liberal-minded an Editor as one could imagine, drew the line against such an out-and-out unbeliever. Robertson's arguments were unanswerable, and the shrewd-minded Jacks knew it and kept him out of his *Journal*.

Dr. G. Stephens Spinks, who succeeded Jacks, was just as frightened at the idea of admitting in the *Hibbert Journal* any "Jesus a myth" article as his predecessor. He refused at all costs even to review my own book on the problem—*Jesus: God, Man or Myth?* How far this childish boycott persisted after 1909 I do not know, for I have not always found it possible to read every number of the *Hibbert Journal* during the past 40 years. I can say, however, that I have not found any reference to the Myth Theory in the many numbers which I have read. I have little doubt that the present Editor, Mr. L. A. Garrard, will nobly and firmly uphold the *Hibbert* tradition on this subject.

But to return to the article by the Rev. R. Roberts. It provoked no fewer than 17 more or less scholarly articles by leading theologians—a feast of hocus-pocus served up in the name of theology most of which it is difficult to believe was written by intelligent men. Talk about hopeless verbosity! I challenge anybody reading through these

270 pages to say whether he is a whit clearer on the distinction between "Jesus" or "Christ" than he was before—that is, "Jesus" refers to a man supposed to have been living in Palestine from about the year 4 B.C. to 30 A.D.; while "Christ" refers to God Almighty who has come down from Heaven (a real place) and was His Own Son who, after performing many "miracles," was put to death, rose alive after three days, and flew up to Heaven in the sight of 500 people.

It would not be unfair to claim that all or nearly all our 17 theologians, no matter how roundabout a way they say it, want us to believe that the Man Jesus was the God Christ and that nearly everything related in the Gospels took place exactly as described. At least, they want the

"people" to believe this—laymen, workers, and of course all children. And I don't think it unfair to suggest that precious few of them believe it themselves; for if they did, they would not have taken such pains to hide their real beliefs.

Forty years ago, it is true to say that more people than now really believed in miracles and a God Jesus who was God himself; and if they did not, they might have been persuaded to do so. Nowadays, the kind of articles written in reply to Roberts would be laughed at by intelligent people, though I admit that they would be welcomed by the B.B.C. as being just the kind of thing for school broadcasts. Their unintelligibility would impress children and, anyway, no replies would be allowed. Like the *Hibbert Journal*.

## Are Atheists Freethinkers?

By P. TURNER

IN having a little discussion with some of our members it becomes apparent that many staunch Atheists are not necessarily Freethinkers, what perhaps is annoying is that these members are highly intelligent, well cultured, quite sincere, and well intentioned. There is a saying: "The way to hell is paved with good intentions." In other words, good intentions are not enough to bring about the best results for humanity.

To be a Freethinker, one must beware of those ideas that have been firmly placed in our minds, appearing to be real and incontrovertible. One of the first things to bear in mind is that humanity is composed of single individuals, and that they are intrinsically alike, there being no reason why one should set himself as a god, or conversely as a slave.

Most people assume that they must be controlled, controlled by others like themselves. They seem to think that without such control, life would be impossible (such a state of affairs has never been tried, therefore all arguments on the subject are pure guessing); the result being that bodies of men are set up, armed, and trained to set about those of their fellows, who are presumed to have failed to obey one or more of a vast array of laws, rules, and regulations.

These laws, etc., are being turned out like sausages from a machine by groups of men and a few women, who are in various states of intelligence, knowledge, and understanding, and who consciously or unconsciously are playing down to their own desires, for power and wealth, or, of course, they may be just stupid.

The main argument in favour of the stream of laws and regulations is to protect people, being especially stressed by the Christian and other religious people, who neither trust their own gods nor mankind.

But every day hundreds are murdered, and there are thousands of assaults, burglaries, robberies, and thefts. In wars and other ways many millions have been killed, hundreds of millions wounded, and millions of homes destroyed by the Christian and other religious law makers.

The laws have not succeeded in stopping murders, and various other crimes, neither have they stopped the terrible ghastly wars, but the laws have succeeded in depriving millions of their freedom, and large numbers of their lives.

Much punishment is for offences against religion, religious ideas, or arising from religious beliefs, where the origin of the idea has been completely lost in the minds of those exercising the powers of punishment. The unthinking man is persuaded by continuous subtle propaganda to believe that it is justified.

Confining ourselves to this country, I turn to the *News of the World*, and read: "A man stabbed to death for a few pounds." The fear of the law (hanging) did not deter the deed, and the unfortunate victim is beyond help.

"A man shot dead on his wedding day—may be suicide." If so, is against the law, but it failed to stop the shooting.

"A man pays blackmail after stealing a large sum." If true, is made possible by a combination of custom (control) and law.

"Government seizes farm for war purposes." This is enforced by law.

"Man arrested for importuning." This is due to a law restricting personal rights, and is not illegal in some countries.

"Counterfeit coinage case." Could not occur where complete personal liberty existed.

"Woman charged with consorting with a mental patient." Again, it could not be an offence, where personal liberty existed, she did no harm to anyone.

"Woman accused of being witness to her husband's marriage." This could only be considered an offence because of idiotic marriage laws.

The last item I shall mention from the *News of the World* is the stupid prosecution about nudist magazines. This is a complete and outrageous interference with personal liberty, and only arises from the insane religious prejudices, which finds something to hang upon, for we could not wear clothes if they were not made, and untold millions have gone through life completely naked.

The laws do more than restrict personal freedom, they consolidate the power and wealth of certain peoples, such as royalty, aristocrats, M.P.s, Governments, and their officials, trade union leaders, army, navy, police officers, financiers, bankers, property owners, various financial institutions; gives power to the Catholics, and to other religious bodies. The courts are dictated by a religious procedure.

Again, the law prevents forthright speech or publication, and vast numbers are punished for opposing authority.

The Christians have established gods of degree, from high to low, while at the same time they tell the mass whom they try to control that they are all brothers and sisters. Think it out.

Now, although the laws and customs are forced upon Freethinkers, that should not prevent them freely thinking about all matters, and where possible freely discussing without restraint

## N.S.S. Executive Committee Meeting 6th November

Present: F. A. Ridley (in the chair), Mrs. Venton, W. Griffiths, F. A. Hornibrook, R. J. Woodley, E. W. Shaw, C. H. Cleaver, C. Corstorphine, J. W. Barker, G. H. Taylor, and the Secretary. Before the minutes were read the news that Mr. L. Ebury was more seriously ill than had at first been thought was reported. The Secretary was instructed to write to him conveying an expression of the Committee's concern and sympathy together with good wishes for his recovery.

Twenty new members were admitted to the Parent, Glasgow, West London and Nottingham Branches. Lecture reports were submitted by Messrs. Ridley, Brighton, Clayton, Mosley and Morris. The Secretary reported that he had passed on to the Jewish Central Information Office a copy of a virulent anti-Jewish leaflet sent to the Society. He had also received a protest from the General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists regarding action taken to prevent misleading advertising of their meetings.

Letters were read concerning an extension of the activities of the Merseyside Branch, and possibilities of new branches being formed in North Staffordshire, Oxford University and Brighton. A discussion of ways and means of increasing the number of branches followed, and a sub-committee consisting of the President, Messrs. Taylor, Barker, Shaw, and the Secretary was appointed to draw up a report.

It was announced that the Annual London Dinner would be held at the Charing Cross Hotel on Saturday, January 24, and that the veteran, Mr. Joseph McCabe, had accepted an invitation from the Committee to be the guest of honour. Messrs. Griffiths, Johnson, Ridley and Morris were appointed as the sub-committee to make all dinner arrangements.

P. VICTOR MORRIS, Secretary.

## Correspondence

### FATIMA!

SIR,—Please allow some remarks with regard to your editorial "Fatima—the evolution of a cult" (*The Freethinker*, October 12, 1952).

The central point of your article was to prove that the children of Fatima were hallucinated. You did not prove it at all, you only asserted it. What you say (after Prof. Alfarc) under the sub-heading "The Background of Fatima" doesn't count for the children. They were rustic, innocent, ignorant children, separated from all the rest of the world. What did they know about Kings of Portugal overthrown by revolution in 1910 (Francisco was seven in 1917!), or of Masonic anti-clerical republic? Lucie's brother in the army does not enter in the scene of the first apparition. It was only in the third one (July) that Our Lady spoke of the war. Lucie never mentioned her brother to Her. With regard to the other supposition: the message of Pope Benedict XVth asking the intercession of the Virgin Mary to put an end to the world war (1914-18), did not make much effect on the children; they did not know who the Pope was! Our Lady *did* mention the conversion of Russia in the third apparition. All the assertions, therefore, made by Prof. Alfarc and mentioned by you under the headings "The background of Fatima" and "The Apparitions," by which you tried to show that the children were predisposed to be hallucinated, are false. It seems, Mr. Editor, that you did not read the story of the most extraordinary happenings at Fatima. I am glad you assert "The original visions seem to have been *genuine hallucination unprovoked by clerical prompting*." Not so bad this time with the clergy. But there were no hallucinations at all. Read, meditate, analyse for yourself the whole story. You may even speak with Jacinte's father, who is still living, or, indeed, with Lucie herself. Do investigate, please. One thing is certain to the impartial observer, and that is that the children were not hallucinated.

At page 322 (*The Freethinker*, l.c.), paragraph beginning with the words "According to Lucie," is historically true. The crowds, however, at the last apparition (October) might have been much more than 40,000. I put emphasis on the words: *To which many spectators have testified*. You should have added that among these were also Atheists and Freethinkers like you. Special mention deserves Avellino d'Almeida, principal redactor of the anti-clerical magazine *Seculo*. He was bold enough to testify by two articles (*Seculo*, October 13 and 15, 1917) about the miracle of the sun of which he was an ocular witness. Well, were all these people hallucinated also?—Yours, etc.,

G. M. PARIS.

### "DROP ALL BELIEFS"

SIR,—Many thanks for allowing Mr. P. Turner and myself space in the correspondence column of *The Freethinker*.

Mr. Turner's latest contribution asks us to "drop all beliefs." Does he include Freehought, Secularism and Atheism in this appeal? I suspect that he really means drop all beliefs incompatible with his own.

It was not my intention to twist the meaning of part of his letter. I omitted to mention Churchill, Truman, etc., because I have no quarrel with his definition of these great men as international leaders. I mentioned only the ones that I would not include in that category.

A few words about "Atheistic Russia." According to the last published figures (1946) the Russian Orthodox Church has, in the U.S.S.R., 89 dioceses, 20,000 parishes, 30,000 priests, 10 seminaries, 2 theological academies, 150 convents and 8 publications.

"From time immemorial, the people of Russia have been imbued with a deep religious sentiment. Since the opening of military operations against Germany, the Church has shown itself in the best possible light. Its ecclesiastics are fighting courageously at the front and every day they give new proof of their patriotism."

Who said these words? Some wicked warmongering Tory or Socialist? No, Joseph Stalin uttered them on September 4, 1943. It would seem that the Soviet Union is not as atheistic as some would have us believe. Incidentally, would Mr. Turner's definition of an atheistic State be one without an established Church? If so, the U.S.A. would qualify.

Mr. Turner wishes to know the connection between individual citizens making profits out of munition making and slave labour in Russia. It is this. Russia either pays her munition workers well (in which case they are making profits) or she pays them poorly or not at all (in which case they are slave labour). Mr. Turner may take his choice, but he cannot have it both ways. In my previous letter I was not trying to disprove that munition making is a national loss, financially, to Russia. I was merely commenting what wealth must have been poured out of the Russian coffers to build up such huge armies and maintain them for so long.

Are the "foreign Christian armies" in Korea, Malaya and Indo-China so Christian? Most of the soldiers comprising these forces may owe a vague nominal allegiance to Christianity, but there are also Jews, Moslems, Buddhists and doubtless many Atheists and Agnostics to be found among their ranks.

Mr. Turner then complains of the behaviour of U.S. troops in Korea. Of course, in all armies and all campaigns, there are individual misdemeanours committed, but from all responsible accounts that I have read and heard, it would seem that the general standard of conduct among U.S. troops in that country is very high.

My reference to the Leicesters was no "red herring." I have not been to Korea and I doubt if Mr. Turner has, but the Leicesters have. Therefore they have had first-hand experience of that unhappy country and its inhabitants.

When doling out compliments to the Communist troops for bravery, Mr. Turner must remember that the appallingly low standards of living in the East are very relevant. Obviously, a Chinese coolie dragged into the "People's Army" as a "Volunteer" has much less to live for than a Western European soldier. This, together with his religious ancestor worship, has much to do with his fanatical disregard for his own life.

I did not doubt Mr. Turner's statement that he is not a Party member. I said, and still say, that he is a Communist sympathiser. I suggest that he sends his donation to the N.S.S., of which body I am a member, where it will help in the fight against our mutual enemy, the Catholic Church.—Yours, etc.,

R. D. MARRIOTT.

## OBITUARY

Richard Robinson, who was one of the founders of the Chester-le-Street Secular Society, and one who rendered valuable assistance to our movement in the North East for the last quarter of a century, died at the age of 78. He was one of a family of life-long Freethinkers and one who has, at all times, not only advocated, but lived as a Secularist and Humanist. His opinions were often asked for by all kinds of people, and his keen judgment and knowledge of scientific matters made him a desirable and interesting friend.

His last wish was that I should deliver an address at his cremation, and this I did on Thursday, October 30, 1952, at Newcastle, before a gathering of friends and relatives.

He leaves one son, to whom our sympathy goes out.

JOHN T. BRIGHTON.

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