

# The Freethinker

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RECENTLY in this column we made a brief reference to the Jesuit "Republic" in (what is now) Paraguay. As we have, since writing the article in question, received several inquiries about the famous Order and its South American State, we think that a more extended treatment of this little-known theme might be not without interest to the readers of *The Freethinker*. The subject is, perhaps, one of more than an antiquarian interest since it may shed some light on Catholic sociology in future as well as in past times.

The "Company of Jesus," to give the Order its correct title, was founded by the Spanish ex-soldier, Ignatius of Loyola, officially in 1540. Contrary to the often repeated assertion, the famous *Company* was *not* originally founded with the object of fighting the Reformation. That came later. Loyola, after being invalidated out of the Spanish Army after a severe wound, went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem. On his return to Europe he founded his new Order with the object of fighting the Turks and of freeing Jerusalem, and the Holy Sepulchre of Christ by a new crusade against the Muslim Empire, then the greatest military power of the day.

The "Warriors" of the Church

As has often been pointed out the Jesuit Order is, in many ways, a "Church within the Church," an organisation with strongly marked peculiarities of its own. As befitted its original military purpose, Loyola organised his Movement on strictly military lines; the title, chosen by the Founder "Company" ("Compania") having a definitely military significance. A famous modern military leader has aptly defined the Jesuits in these terms: "An essentially military organisation, highly centralised, aggressive and dangerous, alike to friend and foe. By his militant psychology and his aggressive war against the enemies of the Church, the Jesuit of the 'heroic' age stood out as the warrior of the Church, in distinction from its bureaucrats" [of L. D. Trotsky—*Their Morals and Ours*]. One may add that the Jesuits have always been in their element in ages of "storm and stress," when they intervened actively on behalf of the Church. In quiet times, contrarily, the "warriors" of the Church have tended to degenerate into its "bureaucrats"!

## The "Republic" of Paraguay

The 16th and 17th centuries constituted the Golden Age of the Jesuits during which they virtually dominated the Church and became themselves a major force in world politics. Not content with their powerful role in European affairs they acquired much influence in both China and in the American lands recently conquered by the Catholic European Powers, Spain, Portugal and in Canada, France. In (what was then) Spanish America, the Jesuits actually succeeded in establishing a territorial state under their own direct rule. In what is now the Republic of Paraguay, the Jesuits established a State which lasted for a century and a half, that is, from 1608-1768, when the

Jesuits were expelled from the Spanish Empire prior to the temporary dissolution of their Order by the Papacy (1773-1814).

## A Theocratic State

The Jesuit "Republic," which made a world-wide sensation in its day, was a Theocracy, a highly centralised dictatorship exercised nominally in the name of the King of Spain, but, in practice, absolutely, by the Jesuits themselves. The actual territory over which they exercised effective control is computed to have comprised about 6,000 leagues of the most fertile land in (what is now)

### —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## The Jesuits in Paraguay

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

Paraguay. Over this fairly extensive territory the Jesuits bore a despotic sway about as "totalitarian," probably, as any known to history, including the Fascist and Communist States of to-day.

## Russia, the Incas and Sir Thomas More

The European historian of the Jesuits, Mr. R. Faelöp-Miller, has made a, perhaps, not altogether fanciful comparison between the Jesuitical regime in Paraguay and the modern Soviet regime, particularly in its earlier, more communistic form. A much more probable resemblance is to be found, in our opinion, with that other South American Theocracy, the Peruvian Empire of the Incas, "The Amerindian" "children of the Sun," who were conquered by Pizarro and his iron-clad Spaniards early in the 16th century (1532-6). The Incas, also, practised a totalitarian form of political and economic collectivism of which the Jesuits must have known; another interesting and, in the present writer's submission, probable derivation is from the *Utopia* of Sir Thomas More, who, as a Catholic martyr since canonised, enjoyed an enormous reputation in Catholic literary circles. Some of the collectivist ideas advocated in *Utopia* (1516) seemed to have been consciously reproduced in the Jesuit "Republic."

## Economic Collectivism

Mr. Faelöp-Miller has described the Jesuit regime as the only form of Communism ever administered by men of European race. In view of the mainly revolutionary antecedents of modern Communism we would prefer to substitute the term "collectivist" for "Communist." There was nothing revolutionary about the slave-state, based on forced labour, which the sons of Loyola founded in the forests of South America! Contrarily, a population of illiterate Guarani "Indians," numbering perhaps as much as 150,000, were penned like sheep into some 30 Jesuit settlements, where every minute of their lives was regulated from birth to burial. But (in modern parlance) "the land, the means, and the instruments of production," were owned by the Jesuits, no private property existed, all trade was forbidden within the Jesuit State. Whilst, what in Russia is termed "a monopoly of foreign trade," regulated all external relations between Paraguay and the outside world, money was forbidden, as likely, to corrupt the simple

natives! Attendance at the public ceremonies of the Church was, of course, compulsory, as was work on the public lands, known as "God's estate," a select band of Jesuits, usually two in each settlement, presided over their flocks, and, *mutatis mutandis* concentrated as much power in their hands as any government can ever have enjoyed. Herbert Spencer's famous dictum, "all socialism is slavery," could well have been derived from this species of State—or, rather, clerical—"socialism"!

### The Downfall of the Jesuits

The fall of the Jesuit State in 1768 has been variously ascribed to commercial jealousy on the part of the Spanish private traders; to fear on the part of the Spanish Crown that its then tottering empire in South America might be

overthrown by an "Indian" rising led by the Jesuits who had raised an independent Paraguayan army from amongst the aborigines; and to the anti-Jesuitical ideas of Voltaire, which were then influential even at the Spanish Court. The Jesuits have gone from Paraguay, but deep traces of their regime remain, both amongst the Paraguayans, who in the 19th century suffered virtual extermination with the blind obedience to which the Jesuits had accustomed them for so long, as also on the Paraguayan landscape itself. As recently as 1931, Mr. Julian Duguid recalled his astonishment at the impressive ruins of the Jesuit settlements still scattered throughout the "Green Hell" of the primeval wilderness (of J. Duguid—*Green Hell*). They bear witness to as strange a social experiment as can be found anywhere throughout the pages of history.

## Carruthers and the Angel

By JOSHUA C. GREGORY

CARRUTHERS read from the book on his knee: "The few people who seem, on evidence, to have survived death, since they desired to communicate with the living, or even arranged to do so, may have survived *because they wanted to*."

He paused over the final words, mused for a moment, and then stared incredulously at the opposite chair. "I hope I have not startled you," came a gentle voice, "but when we angels do appear to you mortals, in this world of sense, we can only appear suddenly."

Carruthers rubbed his eyes, pinched his ear, took off his spectacles, put them on again, and stared at the angel with a bewildered sense that reality was somehow unreal. "I am real," said the angel, "and I have a message for you. No! no!", as Carruthers shuffled uneasily, "your time is not yet, though, of course. . . ." "I know," replied Carruthers grimly, "it will come, and, possibly . . . possibly, your message relates to its coming."

Then the angel told Carruthers that he was to have a choice. When his time came he could live on beyond the grave, or, if he so decided, he could perish as completely as the first fire lit on earth by human hands had perished. Carruthers started up, reflected, and then hesitatingly asked what sort of life it would be. The angel, it seemed to him, either could not, or, at least for the moment, would not answer.

When I go into the furnace, Carruthers reflected, I shall have no eyes, no ears, and no hands. If there are roses, I shall not see them; if the spheres do make music, I shall not hear it. If I do decide to survive, my choice will involve me in a strange kind of existence. What will happen when I come to a wall if I can neither see nor feel nor touch it? It cannot bump me, apparently, shall I simply go through it? "The wall, of course, would not exist *for you*": the angel had evidently divined his thoughts.

Then, thought Carruthers, the whole material world would not exist for me. Still, I would have my memories I suppose, I would see rainbows, perhaps talk again with my friends, possibly read reminiscently discussions on immortality, as I might do in a dream. Then I would live perpetually in the phantasmagoria of an enduring dream without knowing it. Is this survival to be entirely a perpetual memory—the thought is rather terrifying. I may not even have memory if the furnace leaves of me only an urnful of ashes. To survive without both senses and memory seems to be indistinguishable from complete perishing.

"Your thoughts are natural enough," said the angel, again divining them, "but it is difficult, indeed impossible, to explain to you what happens to you on survival." If this promised future existence is a veritable paradise, as

yet inconceivable by me, thought Carruthers, I do not like to miss it by refusal. "You would not *lose* it," said the angel with insight and a smile, "a loss involves a loser." No, thought Carruthers, the non-existent certainly cannot lose paradise, or anything else; either, he reminded himself sharply, I shall endure a further life of trouble and vexation, or worse, if the furnace finishes me.

"It is difficult to choose," said the angel, "but choose you must." Surely, thought Carruthers, I can leave, or even must leave, my fate to Nature or to whatever powers and circumstances control it. "No," answered the angel to his thought, "you *must* choose; all men do choose, though they usually do not know that they do; I am here to tell you that you must."

Memories and ideas fluttered through Carruthers's consciousness. "There was once," he said at last, "if I remember rightly, a vogue for a belief in conditional immortality. I remember the vogue vaguely, but, according to this doctrine, presumably, any man lives on if he is fit or moral enough, and does not if he is not. If this is so, perhaps the spiritual universe will not become too crowded. Each man would then, I suppose, choose, however unwittingly, to survive or not to survive simply by living or not living fittingly." The angel seemed to nod approvingly. "As you human beings sometimes say," he said, "you are getting warm."

While the angel was explaining to him, Carruthers seemed to himself to be thinking rather than listening. The thoughts, as he recollected them afterwards, seemed to be very much his own.

The various beliefs in a future life actually secure survival for the believers, for they live on because they think they will, though not in the way they expect. Roughly expressed, suggestion secures survival, and *is*, in effect, the choice. Each man, by operating his auto-suggestion, chooses to survive, or, by not operating it, chooses annihilation. Religious beliefs in immortality, are suggestive systems that suggest men into suggesting their own survival.

The interview ended dramatically as the angel dissolved into eddying wandering cloud-like streams that vanished into thin air. Carruthers had been watching the smoke from his cigarette and had been dream-thinking, he realised. I wonder, he said to himself as he put the book back on its shelf, whether we do survive if we want to. Then, as he wondered whether he wanted to or not, the dinner-bell rang.

**GOD AND THE UNIVERSE.** By Chapman Cohen. Criticism of Professors Huxley, Eddington, Jeans and Einstein. Price, cloth 4s. 3d.; postage 3d.; paper 2s. 6d.; postage 2d.

# The Future of Secularism

By G. H. TAYLOR

THE great question which looms up after considering the history of our movement is: Can secularism to-day prosper on its own momentum? Does it contain within itself all that is necessary to bring its objects to fruition? Or is the success of these aims dependent on some form of social upheaval in the political sphere? To what extent can the movement determine its own future?

To these problems two kinds of answer are current. The first may perhaps be stated picturesquely as follows: Christ is the ostler saddling the proletarian ass for its capitalist rider. What is the ass to do? Shall he overthrow the rider or merely kick the ostler? Secularism is concerned merely with kicking the ostler. Far better to put the ostler out of a job by helping in the overthrow of the rider.

The contrary view may be expressed as follows: The ostler is a cunning fellow. Overthrow the present rider and he will stand by to do the saddling for any new rider who comes along. And while secularists differ as to the best avenue for the donkey's welfare, they are united in their attitude to the ostler. And while there are already other movements claiming to represent the animal's best interests, to any of which secularists may individually attach themselves, they are the only body militantly attending to the ostler.

To leave the metaphor, the respective points of view may be summarised thus: According to the first, the principles and objects of the secular movement cannot be carried to the best advantage in a non-political vehicle. Cut out definite political aims and you have a body of people agreed as to the brotherliness of being secularists and also as to the brotherliness of doing nothing about it. The banner they think they are carrying could be torn to shreds, the liberty they imagine they enjoy could be snatched away in an instant, just so soon as they become dangerous. Their liberty is that of the chained goat who never wants to go beyond the length of the chain. The priests and priestly would be able to carry out a policy of suppression just so soon as secularism threatened their existence, these same powers who now treat it with scowls, or with apathy, or even repulsive faint praise, but not with persecution. Persecution is an honour done to a movement. It is not possible now to live on the successes of Bradlaugh; the struggle has moved to another quarter. A political spearhead is needed to make the policy on paper come to a fighting reality. Secularist doctrine is subordinated to economic in the way that the desire for food is subjected to the ability to pay for it. Wanting secularism before economic reconstruction is like a woman wanting a baby without undergoing the pains of carrying it. When the Christian master, the State, can dismiss his Atheist employee, what security is there for the latter in the advancement of his opinions? None, till he is the economic and social equal of his master. The freedom secularists seek arises from economic equality, not from exploitation. Genuine freedom of thought and speech emerge from conditions. Will the secularist fight to create those conditions? Or does he prefer the foolish martyrdom of Atheism on an empty stomach? History teaches that the ruling classes have used religion as an opiate for the mental shackling of the masses. Can anything end this state of affairs other than bringing the struggle to a head by the overthrow of class rule? Can we believe that those who hold the reins of power, those who wield the influence of religion, those who organise the intellectual prostration of the people, will quietly allow your slow reformatory processes to eat into their smug privileges? What of the sedition and blasphemy

laws, waiting to curtail any potential dangers? The only remedy is political work directed to the overthrow of the present regime, and the establishment of a classless society in which freedom is provided with the necessary economic basis, which would mean that religion would be forced to defend itself in the open, and forced to finance itself. But if reformatory secularism, unsupported politically, showed signs of exerting an intellectual influence on an effective scale, its economic basis would be snapped by those in power. Without first laying the economic foundation, what secularism proposes is a mansion in the air.

The second viewpoint runs somewhat as follows: What the other proposes may be a concrete foundation for an ugly prison. To put the economic before the cultural struggle, instead of letting them run coeval, is to take grave risks. If we are to cease our frontal attack on religion and superstition, what guarantee is there that your new "proletarian" rulers will not be as dictatorial and intolerant as ever? Will the dictatorship of the (Christian) proletariat be any improvement? Surely the change to a better politico-economic structure will be facilitated by having a culturally enlightened people as its foundation. Or are we to allow the emergence of a society liable to be hypnotised into theocratic fascism as in Spain? Is it not wiser to create an intelligent, sceptical body of people able to think for themselves? And as Marx said, the man is ready to question anything who has already questioned religion. Such a people, however distant, is more valuable because intellectually free, than one made economically secure but mentally in chains. And if the secular movement is not as strong as it should be, that is an extra reason for trying to make more secularists. For every fifty who will join a political movement to-day, only one will join the secular movement, which makes him more rare, and correspondingly more valuable to civilised progress. Nor are secularists idle politically as individuals. But only as the movement itself is non-political can it collect support from all political opinion, support which would otherwise be wasted.

Between these opposite viewpoints there are no doubt intermediate shades of opinion. Generally speaking, secularists and rationalists incline far more to the second. It is safe to assume that the great majority desire to keep the movement non-party political. It is even safer to assert that no present political party claims the unqualified enthusiasm of many secularists. Whatever our personal dream of the political future, the principles for which Bradlaugh stood, though applied to his age and to the circumstances of his century, are essentially inherent in the desire for human betterment.

(To be concluded)

## Sky Pilots

You have so debilitated the minds of men and women by your promises and your dreams that many a generation must come and go before Europe can throw off the yoke of your superstition. But we promise you that they shall be generations of strenuous battle. We give you all the advantages that you can get from the sincerity and pious worth of the good and simple among you. We give you all that the bad among you may get by resort to the poisoned weapons of your profession and your traditions—its bribes to mental indolence, its hypocritical affectations in the pulpit, its tyranny in the closet, its false speciousness in the world; its menace at the death-bed.—*John Morley.*

AGE OF REASON. By Thomas Paine. With 40 page introduction by Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 3s. 9d.,

## This Believing World

To usher the Rev. B. Graham out in a blaze of publicity, our TV pundits cleverly managed to get the Editor of *Punch* to interview him. Without a spark of humour—which could not be expected on such a solemn occasion—Mr. Muggeridge very reverently asked a few leading questions, and was suitably answered by the Great Evangelist. Even when *Punch's* representative did not quite agree with all Mr. Graham's methods, he was still sacredly reverent—and particularly so when he contemplated the crowds who piously came forward to accept Christ so graciously presented to them by Mr. Graham.

These "converts" were all in fact good Christians who certainly had accepted Christ on many former occasions and who, no doubt, anxious to share the terrific publicity of the Rev. Billy, accepted the Son of the Living God again. We cannot help wondering why Mr. Muggeridge did not himself solemnly take his place in the Heavenly Queue if he felt all he said he did about the Revival. Are we to understand that it is not necessary for an Editor of our premier humorous journal to accept Christ? Or has Christ already entered into his life—or what?

Another TV picture of "Men Seeking God" was of a Franciscan monk and an English Jesuit both talking much like Billy Graham but from a purely Roman Catholic point of view without, of course, mentioning Rome as the only true Church. It was all very familiar, and is regularly duplicated in Catholic journals every week. This was only to be expected, but the interviewer, Mr. Christopher Mayhew, should have asked and got a definite answer as to whether any of these very religious people really did find God, and having found him, could have told the viewers what they did with the old gentleman—that is, if he is an old gentleman.

As far as it was possible to judge from the TV representation of these men seeking God—all we could find out was that they said they had found the elusive Spirit—that is, if he is a Spirit—but they mostly looked unhappy about it. The Hindu, the Muslim, and the Buddhist, appear to have found it necessary to grovel and pray, all we could discover that the Jew found was a richly dressed copy of the Law which he liked to carry about, and the Franciscan counted his beads and meditated. A fat lot of good did these wasters of precious time do for anybody. If they helped the needy—as they claimed—that was not "seeking God" but practising pure *Secularism*.

As the Sabbatarians have managed to get the cinemas closed on Sundays in Blackpool—will this be counted as a victory for the Lord, or for Billy Graham? It does seem, however, incredible that such a progressive town as Blackpool should flout modern public opinion in this primitively Christian way. From the huge "guides" to Blackpool issued for the benefit of intending visitors, one would never suspect that Blackpool could have submitted to such astounding intolerance. We wonder—are people allowed to bathe there on the Lord's Day?

That halfway house to reason, the Unitarian Church, is in "a perilous condition," moaned the Rev. F. W. Barr recently addressing the Durham Unitarian Christian Association. But what can he expect? Unitarians are hopelessly divided among themselves—some believing in one God only, others in one God and Jesus Christ—Jesus being, of course, the greatest Unitarian Christian that ever lived. Some Unitarians (we believe) are even willing to accept a little—that is, highly diluted—Trinitarianism. In

any case, what can Unitarians give to this troubled world of ours worth the taking?

The Chief Reporter on the *Bolton Evening News* appears to be profoundly shocked that a headmistress of a local school found that the senior girls hardly knew what the Ten Commandments were. They had a vague notion that they were in a book called the Bible, but few could even recite one of these masterpieces of God Almighty. This reporter calls it "appalling" that the girls "should be so completely unaware of the basis of the Christian ethic." We find it appalling that he should call the Ten Commandments "Christian ethic." Christians, as he well knows, pinched them from the Jews, as indeed they pinched the whole of the Old Testament. In any case, does the Chief Reporter himself keep the Sabbath Day as he is told to in the Ten Commandments? Of course not.

## Chapman Cohen

MR. EDWARD J. BARRETT, of Nelson, New Zealand, who was, for many years, a prominent member of the Christchurch Rationalist Association, sends us this appreciation of the life and work of Chapman Cohen:—

"I have read all the fine tributes to Chapman Cohen's life and work and am modest enough not to attempt to do other than endorse the sentiments that have been expressed so ably and so faithfully in the pages of *The Freethinker*.

Cohen, with few educational qualifications, was a very great man and his contribution to Freethought, to logic and to clarity of expression, will remain his enduring monument.

He had all the qualifications of a great leader—intellect, courage, wit, and above all, a sense of humour. I have been indebted to his writings for over 40 years and shall continue to derive stimulus and inspiration from his books as long as I live. However, the fact that he had completed his life's work, that he had reached a ripe old age, and owed life nothing, we must not express any sentimental lament at his passing. Rather let us proclaim our gratitude that he had lived at all and achieved so much for the enlightenment of his fellows."

## The Ides of March

The March upon Jerusalem had petered out  
In the Garden of Gethsemane in fear;  
The followers of Jesus were scattered in a rout,  
Though Simon Peter's sword sliced off an ear.  
Then Romans nailed its Leader to a cross,  
And all he stood for was a total loss.

The March on Rome was counted a success,  
Although the Fascist Leader went by train  
In first-class carriage in the Rome Express  
From Milan, thus avoiding shots and rain.  
His followers then claimed that he marched into the town:  
But after twenty-three more years his corpse hung upside-down.

The Cardinal-Archbishop, a kindly, cultured man,  
From Westminster to Lourdes travelled in a plane,  
He led his ailing Pilgrims, packed in a luggage van;  
They suffer much, but much they hope, and none  
complain;

Let but the Blessed Virgin on these sick folk smile,  
They deem the March on Lourdes is for them worth while.

STEPHEN YORKE.

CHRISTIANITY—WHAT IS IT? By Chapman Cohen. A criticism of Christianity from a not common point of view. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2d.

# THE FREETHINKER

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## To Correspondents

- C. J. LITTLE.—Yes, we have read about Mohenjo-daro and the Indus Civilization. The city made great progress, for, for 1,000 years, it lived in peace. A good book is Mackay's *Early Indus Civilizations*.
- W. E. HUXLEY.—Thanks for your praise of paper recently.
- G. GLADDEN.—Our attack on religion includes *all* religions, *not* excluding Judaism.
- JAMES F. KIRKHAM (Canada).—Thanks for your periodical reports of the "Bible Belt."
- H. McADAM.—The Catholic church may be pro-Labour to-day, pro-Fascist tomorrow, but always pro-Catholic.
- Z.—You can become a member of the N.S.S. without being active in it. Moral and financial support count too. Membership would be confidential.
- JEAN DUNN.—Agnosticism is all right where there is something to be agnostic about.
- JOHN D. HASLOP.—Gestalt psychology is quite harmonious with modern materialism.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.*
- 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

- J. Clayton's Lectures.—Friday, June 11, 7-30 p.m., Wheatley Lane. Sunday, June 13, 7-30 p.m., Preston (Town Hall Sq.). Tuesday, June 15, 7-30 p.m., Padiham.
- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 3 and 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL. From June 13, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL and J. CLAYTON.
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday at 7 p.m.: HAROLD DAY and others.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle St.).—Every Sunday at 8 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER, E. MILLS and others.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every week-day, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields: a Lecture.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, noon: H. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.
- West London Branch N.S.S.—H. ARTHUR, W. J. O'NEILL, L. EBURY, C. E. WOOD, G. H. TAYLOR. Hyde Park, every Sunday, 5 p.m.

## Notes and News

The formation of a new branch of the N.S.S. to be known as the Worthing Branch was announced at the Conference. The prime mover in this achievement was Mr. W. Perkins, a Parent Branch member, who in March called a meeting of those interested and invited the General Secretary to visit Worthing to meet them. Readers desiring to make contact with the new branch should write to Mr. W. Perkins, 8a, Rugby Road, Worthing, Sussex.

With so many of the Society's prominent speakers at Manchester during the week-end, Whit-Sunday was a testing time for others at present less well known. It is no easy task to deputise for a Len Ebury, a J. W. Barker, a Harold Day or a W. J. O'Neill, but meetings took place as usual at their regular pitches, which should encourage yet more members to come forward and qualify themselves by study, preparation and "having a go," to play a part in the essential task of sowing the seeds from which a sane attitude towards personal and social problems can spring.

The B.B.C., a public institution which has always set its face against allowing a straightforward statement of free-thought and secularist ideas to be given through the

channels it controls, ought to take note that another public body is less intolerant and hidebound. Last week the Current Affairs Section of the Social Club at the National Coal Board Headquarters heard a talk and asked questions on "Secularism," the speaker being the Secretary of the N.S.S. Other discussion groups, please copy, thereby demonstrating the ridiculous nature of the B.B.C. boycott.

## Northern Notes

By COLIN McCALL

ONE Sunday afternoon recently, Mr. Jack Clayton, of Burnley, was a welcome visitor to Platt Fields, Manchester, and, when asked to do so, he said a few words to the audience around the N.S.S. platform. Following on from this casual visit, Mr. Clayton will now make more frequent appearances at "Manchester's Hyde Park." It should—and, I hope, will—be possible to arrange some sort of area campaign between the north-western branches in an effort to strengthen each and all of them. We live in an age of planning and Secularists must plan too.

\* \* \*

On Saturday, May 22, a new £5,500 hall was opened at the Whitefield (Lancashire) Methodist Chapel to meet the needs of "a Church revival." In the last four years Sunday school membership has increased from 150 to 340 and adult Church membership from 130 to 230. Not a revival of Billy Graham magnitude, perhaps, but quite a disturbing reminder of the popular appeal of Methodism in the region. The Methodists are firm believers in showmanship and are prepared to exploit every possible means of thrusting their religion at the public. One of these is found in the pub. First gaining permission from brewer and landlord, the preacher proceeds to dispense his own particular brand of Christianity to people who want only a particular brand of beer: a blatant but unashamed intrusion into people's leisure hours. On certain special days like Good Friday, the stages of Rank-circuit cinemas become their pulpits; at other times they attract congregations to their own halls by the presence of well-known sporting personalities. All to the greater glory of God, no doubt!

\* \* \*

Londoners enjoy certain privileges not bestowed upon provincials and one of the latest is that dramatic emanation from the brain of T. S. Eliot—*The Confidential Clerk*. It has not yet been seen in the north, but its immediate predecessor, *The Cocktail Party*, was recently revived in Manchester. To regard the play as having poetic or philosophic merit it is necessary to surrender one's critical faculties and be distracted by the aura that surrounds the venerable man. Mr. Eliot has been described as "the best British poet ever to have been born in St. Louis," but the American critic Mr. John Mason Brown has rightly called the poetry of this play "optical rather than auditory." Mr. Brown was surely right, too, when he said that the play starts "trivially" and ends "in a pea-soup fog of mysticism." There, alas, lies much of Mr. Eliot's appeal to the intelligentsia. He is obscure and they revel in it.

## The Holy Canon

It is still unknown by WHOM, OF WHERE, OF WHEN, the canon of the New Testament was settled. But in this absence of positive evidence we have abundant evidence of negative proof. We know when it was *not* settled. We know that it was *not* settled in the time of the Emperor Justinian, nor in the time of Cassiodorus, that is, not at any time before the middle of the sixth century.—*Robert Taylor.*

NEXT WEEK

INTERVIEW WITH N.S.S. SPEAKERS

By JACK CLAYTON

# What is Buchmanism?

By H. CUTNER

LOOKING through the history of various Christian sects one cannot help but marvel at the way their leaders almost immediately had enthusiastic followers. Nothing too silly ever stopped a "founder" from gathering almost fanatical disciples, many of them even "plus royaliste que le roi." This can be said of many other movements if you like, but it is especially true of religion.

Who, knowing something of the antecedents of the late Mrs. Eddy, would ever have imagined she could have started a movement which has grown into such vast proportions as that known as Christian Science? Yet there it is—a huge organisation with nearly unlimited funds. And what about Mormonism? Could anyone ever imagine that Joseph Smith, aided by an unpublished romance called *The Book of Mormon*, could have started something which eventually gave us Salt Lake City with its population of over 500,000 all believing in a version of Christianity quite as silly as that engineered by the inimitable Eddy?

Thinking of both these instances—and many more—I am not surprised at the huge success in turn of "Buchmanism" which I knew of thirty years ago as "the Oxford Group." These religious movements only become really famous when they can command, not so much old or new ideas regarding religion, as hard cash. That is the great test. Unlimited funds, and disciples from the ranks of the aristocracy and people with honours or degrees form the basis of their success—but first and foremost is the cash.

Without blatantly begging for money as does the Salvation Army, the Buchmanites have managed to draw in hundreds of thousands of pounds in hard cash not only from well-known business men but also from the ranks of the lowest-paid workers. And the fascinating story of the great success of Buchman and his followers is most interestingly related in *Inside Buchmanism* by Geoffrey Williamson (Watts & Co., 12s. 6d. net).

This book recounts the personal investigations of the author not only at the Head Palace of the Movement in Caux in Switzerland, but gives also an analysis of the books, facts, and figures, sent out by Buchmanism for roping in more converts. And from all this one gathers that although at first—thirty years ago—the Oxford Group dealt with "confessions" and a crude form of Christianity, it is now mostly concerned with "Moral Re-Armament"—whatever that is—very little with Christianity as such, and a great deal about hard cash.

Dr. Frank Buchman started in a small way, conducting what is described as "personal evangelism" among Oxford undergraduates which resulted (about the year 1928) in their being called the "Oxford Group." And almost to the outbreak of war it was based entirely on a kind of Fundamentalistic Christianity. Its Devils, Hell, Miracles, Heaven, Gods, Angels, were all real, as for that matter they are in the Revivalism of Billy Graham. It can be said as a truism no religious movement can draw many converts, distinguished or not, and certainly little hard cash, unless it is completely Fundamentalist and infantile. The money regularly sent to the Lord's Day Observance Society comes from the all-believing—from people who are ready to go further in idiotic belief than even the average Christian. These Fundamentalists actually believe that the Lord's Day is the Sabbath of the Bible! And look at the money which has been poured into the coffers of all our Missionary Societies who always teach the most primitive type of Christianity. The slightest deviation from the most pious orthodoxy would mean a tremendous loss to their funds.

Thus, it did not take Dr. Buchman long, especially when he coined the words "Moral Re-Armament," to rope in hundreds of thousands of pounds, for he took good care to couple his appeal with the crudest Christian teaching. He even insisted on the old Catholic doctrine of "confession" with the difference that it must be in public and not in private as taught by Rome.

That he believed it all himself is beside the point. He had no difficulty in finding loyal disciples who could even out-talk him in the Buchman jargon. Mr. Williamson's most entertaining pages are those in which he details his reception at Caux, the anxious way in which everybody was willing to impress him how very very happy they were now that they had thoroughly imbibed M.R.A. and were always ready to give all in return for the unbelievable joy of being there. Caux was a sort of glorified holiday camp with its "guests" bubbling over with happiness at doing something for the "cause," and for dear old Frank. Most of the "workers" gave their services voluntarily, some (I believe) even paid to work for Buchman, and in the meantime those "at the top" appeared to have unlimited funds, motor cars, all "expenses" being paid in a royal manner. They were entirely relieved of the necessity of earning any money like the poor boobs *outside* Buchmanism.

Everything in the sect was efficiently organised—in particular, the sale of its literature which was in the million number. People bought such works as Peter Howard's *Innocent Men* in hundreds of thousands, and they packed the theatres and cinemas where plays and films depicting M.R.A. in some form or other were being shown. While Mr. Williamson was at Caux he heard appeals made for three million Swiss francs, and no doubt the money will roll in.

There were dozens of incongruous things which jarred on Mr. Williamson, but he had to admit there were many things which he admired in Buchmanism. One reason for this is, no doubt, that he is a believer and not a Freethinker. He does not like the way a Buchmanite will sit with a pencil and paper before him "to listen to God" and write down what God tells him to do; though, for me, this is no sillier than "belief" in a God, however sincere, and whatever the form it takes.

The Freethinker can never hope to rival as far as money is concerned such business organisations as Christian Science, Roman Catholicism or Buchmanism. He cannot appeal to God or Jesus. He cannot hope for wealthy patrons when he actually points out that the work of modern Anthropologists has shown belief in Gods, Devils, Miracles, and similar things to be based on fear and the mistaken ideas of primeval man. It debunks the whole of the Christian creed as well as other religions. And there is nothing all believers in religion hate and fear more than this kind of "debunking."

Our task may be the harder because there is no kudos and precious little money to propagate Freethought; but those of us who have grown old in doing so know that, if nothing else, Truth is ever on our side.

## The Crusaders

The subjugated people were therefore dragged into the public places and slain as victims. Women with children at the breast, girls and boys, all were slaughtered. The squares, the streets, and even the uninhabited places of Jerusalem, again were strewn with the dead bodies of men and women, and the mangled limbs of children. No heart melted into compassion or expanded into benevolence.

# The Pope and Sex

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

THE Pope's latest encyclical letter reaffirms "the Church's doctrine of the superiority of virginity to marriage." It seems to us that there are plenty of married people whose opinion would have been more worth publishing, since they have at least had experience of both states. Not that we disagree entirely with His Holiness, for, since the condition of marriage always involves two individuals, we must consider whether there are not some members of each sex who are totally unfitted to inflict themselves on others in this way. Obviously there are, although fortunately they are a small minority of the human race.

Of the normal majority, any who prefer to remain bachelors or spinsters, virgins or not, have a perfect right to do so. Most of them share in the useful tasks of the world, and would laugh at the suggestion that the sexual status of priests, monks and nuns is superior to that of the married. Marriage, or other union of love, preferably crowned with parenthood deliberately chosen, is, they would agree, the normal fulfilment of a healthy human nature.

Considering the amount of pernicious nonsense that the Vatican is for ever promulgating, we may grant that the said doctrine of the superiority of virginity to marriage might have been justified if the Pope's parents had acted on it.

The encyclical also condemns sexual education for the young. Such instruction is of course wasted on the minority who had better remain celibate, and the Church is quite content, nay, insists that the rest shall be left to reap the harvest of ignorance—a high illegitimate birth-rate, widespread prostitution, unchecked venereal disease, over-large families and crowded slums.

Students for the priesthood, continues this edifying

document, ought not to be allowed to read any book or see any film or be acquainted with everything that happens in the world. They should be "formed for spiritual life and for priestly and religious perfection before being brought into the struggle of life." The products of such training will, presumably, be better fitted to make rules for the guidance of the mass of mankind than will those who have grown up face to face with the facts of life and have been educated to cope with them.

There is also condemnation for the supposition that the sexual instinct cannot be contained for an entire lifetime without danger of disturbing the human organism. So far as the overwhelming majority of normal people are concerned, not excepting many who rashly take vows of celibacy, this is not a supposition at all, but a fact of experience. The Pope may deny it, but all doctors, Roman Catholic ones included, know the disorders that can result from an enforced celibacy.

The encyclical contains the statement that "to exalt married life over total consecration to God is to confound the true order of things." It will not be easy for priests to square this with the much-vaunted Roman Catholic concern for the family. Still, Catholic doctrine always was a mass of inconsistency. Moreover, Catholics persist in shutting their eyes to this weakness of their faith. Otherwise they might ask the Pope to explain why God gave them sex organs and sex feelings while making the denial of these gifts the ideal they should strive after. If the Pope is right, and life-long virginity is both desirable and possible, he is calling on Catholics to extinguish their Church in the present century. Secularists have no objection to this, but surely Catholics should challenge the Holy Father on this point.

## Chapman Cohen on Religious Revivals

PARADOXICAL as it may sound every revival of religion is an evidence of its decay. A religion that is real, one that springs from the life and thought of the people amid whom it exists, does not need a national evangelistic service to make it a reality. It is that already. It is only when religion is among us for the same reason that we have a tailed spinal column, or a rudimentary hair covering, as reminders of an earlier state, that it requires frequent stimulants to activity. For the time being we bring about by artificial means what was once brought about quite naturally. And if we could make permanent these lower conditions, then indeed would religion get a new lease of life. But can we? Is it possible nowadays for anyone to arrest permanently the development of knowledge and once more to reduce man to the level of a savage cowering before the creatures of his own imagination? It is possible for religionists to wipe out the Copernican astronomy, the Newtonian physics and the Darwinian biology? Can they prevent mankind developing a society in which the prevailing note shall be happiness? If they can then they may hope for a genuine revival of religion. For it is not a man or an organisation that destroys religion. That is the work of civilisation. Civilised man never discovers gods; he forgets them. It is the savage that plays the part of a midwife to the gods; the function of civilised man is that of an undertaker. You may have a progressive civilisation and a decline of religion, or you may have a growing religion and a declining civilisation. But you cannot have both.

(*The Freethinker*, March, 1921).

## Pain

EVERY Saturday the *Manchester Evenings News* contains an article by a Church of England minister. On May 22, this dealt with that persistent Christian headache, *The Problem of Pain*. He dismisses as "insulting" the old answers that pain is divine punishment and judgment upon sin for, if this were so, it would be "impious" to heal. Instead, he turns his—and our—attention to the sufferings of God, which were not, by any means, confined to the crucifixion. "Never think of God as a mere spectator of your agony," he writes, but "always inside your experience" and suffering in "all one's own suffering." Even if one adopts this attitude, I cannot see how it will ease one's suffering in any way; no more, in fact, than the proverbial "This is going to hurt me more than you" of the father lessens the pain for the beaten child. And he having renounced the old idea of pain as punishment, reverts to the hoary notion that heaven will bring just reward: that God will "atone." "All man is called upon to endure," he tells us, "is but the price of the ineffable boon God is offering him of sharing in His own life. If we aspire to share His glory we must be ready to share His travail." The moral is clear: you cannot expect something for nothing in this world—or the next. C. McC.

## OBITUARY

### Fred Nuttall

On May 27 the death occurred of the above-named devoted and courageous Freethinker. On May 31, at Crewe, Mr. S. Moss paid tribute to his life and character in a Secular Service attended by relatives and friends. Sincere sympathy is extended to the bereaved. J.A.

## Review

The epic poem is the finest product of high poetry, in the same way that the symphony is the bonniest offspring of the master composer. Therefore anyone presenting a written composition self-entitled "A Modern Epic Poem" arouses great expectations, especially, as in this case, the subject is that Homeric figure, Lenin, the master-mind that made the Russian Revolution. But we, having read Mr. James Poulden's offering, feel bound to say that an approach to it in the mood of great expectation is likely to be disappointing. The word *modern* in Mr. Poulden's subtitle may pass muster, but what about *poem*? To this reviewer a poem must have rhythm (a *sine qua non*) and the embellishments of form and rhyme. A great poet like Milton can discard rhyme in his epic, for his blank verse is profoundly rhythmic and confined within the usual heroic form. But what is to be said of a "poem" that discards, or ignores, rhyme, form and rhythm? Only that Mr. Poulden's "Lenin" is well worth reading for fact and thought, but poetic beauty is almost non-existent.

A cynic might say, "What do you expect for 3s. post free in Great Britain and Ireland for a work on an epic subject of over 4,000 lines?" All the essential points of Lenin's career are here, grammatically if not poetically told. But how strange that a man should take such trouble over his hero and yet mis-spell two of his three names and similarly mistreat his devoted wife, Krupskaya, in the same cavalier fashion in her second name. One might put this down to the difficulties in transliteration of the Karyllic alphabet were it not that Liebknecht, the German revolutionary, is minus an "h" at the end of his name. There are mis-spellings of Russian towns, but against these delinquencies there is reliable history of the Revolution and sage reflections thereon. Stalin is mentioned once only and we have the impression that this "poem" was the product of Mr. Poulden's youthful years a couple of decades or more ago.

In conclusion may the reviewer make a reflection of his own. There is always a minority that take mustard with their mutton. Tolerance would not seek to restrain a harmless idiosyncrasy, and if there are people who like their prose cut up into arbitrary lengths, here is an inspiring story of one of the world's greatest reformers treated with worshipful detachment and, after all, one might chant this story. It remains to add that Mr. Poulden's opus can be obtained from his private address, 15, Bury New Road, Bolton.

STEPHEN YORKE.

## Correspondence

### THE FREETHINKER

SIR,—I have purchased your journal every week for about 40 years, and always enjoyed it.

I doubt whether the current issue (May 28, 1954) has ever been excelled in value.

JOHN R. LICKFOLD.

### "MIND"

SIR,—Could you get Mr. W. H. Wood to define "Mind"? One definition is that it is an entity. The other is that it is a process of the brain. Mr. Wood keeps jumping from one to the other like a man caught in the double corner of a checker board.

Your paper is good. I only wish we had something like it in the U.S. I'm all for more Bible banging. As long as the Church continues to quote the Bible it will be necessary.

ANDREW MENICK.

### MR. DU CANN AND HEREDITY

SIR,—Mr. Du Cann attempts to eulogise a fortuitous eugenics where the results of more or less haphazard amorous or pecunious matings produce desirable results. Can this be said when the consequences are not so good? He contrasts stockbreeders' methods with the more casual propagation of humans, but there seems no room for a comparison. Livestock and plants are bred with definite objectives in view. Humans, in their own interests, decide

what these shall be: who would decide what humans should be "bred for"? How would it be known in time whether the person would inherit the characteristics which it was sought to preserve? Who would want to breed from some of those specimens running around to-day who claim to be the *elite* of the race? Give me mongrels in preference.

COLLIN COATES.

Australia.

### CLIMATE AND RELIGION

SIR,—In view of your notes on the influence of ecology and climate on the religious outlook of India and China, it would seem an analogous result occurs in Peru. In a book dealing with the civilisation of the Incas, I read that in the highlands of Peru, where rain is ample, the sun was worshipped with great fervency, and that in the coastal lowlands, where rain rarely occurs and the sun burns eternally on a parched land, sun worship was diluted to little more than polite courtesy, a graduated worship corresponding to climatic graduations. All this amplifies Buckle's theories of the great influence of climate and land contours on cultures and civilisations.

G. S. BROWN.

### WHAT IS ATHEISM?

SIR,—A contributor, Alvin McElvain, says "Atheism is nihilistic; it provides no consistent inspiration for better living. The logical course for Atheists is to squeeze from life the last drop of sense-pleasure."

Atheism is nihilistic only as far as a belief in God is concerned; and no more postulates a "consistent inspiration for better living" than it postulates a cookery-book.

If the logical course for Atheists is to squeeze from life the last drop of sense-pleasure, how can it differ from the logical course of Christians, who, as far as my observation goes, are doing just this?

Can Mr. McElvain pick out Christians from Atheists by their behaviour? There are differences, of course. For instance, in our prisons the greater proportion of inmates are Christians.

We know that there are many persons, even clergy, who are believed to be Christians, but are not. They *dare* not let it be known that with increasing knowledge and experience of life their outlook has changed. What do they fear? Christian *love*? No; Christian *hate*, much more common, and ruthlessly persecuting, being, indeed, a part of that "better living" to which Christianity is presumably a "consistent inspiration."

The Atheist does not need the crutches of Christianity. He has found the truth, and has the courage to follow where it leads. When Christians come out of their anaesthetic, they will find this way to "better living."

EMILY GROUT.

### SCIENCE AND SECULARISM

SIR,—I find little to agree with in P.V.M.'s interesting article on "Science and Secularism," but in view of limitation of space, I confine myself to his denial of Ridley's statement that "Mankind's critical reason is greater than either science or religion."

It seems strange that the secretary of a society that exists solely to encourage the critical reasoning of mankind should throw overboard the main plank of our programme.

Science is obviously neither moral nor immoral; it has been used to the detriment of mankind as well as to his benefit. Press item, May 15: "Two German doctors were sentenced at Lyons yesterday for injecting concentration-camp inmates with typhus and using them as guinea-pigs to test an antidote for phosgene gas." Pure science.

In the past the struggle for free thought and science were one and the same thing, the enemy was theologic dogma and encrusted ignorance, but when power politics and vested interest took science into their armoury, science, figuratively speaking, turned on her old ally, and radio, screen, press, bombs, schools, etc., are now all used to support theologic and encrusted ignorance.

In plain words, science is prostituted, and the only hope of future progress lies with freethought and the critical reason of mankind. If we lose our battle, then mankind has no hope.

EVA EBURY.

(P.V.M. writes: Your correspondent is unfortunate in her choice of a point to criticise in my article, which contained no "denial" of the statement she quotes. I merely questioned the comparison of critical reason with science as if they were two opposites. Since I assented to the valuation of critical reason as greater than religion, she ought not to accuse me of throwing overboard the main plank of the N.S.S. I never said a word in favour of the misuse of scientific discoveries, and it should have been clear to Mrs. Ebury, as it was to other readers, that my aim was to warn them against lining up with religionists, who only attack science in the interests of their irrational and unprogressive beliefs.)

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