

# The Freethinker

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SINCE the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Rise of International Communism which followed upon that epoch-making event, the Roman Catholic Church has entered upon a new lease of life and activity. In place of the moribund Catholicism of the 19th century, sulking impotently in its mediæval hideout before the triumphant advance of Liberalism in both the political and the ideological spheres, our own generation has seen the former "Prisoner of the Vatican" re-emerge, as a world-wide power counter-attacking all along the international line. To-day, the Vatican ranks with the Kremlin and The White House as one of the three major world-powers of our Era.

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

### Catholic Sociology

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

As Lord Macaulay reminded his readers long ago in a famous passage written with all his incomparable vigour, the Church of Rome has surmounted a whole series of crises in the past. Perhaps the most serious of these was that which occurred at the Reformation, when only its Jesuit-led Counter-Reformation saved the Church from what then appeared to presage an immediate and abrupt exit from the stage of History. And, since the great historian penned his panegyric upon the powers of recuperation possessed by the Papacy, the intellectual and political Revolution staged by Liberalism in the second half of the 19th century seemed also to be upon the verge of obliterating the "Black" International.

Just as the disciples of St. Ignatius Loyola extricated the Church from the dilemma in which the Protestant upheaval of the 16th century had placed her, so, nowadays, the Church, under the direct leadership, it seems, of the Papacy itself, is busily pressing forward with a new "counter-reformation" which aims at restoring, and has, in fact, largely restored the Vatican to its mediæval rôle as a world-power. The Vatican is the "chameleon" of world-history. For, if the leopard cannot change his spots, Rome can change her colour whenever the occasion requires. In her "anti-communist" crusade, to-day, the Catholic Church seeks—and finds!—some peculiar allies: to-day she allies herself with Liberals, Protestants, even Mohammedans—in fact with all her historic enemies of yesterday.

For the final outcome of her life-and-death struggle with atheistic Bolshevism," she relies on the Protestant Crusaders of the U.S.A.; no longer upon the sword of her faithful mediæval knights, but upon that fine flower of her old enemy, Science, the A- and H-Bombs; the final outcome of modern Physics, whose early pioneers so often perished at the stake, or in the dungeons of the Inquisition. Evidently, the Catholic Church for all its theological intransigence, knows when and where to move with the times in the affairs of *this* world!

It is the traditional boast of the Roman Church that she has no politics. For the oldest, most universal, and most politically experienced political institution in the world, this might appear to be a peculiar boast! However, there is a certain sense in which it is true. For Rome is not

tied down to any particular political doctrine. In the course of her lengthy evolution Rome has successively supported the Roman Empire, mediæval absolutism, modern Fascism and "Christian Democracy"—her present favourite in Western Europe. She whooped on Franco's bloodthirsty "crusade" against Spanish Liberalism, and energetically assisted Hitler and Mussolini to suppress Socialism in modern Europe; whilst, simultaneously, successfully "permeating" the British and Australian Labour Parties. In Abyssinia, she was behind the Imperialists; whilst in Ireland she made common cause with their victims. She practised Fascism long before Mussolini, and preached Socialism (through the mouth of Sir Thomas More) long before Marx! Even Communism, her present *bête noire*, has been actually put into practice by the Church in her Paraguayan "Republic," where it lasted far longer than it has so far done in Russia—1608-1768. There are not many cards in the political pack with which Rome has not experimented at one time or another!

In view of the above it might appear that the Vatican is, actually, what it claims to be: a genuine neutral in the political sphere. However, there is a genuine Catholic sociology which the Church prefers, and which she puts into operation in those now not very numerous areas where she still has an absolutely free hand to mould society in accordance with her own traditions and in her own chosen pattern. In mediæval times, the golden "Age of Faith" and of the Church, where innovations were rare, where life ran slowly and smoothly in well-trodden tracks, and where "dangerous thoughts"—the "mortal sin of heresy"—were promptly nipped in the bud, Catholic society assumed clearly-defined patterns which it is still the ambition of the Church to restore. However, modern industrial society with its continuous technical evolution and its ceaseless quest for change, gives little scope to stagnant, slow-moving "mediæval" societies. There are, alas for the Vatican, few clerical Utopias like 18th century Paraguay, where the Jesuit disciples of Thomas More actually succeeded in creating a clerical version of their masters' *Utopia*. The modern world is too enamoured of change, that prime dissolvent of any traditional society. Modern Catholic Sociology is mainly a matter of make-shifts, compromises, and second bests.

The ideal type of Catholic sociology, which it is the ultimate ambition of Catholic politics to restore in its integrity, is, to-day, most nearly represented by such modern "backward" lands as Portugal, Quebec, and Ireland (Eire). When and where she is free to choose, Rome prefers the country to the town; an agrarian peasant economy to an urban industrial or commercial one. For the sea, as the Greek arch-conservative, Plato, once acutely observed, is brackish, with far horizons which bring the taste and invite the desire for new things. It is in such slow-moving peasant communities immune to change and impervious to new

ideas, that the Vatican feels most at home. Such, indeed, was the actual map of mediæval Europe. It is in the form of Bread and Wine, the staple diet of such agrarian communities, that the Catholic God is reborn into this world: One cannot, indeed, imagine Transubstantiation taking place on the floor of a modern factory to the clatter of machinery and the siren's blast!

Much as been written about the ethics and theology of the Catholic Church. Its *sociological* evolution is, however,

much less known. The Servile States of Antiquity, the Feudal States of mediæval times, the Capitalist societies of recent centuries, have all been alternately opposed and supported by the Church. To-day, we observe the rather paradoxical spectacle of the oldest Totalitarian institution in the world opposing the newest in the name of individual liberty!

What next?

## Whither Freethought?

By Mrs. K. C. ALLPRESS

(Concluded from page 202)

SINCE you cannot argue reasonably with a person who is blue with cold, some other gentler, more insidious way should be found of divesting him gradually of the undesirable garments. The whole, the absolute Truth is still greatly hidden and far beyond all of us, believer and unbeliever alike. Might it not be better if we could join forces for a little instead of fraying our nerves with this internecine strife, and by quietly and genuinely seeking to find what good we can in each others' cause, together discover the points where error has crept in and led us astray? At the lowest, it is wise strategy to make small concessions to the "enemy" in order to grapple more closely for final victory in the important matters under dispute. At best, I cannot think that all religions, so ancient and so universally held, are complete balderdash from beginning to end and contain nothing that is worthy of preservation anywhere; and although the Christians might be no more forthcoming on their side than are the Russians in face of Britain's diplomatic appeasement, yet it could surely do little harm to proffer a tentative hand of peace towards the fundamental impulse of "religion" that lies near the heart of man. In greater accord, both might then go on to examine the evidence in a free and positive spirit, rather than with hostile recriminations that foster bad blood and increase the fear and antagonism already in the world. Mr. Cutner notes the fear and antagonism but does not follow up the inferences therefrom. He seems to think that men under the sharp fire of criticism should not have these feelings—and, of course, ideally they should not—but they do, and the only way to progress is to circumvent their immature reactions and seek to lead, not whip, them into more adult mental behaviour. We have learnt this lesson as regards our actual children, but we do not yet apply it among grown men and nations. It is admittedly a difficult, if not an impossible task in view of the present attitude of the Church to Freethought but perhaps it may point a way and offer scope for the emergence of some really great man from the ranks of its present-day adherents. Such a one *might* induce the Churchman to think again if, say, he admitted that Yes, probably, Moses and Joshua and even Adam (records of whom they claim now to be disinterring) did once exist and were on the whole good and wise men who knew a thing or two about psychology and human nature and who may also have been moved quite genuinely by a feeling of Power which they thought of as God and we should call the Force of the Universe—but, that it could not be deduced from their mere assertions, that a specially interested and interfering God (a conceited, unfair and bad-tempered magician in effect), actually existed away up among the clouds. Some of the miracles too might be conceded as being essentially in no way different from the "miracles"—the telepathy or psychotherapy—of our modern age. And so, with patience and

understanding, through all the arguments of the Higher Criticism, till common certainties were reached.

But even this would all be quite useless in face of man's instinctive drives if some substantial, constructive philosophy or "creed" is not brought forward to satisfy his spiritual hunger and allay his fears. Poetry, music—the arts, love, do not seem sufficient for this purpose largely because they are beyond the capabilities of the man-in-the-street; something much more is needed that will stabilise man in his relation to himself, his fellow-man and the Universe, give him a true sense of proportion and a true and worthy purpose in living. Without this the fear that I am convinced are riddling the whole nature of mankind through and through, in every walk of life, repressed or unguessed at, will in the end gain the ascendancy and quench our races in brutal suicide. It is no good merely telling a man to "be reasonable", "not to be afraid" when the fear and unreason are gnawing at his vitals and clouding and twisting his intellect out of control. Reassure and steady him first. Keep his feet firmly on the ground and his deepest emotions un-affronted; then he may look up and smile and follow the voice of true wisdom wherever it may lead.

Much of what I have said above is, I fear, of necessity vague, since the feeling of infinity, though strong, is itself vague and one cannot give chapter and verse for a new philosophy of goodwill in the mere twinkling of an eye. Where it is not vague, it may be thought redundant, in view of all that has been pointed out to Christians in print and on platform for many years past—but I do not think this applies to the new constructive and sympathetic attitude. I should wish to see informing the work of modern Freethinkers. When Amiel, in his *Journal*, says of Christianity: "What this faith makes objective we may hold as subjective truth," he has put the whole idea in a nutshell. Rénan's *Life of Jesus* holds a flavour, an atmosphere that is more desirable, if not more effective, than the monotonous hostility and arrogance into which it is so easy to fall. I must try and live up to my own precepts in future!

### The News Comes to Papua

When news of the Coronation of George VI reached New West Papua, in New Guinea, it fell to a village councillor to translate all the mumbo-jumbo describing the Abbey ceremony into language which the local inhabitants could understand. The result was:—

"King George he dead. Number one son, Edward, he longer want him clothes. Number two son he like Bishop, he make plenty talk along new King.

"He say 'You savvy. You look out good along all people King he talk 'Yes.'

"Then Bishop and plenty Government bosses and storekeepers and soldiers, and bank managers and policemen, all he stand and sing and blow him trumpet."

"FINISH"

Which seems a fairly competent summary of many columns in the newspapers.—*Manchester Guardian*, May 21, 1953.

# Robert Taylor

The Devil's Chaplain (1784-1844) By H. CUTNER

(Continued from page 203)

HIS next two are equally as strong. He asserted that "the persons of whom they (the scriptures of the New Testament) treat never existed; because demoniacs, devils, ghosts, hobgoblins, persons who had once been dead, who could walk on water, ride in the air, etc., such as Satan and Jesus Christ, are the persons of whom these Scriptures treat; and that such persons never existed is demonstrable; 1st: from the utter incongruity of such figments with the immutable laws of sound reason; 2nd: from the total absence of all historical reference to their existence; and 3rd: from innumerable passages of these Scriptures themselves, which fully admit the merely visionary hypostasis of their fabulous hero. (Hobgoblins. See Acts xix, 15. Visionary Hypostasis. See Luke ix, 29; Mark ix, 2; Luke xxiv, 31; 1 John, v, 6, and innumerable other passages in perfect accordance with the TRUE AND GENUINE GOSPELS of the most primitive Christians, which taught that he was ninety-eight miles tall, and twenty-four miles broad; that he was not crucified at all; that he was never born at all; that by faith only are we saved, etc., all equally indicative that Christianity had no evidence at all but was a matter of mere conceit, fancy, or superstition from first to last.)" All the bluster and impression at the mouth such as Pye Smith's could make no did in 1827. Do hobgoblins, ghosts, devils and gods really exist? Did the miraculous events recorded in the New Testament really occur? Is there any reason whatever to believe the miracles in the four "canonical" gospels rather than those in the apocryphal ones? Are they not all of a piece? The pages in the *Syntaxma* in which Taylor defends his statements are some of the brightest he ever wrote; one would like to quote dozens of the paragraphs but space forbids; the reader should procure the work (if he can) and settle down to enjoy the scintillating "pyrotechnics."

On the question of events recorded in the New Testament actually happening, Taylor claimed "that some, many, or all these events had been previously related of the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome, and more especially of the Indian idol Krishna, whose religion, with less alteration than time and translations have made in the Jewish Scriptures, may be traced in every dogma and every ceremony of the Evangelical Mythology." Broadly speaking this is true; but a great deal more has been learnt in the study of comparative religions since Taylor wrote; and he relied, perhaps too much, on these so-called "parallels" in the history of various gods—more than we would allow. It was not so much a "copying" as of the various writers finding the floating legends of gods and goddesses at hand and weaving them in their own histories together with their own interpretations of natural law based on faulty observation and deduction. In any case, Taylor distinctly qualified his assertion by saying "some, many, or all these events. . . ." Following the great Sanscrit scholar, Sir William Jones, and perhaps also the likeness between the two words Christ and Krishna (or Krishna, Krishna, etc.), Taylor stressed the Indian god perhaps a little unduly; but he certainly was on the right scent when he claimed that all the idolatrous family of gods "are but the varied embodyings of the same parent,

and universally diffused hallucination." And the story of Jesus is just one other, devoid of evidence, like that of Adonis, Prometheus, and the other members of the pagan Pantheon.

Taylor's conclusion is:—

"As we see Protestantism to be a mere modification or reform of Popery, so Popery was nothing more than a similar modification or reform of Paganism. It is absolutely certain that the Pagans were in possession of the whole Gospel story many ages before its Jewish origin was pretended; and it was not until the first error had been committed of suffering the people to become acquainted too intimately with the contents of the sacred books that it became necessary to invent a chronology, and to give to airy nothing a local habitation and a name."

In other words, without the knowledge laboriously gathered through modern investigation, Taylor sensed what writers like Dr. Couchoud, Edouard Dujardin, and others are convinced is true, namely the existence of a mystery religion or religions long before the appearance of Christianity in Palestine and which emerged eventually as Christianity. No wonder Robertson had to concede—rather grudgingly—that Taylor's general criticism "is on the line of modern argument and raises the central issues." In reality it was a great achievement.

The *Syntaxma* was such a crushing reply to the bully that Pye Smith was obliged to issue another addition of his *Answer* dealing with the book; but very much against his will he had to name the "unhappy man" to whom he was replying. Little notice need be taken of this performance which is even more contemptible than the other. Robert Taylor is here described as showing himself to be possessed of "considerable ability and adroitness in the management of his cause, extensive but desultory and superficial reading, and some shallow learning, enough to answer his purpose of vain ostentation and of deceiving the ignorant or credulous. . . ." Though Pye Smith was stung to the quick, he was not too blind to see that in the encounter he had been beaten off the field. It is true that he took Taylor rightly to task for more than one error of fact and some errors of judgment; after all it was not to be expected that in such work as an attack on the Christian faith with nearly the whole weight of the Christian Church against him Taylor would be able to escape quite unscathed. He was in prison when he wrote and possibly found it difficult to obtain all the authorities he needed. As a matter of fact, he often quoted from memory long passages of both prose and poetry. Whether he ever replied in detail to Pye Smith's *Rejoinder*, the present writer is unaware.

In any case Taylor was soon at work on another book much more detailed than the *Syntaxma*. This was the *Diegesis* which he finished in Oakham Gaol in May, 1829, and which was published by Richard Carlile just after he was released. He dedicated it to the Master, Fellows and Tutors of St. John's College, Cambridge, the college which had given him his degree, and he referred to his book as "the employment of my many solitary hours in an unjust imprisonment incurred in the most glorious cause that ever called virtue to fact, or fortitude to suffer." His "undivided aim was to set forth truth, and nothing but the truth."

The *Diegesis* is a big book of over 440 pages of close matter. Taylor took himself seriously, and obviously wanted his work to be taken seriously, as well as a solid contribu-

(Continued on next page)

## This Believing World

Whether the Korean truce will be jeopardised or not it is impossible to say at the moment of writing, but it is hoped that the fact that Dr. Syngman Rhee, the man who has thrown a spanner into the intricate works of negotiation (so to speak) is a Christian, will not be forgotten. We are not blaming Christianity as such for Dr. Rhee—but it is not unfair to ask what has Christianity done for him? How has the Prince of Peace inspired him? For more war?

The Church Assembly meeting in London recently must have given all earnest Christians the shock of their lives. St. Paul, the fiery preacher who is considered by most authorities to have put Christianity on the map far more than Jesus Christ, is now being told that he is "out of date." Lord Alistair Graham actually asked with withering contempt, "Is St. Paul, who lived nearly 2,000 years ago, in very different social conditions, to be the arbiter of what women will do for the next 2,000 years?" The same question could be asked of Jesus Christ on divorce, and no doubt it will be asked by some future Lord Graham; for both "our Lord" and his faithful henchman, St. Paul, are 2,000 years out of date.

St. Paul is being blamed for the fact that the Church, as far as its ministry is concerned, is a "closed shop" to women. They want a hand in its ministration and in its administration, and if they yell loud enough they'll get their wish. It will be such pleasure to tell men what unholy sinners they are and will continue to be until they accept Jesus as their Saviour. In addition, women should be appointed as Holy Confessors—and they will certainly enjoy some of the stories men confess to in the realm of sexual adventure. In fact, there is no end to the fun women will have once they become priests and bishops.

Whatever the Pope and Roman Catholics generally think about Communism, Protestantism, and other enemies of the Holy Church, they all know that the *real* enemy, the one they most fear, is Materialism—as the Pope himself said to 15,000 pilgrims the other day, "Materialism is the same old enemy which had sought through the ages to divert men's eyes from God." It changes "tongue and clothing" but it says to men, "Why look at heaven? Look at the earth." And the Pope actually conceded, "it was winning a measure of success." Materialism, that is, the true, scientific, philosophic, mechanistic, Materialism will do far more than that. It will displace Christianity.

So at last even Jesuits have to acknowledge that "The stigma of divorce has gone." This is the contention of Fr. H. Waterhouse, S.J., and he is very angry about it. Of course, the "stigma" nonsense has been, and still is, one of the props of Roman Catholicism, and Anglo-Catholics agree with the rival sect; it is good to learn, however, that the common sense of the people has at last prevailed. Even the completely out-of-date views on marriage and divorce held by Jesus are recognised as such by believing Christians; and if they want a divorce they get it in spite of Jesus, the Pope, and the Jesuits.

The truth is that all the Churches are losing the youth of the country. The annual report of the Catholic Young Men's Society is one of almost heartbreaking despair. "Children," it moans, "are no longer taught their faith in the home. Too much is left to the teachers." But what can a poor teacher do? He is faced with the fact that the history lesson is at complete variance with the Bible lesson:

so is the science lesson, and the lessons on anthropology and in any case, the story of the Churches with their silly martyrs and their appalling miracles must put off all children who learn to think for themselves.

No longer can it be said that if the Roman Church starts working on a child before the age of seven, it will be forevermore a thorough believer. The secular lessons at school have destroyed that in most cases. Moreover, the general secretary of the Society says that he receives reports that many Catholics in public services are disheartened by the indifference and even open hostility of their fellow Catholics. This is all to the good, and it shows the way of a wind is blowing. It is, in fact, not blowing the way of a tremendous revival of Christianity; as that great follower of Dr. Torrey, Mr. Billy Graham, will find to his cost when he tries to bring the Faith—any Faith—back to the people of England.

## Theatre

"The Gift." By Mary Lumsden. St. Martin's Theatre. It is a long time since we have seen a play capable of stirring our finer feelings. Here is something far removed from gangster plays and murder thrillers, for instead of dealing with killing its subject is that of sight-saving.

This is a strong piece of drama which is not quite devoid of grimness, for it concerns a girl (Anne Crawford) blinded by accident during her studies, and her elder sister (Eden Gray) who feels compelled to help her by giving one of her cornea. Then there is the elder sister's husband who is an eminent surgeon (Sebastian Shaw), and a nice young doctor (Michael Gwynn) who is in love with the blinded girl.

A remarkable thing about these people is that they are all very fine characters and all ready for self-sacrifice to help their fellow beings, which makes me think that the authoress must live in a world of fine people of which she is one. Even the very competent surgeon's secretary (Janet Burnell) and the housekeeper (Alice Bowes) are depicted as really good characters. It is so very refreshing to find so many good people collected for the purpose of a play, and for that we should be indebted to Miss Lumsden.

These six people served us well in their acting, notably Sebastian Shaw who is most convincing as a fine surgeon. Anne Crawford stirs us as the blind girl, though in places it is difficult to make this character sympathetic. It is so difficult to accept the reasons for the elder sister wishing so strongly to give part of her sight to help the blinded one, although Eden Gray gets as near to convincing us as anybody could.

Laurier Lister's production is clear and smooth, but the action is slow in places.

The message is that as your eyes cannot serve you when you die, you should will them for the purpose of benefiting some blinded person whose cornea have been destroyed.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

## Robert Taylor (Continued from page 211)

tion from the Freethought standpoint to the great problem of the "origin, evidences and early history of Christianity." He also claimed for his book that the subject was "never yet before or elsewhere so fully and faithfully set forth." This was a bold claim in view of the numerous Deistic works written before him, but in the main he was right.

(To be continued)

# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

A. McHATTIE.—We received your letter, but do not consider that any useful purpose can be served by continuing the controversy. All issues of *The Freethinker* which dealt with *The Geography of Hunger* have been sent, at his own request, to Dr. De Castro, and the word *now* lies with him.

J. R. HOWES.—Your article duly arrived and will appear shortly. Many thanks. We agree with you that religion appears to play a dominant role in pacifist circles in this country.

We regret that the printers—who are always blamed!—left out Mr. Bayard Simmons's initials in his little poem last week.

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

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

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, June 28, 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and J. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields, COLIN MCCALL.

North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, July 5, noon: F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, July 4, 7 p.m.: Messrs. T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Every Sunday from 4 p.m. onwards: Messrs. O'NEILL, CLEAVER, WOOD, EMBURY, TAYLOR, and RIDLEY.

### INDOOR

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, July 3, 7-15 p.m.: Miss E. BURCHETT, "Why We Women Want Emancipation."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, July 5, 11 a.m., ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Future of Ethics."

Streatham Debating Society (White Lion Hotel, Streatham).—Wednesday, July 8, 7-45 p.m.: P. VICTOR MORRIS, affirmative, Miss M. E. ODFELL, M.A., J.P., negative, "That all Grants to Religious Sects for Educational Purposes should be Abolished."

## NOTES AND NEWS

The Rationalist Press Association which, like ourselves, is affiliated to "The World Union of Freethinkers," writes us that they are holding a four-day conference at Sheffield (Works) from July 10. The subject chosen for discussion is "The Impact of Religion on Daily Life." The speakers will be Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, Vice-Admiral Sir Sheldon Dudley, Miss Winifred Taylor, Douglas Houghton, M.P., R. W. S. Pollard, Dr. H. S. Ferne, and Prof. A. E. Heath, the President of the R.P.A. We are informed that there will be opportunities for discussion and questions, as well as for recreational activities. The R.P.A. has expressed a wish that the N.S.S. should be represented at

Sheffield. Accordingly, Mr. P. Victor Morris, General Secretary of the N.S.S., will represent the National Secular Society and will, we are sure, vigorously put forward the N.S.S. point of view in discussion.

Several controversial trials in recent years have once again raised in a sharp form the much disputed issue of capital punishment. We refer to one in particular, which is at present the storm-centre of controversy, that of Timothy Evans. The N.S.S. has long advocated the abolition of the death-penalty and we are happy to note that public opinion seems now to be definitely swinging in the direction of this, in our opinion, overdue reform. For instance, the *Observer*, a moderate and highly-respected organ of conservative opinion, went on record last Sunday with the considered opinion that capital punishment to-day is an out-of-date anachronism in the modern world. The sadistic accounts of the recent Rosenberg executions may, also, we think, be relevantly quoted in the above connection.

The case of our modern "Blue Beard," Christie, will, no doubt, be brought up against this point of view. But whilst Christie may not be insane in the legal sense of the term, it is well known that the legal definition of insanity, like so much of the law itself, represents the knowledge of a by-gone age. The man was clearly insane as and when judged by any normal standards. Be that as it may; the issue of capital punishment is now an open question. The majority of civilised countries have already abolished it. It seems now only a matter of time before the minority follow suit, and hanging will soon follow the "drawing" and "quartering" which were its original concomitants, into the "Chamber of Horrors" of the past.

The incredible eleventh-hour obstruction of President Syngman Rhee to a Korean Armistice affords yet another reminder of the present most unsatisfactory state of international relationships. In face of the unqualified and now historically obsolete authority of the nation state any international authority is utterly powerless. In this respect, the "United Nations" shares the weakness of the old "League of Nations" of painful memory. Unless it can overcome this weakness it will share the same fate, meanwhile, it rather looks as if, by the time that Korea is "liberated" there will be no Koreans left to benefit from its "Liberation"! "Those whom the gods wish to destroy they first drive mad."

Preparations are now already under way for the 1954 Congress of the International Freethought Movement to be held in Luxembourg in the autumn of 1954. Luxembourg, though one of the smallest states in Europe situated between France and Germany, is a predominantly Roman Catholic land, but, despite this fact, possesses a strong Freethought Movement which will be the convenors and host to the 1954 International Congress. Elsewhere in this issue we publish an account of the activities of the Dutch Freethinkers. The Executive Committee of the World Union, a body which represents many nations—and as many shades of political and social opinion!—will be meeting in the Belgian capital, Brussels, on September 12-13 to discuss the agenda for the 1954 Congress. Mr. F. A. Ridley will represent the N.S.S.

# News from Holland

By J. LIEDERMOOY

APART from the Dutch Freethinker organisation, *De Dageraad* (the Dawn) existing nearly 100 years, in Holland a Humanist League, established after 1945, is also working amongst the people that do no more pay attention to churches and faith in general. However, though the members generally call themselves freethinkers, a good many of them are individualists who have not altogether broken with religion. Real atheists are few in this organisation; some of them are agnostics and pantheists.

The leaders of the Humanist League have on many occasions shown their willingness to co-operate with the various churches and groups of religious people existing in the Netherlands, contrary to *De Dageraad* (member of the World Union of Freethinkers) that never co-operates with the churches and their like. *De Dageraad* is keen on attacking the theologians on every occasion both in speech and in writing if need be, and its weekly paper always consists of articles like those appearing in *The Freethinker*.

It is quite evident from the above statement that the H.L. is not half as dangerous to the Christian religion as is *De Dageraad*, and the latter is feared for its activity in public by every clergyman and believer. Nevertheless, the H.L. is equally hated by the Catholic Church leaders in this country. Various members of the Dutch Labour Party have joined the H.L. (though some of these are members of the *Dageraad*) and amongst them are Labour Party M.P.s, yea, some Ministers belonging to the L.P. are members of the Humanist League, too.

The Catholic People's Party (K.V.P.) now having 30 M.P.s, have to co-operate in Parliament with the Labour Party (Party van de Arbeid) (also 30 M.P.s) as is quite clear in view of the fact that the Dutch House of Commons consists of 100 Members. But it's a matter of course that the Catholic M.P.s are often opposing and quarrelling with Labour M.P.s (amongst which are also religious ones)

concerning religion, and it has already happened in the House of Commons that the Roman Catholic members attacked their Socialist allies as the latter claimed the same rights for the Humanist Movement as has already the Christian faith. The Catholics always deny such rights to their non-Christian opponents, pretending that Religion being something divine, Humanism cannot be placed on the same level and consequently the latter cannot claim the same rights which have gained "Christian" religion.

A few weeks ago at the Annual Congress of the Dutch Labour Party the Speaker defended the Humanist League against the attacks of their Roman Catholic opponents. As a result a headlined article appeared in a prominent Catholic daily paper which runs as follows:—

"Those Humanists are wolves in sheepskin who try to lead the poor deviated ones into atheism and we, the Catholics, have to do all we can—seen from our Christian point of view—to save them from the claws of those wolves."

In the Dutch Army are many clergymen charged with the care of the "souls" of the Christian soldiers. However, at least 20 per cent. of the population do not belong to any Church and it is obvious that the Humanist League wishes to appoint some secular leaders in the army to look after these unbelieving soldiers. But this right has been refused to them and the Christian leaders, especially the Catholic ones, have said that soldiers not belonging to a church can be accepted in the Christian homes for soldiers, of course in the hope that they will then embrace the Christian faith. It is quite clear that church leaders are intolerant towards everyone who does not accept their point of view, but on the other hand it is quite comprehensible that unbelieving soldiers wish to have a right to get the secular leaders they need.

## NATIONAL ANTHEM?

By D. ALEXANDER

I AM a Freethinker and a Socialist, and I know there are thousands of others in Britain and the Empire. To a rationalist determinist what does "God Save the Queen" mean?

This religious hymn seems to me to express sentiments totally out of consonance with modern ethics, and politically very reactionary. Religion is, from a political point of view, a purely private matter. We cannot quarrel with the expressions of religious views *per se*, although we disagree with these views, but we feel that in a "National Anthem," as compared with a religious hymn, they are somewhat irrelevant.

Besides then, the fact that it is a hymn, what else do we take exception to in this Anthem?

Firstly, the wholly undemocratic tone which invokes the welfare of only one person in the realm. It would surely be conceded even by the Queen, that a 20th century "National Anthem" should inspire and interest the people as well as the hereditary monarch. What sense is there in "Scatter *her* enemies and make them fall," "Thy choicest gifts in store, on *her* be pleased to pour."

Secondly, we object to the imperialist tone throughout. "Send *her* victorious, happy and glorious"; "Scatter *her* enemies." This is all very well when fighting a war with some moral justification, but to apply such an attitude to

the Boer War, say, is nothing less than criminal. It smears the view: "My country, right or wrong."

If I were writing a manual of political morals, one of the first principles I would lay down would be this. Any political attitude must be equally moral, whether applied to one or other side in a political or economic dispute. This is a basic ethical principle which the imperialism of the Anthem implicitly denies.

If we were very charitable, the only line that we could hail as being progressive would be "May she defend our laws, and give us every cause, to sing with heart and voice . . ." Still, I think it would be more realistic to interpret this as a prayer for the perpetuation of the status quo, which is anathema to any progressive.

Assuming we agree that the Anthem is an expression of backward and outmoded views, what is our practical course of action? I submit to you, friend readers, the following suggestion.

Whenever, as in a theatre, one can abscond before the rendering of the Anthem, do so. When, however, it would attract unnecessary attention, there is no harm in standing, although, of course, one would not join in singing. But consider it foolhardy and exhibitionist to deliberately remain seated *except* when there is a particular imperialist act about which one wants to protest. Otherwise, I do not feel that the whole issue of the Anthem and its sentiments are sufficiently serious to warrant this attention.

## Ask at Your Library

"Solo Trumpet." By T. A. Jackson. Published by Lawrence & Wishart, London; price 12s. 6d.

Colonel Bob Ingersoll once defined "intellectual liberty" to be—"the right to think right and the right to think wrong; provided you did your best to think right. There is upon man, so far as thought is concerned, the obligation to think the best he can, and to honestly express his best thought. Whenever he thinks what is right, or what he honestly believes to be the right, he is less than a man if he fears to express his conviction before an assembled world."

Mr. Jackson, the author of this book has never been afraid to express his convictions, and that is a big thing to say about any man to-day where so many of our public men resort to subterfuge, and are adepts at word-spinning and apostles of compromise.

With very little schooling, Jackson educated himself by his own efforts. A rebel against social evils, and more wonderful still, a rebel to-day, he has gone through life always poor in pocket but rich in hope and humour. Darwin exerted a big influence on his mind and made him into 100 per cent. atheist. He strongly resented the stupid blasphemy laws and broke them upon every available occasion and suffered imprisonment for doing so. It is remarkable to note that these events have left no bitterness in his mind. His outlook was too philosophical and his sense of humour too great to harbour animosity against individuals.

Although Bradlaugh was not a Socialist and Jackson was, this did not prevent his admiring Bradlaugh as one of the really great men of his time. Comparing Bradlaugh with the political place-hunters to be found in the ranks of the Labour Party to-day whose main ambition seems to be the acquisition of a title, Jackson said: "I am old enough and, as a child, used to study so closely the once-fashionable two-page coloured political cartoons my father brought me home to play with—to be familiar with the name of Charles Bradlaugh (for example) as that of a living contemporary. I once saw him, a mountain of a man, towering above everybody as he made his way along Fleet Street. Though he was never more than a Radical Republican, he was a good one. . . . Thus I can say with every confidence—and you can take my word for it—that if any whipper-snapper from the Lord Chamberlain's Office had proposed to Charlie that he should become 'Sir Charles' or 'Lord Bradlaugh,' that whipper-snapper would have been hit for six. If through brain-softening or any other cause he had consented; the National Secular Society would have expelled him with anathema and execrations and the electors of Northampton would have hanged him in the High Street."

Perhaps it was because the author was such an admirer and student of Charles Dickens that many of his pen portraits of the notabilities of his time are drawn in Dickens style.

What a number of interesting people Jackson has met in his long pilgrimage and how very few remain true to the principles they expounded when climbing to success. Jackson's activities in London in the cause of Socialism and his years in the North of England brought him into contact with many prominent men of his time, both Socialists and anti-Socialists. Most of our readers have known of the men he mentions, but we feel that we know them much better when we have read his book.

The one criticism one could make of "Solo Trumpet" is that the publishers have failed to provide the readers

with an index. Tired of the wobblings of the Socialist and so-called Socialist Party, Jackson joined the Communist Party in 1920 and was one of its original members.

Whether the reader agrees or disagrees with the author one cannot help admiring his downright honesty and courage. There is not a hypocritical line in this book. This man who, when charged with blasphemy at the Leeds Police Court, told the magistrate that for years he had been an Atheist, a Republican and a Socialist, is, of course, a mighty different type from most of our M.P.s who, in the majority of cases are anatomical wonders who seem to go through life devoid of guts and a backbone. Ask for this book at your library: you will enjoy it and you will want more from the same pen. We look forward eagerly to the publication of the second part of this most enthralling biography.

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

## Review

It is to be hoped that Dr. Marie Stopes's pamphlet, her *Evidence to the Royal Commission on the Press* (published at 108, Whitfield Street, London, W.1, price 6d.) will have a big circulation. Her evidence was not published in the Official Report, and it ought to be known. Briefly, she shows that although thirty years or so ago she was allowed to advertise her books on Contraception and Marriage, she is not allowed to do so to-day. The advertisements sent out by her publishers are severely censored. She gives many actual examples of the way in which notices of her books, *Married Love*, *Wise Parenthood*, and *Contraception* are constantly deleted by the various advertisement managers of our national newspapers—though, in some cases, the advertisements were accepted.

It is, of course, a sickening story. But Dr. Stopes knows quite well who is responsible. It is the Roman Catholic Church which has managed to get its henchmen into many key positions on our journals, and they have to do what they are told by Rome. Of course, there are a number who are only too pleased to hit such an enemy of Roman Catholicism by hook or by crook. Their object is to destroy her reputation, and to do their utmost to boycott her books. She prints an article by J. W. Poynter on "The Roman Church and the Press"—unaware, perhaps, that Mr. Poynter went safely back to the bosom of the Church from which he had popped in and out several times.

Still it would be interesting to learn from Dr. Stopes whether she herself would not have censored all references to the part played by Charles Bradlaugh in Birth Control if she had had a chance to do so. Years ago, she bitterly attacked him and his "Atheism" for coming into the Birth Control movement. Atheism did it far more harm than good, she contended, and it was quite amusing to see how angry she got when she was forced to admit that after all it was Atheists like Francis Place, Richard Carlile, Charles Knowlton, George and Charles Drysdale, Charles Bradlaugh, and John M. Robertson, among a host of other Atheists, who never ceased fighting for Neo-Malthusianism (as it was then called). They shared the hatred and obloquy of all good Christians, but it was their pioneer work and their steadfastness which helped the campaign later started by Dr. Stopes. She can now appreciate a little better what they had to go through. H.C.

The priests and the monarchists have joined together to seize power in Spain, and Franco has yielded to them, even to the extent of ascribing his victory in the Civil War not to the Axis, but to the Virgin Mary.—Hitler—*Table Talk*.

## Correspondence

### A CORONATION POINT OF VIEW

SIR,—On the morning after the Coronation I remarked cheerfully to a lady I know to be deeply religious: "So the great Poojah who sits up in the clouds was not over-pleased yesterday with England." She replied: "No wonder! All this religious ceremony to confer Divine Powers on this young woman must be very displeasing to the Almighty, who has said, 'Thou shalt have none other God than me'."—Yours, etc.,

R. G. ABBOTT.

### THE VATICAN AND THE KOREAN WAR

SIR,—Why Vatican will send his Latin-Catholic battalions to Korea? Two World Wars were handiwork of Anglo-Saxon diplomats, predominantly Protestants, dethroning and changing Apostolic monarchs. In 1945 in Potsdam, Anglo-Saxons annexed to Russia some 20 free nations and gave to Russia unlimited rights to destroy every free thought and every life willing to be free in annexed to Russian countries. Among annexed countries are Catholic countries—Poland, Chechia, Ungaria, Hungary, Lithuania, and millions of Catholics living in other Soviet satellites. Vatican does not like it. During the Second World War, Latin-Catholics did not pray for Stalin, calling him good old gentleman, but Yanks and Englishmen did. Let them fight now. Why Vatican will fight when, without war, Vatican gained in wealth and power? The fighters in Korea are heretics. Not many Catholics among them. According to teachings of Vatican, God must destroy the heretics. Destruction takes place in Korea.—Yours, etc.,

K. LIDAKS.

### CHRISTIAN ASCETICISM

SIR,—When Mr. Cutner, criticising my article, "Sex and Christian Asceticism," asserted that Jesus "very complacently allowed a vile mutilation 'for the kingdom of heaven's sake,'" and I asked what he was referring to, I was told editorially to see Matthew xix, 12. Here Jesus is quoted as saying that there are "eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake."

Now one reference work I have consulted (*Eadie's Bible Cyclopaedia*) thinks these words were intended to be taken figuratively. That is my opinion, as it is also that of a Freethinker friend of mine. So I cannot help thinking that if this is the evidence upon which Mr. Cutner would thus indict the Galilean, it is not very formidable or conclusive evidence.—Yours, etc.,

G. I. BENNETT.

### THE ROSENBERG CASE

SIR,—There would seem to be three aspects of wide public importance in this case. First, from the meagre reports on this side of the Atlantic, the evidence of their guilt does not appear to me at all convincing; certainly had I been on the jury, I should have had to bring in a verdict of acquittal, due to lack of evidence. But as I say, reports reaching this country do not give full information, and it may be that they were proved guilty of the charges made. The second point is on the matter of judicial procedure. The Supreme Court has upheld their conviction under the Espionage Act, 1917, and denied that the Atomic Energy Act, 1946, had superseded it. The death penalty is applicable under both Acts, but in the case of the later one, only on a recommendation of the jury. This is the first time anyone has ever suffered the extreme penalty for such offences in peacetime. By a majority opinion of six votes to three the Supreme Court decided that the original attainer (under the 1917 Act) was good and stood; it only remains to add that under *English* judicial procedure two such Acts could hardly run concurrently, and the 1946 Act would be deemed to supersede the 1917 Act. The third point is in regard to the suggestions made to the prisoners; this was really the most scandalous aspect of all. They were told that, though correctly tried, found guilty and sentenced, the law would be set aside if they would incriminate others!

Now, assuming their traffic in atomic secrets with Russia to be fact, even so it would be unlikely they would know any other than their "contact" man. Fuchs, when giving a full account of his traffic in atomic secrets, admitted that he knew only his two contacts. It is probable, therefore, that assuming this traffic in the Rosenberg case, they would not have been able, *even if willing*, to give the information for which the bribe of their lives was offered to them.

It is, however, abundantly clear that the authorities making this immoral offer were not interested in the facts. What they wanted was for the Rosenbergs to give away their friends who were progressive or "Left" and had during the war co-operated with

our—then—Russian allies, or Left Wing movement, so that they could incarcerate them (for their opinions) in gaol, leaving the dependants in desperate straits, a state to which the McCarran-McCarran reincarnation of the Gestapo has already condemned thousands of their fellow citizens.—Yours, etc.,

P. C. KOS.

### THE MALAN REGIME

SIR,—Your article in *The Freethinker* of May 1 on the Malan Government is interesting, but Calvinism hardly explains entirely "Apartheid." The fact is that the whole economy of South Africa depends on a plentiful supply of cheap native labour. As it is the gold mines are fighting a desperate battle against rising costs, and any approach to a wage for the natives close to European standards would mean the end of the gold mining industry. This may be lamentable, but when it is a question of survival any powerful governing body is usually not so squeamish about exploiting its strength, as history has shown. Dr. Malan may be a strictly orthodox Calvinist, but it is very doubtful whether all or most of his followers are. The famous "whether Nationalist or United Party, all want cheap native labour." Finally, it is a mistake to assume that the Malan Government is doing nothing for the native; but this is not the place for a fuller account.—Yours, etc.,

E. A. McDONALD.

### THE HOME SECRETARY AND THE DEATH PENALTY

SIR,—This subject was recently dealt with by Viscount Simon who was twice Home Secretary, in an article in the *Evening Standard* of February 2 last. He said: "The dreadful responsibility of deciding whether a murderer should be executed is treated by every Home Secretary in turn as casting on him a very special duty which calls for the fullest consideration. There is a framed card in his room which contains the names of each who have been sentenced to death, with the dates of the trial, and a column at the end to record the fate of the prisoner—whether he is executed, reprieved, or found to be insane and removed to Broadmoor. In the discharge of that duty, the Home Secretary is advised by a committee to that effect to the Sovereign, and the advice is almost always followed. In every instance the case is considered by his highly competent advisers, and he himself studies the facts and circumstances with all the care that his duty demands. He has before him information about the condemned man which has been collected and sifted, in addition to the evidence at the trial. If necessary, he consults the trial judge. He may also see before him what the governor of the jail, or the chaplain may be able to tell him." These passages show that some of your correspondents are under a misapprehension as to the true position of the Home Secretary. It is not accurate (whatever a certain rather boastful permanent secretary may have said) that the decision rests with permanent officials, however eminent, though it is true that some Home Secretaries are more conscientious in the personal care taken in these cases than are others. That is also true of permanent secretaries.

The real trouble is, as Lord Buckmaster pointed out to the Barr Committee, that no one is prepared to take much trouble to reopen a case once a man has been executed. It will be interesting to see what line the authorities take about the *Evans* case. Yet, notwithstanding the trouble taken, as stated by Viscount Simon, the deficiencies in criminal trials in England, and their heavy weighting against the accused, in my opinion, have led to a number of cases in which persons have been wrongfully executed, either, as in the case of Mrs. Bryant, because no crime was committed, or because, as in several other cases, the person executed was executed for a crime committed by someone else, the criminal thus successfully carrying out two crimes, the original murder, and remaining silent while an innocent person was executed for it.

None of these matters touch the prerogative as exercised by the Crown, nor the right of audience given to certain people of high rank on any subject of grave public importance, a right more exercised than the public suspect.—Yours, etc.,

C. H. NORMAN.

### DIALECTICAL MATERIALISM

SIR,—It may come as a surprise to Mr. Jim Graham, but I have often dealt with Dialectical Materialism in these columns. As soon as my Robert Taylor articles are finished I shall be very too pleased to deal with any contributions on the subject, whether by Mr. Graham or anybody else.—Yours, etc.,

H. CURTIS.

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