

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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ON August 27, 1953, a definitive Concordat was signed in the Vatican between the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand and the Spanish regime of General Franco on the other. This Concordat between these "High Contracting Parties" superseded the Concordat of 1850 which, though suspended by the Spanish Republican government that preceded, and was overthrown by Franco, had, otherwise, regulated the mutual relations of Rome and "The Most Catholic" Spanish Monarchy throughout the past century. The new Concordat was solemnly signed by, on the one part, the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs; on the other by the Papal Acting-Secretary of State, acting, respectively, on behalf of Pope Pius XII, and of General Franco as Head of the Spanish State.

"Our Most Beloved Son"

On the morrow of the Franco victory in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), the present Pope (1939—?) saluted the victorious General as "Our Most Beloved Son." In common with Conservative Europe in general the Pope evidently rejoiced at the downfall of the former Liberal Republic, not so much, probably, for what it was, but on account of what it might have led to—"The Spectre of Communism"; or even Anarchism, which, as Mr. Gerald Brennan has demonstrated in his brilliant book, *Spanish Labyrinth*, is the social outlook most congenial to Spaniards.

General Franco, for his part, was not ungrateful for the active assistance which the Pope had given to "His Most Beloved Son." One of the Caudillo's first actions was to readmit the Jesuits, whom the Spanish Republic, like its Swiss predecessor, had expelled on account of their intrigues against the State, and to restore their enormous wealth to the sons of Ignatius Loyola. Since when, the Catholic Church in Spain has been restored to the privileged position which it had held under the Spanish Monarchy. Indeed, in Franco's totalitarian State, the Church is probably more powerful than at any time since the palmy days of the Spanish Inquisition.

Spain's "Catholic Tradition"

The above state of things is recognised in the opening paragraphs of the recent Concordat which sets out "to regulate the relations between the High Contracting Parties in conformity with the Law of God and the Catholic Traditions of the Spanish Nation." Nor is there any doubt as to what Spain's "Catholic Traditions" amount to, concretely. "The Spanish State," summarises the French Catholic paper, *La Croix* ("The Cross"), reiterates in this document, the fundamental principles which it regards as essential for the prosperity of the family and nation; full recognition of Christian marriage (which includes prohibition of divorce—F. A. R.), the Christian education of youth, freedom for the (Catholic) Church to carry on its apostolic work." In return, the Spanish State is confirmed

in its traditional privileges, with the additional one, "never before accorded to a Catholic State," of the right of the Apostolic Nuncio, the Papal representative at Madrid, to annul marriages without any reference to Rome.

"Special prayers," declares our French summary, "for the State and for the Head of the State, are provided for in the Concordat." As has usually been the case since the

Concordat of Napoleon with the Catholic Church, the Head of the State is to be mentioned by name: "God Save Franco!"

Probably the most important clause in the Concordat is that which deals with the legal position of non-Catholic minorities in a Catholic State, such as

Spain. For this problem is, obviously, not confined to Spain.

Accordingly, in Article 6, we read: "The profession and practice of the (Roman) Catholic religion, which is the religion of the Spanish State, will enjoy legal protection. No one will be prosecuted for his religious beliefs or for the *private* (our italics—F. A. R.) exercise of his cult. *But no public display or propaganda of any other religion than the Roman Catholic one, will, henceforth, be permitted*" (our italics—F. A. R.). No wonder that the Concordat concludes by stating that, in addition to summarising the traditional relations of both parties, the Concordat represents "a model for the future relations of the Church with a Catholic State" (our italics—F. A. R.).

Spain and Toleration

Such is the pattern, 20th century style, of toleration as henceforth permitted by the Vatican which, to-day, claims to be the bulwark of democracy in the Western World. It is scarcely surprising that the Conservative French journal, *Monde* (August 29, 1953), comments on this section of the Concordat: "Protestant circles have accused some Spanish ecclesiastics of intolerance in religious matters. This self-same accusation can now also be brought against the signatories of such an agreement." "The leopard does not change its spots," nor, we may relevantly add, does the Church of Torquemada change its fundamental outlook!

Spain and the Assumption

According to our already quoted French contemporary, the influence of Spanish Catholicism also extends to Theology equally. It is well known that ever since the days when the Moors occupied Spain (711-1492 A.D.), the cult of the Virgin Mary has enjoyed a special distinction in Spain and, long before the recent proclamation by the present Pope of the dogma of the Assumption (1950), Spanish artists painted the Virgin's Assumption, as in the famous painting of Murillo. Now, *Monde* assures us: "In France the proclamation of the Dogma of the Assumption has been regarded as a concession to Spanish Catholicism, both in Spain itself and in Spanish America." That is, to the still mediaeval areas within the modern fold of the "Universal" Church.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Church of Christ and Franco

By F. A. RIDLEY

The Concordat and the Franco Regime

Monde concludes with the apt reflection that, "this Concordat will be widely regarded as a demonstration that the Papacy regards with favour tendencies by no means universally accepted in Catholic circles." It is clear that by such "tendencies," our French contemporary implies support by the Vatican for Fascism in the political sphere and, in particular, support for the Franco regime, that still mediaevalist regime which owes its existence to the military support of Fascism and to the "spiritual" backing of the Vatican.

The Concordat can, in fact, only strengthen and make permanent the Fascist regime, and thus makes inevitable

an ultimately violent solution of the "Spanish question," the co-existence of Mediaeval Spain in Modern Europe. At present, however, Franco enjoys the favour of both "God and Mammon," of the Vatican and of the Almighty Dollar! How long this will last we do not know. Meanwhile, however, both Freethinkers and Protestants had better steer clear of Spain!

FOOTNOTE.—The Roman Tribunal of the Rota has, of course, no power to "divorce" anyone since "divorce" is not recognised by the Church. What it does is to declare that the marriage in question was not properly contracted in the first instance. Incidentally, Henry VIII did not seek a "divorce," but an annulment from Catherine of Aragon on the ground that, legally, she had been married to his dead brother.

The Horrors of Christmas

By C. G. L. DU CANN

JUSTICE has never been done to the horrors of our English Christmas—not even by dismayed foreigners! It probably never will be. Let me try to repair the omission.

Charles Dickens—that great and good man, of whom his biographers are not worthy—did his best. He painted some truly terrible pictures of English orgies in food, drink and sentimentality. These caricatures, larger than life and more real than reality, as Art often is, so delighted the average Englishman that Christmas Day was long in danger of becoming the day of Charles Dickens, rather than the day of Jesus Christ. Indeed, to this very time, most English folk—if the vulgar truth may be told—much prefer a truly Dickensian Christmas to a truly Christian one.

Since Dickens's day, Christmas in England has changed for the worse. It has grown more and more commercialised, more and more exploited for the ruthless fleecing of the unwary. Commerce has seized it from the Church. And commerce begins its Christmas not upon the Eve (as was traditional) but in the middle of the Advent period.

One of the horrid features of our English Christmas is the mass-bribery that we all pretend to like, and secretly hate as the expensive and loathsome nuisance that it is. By any other name than "Chris.mas boxes" or "Christmas gifts" this abomination would smell as corruptly as much of it does. There is everything to be said for gifts at all times between friends. But there is nothing to be said for so-called gifts which are disguised blackmail, secretly resented exactions which are parted with only because "One must, you know," or "It's expected because it's Christmas," or "Everybody does: what will people think of us if we don't?"

Even the young children—especially the children—learn the art of beggary and blackmail from their elders at this holy and happy time. Before the "Fourth Sunday in Advent" eagerly anticipative of "Something for nothing" (the modern English national motto) our youthful carol-singers besiege the front door. And what a carolling, it commonly is! Garbled words and tuneless voices b.d us hark the hair-oiled angels sing while shepherds flog their watch by night. This is no "Glory to God in the Highest." It is the satisfaction of greed at its lowest.

Another horror is the tradesman's Christmas card or calendar, which impudently usurped the place formerly sacred to private greetings. Once Christmas cards were for children only. Then childish adults adopted the childish pleasure until the fashion spread and "everybody" sent and received cards. A pleasant harmless custom! But the wily tradesman smelt an opportunity for advertisement; and now one is deluged by tradesmen putting themselves on an equality with their customers by sending them Christmas cards in the confident hope that the few who

resent the insolence will be out-numbered by those exclaiming "Thanks for the memory."

The Saturnalia of over-eating, over-drinking, over-smoking, over-sleeping and general infantile self-indulgence is too well-known to be worth commenting upon. One of its worst forms works itself out upon childhood, upon the pretence of giving the children "a good time," which generally means making them harmfully over-excited and temporarily destroying their health by stuffing them with wrong quantities and qualities of food. Lies about Santa Claus "if you are a good boy or girl" are not readily forgotten or forgiven by children. For even young children are harsh and realistic judges of the adults about them. Let us by all means eat, drink and be merry. Let the children have their stockings and Christmas trees and special pleasures. But moderation in anything enhances the enjoyment of it, and there is for most people, children and adults, too much Christmas about their Christmas for unalloyed pleasure.

It is but fair to notice that all these horrors are completely foreign to the realities of religion, and are in deadly opposition to the spirit of Jesus Christ.

Religion in general, and the Christian religion in particular, has no use for bribery, for insincere "gifts," for over-indulgence of the self. As Christians we are to deny ourselves, to give, not to the rich or our equals, but to the poor. Yet the Christian Churches (false as ever to their "Lord and Saviour" and his teachings) connive at, and even commend, these conventional Christmases. They seem to think them a compliment to Christ. But they are an affront to the spirit of Jesus and all true religions, as great an affront as the Christian warfare in Korea at Christmas is to the angelic declaration of "Peace on Earth, goodwill towards Men."

Arnold Bennett, another great and good man whom I am glad to have known in life, once wrote of Christmas as the feast of Saint Friend. It is not in general. It would be a very good thing if it were. More accurately, in modern England, it might be called the feast of Saint Bribe.

If you think about it, what is there in the story of the birth of Jesus Christ that his followers should rejoice about it even upon their own doctrines? True, many other baby boys, the Holy Innocents, were slaughtered as a first celebration of a new religion of bloodshed! Perhaps that is something to rejoice about. The proclamation of peace and goodwill was at once falsified and has been falsified ever since. Do we rejoice for that? The descent of a mortal god from Eternal Bliss in Heaven to the pains and tears and death of mortal life seems rather something to grieve over—even if it did profit us by purchasing our salvation!

Still, the convention is for joy and not sorrow. We must suppose that it is better to laugh than to weep, though

Jesus is not once recorded as ever laughing. Perhaps, like Lord Chesterfield, he thought it a vulgar habit. We moderns, however, have elevated laughter into a virtue; and even Lord Chesterfield permitted himself a well-bred smile. Let us laugh then at the horrors of Christmas (even if Jesus would not) or, at the least, permit ourselves "a well-bred

smile" over the ridiculous spectacle of the Christian English imagining they are celebrating the Birth of Christ when they are really celebrating no more than the birth of a break from their dead, dull, dreary, ordinary dailiness of rut and routine, the birth of merely a permitted chance to enjoy themselves.

Follow the Flag

By A. R. WILLIAMS

"IT'S going to be a beautiful afternoon for your pleasure," said Mrs. Carter to her son.

Noel made no reply, but somewhat sulkily continued his dinner.

"I wish I was a boy," smiled Mrs. Carter.

"I don't," growled Noel.

"But you are," laughed his father. "So you've no choice."

"No. If I had, I shouldn't go," said the lad resentfully.

"Contrary creature," said his older sister in her superior way. "I'm going with the big girls. We're pleased to help, so surely a small boy like you can enjoy yourself."

"Of course he will," cried his mother.

Mr. Carter added, "He's only showing off. When he gets there he'll be most eager to take part."

Noel coloured, but made no answer.

The occasion was some public function, presumably in connection with Royalty. Most likely it was a coronation.

Emily Carter arrayed herself in white muslin except for coloured ribbons.

Her mother said proudly, "You're lovely, Emmy. No girl'll look better."

Her daughter asked, "Where's Noel?"

"In the garden. Fetch him, Emmy, or he'll never be ready."

Out went Emily and called "Noel! Noel!" excitedly.

Noel sauntered into the back kitchen, grumbling "What a nuisance you women are."

"Hurry up and get washed," cried his mother impatiently.

"You are a dirty grub now."

"Why not?" asked Noel, aggrieved. "Why can't I play and enjoy myself?"

"If you don't make haste, and be less provoking, I'll..." exclaimed Mrs. Carter, raising a threatening hand.

Knowing his mother's blow would have about tickled an infant, Noel merely smiled sweetly at her.

Mrs. Carter smiled too. The minatory hand ruffled her son's brown curls as she said genially, "Hurry up, Noel darling. It's a pity for a boy like you to miss the treat. You needn't be ashamed of being seen."

Turned eleven years of age, Noel disdained help with his toilet. Washing with great particularity, he went upstairs faultlessly attired.

On the back of his head he placed his cap slightly awry.

He looked saucily innocent at his mother, and said "Say I'm a pretty boy, Mum."

"You're a bad lad," pronounced Mrs. Carter, her tone and fond countenance belying her words.

Emily had gone before this.

Meekly enduring a kiss from his mother, Noel walked out of the house, his head high, and just a little swagger in his actions.

Thus he arrived on the great open common, where the children had been told to assemble. Hundreds of them were there before Noel Carter, with a large sprinkling of adults, mostly teachers and clergy.

Having touched his cap to his schoolmaster, Noel found his associates.

Holy Innocents being a Church School, the Vicar and the Curate were present.

The latter cleric rushed to Noel panting "Oh, Carter, I've searched everywhere for you. I haven't enough flags to go round, but you must have one; you're the sort of boy who'll always carry the flag with credit."

The curate thrust the stick of a Union Jack into Noel's unwilling hand, and fled.

The other boys were moved to merriment. With the pole Noel butted them in the rear, or brushed girls' faces with the bunting, to say smiling, "Oh, I'm sorry."

By the time the schools sorted themselves out and the children formed into fours, Noel Carter tired of his plaything. There was a mile march behind a band before tea.

"I'm not going to carry this damn thing all the way," the boy muttered viciously.

Not far away was Puffy Haldon, as usual stolidly gazing at nothing. His pendulous cheeks were wider than his head. His dull eyes were often tearful. His mouth sagged open. Like his mind, his movements were slow.

Stepping to Haldon, Noel said sweetly: "Here, Puffy, take this. I know you want one," at the same time thrusting the Union Jack into his hands.

Puffy Haldon started, whispered "Thanks," clutched the stick, and an expression of delight came over his fat red foolish face. Almost tears of joy sprang into his eyes.

Rejoining his grinning pals, Noel said "That's the sort of kid who likes a flag. See now happy he is."

Puffy Haldon was gazing at the Union Jack, a rapt, nearly devout expression in his eyes as he held it aloft.

All the way to the Public Hall he bore the flag proudly, not waving it, but grasping the erect stick with both hands, as one who leads an army to triumph.

FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS

THE German Volksbund für Geistesfreiheit (People's League for Religious Freedom) held a well-attended congress at Ludwigshafen on the Rhine on October 3rd and 4th. The proceedings were opened by the President, Dr. G. von Frankenberg, followed by a report from Councillor Albert Heuer. After the election of the officers and executive committee for the following year, a resolution was carried to establish a World League for Religious Freedom which should unite the World Union of Freethinkers with the recently formed Humanist International, since it was regrettable that there should be a division of effort. Other speakers stressed the increasing intellectual dictatorship that existed in the German Federal Republic. A message from Prof. Albert Einstein was read as follows:—

"The conflict with the unchanging and prevailing majority of the unthinking and of those who make use of them is indeed hard and with no cheering prospects. But this conflict is necessary, for without it mankind would be still worse off. The struggle, however, brings together the champions of progress who form a natural elite."

Among those taking part were Walter Scheiss of Berne, president of the Swiss Freethought Union, and the vice-president, Walter Bärtschi of Olten. The proceedings were well reported both in the press and the radio. C. B. B.

This Believing World

Lourdes and Fatima, no longer hot news, have to be replaced by hook or crook, so we are not surprised to learn that "thousands of Sicilians fight their way daily to see the Crying Madonna on view in a street in Syracuse." This Madonna is a simple statue made of terra-cotta, and its owner saw tears streaming down its Holy cheeks—each tear having phenomenal healing powers. Naturally, to date, hundreds of people have been cured of incurable ailments, and we fancy if this statue were brought to England it would seriously interfere with the millions of cures regularly reported to have been performed by our own 57,963 Spiritualist healers. We often wonder whether a cure through the tear of a statue of the Virgin would be more lasting than one performed by a Spiritualist? What does the Vatican say?

There is nothing like a "new approach" to religion, and we are pleased to note that the Rev. R. Paterson, of King's Park Church, Glasgow, now has a regular attendance of 3,000 believers through playing a set of bagpipes from the pulpit, sounding a bugle, blowing bubbles, and even playing yo-yo. And why not? All these things are of far greater interest, surely, than being told of the wonderful miracles of Jesus Christ, or even of the way he died to save us. As Mr. Paterson insists, we must get people to Church, and what better way than bagpipes or yo-yo? After all, once in Church, and the threat of Hell can easily become the hangman's whip! Or can it?

Except for indignantly denouncing the Duke of Edinburgh for playing polo on Sunday, we do not hear very much of the Lord's Day Observance Society these days. It was good, therefore, to learn that its pious secretary is again on the warpath declaiming against those misguided Christians who imagine that going to Church on a Sunday morning left them free to do what they liked the rest of the day. This was a damnable heresy, and Mr. Legerton was glad to see that the Bill to free Sunday from its obligations to God Almighty was thrown out by Parliament. Nothing but the most religious misery must be permitted on the Lord's Blessed Day and, thank God, Mr. Legerton and his fellow members are going to move Heaven and earth to see we get it. That's the true Christian spirit, as Dr. Garbett would say.

Writing in our contemporary, the *Daily Herald*, recently, Mr. Alan Taylor begs the clergy to stick to religion. He appears to think that any clergyman who give his views on the atom bomb or the way to treat brides is dealing with subjects which have nothing to do with religion. So what? We hold no brief for either religion or the clergy, but they have every right to say what they please on any subject—including religion. So has Mr. Taylor who, by the way, admits he "does not believe in Christianity." It may be, of course, that though "anti-religious," he is not a Freethinker; if that is so, he would be doing himself a real service if he learnt what is Freethought—that is, if it is not too late.

Speaking a short while back, Dr. Donald Soper said that "people read the Bible but say that God is not equal to present conditions." We wonder where he got his information from? Some people certainly read the Bible, but those who do (and they are in a very small minority) are the very people who claim that with God all things are possible. The vast majority of people never read the Bible once they leave school, and are quite content to allow their Bible reading to be done for them—by the clergy. During the

nineteenth century, hundreds of thousands of sermons based on the Bible were regularly published and read. Who reads sermons these days? Only the clergy. And who reads the Bible? Same answer.

We were given the other day a B.B.C. talk about the work done by the United Church of South India—the Church that has amalgamated Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists. Bishop Newbigin did not seem particularly hopeful and admitted that the "unity" of these Christian bodies was still rather slender. In fact, he talked more about "unity" and "disunity" than about conversion. Of course, Hindus were being converted—all in all, a few thousands; but what success have these missionaries among the teeming millions, the caste-ridden Krishna and Siva believers? Even from the reverend gentleman's own discourse one could see no success whatever. Though an Oriental religion itself, it is a fact that Christianity has always signally failed among—Orientals!

Theatre

Four Winds, at the Phoenix Theatre, by Alex Atkinson, starts as a social thriller and develops into a "who done it?". A doctor visits a house with the intention of shooting a man who has seduced his wife. The man is out and his wife has to learn for the first time that her husband can be interested in other women. This is an excellent scene carried on into Act II when the doctor's wife is found murdered. Much is said about marriage and adultery from several angles, and William Kendall and Patricia Cuts bring in some good comic relief, but these parts are rather over-written in relation to the rest of the play.

Birthday Honours, by Paul Jones, at the Criterion Theatre, is a comedy dealing with a similar marriage problem, and it is notable for the characterisation. Some critics have said that this theme dates forty years, but surely every generation brings its wandering wives and husbands feigning indifference in order to wound their pride. So long as this continues, so long must we expect playwrights to deal with the theme, each one treating it according to the conditions of his time.

Paul Jones' play is slight, but Hugh Latimer and Moira Lister give it considerable life in well-written parts. David Stoll, who creates the triangle, introduces a Sporting Johnnie type of Englishman who worms his way through life on "Look here, old chap" and similar phrases. He has made a great deal of the weakest written part. Jean St. Clair charms us as the ugly and awkward sister. Nigel Patrick's direction is excellent.

Marcel Cornelis, the French master of mime, has come to the Arts. He is perhaps best when showing sporting events or in the humour of a man eating Indian curry. His face is easily expressive of the comical, but he tends to adopt mannerisms. He has the ability to fill the stage with imaginary people.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

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To Correspondents

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

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

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. BARKER and MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every week-day, 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: F. A. RIDLEY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, November 1, 6-45 p.m.: H. I. SEARLE, "Christianity Psycho-analysed."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 3: M. MITCHELL, "American Foreign Policy."

Junior Discussion Group, South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, October 30, 7-15 p.m.: General Discussion, "Tobacco—Pros and Cons."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, November 1, 6-30 p.m.: A. HANCOCK, "The Moral Economic Ideal."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, November 1, 2-30 p.m.: LES ELLIS, "Britain's Economic Crisis and the Way Out."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, November 1, 11 a.m.: Prof. T. H. PEAR, M.A., "Snobbery To-day."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.).—Sunday, November 1, 7-15 p.m.: JOSEPH MCCABE, "The Prostitution of Religion."

Notes and News

It is with the deepest regret that we have to report as we go to press the sudden death of Mr. F. C. Watts, the well known publisher and former Chairman of the Board of Directors of the R.P.A. Mr. Watts, who was 57, and had been in poor health for some time, will probably be remembered chiefly as the original publisher of that fine series, *The Thinker's Library*. Mr. Watts made a regular practice of attending the annual dinners of the N.S.S., and did his best to bring about mutual co-operation between the various sections of the British Freethought Movement. Since the days of Bradlaugh the name of Watts has been a household word in Rationalist circles, and no one can compute the extent of the influence exercised by the original works as well as by the cheap reprints issued and reissued by the R.P.A. with which the name of Watts will

always be associated. F. C. Watts worthily continued the great tradition associated with his name. The funeral took place at Golders Green Crematorium last Monday at 10-45 a.m., where a large gathering of relatives and friends heard Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner read a moving address about his old friend. Mr. F. A. Ridley and Mr. P. V. Morris represented the N.S.S. All sections of the Freethought Movement were also represented.

In reply to our correspondent, Joseph Jack: The dogma that "outside the Church there is no salvation" ("extra ecclesiam nulla salus datur"), is the official dogma of both the Roman and Greek ("Orthodox") Catholic Churches. It was so taught by Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas, the leading theologians of the Latin Church, and is explicitly stated in the creed named after the Eastern Father, Saint Athanasius. The term "Church", however, has never been exactly defined; e.g., some Roman theologians claim that, over and above the "Visible Church" in communion with Rome, there is an "Invisible Church" which consists of people who do not know the Christian Revelation, but live moral lives according to their belief. Such people, declared Pope Pius the 9th, who can plead "invincible ignorance" of Christianity can be saved by living according to the "Natural Law" of God which they do know.

This seems to be the present belief amongst, at least, educated Roman Catholics. For example, the present Pope recently excommunicated an American Jesuit, the Rev. Fr. Leonard Feeney, for continuing to teach that all non-Catholics are necessarily damned as such. As far as we know, however, it is still the dogma of the Roman Catholic Church that all who knowingly reject Catholic Christianity are damned. This presumably includes Protestants upon the time-honoured ecclesiastical adage that "the heretic is worse than the infidel." We are afraid that, in any case, there is absolutely no hope for bonafide atheists and for members of the National Secular Society!

Our readers will be glad to be reminded that Mr. Joseph McCabe is lecturing for the West London Branch on Sunday, November 1. Mr. McCabe needs no introduction from us for he has been vigorously attacking religion for nearly 60 years. We trust that he will have a good audience.

At Oxford, Mr. H. Cutner on November 4 is addressing the Heretics Club on the Myth Theory of Jesus. This is, perhaps, the first time that the greatest of all heresies is being discussed at this famous university so long known as the headquarters of Christian theology. We hope it will provoke a vigorous discussion.

Owing to difficulties of various kinds the Pioneer Press has been until recently unable to launch out with a new printing programme. We are pleased to announce, therefore, that a number of pamphlets and books are being considered which should interest and stimulate old and new readers. The new edition of *The Bible Handbook* is selling extremely well, and the printing of our recent articles on Robert Taylor into a booklet is proceeding apace. We have had numerous requests for this, and it was time justice was done to such a remarkable Freethinker. In addition, we are preparing an excellent pamphlet on the Marriage Question from a secular point of view by Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann, who is a barrister with an unrivalled knowledge of his subject.

The Delusions of Spiritualism—4

By H. CUTNER

READING Mr. Arthur Findlay's *Where Two Worlds Meet* makes me wonder why it is that when spirits communicate with us, even through an "honest" medium like Mr. John Sloan, we should get such a mass of—I must say it—silly inanities.

Open this book anywhere, and you find the spirits full of "God bless you's," full of "How are you getting on?", full of Indian chiefs spouting incredible bilge in mostly perfect English learnt (of course) without any difficulty in Etheria; and everybody is so often ready to start the Doxology—which, for some reason, I simply cannot fathom, is considered a *must* by all the Sloan spirits.

Mr. Findlay, fortified with all this gibberish, tells us that "all who study the absorbing and all embracing subject called Spiritualism, come to the conclusion that there are worlds of different density surrounding and interpenetrating our globe." Well, I have "studied" spiritualism, and I have certainly not come upon this illuminating discovery. Nor, for that matter, have I come across a scrap of evidence in any spiritualist work, and this includes Mr. Findlay's, that anything like he describes "interpenetrates" our world or any other world. It is true that Mr. Findlay talks learnedly of "thinking in terms of vibration," but what this means I haven't the ghost of an idea.

What I know about this world is based on experience and the theories and speculations of great men—like Darwin. He and his followers have—for me—proved Evolution and if Evolution be true, then all that Mr. Findlay says about "interpenetrating" worlds is so much hopeless nonsense. He actually believes that the "myriads of men and women" who had all lived on this earth are still alive!

But man has evolved from some lower animals—are all these alive? Are dogs and cats and birds who once were alive, and died, also still alive? Are tapeworms and bugs still alive? One could ask a thousand similar questions, but anybody who reads *Where Two Worlds Meet* and swallows the nonsense poured out by Sloan would believe anything. If Sloan had said bugs were still alive in the next "vibration," all his followers would believe him.

Mr. Findlay appears to think—for he says so—that his "diagrams" make everything clear. These diagrams make nothing whatever clear, except to someone who already believes, and even then I doubt whether he is a scrap wiser as to "vibrations." Mr. Findlay admits "how limited are our sense perceptions," but such a general statement amounts to very little when he adds what "his informants in the Etheric World" say about "its vibrations." These "informants" are mere figments of Sloan's vivid imagination; while "clairvoyance" and any "psychic photography" (in both of which Mr. Findlay profoundly believes) have never survived any competent investigation. Lest he asks me what I mean by this, I hasten to assure him that, as far as I have read about their "investigations," eminent professors like Crookes and Lodge are more easily bamboozled than the average schoolboy. Houdini used to look on "professors" as godsends when asked to investigate his "physical" phenomena.

One of the sittings commenced "with the usual hymn, 'Nearer, My God, to Thee,'" followed by the Lord's Prayer and—it is hard to believe that this is what Mr. Findlay calls evidence—"a voice from the other side joined in the 'Amen.'" That such things may appeal to the primitive mind of a Salvation Army girl, I do not doubt, but this is supposed to be proof that there is an "Etheric" world. And think of this—"A voice from the other side said: "We

prove nothing scientifically on this side." Here words once again fail me!

The point to note is that Mr. Findlay is angry that "official science" is apathetic "to all matters concerning psychic phenomena." What does he expect, when scientists are bluntly told that nothing "on the other side" is proved "scientifically"? His book, *On the Edge of the Etheric*, he complains, has been ignored by the Universities—and after carefully reading it, I can only say that from any scientific point of view I am not surprised. Any scientist who can read what Sloan reports from the other side without heartily laughing, should join the Witnesses of Jehovah.

If Mr. Findlay wants to impress our scientists, he must be prepared to prove his case for spirits "scientifically." He must be prepared to show at once, for example, that there are such things as "psychic" photographs—that is, spirits which (or who) can be photographed. He must prove his theory of "vibrations" to the satisfaction of such a body as the Royal Society; and he must pardon a number of us lesser people if we see nothing in what Sloan says but a mass of utter nonsense. (I could use stronger words.)

If Mr. Findlay is angry with scientists, he is far more angry with "critics" of Spiritualism. He says, "The critic who asserts that everything Spiritualists believe is moonshine, that their superstitious nonsense is the result of deranged minds, that they suffer from illusions, and that they have neither proof nor reason for their beliefs, is so ignorant and prejudiced that it is impossible for him to think rationally." When I read this, coming from a Spiritualist, I cannot help but think of Swedenborg—who not only was a great scientist, but who never appeared to be anything else but a calm, collected reasoner on every topic he touched. Yet he wrote hundreds of pages of the most arrant piffle that has ever appeared in print. He claims to have talked with spirits from other planets—men and women exactly like ourselves in appearance—people who lived and died on Jupiter, Venus, etc., and who spoke in languages which Swedenborg had not the slightest difficulty in understanding. You can take your choice, believe him or not, as you liked; but the marvels he described were no more idiotic than some of the things Mr. and Mrs. Sloan and their spirit friends can churn out by the yard.

I expect what I have said about Mr. Findlay's two books will not at all be liked by him, but I have never been so little impressed by anything Spiritualistic as by these incoherent ravings of an almost uneducated working man purporting to be the "medium" of dead Indian chiefs and English and Scottish people who have "passed over."

In other words, such books as Mr. Findlay's convince me all the more that when we die, we are dead; and that the truest of all philosophies is genuine Historical Materialism.

OUR CATHOLIC FREE PRESS

Mr. Belloc's articles were grossly personal and provocative in tone, and no doubt a great joy and comfort to the faithful. Mr. Wells prepared a series of articles in reply; and as no one outside the public of these Catholic journals seemed to have heard of Mr. Belloc's attacks, he offered them to the editors concerned, proposing, if necessary, to give the use of this interesting matter to them without payment. Six articles he asked to have published in reply to twenty-four. This offering was declined very earnestly by these editors.—H. G. WELLS: *Mr. Belloc Objects*, p. v.

PERSECUTION IN SPAIN

Pastor Florentino Tornadizo, Valencia, has been gaoled 15 days and fined £33 for preaching Protestantism.—From the *New Chronicle*, September 13, 1953.

In the Steps of St. Bernard

By MALCOLM J. A. STUBBS

THIS year is the eighth centenary of the death of St. Bernard the first abbot of the Cistercian monastery at Clairvaux. Amongst other things St. Bernard is remembered for his ardent devotion to the Mother of God. It is his school of mysticism—clothed in the imagery of the Blessed Virgin—which predominates in the Church to-day. His whole religious approach was conditioned by the doctrine of believing in order to understand: the converse being true of Bernard's opponent, Peter Abelard, who stands out as the sponsor of individualism at a time when the application of such a doctrine to the field of theology was regarded as somewhat in the nature of a loose adventure.

Although only Abelard's heterodox Trinitarian views were condemned by the ecclesiastical authorities at the Council of Sens in 1140, it does appear in view of the subsequent emphasis given to Bernard's mystical theology, that a censure of Abelard's other ideas was implicit in the Sens condemnation.

During the last century there has certainly been a greater emphasis on Mary's rôle in the Christian *schema*: this marks a decided victory for the Bernardine school. Almost one hundred years ago the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was defined, while a further gem was added to Mary's crown in 1951 with the definition of the Assumption. Although devotion to the Blessed Virgin under local titles has always been a distinct mark of the Latin Church, the last century has seen even a greater prominence given to the Marian cult. The evidence of Lourdes and Fatima, and in England the now revived devotion to our Lady of Walsingham, suggests that local enthusiasm acts as a sort of agent provocateur hand in glove with the Right-wing theologians, thus providing a forcible argument for the expediency of a formal definition.

The apparent over-importance attached to Mary's part in the Redemption is not as the Protestant would have us believe, an attempt to place the Mother on par with the Son. Assuming it was wished to give the Blessed Virgin a semi-divine mystique; such a development would only detract from her importance as the human exemplar of bourgeois virtues, and model of family life as lived in submission of mind to God or His representative.

Leo XIII in his Apostolic Letter *Neminem fugit* (1882), stresses the importance of such a pattern of the Christian virtues to the Catholic mother. He says:—

“... mothers have in the most holy Virgin Mother of God a remarkable example of love and modesty, and submission of mind, and of perfect faith. . .”
And Pius XI adds, “It is fitting that those mothers of this our age who being weary, whether of offspring, or of the marriage bond, despise and violate the obligations they have assumed should look up to Mary . . . who has raised their grave duty of Motherhood to such high nobility.”

It is important to note the emphasis placed on those qualities likely to confirm the family's feudal relationship to the Church—submission of mind, perfect faith.

Pius XI may have had in mind the family as the stabiliser of the Divine Society when he said:—

“... if the life of the family, *the beginning and the foundation of all human society* (italics mine), is recalled to this most worthy model of holiness (the Blessed Virgin), without doubt we shall at length be able to meet the formidable crisis of evils confronting Us with an effective remedy.”

The Church, of course, claims to be built on foundations and insured against all ill-winds by promise of the Comforter who would lead her into all truth. Nevertheless, from the “worldly” point of view the strength of the Church is proportional to the stability of the “life of the family.”

In that case, it is not so remarkable that the present era is delineated as the Age of Mary: however that is, it is certainly an age in which the feudal status of the family is being challenged. Pius XII was well aware of that potential source of danger to the Church, when in his allocution to Catholic midwives in October, 1951, he said: “We are faced with the propagation of a body of ideas and sentiments directly opposed to serene, deep and serious Christian thought.” On the one hand there is the Socialist theorist who would, in effect, transfer the “loyalty” of the family from the Church to the State by removing the causes of the family's economic struggle and inequality—conditions regarded by the Church as a not unfitting purgatory for the equitable society hereafter. On the other hand there is what Pius XII calls the insidious danger of “this refined hedonism,” by which he apparently means any morality not based on the Church's teachings on marriage and sex.

* * *

It is not surprising that the contemporary Church, in the tradition of St. Bernard's mystical theology, directs the gaze of the faithful to the example of Mary as the model of family life, with its corollary—*Go and do thou likewise*. And it is possible that such a pick-me-up may go a long way in delaying the medieval family concept from the melting-pot.

Correspondence

ROBERT TAYLOR

SIR,—I have just finished reading the final instalment of *Robert Taylor—The Devil's Chaplain*, by Mr. Cutner, and wish to express my appreciation both to Mr. Cutner for having written so scholarly a contribution to Freethought literature, and to you for having published it.

Robert Taylor was a guiding light to me in my researches in Christian mythology, especially the mythicist position in regard to Jesus. I have his three major works on my library shelf, and treasure them as one would rare gems.

May I be permitted to suggest that it would add another distinguished book to the long list issued by *The Pioneer Press* if Mr. Cutner's articles were published in book form?

With all good wishes and friendly greetings.—Yours, etc.,
JACK BENJAMIN.

[We are hoping to publish the Taylor articles shortly in a booklet.—EDITOR.]

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

SIR,—From the correspondence on “The National Anthem” I notice there seems to be some uncertainty as to what Freethinkers should do when it is being played or sung.

In my case I have solved the problem by singing out loud the following words substituted by me:—

“The common people—they
Need all our help each day,
Their foes to foil,
May they get sense to see
Where lies their liberty,
That they themselves might free
From want and toil.”

I hope that my own solution may suggest to others to do likewise by substituting their own words for the nauseating cant in the “National Anthem.”—Yours, etc.,
N. CASSELL.

TOLERATION?

—Mr. John O'Hare's letter in your issue dated October 16 a very confused idea in my mind of what he is advocating. course it is incumbent on all Freethinkers to be tolerant, there must be limits to this. Mr. O'Hare talks of increasing N.S.S. membership by including the orthodox and the unorthodox. The orthodox in what? If you admit enough people who are not Freethinkers, then it will no longer be a society of Freethinkers. As for the ugly names whose use he so much deprecates—surely we don't apply them to *all* those who disagree with us, but we must maintain firmly that they are wrong in their beliefs or ideas.

Talk of tolerance is all very well. Are we to tolerate such bestial behaviour as that depicted in this week's article on the happenings in Colombia?

We must stand for enlightened opinion and against ignorance and false teaching. Yes, by all means be considerate towards the dupes, but I cannot see that we should entertain the same feeling towards the organisations which are spreading the darkness and confusion.—Yours, etc.,
W. MAYBANK.

TRUTH AND TOLERANCE—WHICH FIRST?

SIR,—It is recorded that Jan Huss, the Bohemian reformer, when on his way to the stake, where he was burned alive by his fellow-Christians (who went back on their promised safe-conduct), noticed a peasant woman add one stick to the pile of faggots. He is reported to have smiled, and to have murmured "Sancta Simplicitas" (Holy Simplicity) before addressing himself to his cruel death. He was a true Christian, exercising the Christian virtues of humility, forgiveness, and tolerance.

Nevertheless, I do not think that I am entirely wrong, who never at any time have been a Christian, nor possessed these virtues to any marked extent, in placing more emphasis on seeking truth and loving justice and mercy. And, arising out of that search and that love, in fighting for those precious things, neither giving nor asking quarter. Had I lived in Huss's day and learned that the old peasant had been killed by irate followers of Huss, I should have shaken my head; uttered a perfunctory "Deplorable"; and, when asked, shrugged my shoulders. That's the sort of unregenerate I am; and I am sure that the Founder Fathers of our N.S.S., Bradlaugh and Foote, would never have built up our militant body by thinking more of tolerance than truth. They may have dwelt in the dark-age of gaslight and hansom cabs, but it was a more manly age than the present age of gas and gaiters—bishops gaiters!

I wonder if some of our newer readers and members are unaware of the Society's motto, "We Seek for Truth." Those who ignore and hinder our search are ever our enemies, and we must have at them.—Yours, etc.,

BAYARD SIMMONS.

CURRENT FALSEHOODS

SIR,—As Freethinkers we are allowed to think, to speak and to write freely about warmongery, false Democracy and false Christianity. Of course always we are responsible for what we do.

Russo-Japanese war 1903-1904, two World Wars, war in Korea and many intrigues, revolutions, dethronings, bloodshed and crooked business to prepare the wars was Anglo-Saxon and Russian handiwork—I mean Russia Czarist and Russia Communist. During two World Wars Yanks sold war materials to both fighting sides. Their cruel business needed longer war and bigger bloodshed to sell their war materials dearer. Where was American Christianity and Christian Organisations Yanks sent to foreign countries? It was false Christianity contrary to teachings of Jesus who was humanist and Lord of Peace, whose coming was announced by singing angels telling that with coming of Christ there will be glory to God, Peace on our earth and goodwill to people.

In 1945, in Potsdam, Anglo-Saxon Diplomat Christians annexed to godless Red Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Chechia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania, Eastern Germany and part of Austria. Is it true Democracy to deliver so many free countries to Russian slave-dealers?

I do not say that British Empire is a slave-camp, but it is true that British Empire helped Roosevelt and Truman to add to Russian slave camps 75 million people with Uranium mines, oil, grain, etc. Annexed countries give millions of slaves to tremendous Soviet War Industry including Atomic and Hydrogen Industry in Russia and in satellites. Ships loaded with raw materials and machinery to produce arms and other war materials are leaving many countries for Soviet countries. Ships arriving with Soviet goods in Christian Democratic countries. Christian Democrats know that goods were produced by unhappy slaves, but true Democracy has nothing to do with slavery, and holy ideas of true Christianity were against slavery in ancient Roman Empire.

To start war it is necessary to have two sides. To-day warmongers, black-marketeers and crooks are profiteering by goods sent to Soviet countries. To sell the goods dearer there are marked restrictions, but in business they do not exist. When Russia will be strong enough to start war, then there will be big business for warmongers in their own countries. Yanks say that wartime is the best business time, and war, even on small scale in Korea, greatly decreased unemployment in U.S.A.

Believing Christians say: "When God wants to destroy nations. He makes them mindless fools."

When wartime business is necessary to improve life, then such business may end with nation-wide trouble we call revolution, because over-taxation of hardworking people has limits, and profits were always to make for handful of warmongers.—
K. LIDAKS.
Yours, etc.

USEFUL QUOTATIONS

SIR,—Here are a couple of paragraphs that might interest your readers:—

Don't do as I do . . . The Times of September 9 reports an address by the Pope to some geneticists; he told them "that Christian morality rejects not only sterilization but . . ." That is something new. How long did the Vatican practise the castration of boys to preserve their soprano voices? For 1,000 years. Or was it longer? And is it still done?

Medievalism in the Vatican. The same report also mentions that the Pope asked the geneticists always to bear in mind "the fundamental difference between the animal and vegetable world on the one hand, and the world of man on the other." This alleged fundamental difference disappeared long ago and was replaced by the unity of all living organisms. The Pope is about a century behind the times. It is in the last degree unlikely that the Pope's nonsense will produce anything other than a smile of incredulity.—Yours, etc.
W. C. SLATER.

CRITICS OF FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—Whilst it shows magnanimity on your part to permit the use of your columns to a professional religious apologist for the purpose of advertising his wares to unbelievers, and whilst we may commend the temerity and enthusiasm of the Rev. G. M. Paris, we can hardly compliment him upon his astuteness or perspicacity. It would appear that the Rev. G. M. Paris is either very young and inexperienced, or very naive and unsophisticated.

It is a great pity that in something like one-third of a whole page of your issue of October 2, the Rev. gentleman above named cannot make a more convincing apologetic for his faith than he has managed to do. It is not surprising that you allow space to apologetics of this calibre. After reproving Mr. W. A. Vaughan for misquoting and misinterpreting the Holy Scriptures, the Rev. gentleman goes on himself to presume to re-interpret them, in strict alignment with all Roman Catholic propaganda, which couldn't possibly allow the Blessed Virgin to have more than One and Only Son, the Rev. gentleman says that we *must* please read "cousins" for "brothers." But why should we assume, or accept at Mr. Paris's suggestion, that the New Testament writers used the wrong term, or didn't know that James and John were "cousins" and *not* "brothers" of the Lord?

It is, of course, easy to suggest that two or three different accounts of an event which happened at a distant date do not contradict each other, when neither one nor the other makes any specific and definite proposition. Of course, the word "after" does not specify precisely how long after one event another event happened, but does not the onus devolve upon those who put a story around, to give us something more than the bare bones of a highly improbable proposition? Will the Rev. G. M. Paris tell your readers precisely when, where and how the levitation involved in the Ascension of Jesus and the Assumption of Mary took place, who were the witnesses, where is their sworn testimony and what is to-day's value of such testimony?

It would appear that Freethinkers are not alone in the extravagance of their claims. I note that the Rev. G. M. Paris claims "more than one thousand million fellow Christians." It would be interesting to learn just where these 1,000,000,000 are to be found at this moment. I trust the Rev. gentleman will accept a challenge on this point and show us in detail where all these Christians are.

I wonder if the Rev. G. M. Paris would care to deal with the following questions re the Resurrection story? 1. If Jesus was in the flesh after the Resurrection, just how had he become possessed of the clothes which he presumably wore when his friend Mary Magdalen mistook him for a gardener? We are expressly told that the grave clothes were still in the tomb, when angels were guarding them. 2. If Jesus was in the "spirit" after the Resurrection, what was the exact duration of the materialisation, and where did the unclothed body get to?—Yours, etc.
H. DAY.