

The Freethinker

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—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Checkmate to the Vatican?

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

IN the latter part of the seventeenth century England was agitated from end to end and the country was brought to the verge of civil war by the alleged "Popish plot" of the Catholic minority to restore the old religion with the secret support of the reigning Stuart dynasty. During the past decade, since the downfall of Fascism, our contemporary Europe has experienced a "Popish plot" of a similar nature, but with far wider implications. For the collapse of Europe, first before Fascism and, subsequently, before Communism, has left the sceptre of the old continent vacant, torn between rival totalitarian régimes. This current situation affords an unrivalled opportunity for the oldest and the most persistent of all totalitarian régimes to assert itself. And this is, in fact, precisely what the Vatican has been doing ever since the downfall of Hitler and Mussolini in 1945 created a great void in the political and ideological organisation of Europe.

As we have pointed out before in this column, the dominant feature in European politics since the last war has been the persistent and insidious attempts made by the Vatican to restore its former medieval authority over a united, predominantly Catholic Europe; as we phrased it here some time back, over a new "Holy Roman Empire," the successor of that of those faithful sons of the Holy Church, Charlemagne and Charles the Fifth. By following the traditional "wisdom of the serpent," by marching along crooked paths—and who has more experience in such devious ways?—by posing alternately as the champion of a bankrupt European democracy and as the Fascist protector of outworn property rights and obsolete traditions, the Papacy has pursued the maxim of the Apostle and seeks to be "all things to all men," with the ultimate aim of reducing them all to its common domination.

The Unity of Europe is, indeed, an aim not confined exclusively to the Vatican and to that astute professional diplomatist, Pope Pius Pacelli, who, after a lifetime spent in diplomatic intrigues "for the greater glory of God," now directs the spiritual and temporal fortunes of the "Universal" Church of Rome. To paraphrase a famous observation of an English politician: "We are all good Europeans nowadays." The current absurdity of a continent united by the jet plane and by wireless telegraphy, carved up amongst the states and former principalities of the feudal age of the bow-and-arrow and the coach-and-four, represents an historical anachronism, perhaps picturesque, but both practically inconvenient and theoretically fantastic. For a generation past, the forward-looking forces in European society have been seeking to put an end to Europe's outmoded divisions, and many international organisations have existed with this objective in view—the present writer, incidentally, formerly played an active part in this current movement for European unification.

"All that the Liberals have imagined, the Conservatives have eventually succeeded in putting into effective operation." This observation of the famous Spanish statesman, Dr. Emilio Castelar, has, no doubt, not passed unnoticed at the Vatican where they, obviously, have long memories. During the past few years the Papacy has been steadily "cashing in" upon the schemes originally put forward by such Liberal and anti-clerical thinkers and statesmen as Ernest Renan, Aristide Briand and Edouard Herriot—all, incidentally, leading anti-clericals and Freethinkers in their day and generation. The main impetus behind recent schemes of European unification came from

Catholic parties and Catholic politicians. In an united non-Communist Europe, west of the so-called "Iron Curtain," it is the Vatican which aspires to be the power behind the scenes.

That advanced American Liberal magazine, *The Nation*, a resolute critic of both religious bigotry and political hysteria, recently published an excellent article on the Italian General Election, which resulted in ejecting from office the former Prime Minister, De Gasperi, right-hand man of the Pope, and former Papal librarian. The article in question was written by one who had every reason to know the power of political Catholicism at work: Senor Y. Alvarez del Vayo, a former minister of the now defunct Spanish Republic, the victim of the "Holy Alliance" between Fascism and the Catholic Church which enabled General Franco to overthrow the Liberal régime in Spain. Remarking that "the consequences of the Italian elections extend far beyond the borders of Italy," the correspondent of *The Nation* goes on to observe:

"The results are a heavy blow to the grand design of a Roman Catholic Europe that was already in the making. A year ago this idea was personified by three powerful Catholic leaders: De Gasperi, Schuman and Adenauer. American Liberals and partisans of World Government have greeted with enthusiasm the project of a United Europe, acclaiming the achievements of Strashbourg and the Schuman Plan as long steps in that direction. They apparently did not realise that the United Europe slowly taking shape was a Catholic Europe, and that behind it was the Vatican. Pope Pius the Twelfth had subtly and discreetly won for his plan the backing of many non-Catholic anti-Communist politicians in Europe as well as the key-men in American diplomacy. He used his great powers of persuasion to convince them that the battle against Russia and Communism could be won only under the leadership of the Church. This was clearly stated in an editorial in the *Corriere della Sera* of June 11, commenting on the elections: 'In a struggle that presents so many common characteristics with the wars of religion, the only symbol that can be opposed to the Hammer and Sickle [the emblem of Communism—F.A.R.] is the Cross'"

(cf. *The Nation*, New York, issue of June 27, 1953, p. 543).

Since Senor del Vayo wrote this penetrating critique of the Vatican's recent European strategy, further disasters have overtaken Papal diplomacy in the political field. The devout Catholic, Robert Schuman, who looked like giving his name to the new clerical version of the "Holy Roman Empire," has been forced out of office; and most well-informed observers of the current French political scene seem to expect that the present pro-Catholic government of the extreme Right, severely shaken by the recent strikes, will soon give way to a Leftist régime which, whatever its political climate, will be traditionally anti-clerical in composition. De Gasperi has already gone, and his (also Catholic) successor sits in a shaky seat without a decisive majority; whilst the very Catholic German Chancellor, Dr. Adenauer—who is said to permit only Catholic washer-women in the Parliament buildings at Bonn!—only won his recent election with Nationalist support and now occupies much the same position as his former leader, Dr. Brüning, who held the ring until Hitler was ready to take power (1930-32). In this latter connection, will history repeat itself? In any case, in the "United Germany" at which Adenauer now openly aims, includ-

ing the Protestant East, a permanent Catholic régime appears unlikely.

It is, in fact, only south of the Pyrenees, in the still semi-medieval and politically weak Iberian Peninsula, that political Catholicism still holds the trump cards.

All of which spells "mate" and, perhaps, "checkmate" to the recent European strategy of the Vatican. The forces of European Liberalism and Rationalism are not yet played out. One must not be beguiled by Rome's own assertions that the *only* alternative before mankind is between its own medieval totalitarian despotism and the more recent Russian brand; for such a claim signifies automatically both the end of human progress and the abdication of human reason. The world, after all, may move deplorably slowly, but it *does* move. The Middle Ages, directed and moulded by the Vatican in its own image, are, after all, long past, and neither the fires of Smithfield (the English equivalent of the Spanish *auto-da-fe*), nor the Holy Roman Empire, the political creation of the Church, are ever likely to return in, and to, the modern world. Europe is never again likely to return to Canossa.

Liberality of Mind

By G. I. BENNETT

FREEDOM from prejudice, breadth of understanding, and catholicity of outlook—in a word, liberality of mind—are characteristics of the mature thinker.

Phrased in such general terms, that statement is one with which few, I daresay, would disagree. All schools of thought hasten to proclaim their maturity when challenged. But not many of them are mature by my definition. In the light of that definition I want to say something about Freethought. In what follows I shall express my own point of view; and because it is purely my own I shall not be surprised if it fails to command any large measure of assent.

I ought to begin by stating that my convictions on religious matters are much the same as those of other Freethinking men and women. Like them I can have no credence in any theological doctrines; like them I have no faith in any anthropomorphic God and the eschatological corollaries of such a faith. But for me unbelief has no special virtue in itself; it is simply the end to which critical freedom of mind led me. I do not claim that this conclusion of mine is final, though I think it may well be. So far as I am concerned, intellectual conclusions may be highly interesting, but not of paramount importance; what *is* of paramount importance is the attitude of mind that evolved them. As I see it, this would still hold good even if the conclusions reached had been wholly different—provided they were the conclusions of a free and rational mind.

Now real freedom of mind, it seems to me, can only exist where there is fluidity of thought. Certainty and finality in scientific investigation are rare conditions; tentative assumptions and working theories are the bases of scientific progress. And on ultimate issues and on first and final causes, which down the centuries have exercised some of the acutest philosophical brains, certainty and finality are out of the question.

We live and have our being in an infinitesimal part of the mighty cosmos, which it is beyond our power fully to understand or explain. That notwithstanding, the cosmos is the supreme fact of existence—or better, the totality of existence—and we must accept it, and can only hazard a guess as to its origin (if origin it had) and its meaning and purpose (if, contrary to our present state of knowledge, it has any meaning and purpose). To try to make

sense out of it by ingenuously representing it as the creation of an all-powerful God, with curiously human attributes, and an especial interest in our individual and collective human welfare, is unwarrantable on our knowledge and understanding of natural phenomena. And while so much must necessarily remain obscure, we are justified at least in disbelieving the existence of any such man-made Deity.

What I think we are not justified in believing is that more is to be known, that our position is final and fixed, that Atheism holds the whole truth about man in relation to his universe (although, as I recognise, it may be as much as we human beings, with our finite intelligence, will ever know). It is my impression that we Freethinkers are apt to glorify unbelief at the expense of a critical openness of mind. Thus there is a tendency (I will not put it at more than that) for our profession of unbelief to become somewhat dogmatic.

Now Freethought should be synonymous with freedom of thought. Nothing should be exempted from liability to criticism and inquiry, and we ought to be prepared, if need should be, to surrender our own cherished convictions if they are proved wanting at the bar of reason. For indeed, though we be, we are still searchers for truth, voyagers on a boundless sea of speculation and conjecture, explorers of uncharted regions of thought.

"If anyone is able to convict me of error," wrote Marcus Aurelius in his ever-famous book of *Meditations*, "I will gladly change. For I seek after truth by which man was never injured. The injury lies in remaining constant to self-deception and ignorance."

That, I feel, is the spirit in which we should move. The absence of dogma, the refusal to harbour gross preconceptions and prejudices, is the true liberality of mind, from which springs the rare fruit of high civilisation: toleration and freedom of expression, so necessary for the growth of enlightened sentiment and for notable leaps in thought.

Writing nearly a hundred years ago, John Stuart Mill, who had "not thrown off religious belief, but never had it," said in his classic essay *On Liberty*: "If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and that one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing mankind."

I should like to think that if Freethinking men and women ever constituted the majority, they would be so imbued with the idea of freedom of expression that they would firmly resist every temptation to impose upon others conformity to their views, and, while dis-establishing the national Church, would in fact permit the fullest freedom of corporate worship to those desiring to worship.

If, as we advocates of Freethought hold, supernatural beliefs and values are false, they ought not, on principle, to be suppressed in any circumstances: that would be the way of tyranny. This may be how religionists have frequently acted in the past towards those who did not conform to their doctrines and standards; but that would be no excuse for Freethinkers carrying out a policy of suppression from the other side—even in the interests of truth. So at least I think.

Perhaps the idea of coercing others to abandon religious superstitions seems alien and even absurd as applied to those who, through history, so far from being the persecutors have indeed been the persecuted. And yet unsleeping vigilance is necessary even in the most progressive of movements; for persecution of some kind becomes an all too natural expedient with men in a majority who feel themselves possessors of great truth. And my plea here is that our minds ought, in the general interest, and for the sake of our fuller personal development, to be kept broadly yet critically open. As I have said, I consider that our attitude of mind is ultimately more important than the inferences we draw. It is upon this attitude of mind that one's intellectual maturity—or liberality of intellect—is to be judged.

In the long run, education, by which enlightenment is obtained, understanding gained, and powers of analysis developed, may safely be relied upon to complete the necessary work of demolishing encumbering and unscientific beliefs. John Milton's words are worthy of citation: "Let truth and falsehood grapple. Whoever knew of truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter?"

Vashti

By LESLIE HANGER

(Suggested by the comments of Thomas Paine on the Book of Esther.)

THEY came to Vashti the Queen and said, "The King has commanded us to bring you before him, that he may show your beauty to the Princes and to the people." With the royal crown they knelt before her.

Vashti arose and, stepping forward, replied, "For seven days the King has feasted and made merry; no doubt he and all his company are drunk. Now he would have me show for a show for the delectation of the drunkards. Am I a horse from his stables, that I should be thus paraded to be appraised like an animal in the market place? Go, tell the King what I say."

The women of the Queen were afraid when they heard these words, and begged her to obey the King for fear of his anger. Vashti refused, saying, "What value has a gold crown if it be worn by a slave?" And she repeated, "Go, tell the King what I say."

When the King heard what Vashti had said his wrath knew no bounds, and he resolved that she should come no more before him, and that her royal estate should be given to another. He commanded that it be decreed and published among the people that Vashti should be Queen no longer, but should be given as a slave to the lowest and meanest man in the kingdom, so that from being the highest and most honoured among women Vashti was to become the least and most despised.

Then they carried Vashti into the outer courtyard and took the rings from her fingers and stripped the jewels from about her throat and the rich bracelets from her arms. The golden girdle from her waist was broken, the golden headdress pulled from her head, and all her silken garments ripped to shreds.

The gates of the courtyard were opened, and Vashti was thrust out into the street with a herald to go before to proclaim her crime, and men with whips to see the King's commands obeyed. The people in the streets jeered and mocked her, crying, "See how she obeys!" for they delighted to see those who are on high brought low, and those whom they have honoured, dishonoured.

Vashti was brought out of the city and up into the mountains, and there they came to a rude hut, the dwelling place of a peasant who tilled the stony hillside. So poor was he that he had neither wife nor slave nor beast of burden to help him in his toil.

The herald commanded the peasant to come forward and take Vashti, for it was the King's will that she should be bound to him, to live and labour with him. The peasant replied, "Who am I that I should be so honoured? My life here on the bare mountain is such that I ask no one to share it with me."

"It is the King's command," replied the herald, "that you take this woman, and she is bound to you by royal decree."

So Vashti stayed with the peasant and laboured on the mountainside and toiled in his hut. And she who had known every luxury and pleasure came to know every hardship and sorrow, so that even the slaves despised her.

Then said the peasant to Vashti, "Forgive me, for it was not of my seeking that I should be an instrument in your misfortune."

"Who am I to forgive?" replied Vashti. "For I who was the highest in the land, am now the lowest, and my word is nothing."

"They say that another is now installed in your place and that she now wears the crown and receives the honours which were once yours."

"She is indeed fortunate to be so honoured by the King," said Vashti. "But ten times more fortunate must she be to retain that honour. She must be constantly on the watch to please the King, for one word of his displeasure may destroy her. She must plot to advance her friends and stake her life against those of her enemies. She must go ever as one with a dagger in her hand, fearing a dagger in her back. When in one moment of pride I threw away the pleasures of the palace, that dagger I also cast aside. If I rejected a crown I also rejected a man who valued me no higher than a sow in a sty. Here on the mountainside I must labour, but I labour on equality with you, who value me on my own merits and respect me as your co-partner. Here, my friends are the spring sunshine and the fruitful rain, my enemies the wild storm and summer drought. If I regret the luxury I have left, I also remember the golden chains which bound me; if my hands are now broken with toil, I reflect that my heart is whole."

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This Believing World

Nothing could be more instructive for Freethinkers than to compare two B.B.C. broadcasts recently—one by Canon Demant on "The Practice of the Presence of God"; the other by Professor Malalasekera on "The Buddha and his Message." They could have easily been exchanged for wherever the Canon used God and Jesus, the Professor used Buddha, and all one had to do was either to follow God and Jesus, or to follow Buddha to achieve the highest in life. Just as the Canon confidently referred to the stories in the Gospels about Jesus as being absolutely true—were they not in the New Testament?—so the Professor related a number of the stories about Buddha as if they also were "Gospel truth." And there is not really any evidence worth a hoot, let alone two, that there ever was a Jesus any more than a Buddha. Both are mythical as far as the wonderful stories related of them are concerned. But, of course, the B.B.C. would never allow that to be broadcast.

Believers in the Design Argument will—alas—never refer to the Presidential Address of the British Association given by Sir Edward Appleton the other day. His remarks about the Milky Way and the stars the light from which takes hundreds of millions of light years to reach us have not the beautiful simplicity of Holy Writ—"He made the stars also"—a simplicity which all Christians rejoice in as infallible proof of a Beneficent Creator of all things. We wonder what those scientists who always attend Divine Service specially got up for them by the Church will think of this Address as they reverently sing hymns and bow humbly to God Almighty? And particularly what will they think of Almighty God being so completely left out by Sir Edward in the scheme of things? And what will the Lord himself think?

One delightful quality shared by most of the early Christians was a strong disinclination to wash. Even Jesus indignantly refused to wash his hands when invited to dine with a Pharisee. So we are not surprised to find that the Wanstead-Woodford Hermitage Estate has refused any washing to be hung out on a Sunday. Even if the harassed housewife finds Sunday the only day on which she can do the week's washing, she must not allow the tender feelings of other horrified Christians to be lacerated by the sight of shirts and smalls drying on the Lord's Day. To say nothing of the Lord's own feelings.

Believers in Faith Healing by "Spirit" Guides and Doctors will not be asked to explain the case of young Malcolm McAlpine who was given two hours to live by doctors after being hurt in an explosion. As Sir M. McAlpine, 55 years afterwards, he has just celebrated his Golden Wedding. If only one of the 76,930 Faith Healers we have now had taken his case in hand 55 years ago, what a wonderful boost Spiritualism might have received these days by believers in Faith Healing. And what a pity not one of them will explain how Sir Malcolm survived without the aid of Spirit Guides.

Of all the footling and futile discussions staged by the B.B.C. Third Programme, we should think the silliest was that between the two Oxford Professors, Price and Hampshire. The subject was "Psychical Phenomena"—which means to most people "survival" and not as they carefully debated "E.S.P." or "Telepathy." Prof. Price is a spiritualist and a thorough believer in "psychical phenomena" and should have made it clear he believed in "spirits" and why.

On the other hand, Prof. Hampshire should have vigorously contested this belief and he ought to have pointed out quite clearly why he did not believe in "spooks." Both Professors seemed quite afraid of the subject and afraid of saying so, in no unmeasured terms. They even seemed afraid of hinting that there was such a thing as "Spiritualism." But it would be interesting to learn from the B.B.C. why these two Professors were chosen to debate at all? Why not get a complete believer and a complete unbeliever?

Compulsory Education

How nice it is to know that we
Are paying through the nose
To teach the kids their ABC—
Or so we did suppose.

But now we know the truth indeed
(They're not the only fools!)
We've sacrificed the homes we need
To build their super-schools!

Why should the little dears read books?
Just teach 'em how to cosh,
To smash and grab (the little crooks!)
And how to swear, by gosh!

Three million morons without brains—
(So useful in a war!)
And they can always dig the drains
And earn six quid or more.

The moral, dears, is very plain—
You'll never make a dime
By working with your little brain—
And thinking's waste of time!

—W. H. WOOL

(News item.—It is estimated that in Britain to-day there are three million adults with the reading ability of a child of nine or less.)

Roman Catholic Learning

There was the literature of Greece and Rome, which the monks not only preserved, but even occasionally copied. But what could that avail such readers as they? So far from recognising the merit of the ancient writers, they were unable to feel even the beauties of their style, and they trembled at the boldness of their inquiries. At the first glimpse of the light, their eyes were blinded. They never turned the leaves of a pagan author without standing aghast at the risk they were running, and they were in constant fear, lest by imbibing any of his opinions, they should involve themselves in a deadly sin. The result was that they willingly laid aside the great masterpieces of antiquity; and in their place they substituted those wretched compilations which corrupted their taste, increased their credulity, strengthened their errors, and prolonged the ignorance of Europe, by embodying in separate superstition in a written and accessible form, thus perpetuating its influence, and enabling it to enfeeble the understanding even of a distant posterity.—(Buckle: *History of Civilisation*.—Ed. 1904, p. 154.)

Freethought

I told you at the outset that you are the last Court of Appeal on all questions affecting the liberty of the press and the right of free speech and Freethought. When I say Freethought, I do not refer to specific doctrines that may pass under that name, but I refer to the great right of Freethought, that Freethought which is neither low as a cottage nor lofty as a pyramid, but is like the soaring azure vault of heaven, which over-arches both with equal ease. I ask you to affirm the liberty of the press, to show by your verdict that you are prepared to give to others the same freedom as you claim for yourselves. I ask you not to be misled by the statements that have been thrown out by the prosecution, not to be misled by the authority and influence of the mighty and rich Corporation which commenced the action, has found the money for it, and whose very solicitor was bound over to prosecute.—G. W. FOOTE (at his trial, 1883).

THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

Owing to the absence of the Editor, the usual Notes and News are suspended this week. Mr. Ridley is representing the N.S.S. at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers in Brussels.

A. D. CORRICK.—We think Bradlaugh's *Plea for Atheism* is out of print. Why not contact its publishers, Messrs. Watts & Co.? The FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 11 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

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, 7-20 p.m.: H. DAY and A. H. WHARRAD.

Kepton Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. BARKER and 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, a Lecture.

North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Every Sunday from 1 p.m. onwards: Messrs. O'NEILL, CLEAVER, WOOD, and other speakers.

Clayton's Lectures.—Friday, September 18, 7-30 p.m., Worsborough; Sunday, September 20, 3-15 p.m., Blackburn Market; 7 p.m., Accrington Market.

INDOOR

Junior Discussion Group, South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, September 18, 7-15 p.m.: H. J. SCHONFIELD, "Daring to be a World Citizen."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, September 20, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Decay of English Culture."

Our British Israelites

By H. CUTNER

HOW very necessary is a journal like *The Freethinker* is impressed upon me when reading some letters sent by readers—especially on the Bible. A Freethinker will write to say he has always disbelieved in the Bible, but has lately come across someone with a pamphlet which seems "feasible," and which he cannot answer.

One feasible pamphlet is *Evidences For the Truth of the Bible*, by Ben J. Allen, who is a British Israelite. I should have thought anybody with Foote's *Bible Handbook* could have asked Mr. Allen and his followers more questions in ten minutes than the whole of the British Israelites could answer in a year; for indeed I have rarely read such a lot of ignorance and credulity even in a "Christian Evidence" pamphlet. Mr. Allen proves the truth of the Bible by the Bible. It must be true, he says, because it's in the Bible itself, or Jesus Christ believed it, or his apostles. "We are," he loftily insists, "distinctly told in the Bible, and have it confirmed by Jesus Christ himself . . ."—and that settles the Bible must, therefore, be true.

We all know that the Bible certainly is responsible for more aberrations of the human intellect than any other book, and I do not know anything which could be much sadder than British Israelitism. The gentlemen and ladies who believe in its tenets, while scorning the idea of being called Jews, are proud of being known as Israelites. They

claim that they are the direct descendants of the Ten Lost Tribes, or at least, one or more of them. Whichever it was, or whichever they were, they came into Europe and were known as the Sons of Isaac, or Isaac's Sons, or "Sacksons," or Saxons; and as the English people are Saxons, they must be Israelites. They are not Jews because Isaac wasn't a Jew; in fact, there were no Jews before Judah who, in the eyes of a British Israelite, is responsible for all the Jews now in the world.

Moreover, God Almighty constantly makes it clear in his Holy Word that there is a distinction between Jews and Israelites. Jews are not allowed to eat pork, but all Israelites can if they want to, and so on. If any reader can get hold of a learned British Israelite with a Bible, there is simply no end to the fun he can enjoy getting to know how the good Lord distinguishes the Jew from the Israelite.

Now, if there is one thing which emerges from the study of the Bible, it is that the inhabitants of Judea must have been a brown race—like the Arabs. The ancient Jews and Israelites were certainly not white men like Europeans. If ever there were any Israelites, they were brown in colour like the Arabs now.

In a book which I hope to deal with lengthily one day, *Jesus in Heaven on Earth*, written by a Muslim, Mr. A. K. N. Ahmad, who claims that Jesus did not die on the Cross but escaped and died in India, where his tomb can still be seen, the author deals at great length with a profusion of authorities and with proofs that the Ten Lost Tribes became Afghans and the natives of Kashmir. They are, of course, all brown, as they would be naturally if they really were descended from Israel. But our British Israelites are just as certain that the same tribes did not go to Afghanistan and Kashmir. Instead, they went into Germany near the river Elbe and, like a flash, they lost their colour and became blonde Aryans—fair skin and golden or blonde hair. For no one would have the impudence to say that the British people were not white.

Mr. Allen believes every word in the Bible. It would be useless to tell him—as it would indeed be useless to tell Mr. Ahmad—that if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, never existed, but are mere names in a book of legends and myths, there could never have been any Lost Tribes of Israel, and therefore all the British Israelite edifice falls to the ground. If Mr. Ahmad is right about the Afghans then Mr. Allen is wrong about the British Israelites. But if there were no Israelites at all, then both are wrong.

Of course, Palestine was inhabited not only by different conquering tribes but, no doubt, always by a remnant of its original inhabitants. Who all these people were is a subject for historical inquiry, and we may find out one day. But the one thing certain now is that the fantastic story in the Bible about the origin of the Jews and Israelites is just fiction. At the moment, there are Jews, like Christians, of every colour. And just as there is no Christian race, so there is no Jewish race.

Mr. Allen, apart from his British Israelite beliefs, makes any number of statements about the Bible which were long ago demolished, not only by unbelievers, but by Christians themselves. Let me deal with one. He spends many pages of his pamphlet to prove that "Our Authorised Version of the Old Testament is a true descendant of the Scriptures in use long before Christ." The truth is that the Authorised Version is an extremely faulty translation, and if the Massoretic Hebrew text (c. 500 A.D.) is the "original," then it (the A.V.) has had to be superseded by the Revised Version in the interests of accuracy—and even then the R.V. is full of mistakes.

The Authorised Version is a "revision" of the older translations, and its "authors" had to make as few

changes as possible. These older translations were made either from the Latin version known as the Vulgate, or from the Dutch, that is, the German, mostly from Luther. The reason for this is that very few people, when the A.V. was made, knew Hebrew well enough to make a direct translation. And no one knows what text of Hebrew Jerome had in front of him when he was at work on the version later known as the Vulgate. He knew very little Hebrew himself, and did little more than revise the "Old

Latin text" which, as far as we can gather, was made from the Septuagint—that is, from a Greek text which might have been the original Septuagint, or even the original Old Testament, for nobody knows. The upshot of all this is that the A.V. is not a "true" descendant of anything we really know something positive about.

To put the matter briefly, the "evidences" for the truth of the Bible do not exist. And the scholars in the Christian Church know this quite well.

A Scientist on Religion

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

THE claim that the services available to suffering humanity in hospitals derive from Christianity and are still a Christian monopoly is regularly used by the defenders of that faith when driven into a corner by unbelievers in discussion or debate. This, to me, makes a book which Sir Ernest Kennaway, F.R.S., has written, entitled *Some Religious Illusions in Art, Literature and Experience*, particularly interesting and significant. Indeed, I think it a pity that the modesty of the author has led to the omission of details of his life's work from the book. For the outstanding nature of his achievements in pathological research has gained for him world-wide recognition and many distinctions, but the book with which I am dealing shows that he is far from being a Christian, orthodox or otherwise.

The author tells us that the earliest inspiration of his book came from his experience as a small boy, when his mother was giving him some preliminary religious instruction before setting off for the Sunday service in the Cathedral. She was emphasising some truth or other which appeared to be the exclusive property of the Church of England. "Suddenly the idea flashed upon me—how strange it is that we, sitting in this drawing-room, in Exeter, are members of a comparatively small body, among all the host of mankind, which is right, and everybody else is wrong." Actually it must have been nearly sixty years after this incident that he wrote the work in which he relates it, for he was born in 1881 and the book was not published until 1953, by Watts & Co., at 10s. 6d.

At first glance it appears unusual as an example of Free-thought literature, for the author makes use of quite a number of plates in colour and monochrome to demonstrate the literal acceptance by Christendom in the past of stories that modern apologists suggest should be taken for allegory. Sir Ernest will have none of this, insisting that statements mean what they say, or, at any rate, ought to mean something. In consequence when, in his final chapter, he considers the question of a new statement of belief by the Church, he puts forward requirements which are unlikely to encourage Church leaders to hurry up in producing such a restatement.

I do not wish to imply that his book is more than a mild and good-tempered statement of a scientist's criticism of beliefs that he finds to be honoured by lip-service to-day in a social environment in which they have no relevance. Here is not the challenging blasphemy of a Foote or the devastating irony of a Cohen, but a few quotations will show that the author knows how to deliver shrewd knocks against the ideas he calls in question.

Of Stonehenge he comments: "The almost incredible labour which must have been devoted to the collection, dressing and erection of these stones, of which some were brought from South Wales, indicates an immensely powerful religious impulse. No doubt the votaries of that time were assured that their religion was the only true one, and that its "cardinal verities" were established for all mankind for ever. Yet after less than 4,000 years we know

almost nothing of this religion, except that it was in some cases concerned with the seasonal changes indicated by the position of the sun."

I liked his story of his going into a public library and asking the girl in charge for the *Koran*. After some difficulty she managed to get the name right, and then asked: "But who is it by?" There is also a dryness of wit in his reference to the Trinity, which, he says, "has been compared to an equilateral triangle; anyone who derives any spiritual enlightenment from this barren geometrical analogy is fortunate."

Two very respectable institutions get a sharp rap when he writes: "The purely competitive attitude of the Church of England to other religions is shown very clearly when the British Broadcasting Corporation cannot allow even a ten-minute talk on Buddhism (originally a non-proselytising religion, by the way) without inserting a eulogy of Jesus."

Regarding the hereafter, he speaks as a scientist: "Those who wish to believe in a future and better life would do best to believe as they wish, and not to seek for evidence. They should follow the purely anti-scientific teaching of Christ expressed in the words, 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.'" His personal view is given in a passage that struck me as being as impressive as it is simple: "In the absence of any evidence for survival after death, the truest analogy to the life of a man seems to be the life of a wave of the sea. However powerful, however beautiful, the wave in its full development may be, it reaches at last the fatal shore, and after some moments of turmoil is merged in the ocean from which it arose; other waves will be formed from this ocean, but the individual life of that wave is lost, irrevocably and for ever."

As I said at the start, the book gives little indication of what our septuagenarian exposé of religious nonsense has been doing for the larger part of his life. A reference to *Who's Who*, *Burke* and *The Medical Directory* informs us that his career has been a fruitful one in medical research, that he has been awarded prizes, medals, degrees and fellowships galore, that he is Professor Emeritus of Experimental Pathology of London University, Honorary Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine, Honorary Member of the American Association for Cancer Research, late Director of the Chester Beatty Research Institute at the Royal Cancer Hospital, and still on the active list in the Department of Pathology at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. To me, this information gives added significance to his book. It is all too rare for men who have achieved distinction in medical research for the benefit of their fellows to speak and write freely against religious beliefs and assumptions, and Sir Ernest Kennaway merits our thanks for his personal testimony against "the amazing torrent of books on theological and devotional subjects to which he draws attention in the opening sentence of his useful book."

The Evans Case

By C. H. NORMAN

THERE are ominous signs that attempts are going to be made to assert that, as the statements of Christie and Evans on the subject of the deaths of Mrs. Evans and her child are so conflicting it is useless to reopen the matter; so that, presumably, the judges and the Home Office will be able to continue their assertion for another 50 years that no innocent person could be executed under English administration of the criminal law in capital cases!

It is well to remember the exact words of Lord Buckmaster giving evidence before the Barr Committee on Capital Punishment: "When people say that no innocent man is ever hanged, I should like to know what is the authority for any such statement at all. All they can mean by that is that a man is hanged in accordance with the verdict of the jury and that the verdict of the jury is an infallible thing"—which is an absurdity. Lord Buckmaster then proceeded to recite some verdicts of juries in capital cases which had been proven wrong. Mr. D. N. Pritt, O.C., in testifying before the same Committee, declared, speaking of the civil cases in which he had been engaged, that "the decisions in perhaps one-third of them are wrong."

The present writer was informed by the two greatest common lawyers of their time that 35 per cent. of the decisions in the cases they had been engaged in were certainly miscarriages of justice, and the two greatest equity lawyers of their time informed him to the same effect.

A prisoner on a capital charge has everything heavily weighted against him when he appears in the dock to take trial. He has been in prison for some weeks, as bail is never allowed on a capital charge. In the Gutteridge case, the prisoner, Kennedy, was examined continuously from 9 a.m. till 5 a.m. the next morning. The jury who are trying him know that he has been brought before them because the Public Prosecutor is of the opinion that he is a murderer. The late Lord Darling, no sentimentalist, in comparing the situation of a prisoner and a defendant in a civil case, put the matter thus: "No defendant is brought up through a hole in the floor; he is not surrounded by a barrier, nor guarded by a keeper of thieves; he is not made to stand up alone while his latest actions are being judged; and his latest address is not presumably the gaol of his county" (*Scintilla Juris*, p. 44). It is really nonsense to assert, in these circumstances, that a prisoner on a capital charge is on an equality with the prosecution in conducting his defence. In the one case, the whole resources of the country are behind the prosecution: in the case of the defence, unless the funds are provided by newspapers (a frequent and objectionable practice), the resources are generally pitifully small. In the case of Mrs. Bryant, who was without resources, the county authorities refused the defence any funds by which they could have called rebutting scientific evidence in an alleged poison case.

In the Evans' case, the issue was clearly raised at the trial before Mr. Justice Lewis that the leading witness for the Crown had murdered Mrs. Evans and probably had murdered her baby. Mr. Justice Lewis showed plainly his distaste for this line of defence by his interruptions and by summing up to the jury. There is one passage in the circumstances which has recoiled with deadly effect in present circumstances, namely, the passage in which the judge told the jury that whoever murdered the child murdered the mother; that, as Christie had no motive in murdering the child, the defence that Christie had murdered Mrs. Evans could not be true. How does that reasoning stand now that it is known that Evans' defence that Christie was a murderer was a true defence on Christie's admissions at

his own trial? The remarkable part of the judgment of Lord Goddard in the Court of Criminal Appeal is that he never mentioned the fact that Evans had set up the defence that Christie was a murderer. Indeed, his whole reasoning is fantastic and fallacious compared with the facts as known to-day. It is noteworthy that his senior colleague was Mr. Justice Humphreys, a gentleman very prone to enlighten the public on various occasions on the impeccable character of English criminal justice!

The gravity of the Evans case, however, lies in an area which the authorities have carefully avoided so far. If Evans' story had been believed at his original trial or if the Court of Criminal Appeal had not rejected his appeal, many of the women admittedly murdered by Christie would have been alive to-day. If Evans' story had been accepted, the authorities would have been compelled to make close inquiry into the nature of Christie's activities. At that time, he had committed two murders apart from that of Mrs. Evans. It is an astounding feature of this case that, though the leading witness for the prosecution was accused of murder, no investigations seem to have been directed after the conviction by the authorities into this allegation. The whole thing was dismissed, apparently, as an hallucination by Evans, so the chance was missed of preventing Christie continuing his deadly activities for three more years. The responsibility for this result rests, fairly and squarely, on the trial judge, Mr. Justice Lewis, on the judges of the Court of Criminal Appeal, on the department of the Public Prosecutor, on Scotland Yard, and on the Home Department.

No Room at the Inn

One result of the French strike wave is the "No Vacancies" sign now making its appearance at many British resorts.—*Daily News*.

In a clean white shirt, but minus socks,
Packed neatly in a cedar box,
Lord Bishop—free of earthly sin—
Waits for God to let him in.
"Look, Peter, here's another cove
Who wants a lodging here, by Jove!"
"Dear God," said Peter looking sharp,
"We're out of wings, and not one harp!"
"Well, order some and have 'em sent
C.O.D., less ten per cent.
I'd better ring up Cousin Nick's—
Is that you, Lucy? How's the Styx?
Oh, good. But look, old boy, can you
Put up a guest? Eh? A day or two.
Ah, thanks. I'll send him right away.
I'll do the same for you one day.
Hey! Peter, ring the porter's bell
And have this guest wheeled off to Hell."
"To Hell? But God, this bloke's a Bish.
Who spends each Friday eating fish."
"Oh, well, get him a fishing-rod.
I thought he lived on lamb," said God.

JOHN O'HARE.

TRUE STORY

Jill's freethinking parents withdrew her from religious observances and instruction. After a while another child at her school said to her, "You are wicked, not believing in God. Why, He spoke to me last night." Which led Jill to inquire, "Wouldn't it have been better if he had spoken to me?"

Correspondence

THE HONESTY OF GEORGE ORWELL

SIR,—Does Mr. King think this an example of the "uncompromising honesty" that he attributes to George Orwell. Some years ago George Orwell wrote in *The Tribune* a doggerel criticism of pacifism and conscientious objectors, which he was quite entitled to do. It was a criticism of the writing of some other person. One part of the doggerel consisted of a violent attack on the writer because he did not give his proper name. I wrote a letter to *The Tribune* pointing out how strange this criticism was, in that the real name of George Orwell was Eric Blair, and that he had always tried to conceal his real identity under his pseudonym. The letter was not published at the request of George Orwell himself. Incidentally, though Animal Farm is an excellent and amusing satire, can one say that honesty of purpose is its basis: surely it is propaganda writing of the most extreme form?—Yours, etc.,

C. H. NORMAN.

THE KOREAN WAR

SIR,—The U.S.A. and Allies in Korea were against N. Koreans, some Chinese, some Russians, and former had much material from the latter two. As you say, in a three years war U.S.A., plus Allies, were unable to drive the Chinese out of Korea, but you omit the help they had, as mentioned above. I think the reason of the war ending as it has, presuming it is at an end, which seems to me to be doubtful, was that U.S.A. and Allies did not allow their airmen to follow the enemy's planes to their homes, wherever those were, and did not use all the war material they possessed, such as atomic or hydrogen bombs of various sorts and sizes and rockets.

You could truthfully say this did not happen 50 years ago, instead of "this would not have happened 50 years ago."—Yours, etc.,

C. J. LITTLE.

PS.—I wonder why people continue to talk of immortality. Existing five thousand million years would not prove it.—C.J.L.

PSS.—No doubt you know of the report in *Telegraph* about the at present unknown trigger that acted upon P.E.N. (protons, electrons and neutrons) then existing; altering the four into present state of affairs is, to me, chaotic. —C.J.L.

SEX AND CHRISTIANITY

SIR,—Congratulations on your very excellent editorial notes on the Kinsey Report on the Human Female. It comes as a welcome contrast to the attitude of such papers as the *Daily Express* and the opinions of John Gordon.

The whole subject needs much closer study, particularly in relation to British Law. Cosh boys and gangsters may receive five, eight or even ten years for their crimes, but it fell to a clergyman to be awarded fifteen years for "ruining the lives" of a number of his choir boys. On the subject of sex the law is vicious and barbaric and badly needs revision. One has only to read of the cases occurring weekly when, at the very mention of the word, judge, counsel and court are seen to brandish ignorance aloft as the supposed symbol of purity.

I enclose herewith a cutting taken from the *News of the World* some months ago. Although I wrote to the newspaper in an attempt to find out more about the case, explaining my motives, I was not successful. I am by no means ignorant of these matters and, at one time, spent over three years working as a mental nurse, so that I have seen much that is regarded as "vice," yet I cannot imagine any action which warrants a sentence of eight years! And it is no easy task, it would seem, to find out.

Another case which comes to my mind concerns a boy of 18 who was tried for having intercourse with a girl of 15. Although the girl was known as "the prostitute of the camp" (where many families including the girl and the accused lived) and his employers gave him an excellent character, the judge remarked there was "too much of this sort of thing" and handed out three years Borstal! This boy's life has been ruined because he responded to a very human urge (like, it would seem, many others) contrary to the strict letter of an ill-made law.

I remember also the comments of a judge dealing with a number of boys who had had intercourse with girls under age (and were by no means solely to blame) against the law, but not, apparently, against their all too natural inclinations. Referring to them as "filthy little beasts" he doubted the wisdom of allowing them to go free amongst "decent boys" to "contaminate them." Have these judges forgotten their own school days and the sexual habits and conversations of those times?

However we may pride ourselves on our judicial system, when it comes to sex it is biased and a disgrace. Such, one can only think, arises from the curse of ascetic Christianity (or, perhaps, Churchianity) which has darkened the earth for the past two thousand years.

More power to *The Freethinker*, or any other publication which can help to banish for ever this stupid adulation of dangerous ignorance.—Yours, etc.,
F. CLIVE ROSS.

AN ALTERNATIVE TO RELIGION

SIR,—I have recently in an article and a letter published in *The Freethinker* made two suggestions:

(1) That as an alternative to disestablishment and disendowment of the C. of E. (which is merely a department of State, created by statute) we might find it advantageous to demand instead that it be made a purely cultural and welfare body, without any religious test, and recruiting social science students instead of divinity students.

(2) That there may be advantages in organising freethought as a "church" with a naturalist creed, and a syllabus designed to give a brief outline of our philosophy and ethics.

Mr. W. E. Huxley has seen fit to strongly criticise both article and letter on what appear to me to be merely sentimental grounds. Because, as secularists, we are opposed to the Christian church, to religious dogma, and to a supernaturalist creed, we oppose reasons Mr. Huxley, be opposed to any church, dogma, and creed. I suggest this is merely bad reasoning. Because one opposes let us say, the Conservative Party and the Communist Party, one therefore committed to opposing the use of the word "party" at all by one's own political kin? I wish Mr. Huxley would distinguish between what is essential to Secularism and what is merely accidental historical association. I also wish he would distinguish between rhetoric and logic. I believe naturalism can be reasonably maintained and is consistent with the facts, but it is naturalism I believe in, not truth or reason. Similarly it is supernaturalism I am opposed to and not "faith" or "dogma" as such. I have been told I am a most "dogmatic" person myself and, I have no doubt, with truth.

I beg Mr. Huxley, if he must attack me, to please attack my proposal as a whole and as I meant it, and not merely object to the language I express myself in.—Yours, etc.,

JAMES R. HOWES

TRUTH IS STRANGER THAN FICTION

SIR,—The Peace Talks in Korea show that Godless Russia and Comrade Vyshinsky are not Abyssinia and Negus. Truth is stranger than fiction. Godless Russian Communism is a power created by Christian Anglo-Saxon diplomats due to the political combinations. Orthodox Russian Emperor and King of all orthodox Christians on this planet, Nicholas II, was de-throned under leadership of British diplomat. After Revolution or First Republican Government in Russia was overthrown, Comrade Lenin, sent to Russia by German Kaiser's diplomat, Lenin introduced Communism with all horrors in Russia. Foreign power was necessary to get rid of Christian monarch in medieval Holy Russia, otherwise the Revolution and Communism were impossible. Many countries, including Anglo-Saxon countries, used Soviet Russia in their own political and economical combinations, even hurting each other. Godless Russia, with her Soviet capitalism, many slaves, developing industry and growing military power, was menace for all Christianity and capital in hands of private owners. Christian Anglo-Saxon diplomats put in power Adolf Hitler, who promised to destroy Russian Communism, even if he was already known as anti-Churchman. When Hitler fooled his own supporters and started his own business, Anglo-Saxon countries gave all needed aid to old, good gentleman Uncle Joe, called Comrade Stalin alias Djughashvili. Joe was necessary to destroy Adolf. Godless Adolf and Godless Joe saw that both of them were teased by Christian Anglo-Saxon diplomats, then both Godless men tried to find terms and understanding. Godless union was broken by Christian Anglo-Saxon diplomats, imposed by U.S. President, sometimes imitating Chaplain F. D. Roosevelt. In Teheran, Christian Anglo-Saxon diplomats, under leadership of President Roosevelt, started to sell to Godless Russia many Christian nations and countries. Clever Uncle Joe, Adolf and joined Anglo-Saxon side, giving all what Joe wanted and promising in future. Baltic countries did not fight with Allied Armies. They fought for their own freedom and independence against Russia. After the war, soldiers and policemen from Baltic countries were recognised as enemies, and many of them died by inhuman conditions in British concentration camps supervised by Christian British officers. Now how about Vatican? Heretic Anglo-Saxon diplomats joined anti-Vatican side during Civil War in Spain, annexed to Soviet Russia, and Catholic countries Poland, Lithuania, Chechia, Hungary, and many millions of Catholics in other satellites. In South America, Catholic people are very sorry to see their own motherland, Spain, ruined by heretic Anglo-Saxons supporting Communists in Spain during Civil War.—Yours, etc.,

K. LIDAKS