

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXIII—No. 4

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Price Fourpence

UNDER this title, the Italian historian, G. Ferrero, made, already in 1914, an instructive parallel between the greatest empire of antiquity and the greatest power in our own contemporary world of the 20th century. To-day, in 1953, the apt historical parallel can be extended a stage further, both in its general political sense and, more specifically, in what we may,

perhaps, term the political relationship between religion and modern society.

Students of the history of the ancient world are well aware of how the originally Latin Republic of peasants and farmers gradually extended its area of conquest until the Roman Empire, soon after the beginning of our era, attained its maximum zenith and controlled a vast periphery which stretched from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, and from Scotland to the Sudan. One by one, the States around the Mediterranean were crushed beneath the Iron Heel of the military juggernaut of Roman Imperialism. The Empire of the Cæsars became synonymous with the cult of power. (Both the modern Imperial titles, Kaiser and Czar, are derived from the Roman Cæsar.)

In the final stage of the civilisation of antiquity, the Roman Empire became practically synonymous with the world of what it is now the fashion to style "Western civilisation." It was not until the Roman Empire finally collapsed in the West that the "Dark Ages" may be said to have definitely begun.

In the sphere of religion the influence of the Roman Empire was equally as important and far-reaching as in the political and legal spheres. It is from the date of the "conversion" of the Roman Emperors of the fourth century A.D., Constantine and his successors, that Christianity takes its rise as a world-religion, as a world power; the "Universal" Christian Church succeeded, and modelled itself upon the "Universal" Roman Empire; both the new orders—the term "new order," recently revived by Hitler, was actually first used by Julius Cæsar, the founder of the Roman Empire—were "Catholic," that is, "Universal," as against the merely local tribes, city states, and cults of earlier ages.

Even to-day the most powerful of the Christian churches is governed from Rome; and it would actually be more true to state that its effective founder was the historical Julius Caesar rather than the legendary St. Peter. Probably the finest and most exact definition of the Papacy ever penned is still that of the old English philosopher, Thomas Hobbs (1588-1679), "The Papacy is the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned upon the grave thereof." One can say, in fact: No Cæsars, no Popes; no Roman Empire, no Christian Church.

Not only did the Roman Empire first give birth to Christianity; it also enforced it by a ruthless use of the State power. If it was Christianity which first introduced, what one of its own more scrupulous leaders (St. John Chrysostom) first described as "the new, and inexpiable

crime" of religious persecution and judicial murder systematically practiced in the service of religion, it was the Roman Empire which supplied "the secular arm," the State power to enforce its decrees by physical violence. It was the Christian rulers of the Roman Empire who violently obliterated the old pagan cults by a far more ruthless and effective persecution than anything which Christianity itself had ever experienced at the hands of earlier pagan Emperors.

Like such modern semi-religious cults as communism and fascism, Christianity only became effective when it got control

of a powerful political instrument for the furtherance of its ambitions. It is this fact which made the "conversion" of Constantine, "the first Christian Emperor," a red letter date in Christian annals. Certainly, the personal characters of Constantine and his immediate successors who established the new religion as a world power, were not notable for sanctity, nor were superior in any way to their pagan predecessors. Constantine, as even most educated Christians would admit to-day, cuts a sorry figure beside Marcus Aurelius, his pagan predecessor. For that matter, even Christianity has never mustered enough courage to defy the verdict of his contemporary history and make the first Christian Emperor a saint—St. Constantine!

None the less, it was the conversion of the Roman Empire which put Christianity on the map and, far more than the mythical Birth of Christ, A.D. 1, marks its effective birthday.

So much for "ancient Rome." Now, what of "modern America?"

It is, nowadays, obvious that the Anglo-Saxon "United States of America" holds to-day, a global preponderance without precedent in human annals. None of the major preceding empires; neither the Roman or Chinese Empires in antiquity—for China was the Oriental equivalent of Rome in the ancient world—nor the Spanish or British Empires "on which the Sun never sets" in modern times, ever exercised such an overwhelming political and industrial ascendancy as does present-day America. Just as the rulers of the ancient world flocked to Rome to receive their orders from the Roman Republic-turned-Empire, so, to-day, we observe an unceasing pilgrimage across the ocean to Washington, the new "Rome," the new capital of the Western world, on the part of the present rulers of Europe and the old world, who sit in shaky seats only propped up by American dollars and bayonets, and by the ever-present fear of American atomic power.

Like "ancient Rome," "modern America" has risen from humble beginnings as a republic of peasants and farmers in an isolated backwater. Like her Latin prototype, America has now raised a soldier to supreme power though, so far, the American Republic, unlike that of Rome, has not yet formally given way to an Empire. Like pre-Christian Rome, again, the American Republic is a

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Ancient Rome and Modern America

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

secular State, in which Christianity is not officially recognised by the Constitution, and in which all religious and anti-religious cults alike are equal before the Law. The "Age of Constantine" has not yet dawned in the U.S.A., when the State abandons its secular character and becomes the armed instrument of religious tyranny, as did the later Christian Roman Empire.

There are, however, at present, signs that America may shortly do so, and thus extend the historical parallel between "ancient Rome and modern America." For, to-day, the Christian churches, with the Vatican at their head, are moving heaven and earth—particularly the latter!—to enlist America as the armed champion of "Christian civilisation" against Communism, and the growing temperature of the cold—but, at present hotting-up war, plays right into the hands of Christianity in this field. For only America has the requisite strength to tackle the Russo-Chinese colossus on equal terms. Time takes its ironic revenges; the Vatican, which persecuted the founders of modern physical science in the days of Bruno and Galileo, now depends for its continued existence on the fine flower of their researches, the atomic bomb! Without her American crusaders, the outlook for Christianity as a world religion would be tolerably grim.

Youth asks a Question

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

MISS FREDA PECKMAN is right in not being satisfied with the word "Nature" as an explanation of existence, in place of the word "God" and all the beliefs and ideas that the latter term carries with it. Rejecting the God-idea, she wants something better to replace it, and merely to be told that "Nature" answers everything is a disappointment, since she is of the opinion that it leaves plenty of difficulties unexplained and plenty of problems unsolved.

"What is Nature?" she asked, and has been told in these columns that it is a collective, continuous process including such phenomena as magnetism, the growth of plants and the whole field of scientific inquiry. "I remain unenlightened," she replies, and repeats her question. Now, I can understand her point of view, since definitions have a habit of being irritatingly tautological. Moreover, "Nature" varies in meaning according to whether it is used by a scientist, artist, mystic, countryman, town-dweller or a score of other special types, and is, therefore, a particularly vague and woolly term more often than not.

In the case of all such words, the basis of understanding is to be reached by looking back at their history. If we do this with "Nature," we see that at no time has it been an explanation of anything. The animal world is always in the closest contact with Nature, but with a very limited understanding of what is happening. Primitive man defines the natural by means of a word, but in order to explain things he turns to the supernatural. For the vast majority of mankind have always been prone to see every phase of existence in a dual aspect. They contrast the natural with the supernatural, the temporal with the eternal, the material with the spiritual, the mundane with the heavenly, the relative with the absolute, the human with the divine, and see a similar dualism everywhere.

However, a few clear-sighted Freethinkers have usually been in evidence in superstitious communities. Their attitude has been that the second term in each of these pairs, that is the term that is held to be especially helpful towards an understanding of the scheme of things, is quite valueless as an explanation of the world, and a hindrance in the onward march of mankind. Their critical, sceptical outlook has been handed down through the ages, so that

It may, of course, be said that a "crusade" against Communism is not a crusade for religion, still less, religious persecution. However, the matter is not quite as simple as that, for it is not only a political creed—Communism—which is involved in this prospective crusade, on behalf of which the Knights of the Cross are at present preparing on behalf of both God and mammon. On the contrary, it is against atheism and materialism that the churches are now calling upon us to wage war.

For, taking a clever advantage of the undoubted fact that, by far the largest number of atheists and materialists in the present-day world, subscribe to the Marxist school, the churches brand atheism, materialism, and Communism together and, already, the "Committee on Un-American Activities"—largely staffed by Catholics—seeks to suppress all three together. Atheism must oppose any war "for Christian civilisation," if only because what would begin as a crusade against Communism, could and probably would, end in a war against all enemies of Christianity and, thus, complete in the age of Eisenhower, as formerly in that of Constantine, the already remarkable historical parallel between "ancient Rome and modern America."

to-day more of such people reject the supernatural, the eternal, the spiritual, the heavenly, the absolute and the divine than ever before.

Following the rejection of the supernatural on the grounds that it was invented without justification and has proved of no use or benefit, "Nature" remains as the term covering the whole of experience instead of merely a part of it. This is the end of one phase, and the beginning of another. The devotees of Nature cannot claim that it answers prayers or enlightens mankind by revelation, as the Gods have been said to do. All they can assert is that it rewards long, careful and patient study. The proof of this is seen in every advance in our control of the surroundings to which we must pay attention in life. The Saviour offered us by Christianity has done nothing to remove the ignorance, misery and brutality that have been features of Christendom since its first appearance. Nature, however, offers us opportunities of raising human life to an ever higher plane of material and mental satisfaction. When it says, "Seek and ye shall find," it keeps its promises, as the history of mankind's social and economic progress proves. Note, however, that it never says, "Believe and ye shall be saved." Nature is not a realm of miracles, but a field of endeavour.

Once Miss Peckman grasps this, she will recognise that her further questions about whether Nature is purposive, or good, bad or indifferent, have no meaning; for concepts of will and ethics have no application apart from living organisms. In Nature, mental and moral qualities belong to the part and not to the whole. The exploration of Nature thus regarded is the foundation of the scientific Materialism that Miss Peckman assumes to be dogmatic and uncompromising, and which she considers as having an unreasoning abhorrence of any trace of supernaturalism.

Will she bear with me when I close by saying that she has been misled by those who demolish Materialism by calling it names? Materialism, clearly understood and stated, embraces every fact of experience, including every human ideal and aspiration. It is as open-minded as any point of view can be. It does not "abhor" the supernatural; it merely shows it to be a fraud and a delusion.

Romanist Plots in Elizabethan Times—II

By T. F. PALMER

THE conspiracy against Elizabeth's rulership, however, was badly conducted from its inception. Pope Gregory issued an *explanatio* in which he instructed the Jesuit missionaries to introduce politics among discontented Catholics. He stated that although the conversion of the country was paramount and the Bull of his predecessor was still directed against the heretic queen, it did not compel Catholics to obey it until it could be publicly proclaimed. The Pontiff had no intention of tolerating heretics, for that was impossible if the Bull was not to become a dead letter. But this concession freed Romanists from the charge of treason, at least for the present. But the *explanatio* only intensified the vigilance of the Government. The Jesuits excited graver suspicion and surveillance and enabled the queen's minister, Burghley, to adopt more rigorous measures against the Romanists.

The success of the enterprise was also imperilled by the Pope, when he urged, when it commenced, an invasion of England directly from the Netherlands or from Ireland. As Black notes in his *Reign of Elizabeth*, the Papacy was willing to support an expedition with "a concrete embodiment in men, money and ships." This armed project was welcomed by the Papal secretary and its nuncio at Madrid, as well as most of the influential Catholics in exile. But, a commander for such an adventure was hard to discover, while the Spanish king's wider experience of warfare made him doubtful of its success. So he refused his assistance. Still, in 1578, a motley contingent landed in Erin furnished with weapons to enable rebellious Irish Catholics to arouse their countrymen and drive out the hated English.

The few foreign invaders and the Irish who joined them were easily overthrown. Thus, the invasion proved a complete fiasco. The bold assertions of Stukely, who had deserted the enterprise at Lisbon, and other grotesque claims made the adventure notorious throughout Europe. His complete collapse became common knowledge on the Continent before the Jesuit leaders, Campion and Parsons departed from Rome. No wonder they were dismayed by the Pope's proceedings which not only endangered their own lives but prevented any probable success of their mission. Parsons himself asserted that: "We plainly foresaw that this would be taken in England as though we had been privy or partakers thereof, as we were not, nor ever heard or suspected the same until this day." Thus Papal blundering and folly made the arrival of the Jesuit missionaries in England coincide with the abortive insurrection in Ireland. Consequently almost all Protestants feared that the coming of Jesuit priests heralded an invasion of their island home by the combined military and naval armaments of Continental Catholic Powers.

Not only did the Papacy encourage and provide armed intervention against England, but it actually condoned the despicable methods of the assassin. The justification or condemnation of tyrannicide were questions widely discussed in the sixteenth century both in Romanist and Reformist realms. Yet, as Professor Black testifies: "The only example of its use by a responsible authority was in 1580 when the King of Spain (Philip II) outlawed William of Orange and put a price on his head. Unfortunately there can be no doubt that Gregory XIII was also a disciple of that doctrine (assassination) or that he advocated its use against the queen." Two would-be murderers, Tyrrel and Parry, confessed under torture that they had planned the death of Elizabeth with the promise

of plenary indulgence. But even more conclusive proof is provided in a letter written by the Papal secretary, Como, to the Nuncio in Madrid, in reply to a question addressed to the Pope regarding two English nobles who desired assurance that they would commit no mortal sin by killing Elizabeth. As the crime might cause their execution, they were anxious to be certain as to their safety from Hell. In answering this inquiry the Pope's secretary avers: "Since that guilty woman of England rules over two such noble kingdoms of Christendom and is cause of so much injury to the Catholic faith, and loss of so many millions of souls, there is no doubt that whosoever sends her out of the world with the pious intention of doing God service, not only does not sin but gains merit, especially having regard to the sentence pronounced against her by Pius V of holy memory. And so if these English nobles decide actually to undertake so glorious a work, your lordship can assure them that they do not commit any sin."

Although murder was thus encouraged, very few English Catholics favoured this crime, while the majority of priests were guiltless. Yet, the authorities regarded the Romanist campaign with grave anxiety, and every precaution was taken against it.

Campion and Parsons were chosen by the Jesuit general as the missionary leaders. They were English Oxonians and were men of ability. Campion was highly respected by his co-religionists who frequently prevented his arrest, but he was ultimately tracked down and executed as a traitor. Parsons was his superior in the conspiracy, and lacked Campion's exemplary character, but he was a more resourceful and adventurous personality. Also, he was more a man of the world who resented the restrictions imposed upon him by his Order. He fled his native land when Campion was put to death and became the leader of Catholic conspiracy against Elizabeth. The Spanish diplomatist, Mendoza, distrusted him and cautioned Philip II against confiding to him State concerns. Yet, it is evident that the Pope, Philip, and the French Guises all trusted him and were impressed by his knowledge of English affairs. We gather that: "His consuming passion was to be the overthrow of Elizabeth and to this he urged the slow-moving Philip and became the *deus ex machina* of every plot and intrigue of the age."

Repressive measures naturally resulted and doubtless innocent Catholics sometimes suffered with the guilty. But when all is said and done the misery and death occasioned in England as a consequence of the Reformation sinks into utter insignificance when compared with the assassinations, wars, and massacres in Catholic and Counter-Reformation lands.

ANTI-MILITARIST NEWS (AUSTRALIA)

"To accept the leadership of the Catholic Church to-day would be to find ourselves supporting Fascism, militarism, war preparations, and war itself. Short of a miracle, there can be nothing to be expected from the Catholic Church to inaugurate a new era of world peace and brotherhood. Its record of 1,600 years of alliance with and complicity with state power, and the war-machine, forbids any such hope as that."

THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1½d.

This Believing World

A new biography of Abraham Lincoln has recently appeared in America, and a reviewer in the Chicago *Sunday Tribune* considers it the best so far written—but he says nothing in his review of Lincoln's complete rejection of Christianity. He never became a member of any Church, and he is reported to have said that if anybody started a church whose only creed was the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, he would join it. He knew perfectly well such a church could never be started, and therefore he was quite safe in talking about the Fatherhood of God. Lincoln's God was just as nebulous as his creed.

In the same journal appeared a review of a new life of Ingersoll, and this time the reviewer could not help mentioning his anti-religious views though he tries to soften the blow by asserting that he was "an incorrigible spokesman for agnosticism, then called atheism." This is, of course, childish. Ingersoll called himself an Agnostic, but he said Agnosticism was Atheism and Atheism was Agnosticism. And in his last lecture, *What is Religion?*, after explaining his position on the problem of Force and Matter, he concludes, "If Matter and Force are from and to eternity, it follows as a necessity that no God exists." That looks to us as being Atheism at its best and clearest.

A broadcast eulogy of the late Dr. Iremonger, who directed religious broadcasting for many years, was recently given by the present Director, the Rev. F. House. It was Dr. Iremonger, much more than Lord Reith, who was responsible for flooding the B.B.C. with religion "properly organised," and Mr. House went into heavenly raptures about it. It all sounded as if Dr. Iremonger had, so to speak, paraphrased the famous outburst by Danton: "Religion, again Religion, and always Religion!" and he seems to have frightened the B.B.C. chiefs into acquiescing. But one might well ask in all seriousness—has all this religion made people believe more in miracles, devils, angels, hell, and heaven? Or has it?

For example, here we have Canon Stevens of Wimbledon imploring our religious leaders "to simplify religion." It appears that "Samson and Delilah" (and, of course, similar stories in God's Precious Word) "do not matter." And "justification by faith and predestination are just so much nonsense." So here we have a real, live Canon blasphemously undoing all the wonderful work the B.B.C., under Dr. Iremonger's direction, performed for the good of our souls. Overboard goes Paul, and the Old Testament, and all we need, insists the Canon, are the Gospels.

We suggest that the B.B.C. invites Canon Stevens to broadcast his attack on justification by faith and predestination as well as his views on the famous talking Ass, the aerial Flight of Elijah, and the Exodus, and tell us also how useful or not are the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and the prophecies of Nahum, Zephaniah and Haggai for solving the problems our modern world is up against. But perhaps this would mean not only the Canon, but Mr. House, would have to get down their Bibles and find out—for we are fairly sure they don't know. In spite of Dr. Iremonger's wonderful work.

Though Christian teaching insists that "all are one in Christ" our gallant Anglo-Catholics do not like "Protestants." One of them, the Archdeacon of Stoke-on-Trent, proudly points to the fact that the Prayer Book never mentions the word "Protestant." That may be, but

surely the fact that the Archdeacon does not accept the Pope—nay, strenuously "protests" against the Pope as the Head of the Christian Church, makes him a Protestant! If it does not, then words have no meaning.

Congratulations to the Archbishop of York! In a speech on preventing crime, instead of telling his hearers that more and more religion in schools was wanted, or that the only way was to bring Jesus Christ into our homes, he declared that "the best way of beating the present wave of dishonesty was to bring the police force up to full strength." Of course. The solution had to be a purely "secular" one—nothing whatever to do with religion at all, and we are delighted to see that Dr. Garbett has allowed his intelligence to over-ride his religion.

Last Year, the B.B.C. broadcast to schools how God Almighty, revealed in that "great historical character, Jesus, the Christ," can be discovered by pure reason. This year, the B.B.C. is going to demonstrate how God Almighty, revealed through the same historical character, Jesus, the Christ, can be discovered through pure revelation—or at least, through a mixture of both. So far, the revealer, a Mr. Walton, gave us the dear old design argument in all its crudity—so we shall wait with impatience the shattering proof of God's existence—through Jesus, the Christ—by revelation.

Theatre

"The Man." By Mel Dinelli. Her Majesty's Theatre.

In this new and original thriller from America there are two very remarkable performances by Joan Miller and Bernard Braden.

These two artists' combined efforts constitute what is almost a two-character play, for most of the five remaining parts are brief.

We have a middle-aged widow who lets a room to a boarder; he goes away on holiday on the day she takes in a casual male cleaner. Once this man enters the house trouble starts, for Bernard Braden takes the part of a schizophrenic who wanders from near normality to homicidal mania, and who appears incapable of remembering what he does from one minute to another. He locks the front and back doors of the house, imprisons and intimidates the widow (Joan Miller), and there is created around them a tension that gradually increases until the climax is reached just before the last curtain. All the time we are wishing the widow could escape from this lunatic, but her repeated efforts to save herself are foiled. It remains for you to discover the ending for yourself when you visit the play.

Once again Peter Cotes has given us an excellent production, and his work—together with that of the two leading players—has done much to make this rather grim play into good entertainment. For this is no laughing matter, and Mel Dinelli has left his play noticeably devoid of humour.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

"Looking Down Upon the Damned"

I don't want the pleasure of Heaven,
And I hope the Dear Lord never lets it;
I just want to live with the Leaven—
Who make sure that no one else gets it.

A. E. C.

THE UNIVERSAL HEIR

"It is a bad Will that has not the name of Our Lord among the heirs."—CARDINAL MANNING.

THE FREETHINKER

41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.
Telephone: Holborn 2601.

To Correspondents

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3-50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

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

Lecture Notices should reach the Secretary of the N.S.S. at this Office by Friday morning.

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.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (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: L. EBURY.

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

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY (President, N.S.S.), "The Social Origins of Christianity."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: A Lecture, "Spain Under Franco."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 27, 7 p.m.: HECTOR HAWTON, "The Crisis of Modern Philosophy."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: W. PAUL, "Robert Burns—Poet and Fighter."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Mrs. D. PURCELL, "Poland Visited."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Left Tradition."

West London Branch (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: T. MOSLEY (Nottingham), "Free Will and Determinism."

N.S.S. President in Manchester

MR. F. A. RIDLEY travelled to Manchester on January 10, for two meetings in two days. On Saturday afternoon he addressed the Manchester Humanist Fellowship and on Sunday evening the local branch of the N.S.S. Both lectures were well received and the latter, entitled "The Social Origins of Christianity," was scholarly.

"Christianity," said Mr. Ridley, "did not come down from heaven, but up from earth." That being so, under what circumstances did it arise? This led to an examination of life in the Roman Empire, with particular reference to the slave revolts. It was among the slaves that the religion first spread; it was to them that it appealed. It was they who lived in fear of crucifixion for civil disobedience or insurrection; and Christianity turned the crucifix, the symbol of death, into a symbol of resurrection.

Up to the year A.D. 200, Christianity made little progress, but 100 years later it was a powerful movement and, A.D. 315, Constantine made it the official religion of the Roman Empire. It flourished as the empire declined. The later emperors were savage and illiterate; the old ruling-class had largely died out and their Rationalism with them. "Christianity was successful," concluded Mr. Ridley, "because of the favourable social conditions of the times."

C. McCALL.

"The Freethinker" Fund

We gratefully acknowledge the following donations to the above Fund: Previously acknowledged, £41 14s.; A. Hancock, 1s. (6th donation); R. Aksed, 4s.; J. M. Ward, 5s.; H. W. Armstrong, 1s.; Anon, 5s.; Werner Engler (Zurich), £4 12s.; P. Lewis, 1s.; Miss R. Dumont, 2s. 6d.; Peter J. Lewis, 4s.; F. Muston, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. J. Helfernan, 10s.; H. Courlander (Cape Town), £4.
Total: £52 9s. 6d.

Correspondence

MORALS AND MARXISTS

SIR.—In an article in the *Manchester Guardian* of January 8 it is submitted that the so-called "self-criticism" is but a disguised form of public persecution. It is never spontaneous—no ordinary Russian would denounce his fellow-citizen—but is invariably initiated by "the party authorities and published in the central papers." The hero held up by these authorities, for the emulation of Russian youth, is Pavlik Morozov, the protagonist of a play, who at 13 denounced his own father as an enemy of the people and was then most villainously murdered by his grandfather in retaliation. As the article observes, one cannot escape from the conclusion that, under Soviet moral teaching, children "are consciously and systematically being educated to model their adult life on that of the sneak." It is clear, therefore, that the concept of personal honour, as understood in "bourgeois" society, does not exist in the Soviet Union.

I think Mr. Pat Sloan might admit this and not claim that the Soviet Union is "the most moral country in the world" by some universally agreed standard which he knows very well does not exist. *Of course* the Soviet Union is the most moral, in fact the only moral, country in the world, and *of course* the "bourgeois" West is highly immoral—by Marxist moral standards. Per contra, Marxists and the Soviet Union are hopelessly immoral from the Western "bourgeois" point of view. There is no common ground between them; there is indeed the complete opposition of the "individual" and the "group" morality; nor do these opposites have any identity. They cannot be reconciled.—Yours, etc.,

P. C. KING.

MR. ROWLAND AND RELIGION

SIR.—Mr. John Rowland's letter in the January 11 issue suggests that the contemporary irreligion of society is the cause of the "mess the world is in."

Now, Mr. Rowland as a former Freethinker, must be aware that his statement is weak. If we examine those periods of European history, when the Churches were at the zenith of their power, we discover that the hall-marks of those "glorious Ages of Faith" were war, murder, rape and torture; indeed it is surprising that the faithful did not adopt these as additional sacraments.

It cannot be pleaded that contemporary men are less ignorant, and that a new religious revival would produce different symptoms; the ability nowadays to read the Western or Romantic novel does not make the faithful any more enlightened than their predecessors.

The present "mess" does not prove the truth of religion, but it does illustrate the damage done by false assumptions held by some Freethinkers, past and present, with regard to men and society. What is required is not Mr. Rowland's threadbare creed, but a fresh approach to Freethought in which those social and political myths which clutter it are removed.—Yours, etc.,

ERIC M. GOLD.

THE UNITED STATES AND LIBERTY

SIR.—I am a little astonished at the contribution of Mr. Woolsey Teller as representing the American Association on the Advancement of Atheism, etc., at the World Conference of Freethinkers printed in the issue of October 12. I should have thought that the outstanding representative of dictatorship in the world at present was the United States. In that country there is a complete dictatorship of the plutocracy, and always has been. It is not without significance that the first President of the United States, George Washington, was regarded as the richest man in worldly goods in that community, and that famous Constitution was drawn up by half-a-dozen men who controlled a quarter of the wealth of the United States. The fact is that whatever historians or constitutional writers may assert, the dictatorship of the plutocracy is the only form of government which has been practised since the dawn of history. It may take the form of a military dictatorship, or the dictatorship of a bureaucracy (as in "democratic" governments), but it is always the basis of government. Whether the dictatorship of the proletariat, which seemingly Mr. Woolsey Teller regards somewhat fearfully, would be any better as a system may be a question, but it would certainly be more representative of the people as a working mass and, therefore, more truly libertarian.—Yours, etc.,

C. H. NORMAN.

Freethought and Our Encyclopedias—1

By H. CUTNER

WHEN the Christian Church was at the height of its power it had a simple way of dealing with heretics—exterminating them. Imprisonment and complete confiscation of their property were never quite good enough. The most monstrous tortures followed by burning at the stake were the uniform punishments for daring to disagree with Christianity; and the fate of Vanini, Dolet, and Bruno should never be forgotten—though it is only fair to point out that they were three heretics among thousands condemned by the Christian Church in the heyday of its power.

When, however, heretics became too numerous, not even a Massacre of St. Bartholomew could prevent the spread of heresy, and they could—and did—reply in kind. Even at this day Roman Catholics cannot stop squealing at what was done to Catholics in the reign of Elizabeth I, while stoutly maintaining that what *they* did to Protestants in the reign of Mary I was always completely justified. Both sides squealed then, and often squeal now, though at this time of the day they prefer to take joint action against the heretic who denies both Romanism and Protestantism. The good old days of public *autos-da-fé* have been banished—let us hope—for ever, but Christians of both sects have found a very convincing way of dealing with heretics these days. As far as possible let us boycott them in all books of reference and there will be joy in Heaven—that is the subtle and in many ways effective method of dealing with the unbelieving scoundrels.

Many years ago I wrote a biography of Robert Taylor (1784-1844), the Church of England clergyman, who became known as the "Devil's Chaplain" because of his devastating criticism of the literary evidences of Christianity leading him to the Myth theory and the denial that Jesus Christ had ever lived. I am sorry to say that my biography was never published, but writing it led me to many sources of reference, and it was heartbreaking to find out the sorry shifts Christians and even reverent Rationalists took to hide the complete truth about heretics.

Although Taylor was looked upon with contempt by Christians like the Rev. J. Pye Smith (in his day a very Fundamentalist one) over four columns are devoted to him in the Dictionary of National Biography—a much longer notice than the one given to the egregious Smith who fancied himself as a great Infidel slayer. But notice how carefully the real truth regarding Taylor was hidden. The article was given to a reverend gentleman, the Rev. Alexander Gordon, to be written, and one can easily imagine what justice that not-so-eminent Christian would give such an out-and-out unbeliever as Robert Taylor.

Of course he could not lie about the details of his life for Taylor wrote a most engaging autobiography in the little magazine he published in 1833 when he came out of prison after doing two years hard for the shocking crime of blasphemy. Our English prisons under William IV were not exactly the home-from-home which most prisoners enjoy these days, no matter what *real* crimes they commit. The reader can get a faint idea of what they were like in those days by reading the description of the Fleet in Charles Dickens *Pickwick Papers* or seeing the film. When he was first thrown into gaol Taylor spent his year writing the *Syntagma* and the *Diegesis*; but he was not allowed to write anything during the two years he had to serve again for "blasphemy"—a "blasphemy" which it would be safe to say any magistrate or judge

these days, even if a Christian, would laugh at, so utterly absurd was it. The idea of putting a scholar—and Taylor was a distinguished surgeon as well as a Church of England clergyman, with a university education—into the vile prisons of 120 years ago just because he laughed a little at Christian nonsense should have been severely commented upon by the Rev. Mr. Gordon—but of course there is not a line of reproof. On the contrary, I have no doubt whatever he thought Taylor thoroughly deserved it. It was his duty also to point out that in the *Syntagma* and the *Diegesis* Taylor attacked the literary evidences of Christianity even if he (Mr. Gordon) did not agree that any case was made out—and to show where Taylor went wrong. A meaner or more contemptible "criticism" I have rarely read. No student who had not read the *Diegesis* for himself—and when I say read it I mean read it carefully, not just skipped it—would ever imagine from Gordon's notice that Taylor was a hundred years in advance of the then Biblical criticism, and that not even Bishop Barnes, with all the resources of modern scholarship now at his command, gave us a better book on the origins of Christianity than poor Taylor gave us all those years ago.

Thus, if Christians cannot burn the hated infidel nowadays they can easily kill his reputation. Moreover, one will find it an almost invariable rule to give the notice of a Freethinker to a Christian—or at least to one who has no sympathy whatever for his subject. What sympathy could the Rev. A. Gordon have for Robert Taylor? Whose was the bright idea to entrust such an article to a Christian? He actually says that the *Syntagma* and the *Diegesis* are "a curious medley of random judgments and second-hand learning"—as if one can do more with Biblical criticism—and "his ill-arranged writings are of no original or scientific value" which is an unmitigated Christian lie. But Mr. Gordon no doubt could sit back and smile at the "body-blow" he gave to Taylor. After all, the "Devil's Chaplain" could never answer back.

In the ninth edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica—a truly magnificent edition which still can be consulted with profit—the article on Vaccination was entrusted to Dr. Charles Creighton, probably the best writer on medical subjects then living. He was, like nearly all doctors, a thorough believer in vaccination as a preventive of small pox; but in the course of his research into its history and pathology, he came to the conclusion that there was no evidence whatever that this was so, and he wrote a long article maintaining that vaccination was a huge delusion. There was a terrible row about it going into the Encyclopedia, but its editor decided that it should go in with another article written by a doctor in full support of vaccination. Readers can make their choice after full examination of the two articles. (Incidentally I am entirely with Creighton.) But the publication of his article practically killed Creighton for he was thenceforth as thoroughly boycotted by the medical profession as was possible, and died almost in obscurity. I mention this to show heresy is not a crime only in religion. But at least the editor of the E.B. gave both sides a chance—a generosity that is difficult to imagine any Christian doing for Freethought.

Geography of Hunger

By BAYARD SIMMONS

IN the early nineteen-hundreds, when this reviewer was a youngster of twenty-three, he first heard of the Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus. It was, I fancy, in the pages of the young H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*, or some such book of sociological and economic musings. Mr. Wells, if I remember aright after the lapse of half-a-century, cited the reverend gentleman's oft-quoted theory that any population increases in a geometric ratio (1, 2, 4, 8, 16) while, at the same time, the food-supply for that population advanced only in a mathematical ratio (1, 2, 3, 4, 5). This theory, if it were a fact, and "H.G." regarded it as such, a fundamental fact, pointed to the inevitable cessation of human life on this planet, after a period of revolutions and wars. His young reader found this reasoning good, but both master and reader passed on to other, and, as we thought, more urgent matters, namely, the propagation of socialist ideas.

Now I ask myself why we did this. In my case, I think it was from a perception that I lacked the necessary facts to come to a final conclusion on so fundamental a problem, including the factor of time. It was not a question of whether, but when, like those "laws of thermodynamics" current at that period, proving that the sun must inevitably cool and the earth freeze. Well, one said, there is nothing that we can do about it, and it won't happen in our time. The healthy mind passed on to more urgent themes.

I don't know how it stands now with these thermodynamic "laws," but I fancy young Mr. Hoyle and his crew have knocked about these theories quite a bit. But the Rev. Malthus, after some decades of neglect, appears, after the last world-war, to have come back right into the picture. We have had from the "highest in the land" gloomy predictions of the fate of our dear motherland, and glib assurances that something on the scale of twenty million people must get out of Great Britain or die. The neo-Malthusians are in great fettle in these days—and Socialism appears somewhat off-colour—so the time would seem ripe for a new and serious appraisal of these problems of population and subsistence. But Freethinkers want first, and above all, facts before they can give a balanced judgment in a world of shouting parsons, politicians, partisans, papers, and, perhaps worst of all, economic pundits.

But upon the hour has arrived a remarkable book, *Geography of Hunger*, by a Brazilian scientist, Josué de Castro, with a Foreword by the redoubtable Lord Boyd Orr, sometime head of the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. As Lord Boyd Orr writes, the title of this brilliantly written book might well have been "Hunger and Politics," because from the matters discussed therein arise political issues of the first magnitude. Hunger has ever been the most dangerous force in politics. This the second world-war taught us all clearly, and from the wide prevalence of hunger in the post-war world sprang the F.A.O., Marshall Aid, UNRRA, and all those other agencies in which self-interest and philanthropy combined to pour in dollars and tractors to allay the pangs of world hunger due to six years of devastating war and under-nourishment, and we are not by long chalks out of that world-wide problem. As this book is likely to become something of a textbook on food in relation to politics it would be well to give here some idea of its contents.

Like Julius Caesar's Gaul Mr. de Castro's book is

divided into three parts. The first defines the word "Hunger," giving it a far wider connotation than is customary in ordinary speech, and therein lies the whole clue to the problems considered. The term hunger is used in the modern (scientific) sense as lack of any of the forty-or-so food constituents needed to maintain health. Boyd Orr states flatly that lack of any of these causes premature death and adds that even in recent times more people have died from famine than have been killed in war. Those that survive famines suffer from nutritional diseases which take their toll in death, weeks, months, or years afterwards from these terrible diseases brought on by improper feeding. These deficiency diseases, and their principle locations are enumerated, among them being such scourges as beriberi, pellagra, scurvy, goitre, night-blindness, and, of course, debility and anaemia. Apart from the pain of the sufferers of preventable disease, for they can be cured without medicine by the simple expedient of proper new adequate feeding, there is the loss to the world of an output derived from energy and clear, free thinking. Just as about forty years ago it was realised in the schools of our country that it was a waste of time and labour to try to teach hungry children, and this was put right by the provision of meals for school-children (in the face of our mercantilists and *laissez-faire* politicians), so the problem widens to the adequate feeding of 85 per cent. of the parents of these scholars. Christians will not need to be reminded (or will they?) that the last commandment of their Risen Christ was Feed my Sheep, just after he had bidden Peter to Feed my Lambs. I am a little doubtful on this, for I well remember thirty or forty years ago seeing a notice at the gate of a churchyard by the Church Wardens of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, in London, which ran as follows: "The feeding of cats in this churchyard is forbidden."

The chapter-headings of the second part deal with Hunger in the New World; in Ancient Asia; in the Dark Continent; and Starving Europe. We all know that hunger and famine are endemic to China and India, but this book reveals that many European lands suffer from deficiency starvation. On Africa there is a topical matter that I have noted, and feel I should pass on. On pp. 40-41 we learn that of the tribes of Kenya, "the Kikuyu are farmers, living on a diet of cereals, tubers and legumes (= vegetables); the Masai, on the other hand, are cattle-raisers, whose diet includes meat, milk and ox-blood, which they take from animals. These two human groups, living side by side in the same natural environment and the same climate, differ profoundly in their physical measurements. The Masai men are three inches taller and 27 lb. heavier than their Kikuyu counterparts. This difference is a direct result of their fundamentally different diets. The Masai, through an abundant use of foods of animal origin, enjoy a diet balanced in proteins, while the Kikuyu live under conditions of permanent protein hunger."

(To be concluded)

NOW READY

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE

Complete Series of 18 bound in ONE VOLUME

Price 5/- Postage 3d.

Chapman Cohen at his most lucid

Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the Philosopher— Statesman of India

By ANTHONY ELENJIMITTAM

(Concluded from page 19)

SWADESHI AND SWARAJ

NO greater calamity has befallen the nation than the advocacy of imitation secularists of our days who think that the national culture of the land should be equated on par with exotic cultures and religions. Arabic, Persian, Mongolian or European cultures and religions can then only thrive in India, when they are duly grafted on to the main humanistic, rational, and national traditions of the Indian civilisation. Or else they remain like water and oil in the same bottle. It is the nationalistic awakening that heralded Indian renaissance; it is national self-respect that was the motive force behind the freedom struggle, and it will be the same national spirit, the age-old *Swadeshi* that shall remain the basis of the new *Swaraj* of our dreams.

The unsurpassed rhapsody of the Mahabarat and Ramayan, the metaphysics of the Upanishads, the psychology of Yoga and Buddhism, the naturalistic Theism of the Vedas are the common patrimony of every son and daughter of India, and not of the "Hindus" alone. Those who ignore this basic fact are selling away the priceless pearls of the national culture, under the garb of religious equality and judicial impartiality. Truth pays no homage to governments and authorities, the society and state. It is the government and the authorities, the society and state that have to pay homage to Truth, under the pain of being obliterated from the pages of history. For Truth alone triumphs—*satyameva jayate, na anrutam*, which Free India has nominally accepted as her national motto.

Dr. Radhakrishnan, in his book, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, has rightly depicted the basic essence of this national spirit which may be called "Hindu," or *Bharatiyata*. He writes:—

"The attitude of the cultivated Hindu and Buddhist to other forms of worship is one of sympathy and respect, and not criticism and contempt for their own sake. This friendly understanding is not inconsistent with deep feeling and thought. Faith for the Hindu does not mean dogmatism. He does not smell heresy in those who are not entirely of his mind. It is not devotion that leads to assertive temper, but limitation of outlook, hardness and uncharity. While full of unquestioning belief, the Hindu is at the same time devoid of harsh judgment. It is not historically true that in the knowledge of truth there is of necessity great intolerance."

This broad spirit of tolerance, assimilative understanding is the *Bharatiya* spirit, which is not restricted to technically-called "Hindus," but to every Indian who is conscious of his rich national heritage. On the basis of such *swaraj*, we trust, the new Vice-President will give a lead and set an exemplary pattern for the educational resurrection of India.

CROWN OF THORNS

In the year 1946, at the time of the formation of the Interim Government, Gandhiji, from the wilderness of Noakhali, told the nation that the crowns which Pandit Nehru and his colleagues were going to receive were not "crowns of roses, but crowns of thorns." Unfortunately, since then, the chastising tongue of the Father of the

Nation, his accurate critical comments of the events in the country had little effect on those who were mad after power, career, position, fame and mammon-glamour. Many of Gandhiji's own disciples have transmuted the crown of thorns into crowns of roses for themselves, transferring the thorns and bitter chalice to the common man of the country who is still in agony and slavery both social and economic.

Such an eminent personality as Dr. Radhakrishnan, certainly, must have realised long ago that he was going to wear a crown of thorns and not of roses, a great sacrificial offering which he has to make on the altar of the Motherland for the good of the people. This crucifixion alone can become the prelude to the educational, economic and social resurrection of India.

In a foreword which Dr. Radhakrishnan wrote to the present writer's book on Rabindranath Tagore, he has insisted on the sacrificial nature of all public activities, for he urges us to act "for the welfare and good of the world—*Jagat hityaka krishnaya*." We trust and pray that a new leaf will be turned under the vice-presidency of Dr. Radhakrishnan, which must bring about the socio-economic revolution based on national culture, national self-respect, and dignity.

The Old Invader

There's a murmur in the shadows where slept the silent
wood,
There's a tuning of the heart-strings, a rose thrown in
the blood,
There's an echo from lost lifetimes, there's a whisper
and a sigh:
The rebels are afoot again and marching down the sky.
The drum is booming gently; with a bugle at his lips,
The sentry stares across the world to spy the laden ships.
Ships that spill their cargo gladly upon a smuggler's coast:
The rebels are come home again and making good their
boast.
There's a shout upon the hillside, there is laughter belly
deep,
There's a knocking at the portal to rouse the heart from
sleep,
There's the thunder of the captains tracking down the
pallid foe:
The rebels are afield again as in the long ago.
The iron hands are broken and the shuttered dark is
smashed,
The stony heart is splintered, the tyranny is crashed,
The banners wave in triumph from every tossing tree:
The rebels are in force again for all the world to see.

Now pass the gloomy traitors to their exile in the north.
And manacled in snowdrops is the winter harried forth.
From twig and tuft and housetop the ruffian choirs sing:
The rebels have reached home again with yet another
Spring.

JOHN O'HARE.