

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXIV—No. 10

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Price Fourpence

[AS the week which sees this issue of *The Freethinker* appear marks the fifteenth anniversary of the accession of the present Pope, Pius the Twelfth (1939-?), and as an early vacancy in the Papacy at present appears not improbable in view of the precarious state of the aged Pope's health, the time appears opportune for the following study of the "Vicars of Christ" and of how, historically, they, or some of them, have been elected.]

The office of Pope, the wearer of the Triple Crown, like everything else, is subject to the "law" of evolution, which applies universally—even to those organisations which reject it! In the early days of the Catholic Church the Pope of Rome, like all other bishops, was elected by the people of his diocese.

Later came the custom of confining his election to the Cardinals, who originally represented the Pope's suffragan bishops of the various Roman Churches. It was not until the eleventh century that the Roman people lost their traditional right to ratify by acclamation the choice of each new Pope; and it was not until the fifteenth century, after the famous Council of Constance (Konstanz) in 1417, that the exclusive right of the Cardinals to elect the Pope was finally decided and fixed in the Canon Law of the Church. In 1917 a further step in this long evolution was taken when it was enacted that every Cardinal had to be a priest, prior to which date several famous princes of the Church had not been in Holy Orders (e.g., Cardinal Antonelli).

"Pope Joan"

The first thousand years of the Roman See was marked by many legends, and legendary Popes, one of the more authentic of whom was a convicted swindler who, presumably, laid the foundation of the Church's splendid financial system! The most famous legend, however, of the first millenium of the Papacy was the famous woman Pope, "Pope Joan." The historical existence of this holy woman is now generally discredited, even by Catholic scholars, but, like most legends, it seems to have been originally founded on a nucleus of fact.

"The Age of the Whores"

What an outspoken Catholic Church historian (Cardinal Baronius, seventeenth century, who was himself nearly elected Pope!) has aptly termed "The Age of the Whores" actually eventuated in the tenth century, when the "Dark Age" was at its "darkest." At that time, two eminent (*sic*) "whores," by name Theodora and Marozia, were the mistresses and mothers of Popes in that brutalised era. It would seem that these successors of the Apostles used to hold orgies, in the course of which the Papal concubines were, or so it is alleged, in the habit of placing the Papal "Triple Crown" on their own heads and receiving the homage of the Papal court. It was some such display which gave rise to the famous legend of "Pope Joan." However originated, the belief in the female Pope was universally

believed in and by the credulous Middle Ages, and, later on, proved a veritable godsend to the Protestant controversialist of the Reformation, eager to establish proof of the identity of the Church of Rome with "The Scarlet Woman" of the Apocalypse!

The golden age of the Papacy was, of course, that of the Crusades (*circa* 1100-1300), but the great Popes of that period are somewhat grim and impersonal figures. Whilst the Popes who followed them during the so-called "Babylonian captivity" of the Church at Avignon (fourteenth century), during the decline of the Middle Ages, were colourless and personally insignificant, a very different scene

is presented by the Renaissance Papacy in the fifteenth and sixteenth century.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Vicars of Christ

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

"This Fable of Christ"

In this corrupt but magnificent age the Popes took, for the most part, little interest in theology or in their *religious* duties. They were men of the world, politicians, and magnificent patrons of the arts. They had even more secular pastimes! They had illegitimate children galore: the most famous of these were the children of the Borgia Pope, Alexander the Sixth (1492-1503), Caesar and Lucrezia Borgia; and were not beyond poisoning an inconvenient rival or a too-wealthy Cardinal! They intrigued and fought like secular princes. Moreover, their personalities matched their actions. Julius the Second (1503-13) led his troops in full armour, whilst Sixtus the Fifth (1585-90) burst into song when elected Pope, and promptly ordered the erection of an outsize gallows! Of religion, they had little, and at least one, the gorgeous Leo the Tenth (1513-21), not only did not believe in Christianity, but actually seems to have denied the historical existence of Jesus Christ: he is reported to have exclaimed, "What a profitable superstition for Popes is this fable of Christ!" Are we to take this as the first declaration of "The Myth Theory"? And, if so, coming from a Pope, was it "infallible"?

Fisticuffs in the Vatican

The scenes witnessed at the election of some of these (self-styled) "Holy Fathers" were, to put it mildly, not particularly edifying. We may quote two examples from a learned historian of the Papacy. The first occurred at the election of Pius the Second (1465-72), scholar, humanist and one of the ablest of the Renaissance Popes.

"Two Cardinals gave Piccolomini (Pius) their voices; only one was needed now for him to reach the necessary majority. It is said that Piccolomini's gaze travelled slowly round the assembled prelates and came to rest on Colonna with such power and promise that he rose like an automaton to obey the unspoken command. But before he could utter a word Rouen and Bessarion had flung themselves upon him in an attempt to silence him by main

force. There was a violent scuffle, during which Colonna managed to free himself sufficiently to pronounce the necessary formula. In a moment the panting, dishevelled Cardinals fell apart and were prostrate in adoration. Piccolomini was Pope."

How the Borgia was Elected

A generation later came the turn of Rodrigo Borgia, Alexander the Sixth, the most famous, or infamous, of the Popes, of mixed Spanish and Moorish blood, and of Negro descent. Borgia literally bought the Papacy. Of one of his bought voters, we are told: "Cardinal Sforza, whose nerves, after two sleepless nights of intense excitement, were probably a bit out of control, forgot himself so far as to rail against the mummery of invoking the Holy Spirit, saying that at all the conclaves at which he had been present the Pope had been made without the Holy Ghost's assistance, and that the sooner they got to business the better." Borgia was unanimously elected—with, or without, the Holy Ghost (*cf.* Valerie Pirie, *The Triple Crown*, pp. 20 and 33).

Did the Jesuits Poison the Pope?

The Counter-Reformation was only able to reform the Church sufficiently to resist the Protestants by putting an end to the Renaissance scandals of the Vatican. One result has been that modern Popes have usually been very dull people! The best of them was, probably, Benedict the Fifteenth (1740-58) an admirable pontiff, who denied his own infallibility, swore like a trooper, and to whom Voltaire dedicated his play, *Mahomet*. A little later,

Clement the Fourteenth (1769-1774) plucked up courage to dissolve the all-powerful Jesuit Order and declared the sons of Loyola to be "extinguished, abolished and abrogated for ever." (Actually, the Jesuits were restored in 1814, after the French Revolution.) A few months later the Pope died, in horrible agony, of a lingering disease. The truth of the matter will now probably never be known. In contemporary Rome it was universally believed that the Jesuits had poisoned the Pope, as he himself declared with his dying breath.

A Vatican Wit

The nineteenth century Popes were a dull lot. As Mrs. Pirie aptly remarks: "The modern Papacy has been cauterised by the rough hand of Democracy." The only exception was Leo the Thirteenth (1878-1903), a wit as well as a statesman, whose remark on receiving at the Vatican the Anglican "Bishop of Southern and Central Europe" borders on the classical: "I think that I am in your lordship's diocese." The modern Vatican is still adorned with the masterpieces of Renaissance art, and the Pope's Swiss Guards are dressed in Renaissance uniforms. But, to-day, the former Court of the Borgias is holy, but very dull.

"The Spirit Bloweth where it Listeth"

The Gospel of St. John assures us that "The spirit bloweth where it listeth." But if the Holy Spirit really presided at each Papal election since the legendary St. Peter founded the Papacy, one can only conclude that he must have a most peculiar psychological outlook.

More Light on Jesus—3

By H. CUTNER

IN his *Jesus in Heaven on Earth*, Mr. Ahmad has an excellent chapter of over 20 close-knit pages discussing the Virgin Birth. Who exactly was it written for? No Muhammad believes in the Virgin Birth, and all those Christians who do believe it would certainly not have their faith shaken by any reasoning. The Virgin Birth is accepted on Faith—like so many other beliefs, indeed, like so many of Mr. Ahmad's own beliefs in his religion.

Of course, even thorough-going Christians are aware that a case can be made against the Virgin Birth—so what? They believe it, and will continue to believe it in spite of the *Encyclopedia Biblica* and other similar works. No discussion on the Angel Gabriel would convince Mr. Ahmad that he is a myth—as, and it must be stated clearly, is the Virgin Mary.

And it should have been Mr. Ahmad's task to prove that such a person as Mary ever lived at all. It was necessary to prove this first before going on to Jesus, and Mr. Ahmad, on the strength of the Qur'an, is ready to believe almost anything about Mary and Jesus; and if the Canonical Gospels do not give him his proof, he is always ready to fly to the Apocryphal ones. To the *Freethinker*, both classes of Gospels are equally unhistorical; but as the Qur'an quotes either or both classes indiscriminately, we cannot blame Mr. Ahmad from doing likewise. Yet in doing so, how can he possibly influence Christians?

Mary's mother is not named in the four Gospels—only in the Apocryphal ones, and it is not surprising to find her name is *Anna* (Mr. Ahmad says "Hanna"). How do we get the two names Mary and Anna? Robert Taylor (following Cruden) says that the name Mary is the same as Miriam (Mr. Ahmad gives Maryam), which signifies Myrrh or "of the sea" or "Lady or Mistress of the sea." It is like Smyrna, the name of the sixth of the seven churches in

Asia. The mother of Adonis was Myrrha. "Anna" is the feminine of "Annus," the year—and Mary is simply the sign Virgo in the Zodiac—the Daughter of the Year. Not a scrap of evidence has ever been produced that Mary, the Mother of Jesus, ever lived. It is one of the things never discussed by Christians.

It is most surprising, however, to find Mr. Ahmad confusing "the Immaculate Conception" with the Virgin Birth. Any Church dictionary would have put him right. And it is even more surprising that, with such a wealth of Freethought literature as has been produced in modern times, such a scholar as he is should talk about Noah and Abraham and other Bible heroes as if they had really lived. Jesus in the Qur'an is called the "Messiah." Was he the Messiah? Could anybody be a Messiah? Is not the whole conception of Messiahship based on sheer ignorance? Is it not a fact that Hitler, the "Fuehrer," the Leader, really wanted to be the German Messiah?

In the Qur'an, Jesus is made to say: "Surely, I am a servant of Allah." It is a pity that Jesus is not shown grovelling on a mat at the call of a muezzin.

One thing the Qur'an did notice, and that was how very rude Jesus could be to his mother in the Gospels. So, as Mr. Ahmad says, the Qur'an shows him "dutiful" to his mother, and never rude. "Mary," he adds, "had faith in God, and was a chosen one of God. She was an obedient servant of God who guarded her chastity." In fact, the "charges made against Mary" by Jews and Christians are false. Does he prove this—as a good lawyer should? Not a bit. We have the Qur'an's word for it—it's in the Book. and that ought to suffice.

Mr. Ahmad makes a point it is always good to remember—and that is, the Qur'an is not an *historical work*. So the father of Jesus, though he was a human being, is not men-

Book Review

Make the United Nations a Reality

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
IF every communist committed suicide tomorrow, the tensions of world revolution would remain; for two-thirds of the world are hungry and sick. Yes, we talk of the "teeming millions" who are starving—to make them sound anonymous but we ought to try to conjure individual faces before our conscience.

Dr. Stringfellow Barr, author of *Citizens of the World* (Gollancz, 13s. 6d.), attacks his fellow Americans for their myth that only Communism stops the whole world from being peaceful and prosperous. He blames them for a foreign policy of fear when what peace and prosperity need is a foreign policy of hope. Naturally the sick and the hungry are not going to believe that Communism is their first enemy when they know that their first foe is human misery.

Dr. Barr does not dodge the difficulties of a war-on-want, but he does stress the necessity. The world is not in a melting pot, but in a pressure cooker. The pressure is mounting, the explosion is near. We have, in fact, no alternative but generous action if we are to save our dinner.

If we keep the no-alternative idea at the back of our minds, we can, as Dr. Barr shows us, eliminate objections one by one. They are not so valid when seen against the background of bursting crisis. The call is to use our heads instead of our fists; for the problem is not only "what will the Russians do?" but what will the rest of the world do?

America cannot hope to mould and lead the world revolution against misery by trying to buy allies against Russia, by making grants with wrist-twisting conditions. Why should America urge Asia to fight for "freedom", not against France in Indo-China, but against Russia if and when Russian armies should invade an Asian country? Why should the Frenchman joke that he plans to take out American papers in order to have some influence in French affairs? No, the "haves" must take down the golden curtain; and by so doing they will not only save their skins but also their economies.

Dr. Barr shows, with carefully reasoned arguments, how it can be done to the advantage of everyone in the Mighty Neighbourhood. America has set a pattern for an International Development Authority with the Tennessee Valley Authority; and every "good American" ought to be behind such a proposal for the U.S.A. is the colony of mankind which has stood, in the past, for equality and aspiration.

The United Nations has never been given a chance. Where are the promised radio facilities? Where are the funds to implement the hopes for the world prosperity which alone can lead to stability? Why did the *New York Times* announce, shortly after the Chinese intervened in Korea, "that as soon as Washington had decided what was to be done, it would be done through the United Nations?" But the United Nations could be brought to life if all the staff of the I.D.A. were sworn in as members of the U.N. Then the "have-nots" might lose their suspicion of the U.N. and learn that freedom is a good contract and that even formulae for co-existence are not enough but that co-action can break down oppositional ideologies.

This is a book all freethinkers must read, and then work to spread the idea that it is intolerable that men must die because it is too much trouble to make them live. We must talk about I.D.A., write to the Press, to our M.P.s. and get strong, not tough, with moral courage and not be frightened of a few sacrifices of privilege in order to win the whole game of being a member of the human race.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

tioned in the Qur'an—which is very curious. Or rather, it would have been curious if Joseph had ever lived. Like Mary and Jesus, he is just a myth. He disappears completely after "marrying" Mary, and one wonders why the old gentleman (if he was old) was ever dragged in at all? Joseph has been a thorn in the flesh of commentators ever since he "married" Mary.

Mr. Ahmad uses the name "Jesus," but other works I have consulted say that in the Qur'an it is "Isa" or "Issa." But, after all, what is in the name? For all Muhammadens, Jesus is as much a figure from history as Muhammad himself. In the Qur'an it says: "Surely the likeness of Jesus is with Allah as the likeness of Adam. He created him from dust, then said to him, Be, and he was. This is the truth from your Lord, so be not of the disputers." This verse and some others were revealed when Muhammad was having a discussion with Christians in the Mosque of the Prophet as to whether Jesus was God. This discussion has been "reported," but is most inconclusive. Muslim theologians have discussed it in detail—just like Christian theology can fill books about a word or two in Holy Writ. Mr. Ahmad himself has nothing to learn from any kind of theology and he has filled pages of his book with what appears to me to be completely useless argument that Jesus was the son of Mary and Joseph. He would have done his cause much more good had he provided any arguments whatever to show that there ever was a Joseph, a Mary, or a Jesus.

To prove how he must have turned away from what I call "rational" argument, take what he writes about St. Thomas, the "doubter," who, of course, eventually became convinced. Like all the Apostles, Thomas had a Gospel and Acts to himself, and I suspect that the Christian Churches would much prefer their sheep *not* to read them. First of all, note that there is very little in our "Big Four" Gospels about Thomas. In John he is called a Twin—Didymus the Twin. And what else? His name is *Judas* Thomas. And with whom is he a Twin?—rather surprisingly, he is the Twin of Jesus Christ himself.

Thomas comes from "Tammuz," the Syrian God mentioned by Ezekiel for whom women sat weeping. And there is no need to wonder at his being a twin of Jesus for Tammuz was the Sun worshipped in Syria under that name. As Jesus Christ is also the Sun—he himself said that he "was the Light of the World"—Tammuz just had to be his Twin, a fact recognised by John and, of course, by the writer (whoever he was) of the Acts of Thomas. Mr. Ahmad cites authorities to show that this work was used by early Christians, but about 495 A.D. was condemned as heretical by Pope Gelasius. The Roman Church could stand much but not a Sun God as the Twin of Jesus.

All the same, it was Thomas who was sent to India, the Land of the Sun, to convert the inhabitants—according to his Acts where, incidentally, he is not called Thomas but Judas; though there were some Christian writers who did not agree even here—they claimed that it was Bartholomew who went to India. But really, why try and discuss these things seriously? The whole story of Jesus and his Twelve Apostles is as mythical as the story of Aladdin. Thomas (or Tammuz) was the Syrian God Adonis, or the Greek God Apollo, and even Jews who pretend that they dare not pronounce such a Holy Name as Jehovah or Yahveh substitute for it Adonai.

That Mr. Ahmad should swallow these Sun Myth allegories as historical truths is astonishing—but we must remember that he has swallowed much more than that: the ridiculous stories in the Qur'an.

In the next article I will deal in more detail with Thomas and his "Twin" Jesus Christ or Issa.

This Believing World

The Free Gospel Society of the U.S.A. are very anxious for our souls for we have received a flaming red folder with the word "warning" across the top and the intimation that we are in "great danger." God's judgments are shortly to be poured out "upon this earth, and Jesus Christ the Son of God is coming soon," and we have to prepare to meet him—"before it is too late." If we ignore this final warning, we are properly in for it—"the lake of fire and brimstone" will be our fate "tormented for ever, and ever weeping." We should have thought our tears—in time—would have put out the fire and brimstone; whereas, if Hell got a move on, and used atomic energy for the fires, no amount of weeping would put them out. Hell is really quite out of date with its ridiculous brimstone.

And there can be no possible doubt either that Jesus Christ is coming soon what with the Free Gospel Society and Billy Graham. Our very dissenting contemporary, the *British Weekly*, has readers already going for Billy because his huge advertising campaign mentions Billy only, and is withholding "any reference to God and His Gospel." But surely this is unfair. If they go to Harringay Arena, they will find the Great Revivalist giving them more God and His Gospel in five minutes than the Churches manage to churn out in a year. Don't these people realise that God Almighty, through Jesus Christ Himself, is behind this Revival? Why, there will be far more joy in heaven when the converts roll in, than there will be when Billy himself starts counting the shekels received from the all-believing sheep.

Pious President Eisenhower used to belong, we understand, to Jehovah's Witnesses; but whatever he thinks now he is most anxious to see "faith in God" as the watchword in America. All soldiers believed in God, he recently declared, but we wonder what the President thinks of the pronouncement of Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation—that last year there was a record of crime in the U.S.A., a major crime taking place every 15 seconds. He does not put the blame at all on the lack of religion—but on parole boards turning loose confirmed criminals on society. It's a pity that the two heads cannot settle between them exactly why there is so much crime in America.

We do not often get first-hand information on the religious services given in our big passenger liners, so here is an item which is most intriguing. "Ileco," one of the writers on the *British Weekly*, tells us that on a voyage to America, he was asked to attend the "Protestant" service in the first-class lounge. But it turned out that he "had heard it all before as a lad" for it "accommodated to the mentality of 9 or 10 years old." And he was glad so few people attended. We need only add that we are delighted that he has at last come into touch with "true" Christianity. Is it suitable for anyone really older?

All is not well in Coventry re the building of its new cathedral. Apart altogether from the fact that most religious believers think a cathedral should look like a cathedral, and the accepted plans show something very ultra-modern and not a bit in any accepted tradition, people in Coventry are in revolt at "the idea of a cathedral taking priority over hospitals, houses, and comprehensive schools." And "people prefer plush seats and tankards to pews and parsons." Councillor Weston even adds: "We just have not got the customers to make the cathedral worth while." And all this in spite of religion's wide publicity on the

radio and TV! Don't people want any more religion, after all?

Whether previous speakers had, or had not, failed in persuading schoolchildren to believe in God, we do not know, but the religious authorities have roped in the Bishop of Bristol to clinch the matter on the radio. Dr. Cockin has a fine reputation as an Infidel-slayer, for it was he, some years ago, who staged a wonderful dialogue between a Christian and an Unbeliever—in which, of course, after a hard battle, the Christian won, and the Unbeliever became a Believer. Dr. Cockin proudly declared afterwards that he himself had written the script for both! It was a great way of showing how Unbelief crumblers in the face of a Christian attack. The Bishop's address for the kiddies was a lame attempt to show how there was no antagonism between science and religion or, if there was, it was the duty of everybody to have Faith in Jesus. And most of what he said was twaddle.

Critics

A critic, it seems, is a man
Whose peculiar plan is to pan.
He thinks that he knows
All the answers—and those
That he doesn't, he'll dodge—if he can!

Should his brain be a shallow receptacle
He should never touch things "dialectical,"
Without knowing his book—
Or a fool he will look—
And that's not a delectable spectacle!

So, critics, please hark to my sonnet—
If you have a bee in your bonnet,
Keep your hat on your head
Lest the bee be not "dead,"
And a ghost bee might sting you upon it!

Yes, a critic, I fear, is a muff,
Who delights to denounce and rebuff;
Though he knows least about
Any subject, he'll shout
His silly fat head off—just bluff!

Yours, etc.,
W. H. WOOD.

P.S.

Let me hasten to add right away,
That *fair comment* is always fair play.
But there is no excuse
For malicious abuse,
So let's try to be fair, eh? Good-day!

A Roman Hospital

The discovery of a "hospital" amongst the Roman ruins at Baden, in Canton Aargau, is of considerable interest because we possess no literary document, Greek or Roman, which throws light upon the question whether the Ancients had any institutions corresponding to our hospitals. Hippocrates, indeed, speaks of his observations upon the sick persons in the Temple of Æsculapius, but it is impossible to tell from his very meagre remarks whether there was any hospital attached to the Temple. The excavations at Baden have laid bare a building containing fourteen small rooms, together with a number of articles which evidently served for the use of Roman physicians and surgeons, as pincettes, tubes, spatulas, spoons, measures, caustics, ointment-boxes, etc. The experts conclude that these "finds" indicate the building to have served as the hospital for the Fourth and Fifth Legions, which had their standing quarters on the spot.—*Daily News*.

THE ATOMIC BOMB—A CORRECTION

SIR,—In his thought-provoking and witty speech at the N.S.S. Annual Dinner on February 27, the guest of honour, Mr. C. G. G. Du Cann, stated that *The Freethinker* was the only paper in Great Britain which protested against the atomic outrage against International Law. Actually, this is not correct. Several left-wing papers, *The Socialist Leader*, with which the present editor of *The Freethinker* was then connected, *Freedom*, and *Peace News*, all protested in the strongest terms.—Yours, etc.,

INTERNATIONALIST.

THE FREETHINKER

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

To Correspondents

We regret that there may be some delay in publishing correspondence in view of the large number of tributes to the late Mr. Cohen which have reached this office.

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 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.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: FRANK ROTHWELL.

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).—Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, March 7, 6-45 p.m.: CLIFFORD ALLEN (S.P.G.B.), "Fundamentals of Socialism."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 9, 7 p.m.: Dr. E. CONZE, "Jung's Psychology and its Later Developments."

Glasgow Secular Society (N.S.S. Branch) (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St.).—Sunday, March 7, 6-30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY (President, N.S.S.), "The Menace of Rome."

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, March 5, 7-15 p.m., CYRIL APPLETON, "Trade Unions and their Future."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (Cross St. Chapel).—Saturday, March 6, 3 p.m.: W. GOLDSBROUGH, "Why I Believe."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, March 7, 2-30 p.m.: P. H. GRAY, D.Ph., "The Right to be Wrong."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 7, 6-30 p.m.: P. VICTOR MORRIS (Secretary, N.S.S.), "An Evening with the Poets—A Freethinker's Choice"; 74th Anniversary.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Sunday, March 7, 11 a.m.: Prof. J. C. FLUGEL, D.Sc., "The Psychology of Initiation."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road).—Sunday, March 7, 7-15 p.m.: ALEC CRAIG, "The Kinsey Reports."

NOTES AND NEWS

Since his lamented death on February 4, tributes to the late Mr. Chapman Cohen have come pouring in, and will, we do not doubt, continue to do so for some time to come. It is not every day that the opportunity arises to do honour to a really great man. As we predicted on announcing the news of Mr. Cohen's death, he has received scanty mention in the Press. This is, after all, still a Christian land—or so, at least, we are told! *The Times* published a brief but technically correct notice. The *Liberal Manchester Guardian* was, as might have been anticipated from its long championship of unpopular causes, both more detailed and more sympathetic. Its "London correspondent"

gave a fairly full and obviously friendly account of Mr. Cohen's career. The Labour (I.L.P.) weekly, *The Socialist Leader*, published "an appreciation" by the present Editor of *The Freethinker*. What is sometimes termed "The Millionaire Press," paid the great Freethinker the perhaps appropriate honour of completely ignoring him. Perhaps, though even that we doubt, they recalled Mr. Cohen's stinging epigram that people who "make money" often do so because they cannot make anything else. However, when one considers the hullabaloo on the B.B.C. and in the Press over nonentities of all kinds, who will be forgotten as soon as they are in their graves, the display does not give one a very high opinion of the intellectual and moral "values" which are officially recognised to-day.

By an unfortunate and rather curious coincidence the death of the most brilliant English Freethinker of his generation was preceded by a few days by that of the most brilliant of Asiatic rationalists, Mr. M. N. Roy, who died on January 25 at the comparatively early age of sixty-one, after an unusually stormy and eventful career, which touched life at many angles. A memorial meeting to M. N. Roy was held on Wednesday, February 17, at the Conway Hall, London, W.C.1. Both British and Indian speakers paid tribute to the late M. N. Roy; the speakers being Mr. Fenner Brockway, M.P., and Mr. Phillips Price, M.P., the well-known Indian trade union leader, Mr. Shaikh, Mr. H. J. Blackham, who represented the Ethical Union, and Mr. F. A. Ridley, who represented the National Secular Society. The chair was taken by the distinguished Indian publicist, Mr. Ayana D. Angardi. Several of the speakers recalled personal reminiscences of M. N. Roy, and all paid tribute to various aspects of his many-sided genius. Mr. Brockway praised his courage in India's struggle for her liberation, Mr. Price referred to his "panoramic" outlook on Life and History, Mr. Shaikh described Roy's political outlook from personal experience, whilst Mr. Blackham described the deceased Indian leader as a great Humanist, an important thinker who did much to bring East and West together with "a materialism on fire." Mr. Ridley compared M. N. Roy's career with that of Thomas Paine; both were great radicals and great Rationalists; both wrote outstanding books on both politics and religion; both took an active part in the revolutions of other lands besides their own, Paine in America and France, Roy in Mexico, Russia and China. The encyclopaedic genius of Roy and his leading role in the present renaissance of eastern culture, was emphasised by the chairman, Mr. Angardi. A message of respect and sympathy was sent from the meeting to Mrs. Ellen Roy, widow of the deceased leader.

The old Testament versus the New! The Israeli Parliament has just voted £35,000 to keep out Christian Missions from "The Holy Land," presumably on the old Rabbinical axiom regarding the New Testament, "What is new in it isn't true and what is true in it isn't new." But just what is "true" in the New Testament?

At University House Community Centre in Bethnal Green, Mr. H. Cutner recently had a "debate" with Mr. D. Dutton of *Psychic News* in which the audience also took part. It was not, we are sorry to say, much of a debate. Mr. Dutton appeared to know next to nothing of the history of Spiritualism, and was utterly unable to reply to the four cases which all Spiritualists have put forward for many years as undeniable proof of survival, and which Mr. Cutner had no difficulty in proving as sheer fraud. Where are the Spiritualists who can do "battle" for their cause? Are there any?

Chapman Cohen: More Tributes

For me the world is more empty now without Chapman Cohen. Apart from the world's loss, I feel I have lost a very, very dear friend. I enjoyed his writings more than I can express. It was always a great disappointment to me that I never had the good fortune to hear him speak or to speak to him. I am often very ill and this prevented my going to his Glasgow meetings. I have shed many tears since I read in my paper of his death. Please convey to Mrs. Cohen my deepest sympathy.

AGNES KEAN.

It has been a great honour for me, as well as a great privilege, to enjoy for over thirty years the intimate friendship of Chapman Cohen. On the public platform he was recognised as one of the greatest exponents of Freethought and a deadly critic of shams and humbugs of all sorts. Like Voltaire, he recognised that ridicule was the most deadly of all weapons; that orthodox religion would fight attacks but could not stand up to sarcasm. In private life Chapman Cohen was the very essence of gentleness and courtesy, and was fortunate in possessing a wife who recognised his genius and who made his home life such a happy one. His wide range of reading and his original thinking, free from all shibboleths, made his opinions on all matters valuable and helpful. His books and writings will remain as a monument for us and for thousands of men and women in the future.

F. A. HORNIBROOK,
President, West London Branch N.S.S.

As a humble convert to the principles and aims of Freethought since the early 'thirties through the works and lectures of our revered leader, the late Mr. Chapman Cohen, may I be allowed to add my small tribute to the many you will certainly be receiving? I count it a privilege to possess nearly all of his published books and pamphlets, whose penetrating lucidity and clarity of expression are so satisfying to the intellectual appetite that is interested in controversial issues. The concluding paragraph of our Editor's fine appreciation, "The Passing of a Great Man," and the address by our Secretary at the cremation, will be generally endorsed.

F. NEWELL.

Both of Chapman Cohen's children—his daughter who died soon after her marriage and his son Raymond—attended my school in Leyton. For nearly fifty years I was in close touch with him, both in the provinces and in London, and he helped me considerably in clarifying my thinking on Theism.

M. GOMPERTZ.

What a great satisfaction and consolation there must be in the enviable privilege of Chapman Cohen's acquaintance over the past fifty years; to have heard his lectures and debates and to have known his earnest vigour and enthusiasm! It is only now, after reading the many tributes to this great personality, that we newcomers to the movement realise our loss. Though not in the best of health, I enjoy a most wonderful peace of mind and assurance, thanks to the great Freethinkers, the courageous giants of liberty, for which I am ever grateful.

D. G. ROLL.

I never met Chapman Cohen, but he is the man more than any other who freed my mind from the dogmas instilled in my youth and set me upon the path of rational thinking.

E. J. HUGHES.

With tongue and pen Chapman Cohen did wonders for Freethought, but in addition to his intellectual gifts he had a great heart: he was a good friend. It was this combination that made him so likeable. It must be sixty years since my father and I walked by his side after hearing him lecture on Evolution. It was not until the first world war that we met again. Afterwards we met often and corresponded regularly. I was at the Clarion Café in Manchester when he was elected President of the N.S.S. On a number of occasions I have sat with him till long after midnight, giving a willing ear to his most fascinating discourses. On Conference holidays he would cast business aside and enjoy himself like the proverbial sandboy. Wherever he went or whatever the circumstances—he fitted. That was his great gift. He was a human Master-Key, opening every gateway to a better understanding. His portrait occupies a prominent place in my home. His books talk to me in his absence.

HENRY IRVING.

It was sad news to hear of the death of Chapman Cohen. Your letter gave me the opportunity of being with you all, at least in spirit, at the Secular Service at the Crematorium. He was a grand man in all ways, and George had the happiest time of his life working for him on *The Freethinker*. He gave me every help when George went, and after. At one of the Annual Dinners, when I sat next to him, I took a glass of wine and told him I had left off being a tottaller rather than miss one of the good things in life. He said: "My mother died of drinking too much tea." "How old was she?" I asked, and he answered, smiling, "Eighty-four!"

LOUIE BEDBOROUGH.

I feel, as undoubtedly we all do, that the Freethought Movement in general has lost one of its veritable champions and stalwarts at a time when it can ill afford to do so. Chapman Cohen, through his lucid, eloquent and philosophic "Views and Opinions" in *The Freethinker* nearly forty years ago, not to mention his many books and pamphlets, showed me the way to freedom and happiness.

H. STANLEY WATERS.

Second Death

We die a second death
When friends who loved us die;
Then must remembrance fade
As the funereal wreath
Which on our grave did lie.
When we in earth are laid,
While memories survive
We still are half-alive.

A half-life that is short;
Life, as perceived in dreams,
With no substance in it—
And maybe dearly bought.
That part-life wholly seems
A well-intentioned cheat.
In twilight we survive—
Still dying, half-alive.

—BAYARD SIMMONS.

For Your Bookshelf

Bound Complete

THE FREETHINKER, 1953

Volume 73

Green Cloth, Gold Lettered. Price 24s., postage 1s. 2d.

The "Myth" of Materialism

A Reply to Mr. Morgan

By G. H. TAYLOR

"THE first thing I would like you to note," begins Mr. Morgan, "is that the adjective used to describe my idea of materialism is 'myth'."

The first thing to do is to note that Mr. Morgan does not know what an adjective is, though a child of ten does. The word "myth," for his information, is a noun.

"Now as a Materialist I take it that you will accept . . . Cohen's *Materialism Re-stated*." This is just Mr. Morgan's uninformed nonsense. If he professes to read *The Freethinker* he will have found several varieties of materialism defended in its pages. Of those who have here written on the subject, H. Cutner is content to call himself a mechanistic materialist, J. Graham is a Dialectical Materialist, A. Yates (to judge from his masterly demolition of W. H. Wood) would probably defend some form of emergent materialism, while C. McCall and myself advocate the new materialism of the Michigan school, which has rendered obsolete, or at least inadequate, all previous presentations of the materialist philosophy, and has been variously termed neo-Materialism, physicalism and Physical Realism. It is a philosophy which has vastly gained in prestige in the last ten years, and in 1949 it formed the core of the great symposium *Philosophy for the Future* (reviewed here by McCall). We have in the new materialism, for the first time in the history of materialism, an effective linking of the epistemological with the ontological issue. Mr. Morgan, of course, is in the dogmatic slumber of one who still thinks materialism has stood still since Haeckel.

Some of us, however, are less concerned with displaying the letters after our names and more concerned with keeping abreast of the times. We look to our nouns and adjectives, not to our letters.

Coming to "the core of my thesis, the purpose of my article," he challenges the materialist to refute four "postulates of an Idealist." Then we discover he has confused philosophical idealism with the meaning of "idealism" when it is used in ordinary parlance. As a materialist I can certainly refute the postulates of Idealism, but I must point out that what we are given are the postulates of Mr. Morgan.

They are as follows: (1) "It is the *spirituality* of man which has given rise to his *material* progress." This is hopelessly unscientific language. What he is obviously trying to say is what the materialist says in scientific language, namely, that the evolution of intelligence has had survival value.

(2) His second point appears in bad English, with confused subject, confused predicate and God knows what object. Let us assume the fault is not his. What, I think, he is doing is attacking mere reductionism, but the materialist is not guilty of reductionism, a position put into the mouth of the materialist by his opponent. In my book, *Can Materialism Explain Mind?*, I have listed these and other misconceptions of materialism.

(3) I dealt with the "logical refutation" of materialism in my article under that title last year.

(4) "Epiphenomenalism (*sic*) does away with Mind. Pavlov and Watson have 'explained' all these things. . . . You deny the Human Mind, you say it does not exist, but where is your proof?"

I presume he means epiphenomenalism, but in any case Watson and Pavlov are behaviourists, and we hold no brief for them. I have always contended that behaviourism is true at the behaviourist level.

Now where, oh where, does the materialist deny the existence of mind, when the word is properly used to signify, not a thing-in-itself, but a function of organism? The materialist does not deny the existence of functions; he affirms them. The only "mind" he denies is an entity isolable from brain and nervous system.

Mr. Morgan's attack is not even valid against the older mechanistic materialism, let alone neo-materialism, and I would back any mechanist to make mincemeat of his arguments. Both Cutner and Yates, in my opinion, have most ably defended their positions against attack (in Cutner's case, against abuse too) in these columns.

If Mr. Morgan is within reach of London, and will acquaint himself with materialism, I should welcome an opportunity of meeting him in debate.

Correspondence

SPIRITUALISM

SIR,—H. Cutner's series of articles on Spiritualism are interesting, although it would seem that he is inclined to jump to conclusions not necessarily indicated by the facts, in rather the same way as he considers Mr. Findlay does.

I also disagree with Mr. Findlay's statement 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." I have studied spiritualism for many years and was even quite convinced at one time by the evidence presented in books, often by famous men. Practical experience with mediums and of spiritualism caused me to change my ideas and, today, I am of the opinion that if there is a life after death spiritualism has not proved it—at least to me. However I do not, from this, immediately jump to the conclusion that all mediums are fraudulent or merely giving unbridled rein to a fertile imagination. In fact, with one or two exceptions, I have found nearly all mediums to be genuine in themselves, inasmuch as they really believed they were in touch with the dead, and were often in an abnormal psychological state. I do think, however, that a greater knowledge of psychology and the powers of the human being will probably provide the answer to many so-called psychic feats. There is also quite an interesting parallel between many unfortunate people suffering from schizophrenia and the trance medium. In fact I have often thought that the trance medium develops the capacity for presenting different aspects of his personality when he or she wishes to, in much the same manner as occurs in the case of the schizophrenic, although in the case of the latter it is uncontrolled. In short that many trance mediums have induced what might be described as a state of "controlled schizophrenia."

My experiences have also led me to accept the existence of a form of clairvoyance, both precognitive and retrocognitive. I think there is sufficient really good evidence available at the Society for Psychical Research and elsewhere to make the proper study of this subject worth while. The only point on which I differ from the Spiritualists in this matter is in supposing that the dead have anything to do with it. To me they do not seem to be involved at all.

I agree with Mr. Cutner that Swedenborg was a very great scientist and a remarkable man. For this reason I hesitate to describe part of his writings as "arrant piffle" merely because their significance is not immediately apparent to me. We know from the experiences of many saints and others who have had what, for want of a better expression, we might call "the mystical experience" that there is great difficulty in putting these things into words. It is possible, therefore, that they can only be described symbolically, in a manner which can be readily understood by another of the same level, but which would appear incomprehensible to the layman. I do not assume that all things in this world can be easily understood by me and that, should I fail to desery their meaning, I can designate them "arrant piffle." This sort of thing would seem to indicate the closed mind. Notwithstanding my remarks above I am still prepared to accept the claims of the spiritualists if they can provide evidence that they are true and in a way that convincingly refutes all alternative hypotheses.

Finally, I see that Mr. Cutner says that Mr. Findlay's book convinces him "all the more that when we die, we are dead." Why he should have jumped to this conclusion I cannot imagine. Surely his knowledge of science should have taught him that nothing dies; that however we may alter or destroy the form, the constituent parts persist. Even if we burn a sheet of paper we merely destroy the appearance; the thing itself still exists as ashes, gases, etc. Is there any reason to suppose, therefore, that the human being should prove any exception to this rule? Surely the animating principle, the person apart from his physical body, must also persist in one way or another, even though it may be in a manner vastly different from his life in conjunction with a physical body.

It does not seem likely to me that we persist in the manner described by the spiritualists who have, in the words of Claude Houghton, "suburbanised the Cosmos." I do think, however, that they are an advance on the unthinking orthodox who are prone to accept any symbolic myth as literal fact.

As neither a spiritualist nor a freethinker, it does seem to me that the spiritualists as a whole are far from being open-minded on the question of the survival of the personality (or anything else) and, with one or two exceptions, are not over-willing to examine impartially possible alternative explanations to much that is presented as "evidence for survival." On the other hand, freethinkers too often give one the impression of "knowing it all" and might even be described, at times, as "narrow-thinkers." In connection with this I have in mind a remark about there being few sillier religions than Buddhism, which appeared in an issue of *The Freethinker* some months ago, and did not, to me, seem to indicate any thought at all, free or otherwise. Buddhism is a philosophy based on the fact of suffering and the cessation of suffering, and is worthy of the consideration of all thinkers. If the writer of this remark was not able to discriminate between the philosophy of Buddha and some of the excrescencies which have since become attached to some of the Buddhist sects, then he obviously knows little of his subject.

Our aim should surely be to arrive at the truth, or the relative truth in these matters. We can only do this by being impartial; not as in the case of the spiritualists, by presenting debatable "evidence" and insisting that it shall be accepted as "conclusive proof"; nor as in the case of the freethinker, of assuming that anything they cannot understand is necessarily "arrant piffle."—Yours, etc.,

F. CLIVE-ROSS.

DEMOCRACY—TRUE AND FALSE

SIR,—I derive a dour satisfaction from Mr. Wood's letter; it is so exactly as I expected, from his childish objection to my anonymity, to the assertions he makes and the inferences he draws without a shred of evidence or a shadow of logic. But richest of all is his laughable failure to see that the unconscious irony I referred to lay in the writing of an article entitled "Rationalism and Tolerance," by W. H. Wood, whose irrationalism and intolerance I have so often found incongruous in your pages.

I am not the champion of Mr. Warhurst; I made that clear. I am not a fellow-traveller, whatever it may mean. I neither said nor implied, nor do I believe, that the Communist countries are true democracies. I asked Mr. Wood to outline his idea of true democracy, in which he claimed to believe; he is apparently unwilling or unable to do so. Instead he says, regarding the Communist countries and myself: "If this is what he calls true democracy . . ." Since I mentioned no definition of democracy, it is obvious that Mr. Wood is putting one in my mouth. This method of conducting a controversy is well known among schoolboys.

It seems that Mr. Wood believes (incredibly!) that starvation and mass suffering are confined to the Communist countries—and serve them right, he says in his wisdom. I can only express my unbounded astonishment that he has never heard of starvation and consequent high disease rate and low expectation of life in some of the primary producing countries such as India or Africa, to mention two notorious examples. Probably it serves them right, too? Incidentally, I do not accept the view that the standard of life in the Communist countries is as low as is often said, except perhaps in the case of China, where no new government has yet had time to make much difference either way. In saying this I fully realise that Mr. Wood will be characteristically capable of deducing from it my political views—and probably my height and weight as well.

I would not dream of denying to non-rationalists the privilege of thinking as they like (another Wood invention), which is why I now leave him to his fatuities.—Yours, etc., J. W. B.

FREETHINKING AND POLITICS

SIR,—I have never understood why freethinking has been limited so much to anti-religion. Freethinking and freethought are wide words in their range and should cover politics, morals and econo-

mics, as well as religion. The censorship in political and financial matters is very strong, though hidden in many artful fashions. There is no free criticism on army, navy, air force and police subjects. All these institutions are as important, if not more important, than religions, which it is asserted, even by their supporters, that only a tenth of the population accept.

My own attitude to these religions and their myths is that there is no evidence that anyone who has lived in this world has any real knowledge of how the world (or the universe in general) came into existence, what its purpose is (if any), nor how it will disappear, or what its relationship is to the rest of the universe. All the prophets are as ignorant on these topics as those they presume to teach. Indeed! they talk even more nonsense than their dupes, as they invent the yarns which their followers accept. It is equally difficult to understand the vagaries of what are called Nature and Fate—two terms as meaningless as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. These matters seem totally removed from the current stream of life. But politics, morals and economics touch more closely the affairs of men and women from day to day, and are as much controlled by vested interests in all countries as the mind on religious subjects is controlled in Roman Catholic states. Hence, the light of freethought should shine its lantern in these dark places as much as possible.—Yours, etc.,

C. H. NORMAN.

[The following letter was sent by "T.H." to the B.B.C.—Editor.]

DEAR SIRS,—Monday, December 28, I happened to overhear part of your "Children's Hour" programme. I was just about to switch the receiver off, when three announcements, each time promising the "TRUE" story of Christmas, caught my fancy.

It has become the basic axiom of modern education that children must never be told a lie; and—I pondered—nobody but an eye-witness can vouchsafe for the correctness of the Biblical story with all the well-known contradictions and historical discrepancies. However, knowing the pietistic trend in the B.B.C. which wouldn't miss an opportunity to underline time and again what I have come to call the "soppiest season of the year," I wondered what could be offered as the dead-sure true report.

I felt highly angered and annoyed when the old yarn was rehashed. The "True Story of Christmas" could have meant how the 25th December came to be regarded as the proper day. Be it noted that even in Roman Catholic seminaries—surely the most fundamentalist institutions besides Tibetan lamasarais—it is being admitted that that day is NOT the "birthday of Jesus" but had to be chosen for several reasons, mainly in pursuance of old custom. That meandering story could have been served up as a "True" report of Christmas without any harm to anybody. But unless your pious aunt who made the rehash can prove that she herself was an eye-witness to what she reported, she has not the right to tell our children that hers is a three-times-true report.—Yours faithfully, T. H.

THE COST OF ROYALTY

SIR,—I must congratulate my critic, W. E. Nicholson, on his good fortune in having reached that happy state described by the poet, where ". . . no sound of human sorrow mounts to mar their sacred, everlasting calm!"

From whence, referring to my statement, "the homeless multitudes who are taxed to provide several whole villages, besides palaces, for one parasitical family," he scornfully demands, "where are these homeless multitudes and how do you tax them?" B'issful unconsciousness of the bitter realities of the life that now is, where there is no town, however small, without its long list of those seeking homes on its housing list, not to mention the almost daily evictions of families, many of whom are broken up and existing in what are ironically known as "rest homes," or Public Institutions. And these unfortunates know only too well of purchase tax and many taxes besides, even if W.E.N. is fortunate enough not to.

Referring to the factory gate, there is no need to tell those who through them every day of house shortage and high taxation. Too many of them experience these evils, either in their own person or through those near and dear to them, and they also know that it does matter very much how money extracted by taxation is spent. And they are equally aware that those who live lives immune from the things I have referred to only do so by living on the produce of the workers.—Yours, etc.,

JAMES H. MATSON.

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE. The celebrated series of eighteen pamphlets bound in one volume. A complete introduction to Freethought, with clear exposures of the commonest religious errors and fallacies. 5s. (postage 3d.).