

# The Freethinker

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THE history of religion is filled with denunciations of "the love of money, which is the root of all evil." In the New Testament we have the instruction "thou canst not serve God and Mammon." Whilst in the Old Testament the children of Israel were rebuked by no less a person than Moses on account of their public adoration of the Golden Calf. However, even amongst men of God, theory and practice do not always travel hand in hand. Religious bodies, including the Christian Churches, have in practice, been by no means indifferent to the urgent demands of "filthy lucre."

The Materialist or, more narrowly construed, the Economic Interpretation of History, as expounded by Karl Marx and his disciples, has like most of the great historic generalisations—Comte's "Law of the Three Stages," for instance—been both hotly asserted and denied. In the case of economic determinism, there is, also, the further complication that the Marxian dogma is associated in the public mind with revolutionary political theories, with which it has actually no necessary connection. There is, in fact, no apparent reason why, say, a "die-hard" Tory equally with a "dyed-in-the-wool" Communist, should not accept the theory of the primacy of the economic in human affairs, upon which, in fact, all privileged classes normally act! However, when stripped of its contingent association with "leftist" political theory, there still remains the more fundamental scientific question: How far is Economic Determinism true? Here, it seems possible to determine at least a substantial measure of agreement. Everyone must admit that a wide field of activity is guided and conditioned by economic forces. Similarly, the extreme form of the theory, that *nothing* counts except the economic, is clearly absurd in view of modern (post-Marxist) psychological investigations, which reveal the power of non-economic factors of human subjectivity. Between these two extremes, the truth obviously lies. But exactly where? Which are the economically-conditioned fields of human behaviour?

## The Economics of Religion

Religion is, precisely, one of the aspects of human existence, over which the question of the validity of the Economic Interpretation has raged most fiercely. Is the belief in the supernatural due, ultimately, to economic conditions, as the economic "whole-hoggers" unequivocally contend, or must prior importance be attached to primitive psychological states which proved fertile soil for animism? Bakunin, who seems to have accepted economic determinism even after his famous break with Marx, held that the earliest gods were the earliest priest-kings, the Pharaohs of Egypt and their kind. But even granting that this is so, was it the economics or the ideology of the State which played the principal part in the creation of the gods? The question is still *sub judice*.

Whatever view one may hold about the economic causation of religion itself, there can be little dispute about the

immense role which was played by *practical* economic questions in relation to the organised forms assumed by religion, and, specifically to the Christian Churches, even if we hold, with Prof. Alfarié and other critical students of Christian origins, that the earliest Christian congregations, like their Essene prototypes, started with a form of "primitive communism," that is, with a communism of conser-

vation, *not* of production. It seems clear that this did not last long, though, writing about A.D. 170, the Pagan satirist, Lucian of Samosata, describes it as still in existence. When the eagerly-awaited millenium, the return in person of the Messiah "on the clouds of Heaven," unaccountably

failed to materialise, the Church found itself obliged to come to terms with this sinful world here below.

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

### The Golden Calf

By F. A. RIDLEY

#### "Slaves, Obey Your Masters"

Whatever may have been the exact circumstances under which it originated, it is indisputable that Christianity first saw the light during the last phase of the classical Græco-Roman civilisation represented by, politically, the Roman Empire of the Cæsars, and, economically, by the servile state, in which its *human* instruments of production, the slaves, represented the most important economic foundation of the régime. Accordingly, we find such injunctions in the New Testament as, "render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and, "slaves, obey your masters." So far did this collaboration proceed even under the pagan empire, that, long before Constantine, we find the Christian "apologist" Tertullian (200) declaring that: "It is more dangerous to swear falsely by the genius of Cæsar than by that of all the gods put together." The "Total" State in a sentence! After the "conversion" of Constantine, the amalgamation of the new religion with the great servile empire became complete. Of all the, in Churchillian phrase, "terminological inexactitudes" put forward by Christians, the legend that the Christian Church abolished slavery must be regarded as one of the most transparent falsehoods.

#### The Economics of the Reformation

It is scarcely necessary to stress the economic power of the Church during "The Ages of Faith," when "All roads led to Rome," and when the Church owned from 40-50 per cent. of the land of Europe in an agrarian society where landed property was *real* property. Perhaps the most interesting example of the mutual influence of economics and religion is to be found in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, which may be fairly regarded as an economic revolution hardly, if at all less, than one inspired by *religious* objectives and by theological controversies. Here, the economic determinists, who would include religion in the sphere of economic causation, seem to have a pretty strong case. It is indisputable that a fundamental cause, perhaps *the* fundamental cause of the Reformation

ultimately lay, not in the domain of theological controversy, but in the less publicised sphere of economics. Readers of such mediævalist scholars as the late Dr. Coulton, will, we imagine, not take exception to the statement that the most important single cause of the Reformation lay in the amount of money sent out of the country to Rome. The famous "Indulgences" which originally launched Luther on his reforming path, were, to be sure, intended for precisely this last purpose.

### "Christians Became Jews"

The *economic* effects of the Reformation were profound. This revolutionary effect has been accurately and wittily summarised by Karl Marx in his famous *bon mot*, that, at the Reformation, "the Christians became Jews," viz., the Protestant Churches—the Calvinists in particular, abolished the mediæval prohibitions against "usury"—that is, against the lending of money for interest, a comprehensive term which included most capitalist financial transactions prior to the Reformation, the "un-Christian" trade of money-lender was "unlawful" for Christians, and was a largely Jewish monopoly, whence Marx's epigram quoted above.

## Catholic Counter-Reformation of the 20th Century

(A Paper read by F. A. Ridley to the International Free-thought Congress at Luxembourg, September 4.)

I. THE EVOLUTION OF MODERN CATHOLICISM  
IN his book entitled *Leviathan*, written in the year 1651, the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes pronounced this definition of the Roman Catholic Church: "The Papacy is the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned upon the grave thereof. For so did first start up this great ecclesiastical power."

Of all the definitions ever given to the See and Church of Rome, this definition of Hobbes is incontestably the best. It is, indeed, the classic pronouncement on the subject.

### THE TOTALITARIAN CHURCH

"Rome," once declared an Italian Liberal, "never bends through defeat or misfortune; and never forgets her claims through lapse of time." One may add that, in the political phraseology of our own era, Rome is ecclesiastical "Fascism"; it is the totalitarian form taken by Christianity, with, however, this important and significant addition: the Vatican claims absolute dominion, not, as do merely terrestrial dictators, on one side of the grave, this one, only: contrarily, it is the distinguishing feature of the Roman Catholic Church and of its ruler, the Papacy, that it arbitrates the destiny of mankind on *both* sides of the grave, impartially. The Holy Inquisition was never conceived as more than the curtain raiser! The *real* "concentration camps" of this ubiquitous ecclesiastical empire begin only *after* death. For—a fact often forgotten by her critics!—just as the Theology of Catholicism, as expounded by its "Universal Doctors," claims to be the only *Universal* form of Reason accessible to mankind, uniting God and Man, Heaven and Hell, the various orders of Being, Supernatural, Terrestrial, and Infernal, in a comprehensive network of logic; so, equally, does the Catholic Church, here below, likewise claim a universal jurisdiction: it is, we may relevantly add, this fact above all else that marks off the Christianity of the Catholic Church from the "Christianity" of "the lesser breeds without the law," of the other non-Catholic Churches. Roman Catholicism is, in essence, a religion, *sui generis*.

It is an historical law, frequently illustrated throughout the annals of Humanity, that every vital organisation cherishes the memory of, and seeks to recapture, that his-

At a later date, the Jesuits got round the mediæval prohibitions against "usury," and, nowadays, *all* Christians, Catholic and Protestant alike, have become "Jews"—that is, financiers!

### "God and Mammon"

To-day, all Churches have assimilated the economics of their contemporary world. If, for example, one turns over the pages of *Crockford's*, the year-book which enumerates the Anglican clergy, one will find their cures of souls economically described as their "livings," and the value of the "livings" in "filthy lucre," in £ s. d., is carefully added. Mammon is now in open partnership with God. No longer do the preachers of the Gospel obey their master's injunction to "take neither purse nor scrip." The modern successors of the Apostles demand—and get—"the rate for the job." Even an itinerant free-lance like Billy Graham gets his £5,000 a year, not to mention odd dinners given him by high society at the *Dorchester*. We have come a long way from the stable at Bethlehem. Christianity has not only "killed the fatted calf," but has turned him into gold!

toric era in which, in thought and action, it enjoyed the maximum power over its contemporaries, and the maximum consideration in the eyes of mankind. Thus, Spain still recalls nostalgically her "siglio del oro" (Age of Gold), the 16th century, when she overran her "New World" and bestrode the "Old World" like a colossus. England, similarly, to-day, recalls with an ever more acute regret, her "Victorian Age," when the monopoly of the Industrial Revolution made Britain "The Workshop of the World," and when every succeeding year added, simultaneously, to the material wealth of the British bourgeoisie and to its spiritual belief in an inevitable "progress."

Similarly, also, the Church of Rome looks back with a sharp regret, a wistful nostalgia, to its "Age of Gold," to the mediæval "Age of Faith," when the Church was supreme; and when the social order was uniformly administered throughout "Christendom" on the tacit assumption—to challenge which was death—that the teaching propounded in the Gospels, and the theological deductions based thereupon by the Catholic Church, were the supreme values of existence, to which no others could be even remotely compared. That Age so aptly summarised in that terse statement of mediæval society: "All roads lead to Rome"!

It was the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century that effectively ended the "Age of Faith." It is to the restoration of that lost "Golden Age" that all the subsequent activities of the Papacy have been devoted. To return to that lost "Garden of Eden," expanded to a world-wide scale, is still, to-day, the primary aim of the Catholic Church, and the avowed objective of its present "Counter-Reformation" in the 20th century.

### REFORMATION AND COUNTER-REFORMATION IN THE 16TH CENTURY

The first half of the 16th century, which inaugurated and witnessed the Protestant "Revolution," as the English historian, Seebohm Rowntree, has most aptly termed the epoch-making conclusion of the Reformation, effectively ended that mediæval "Golden Age" of the Catholic Church. Henceforth, Western psychology responded to a divided allegiance: to the nation-state in lieu of the "Holy" Empire; to the National Church—an abortion in the eyes

(Continued on page 292)

# Intelligence and Religious Belief

By G. I. BENNETT

THE tendency of Christians is to regard Freethinkers as of inferior morality; while Freethinkers for their part are apt to look upon Christians as of inferior intelligence. With the first of these assumptions I do not concern myself here; but to the second I should like to give consideration.

Lack of liberal education in itself, of knowledge with which science presents us of man's place in the universe, may be reason for the holding of rather *naïve* religious convictions. But there are bounds to what one may believe and remain tolerably intelligent. It is, I think, clear that Four-square Gospellers, Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah Witnesses, Christadelphians, and the like, cannot by virtue of the *quality* of their views be other than somewhat mentally obtuse. Biblical fundamentalism does not go with keen intellectual discernment.

On the other hand, it would be a mistake unreservedly to class among the unintelligent those who profess belief in God, purely and simply, or even those who may also believe in Jesus the Christ and Saviour. To do so would mean lumping among the hosts of moronic religionists the world contains, not merely all who are members of the Society of Friends, but the rank and file of Unitarians as well. And if anything is obvious, it is that these are people whose general level of intelligence is relatively high.

That belief as such is not necessarily an index to intelligence (or want of it) we perceive when we think of that many-sided man of impressive intellectual attainments, Albert Schweitzer. He has at least a mystical faith in God—even if his agnosticism is otherwise such that he has written, much to ecclesiastical discomfiture (for Schweitzer is a Doctor of Theology and a former pastor): "There is no knowledge and no hope that can give our life stability and direction." (*Christianity and the Religions of the World*.)

Moreover, who would doubt the mental calibre of the late Dean Inge and the late Bishop Barnes? Many of their views may have been unorthodox, if not sceptical in the extreme; but they did nevertheless believe in the reality and supremacy of God. When one further reflects on the number of learned and astute minds, not merely in the Church but out of it, that have been unable to accept the idea of a universe without God, one realises that religious belief does not inevitably denote want of intellect. Why then, to some of us, does such belief appear so unfounded and so erroneous? If we are right, and we do in fact see further and more clearly than our Christian contemporaries, the more educated and intelligent of them, why is this?

I think the explanation must be sought in the fact that the majority of religionists (I refer in this essay to Christians, but it is no less true of other pietists) are decided and confirmed in their beliefs chiefly by their emotions. It is apparent that the intellect plays a small and often negligible part in matters of faith.

That we are essentially alone in moments of birth and of death, of critical illness and of grief in bereavement—in fact, in all moments of great personal crisis—is a thing that few willingly face. Primitive man's mortal dread of being alone is in some measure shared by many still. The thought that there may be no purpose or meaning in life other than that which we put into it ourselves, that the only help and support we can look for is the help and support of our kind, repels not simply the *hoi polloi*, but also sensitive religious thinkers. Religious doubts and difficulties are hard enough to bear; but there is heart-chill in the apprehension that the universe may be totally indifferent to ethical values and offers nothing on which to base human hope. There is an unspoken demand that life shall "make

sense"—shall contain, if not the certainty, at least the expectation of recompense and redress in a world or realm beyond this temporal one, where suffering and inequality are unredeemed.

How easy is the persuasion that the cosmos must have an explanation in terms understandable to us! It is a propensity of the human mind to crave an explanation and, in the absence of finding one that accords with its anthropocentric conceptions and wishes, to invent one. There must, it is felt, be direction, pattern, and design in the mighty scheme of things; and implicit in that notion is the idea—the deistic idea—of God. But, as is well-known to psychologists, the almost universal need of God is part of human emotional make-up, which desiderates in God an all-powerful, all-perfect father, to whom to ascribe the attributes of which we approve, and on whom we may rely, in whom repose trust, from whom derive consolation, and under whom feel secure.

Now the Freethinker, unlike the religionist, believes nothing unacceptable to his rational and critical faculty. He seeks to know the truth, whatever the truth may be, and is more likely to find it because he is unhampered by emotional predilections. So far as he can discern, there is no trace of benevolence in the universe: indeed, everything suggests that it functions in conformity with immutable physical laws. And what is clear beyond doubt is that Nature shows partiality to none of her creatures. Contrary to man being a favourite of God, or the Gods, he is subject to the same implacable forces that govern all life.

Hence we have no grounds for supposing that any kind of anthropomorphic deity presides over our human destinies. What sets in motion the matter that constitutes the vast universe we cannot say, because we have no evidence that it was ever set in motion. Neither can we discuss how matter *in its cosmic totality* came into being, because we have no warrant for thinking that it was ever brought into being—that it is other than an evolving but timeless whole. It is natural for us on this terrestrial orb to think in terms of a beginning and an end, but they have no meaning as applied to the universe at large. Since our knowledge, experience, and powers of thought are limited, these questions What? How? Why? Whence? are idle, and it is worse than profitless to seek an answer to them. Our attitude must perforce be a shrug of the shoulders. We are driven by a consciousness of the woeful inadequacy of our data to despair of arriving at any certainty—nay, at any theory—about first and final things.

Such a position, which is the logical outcome of scepticism or Freethought, is reached, I hold, not by virtue of greater inherent intelligence, but by virtue of the mind's freedom from emotional prepossessions in facing the ultimate riddles of existence. What the Christian or other religionist frequently lacks is not innate intelligence, but the resolution that his feelings, however prompted, shall in no circumstances govern his thinking.

"The profoundest of all infidelities," wrote Herbert Spencer in his *Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative*, "is the fear that the truth will be bad." Whoever thinks likewise must pursue the truth unswervingly wherever it leads him. To this disinterested quest for truth all human progress worth the name has, down the ages, been due.

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## This Believing World

**It was a famous victory.** That grand old institution, the Lord's Day Observance Act, scored a splendid win when it prevented that distinguished actor and dramatist, Mr. Emlyn Williams, from giving his wonderful impersonation of Charles Dickens as a reader on a recent Sunday. And why was he prevented? Well, he had to put on a false little beard! Had he *grown* the beard, the Lord would have made no protest. But God Almighty simply cannot stomach anybody giving a recital on a Sunday wearing a false beard. And there are people—yea, even reverent Rationalists—who object to the campaign we, in this journal, wage against such incredible stupidity.

**Oh dear, those empty pulpits!** The Church has all it can do to fill the empty churches—but always with it is the question of filling the empty pulpits as well. The young men simply will not come in and take part in the glorious work of saving millions of miserable sinners through the blood of Jesus Christ. An anonymous Church of Scotland minister has filled nearly half a page in his newspaper recently with weeping and wailing on the scarcity of suitable candidates for Christ, and how marvellous the work really is with its study of Hebrew and Greek, and the warmth of the parish's welcome, and running the Kirk and the Women's Guild and the organist and the beadle. What a heavenly future!

**The truth is that the days of the fool of the family** entering the Church are over. Even the fools can get a better job outside; and the cleverer ones find no divine consolation whatever in keeping up a vicarage and a family on a small income no matter what God and his saints feel about it. The biggest headache for the Church is getting young men who will be a credit to it, and they are no longer there. How many genuine scholars has the Church of England now?

**But when it comes to idiotic censorship,** the Church is right on the spot. A widow at some small place on the map called Long Buckby wanted to put on her husband's gravestone: "Someday God will tell us why he broke our hearts and let him die"—a most sensible criticism of any loving and merciful Deity. Twelve parish councillors of Long Buckby discussed this awful blasphemy with the vicar in council, and a newspaper reporter who was present and who gave his report, has been severely admonished for daring to say they wouldn't allow the inscription. And the reporter will not be allowed to attend any more council meetings.

**Then there is the Vicar of Damerham,** the Rev. A. Phillips, who objects to the words, "Journey's End" being inscribed on a tombstone; and it is not inscribed. The *Daily Express* considers this to be "a foolish act of intolerance"—but, after all, as a Christian paper, it should allow the vicar to point out that death is not the "journey's end." A dead Christian must go either to Heaven or Hell or to Purgatory. He can await his sentence in the latter after death, and then go to either of the others if a Catholic—or go and frizzle in Hell at once, or sit with Jesus in Heaven if a Protestant. But what a fate! Surely "journey's end" is the best of all?

**That stout English Churchman,** Mr. John Betjeman, writing in the *Spectator*, is scandalised that two tourists in shorts, smoking and actually with *walking sticks*, went to look round a country church. Didn't they know, moans Mr. Betjeman, that this was "the House of God"? He

took them to be "freethinkers of the 1910 Wellsian Vintage"—and no doubt would be both surprised and hurt that we, in 1954, have left the 1910 vintage a long, long way behind. The fact is Mr. Betjeman, as all who have read him or heard him on the radio, is of the 100 A.D. Christian vintage and very laughable it is. Still even our Betjemans must grow up in this very materialistic and secularistic old world.

## CATHOLIC COUNTER-REFORMATION

(Continued from page 290)

of the Middle Ages!—in lieu of the "Universal" Church. To mediævally-minded Catholics, it must then have appeared that the Church could not possibly hope to survive in so unmediæval a world. The Church herself at first evidently shared the same view. For, rather than agree to resign herself to the role of "one amongst the philosophies," as a modern Catholic writer has phrased it, Rome sought to drown the Revolution in "blood and iron"—not to mention fire! In the "religious" wars of the 16th and 17th centuries, culminating in that most terrible of all wars of the pre-scientific era, the "Thirty Years War," Rome did her best either to rule or to ruin completely the modern world which was emerging from the Revolution inaugurated by Luther and Calvin. It was not her fault, nor that of her militant standard-bearer, the Spanish Empire, which wore herself out with quixotic ardour in the war against "heresy," that she failed. When the "Thirty Years War" ended in 1648, leaving behind it a ruined Europe, then, the "Ages of Faith" having vanished into the irrevocable past. Catholicism had, willy-nilly, to find some means of surviving, on terms of co-existence with the modern world. To co-exist in an alien world and, if possible to reconquer it and thus to restore her last "Golden Age," such has been the essential problem of the Roman Catholic Church throughout the three centuries that separate the end of the "Wars of Religion" (1546-1648) from our own.

## THE JESUIT "COUNTER-REFORMATION"

The "Counter-Reformation" which effected this necessary task was, primarily, the work of the Jesuits, to whom the special features of modern, as distinct from mediæval Catholicism are due. The Spanish "Company of Jesus," founded—originally with the object of fighting the Turks—in 1540, may, perhaps, be termed the first *corps d'élite* of professional counter-revolutionaries in recorded history. The definition of Loyola: "No storm is so dangerous as a perfect calm; no enemy is so dangerous as the absence of all enemies"; may, indeed, be described as the effective motto of the "Counter-Reformation," or, indeed, of counter-revolution in general. It is an axiom aptly illustrated in the history of Loyola's own Order. When the enemies of the Church are abroad, the Jesuits are in their element. In non-controversial epochs, they became a liability to the Papacy. Of a similar character was the Jesuit emphasis on the Freedom of the Will against Jansenism. It is the Revolution, which reflects accurately the spirit of the times, that believes in "inevitable" progress and, hence, in predestination or determinism. It is the human will that arrests the seemingly "inevitable," and counter-revolution, accordingly, lays stress upon the *will*. One finds this emphasis in both the classic text-books of modern counter-revolution; Loyola's own *Spiritual Exercises*, the "drill-book" of the Jesuits; and in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, the text-book of secular counter-revolution. Essentially, the Jesuits were *step-children* of the Reformation! They were the first Catholics—and in this lay their essential service to Rome—to realise that the Middle Ages were over.

(To be continued)

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Rome-Rule for Ireland

(Report to the International Freethought Congress by F. C. Edwards, R.P.A. Representative in Dublin, at Luxembourg, September, 1954)

DURING the last two years it cannot be said that conditions have changed in Ireland except that the Roman Catholic Church is stronger than ever since the rift between East and West has widened. As a result of the struggle between Communism and Democracy, the Clergy are getting the best value out of this situation. They achieve this by making people believe that the Church and the Vatican are the best defenders—the only defenders—of freedom and democracy.

### THE CHURCH, COMMUNISM AND DEMOCRACY

Quite recently the Bishop of Cork, the Rev. Dr. Cornelius Lucey, coming back from America loaded with the money given by the so-called Irish exiles for building five churches in the surroundings of that city, has openly defended McCarthy. In brief, in Ireland, more than elsewhere in Europe, people are bound to believe that the Roman Catholic Church is the only bulwark against dictatorship, and that by attacking her the world would run the risk of becoming the easy prey of tyranny. For this reason, after the publication of Mr. Blanchard's valuable book, *The Irish and Catholic Power*, the inhabitants of a small town called Blanchardstown, Co. Dublin, seriously considered changing its name to avoid any possible link between the very name and an attack on the Church! The book has had very good sales in Dublin, and the newly-coming English edition, by Verschoyle, makes us hope that the book—even if it will never be classified in the Irish National Library—will be more widely read. I suggest that it should be printed, if possible, to the order of Rationalist associations in cheaper editions, as *The Irish and Catholic Power* is the most authoritative and informative book on Irish affairs of the last fifty years. The reason why the book has not been banned in Ireland must be sought in the desire of the Church to appear liberal, and, as a priest told me, "to allow the Irish to react by themselves against the gratuitous statements of a blasphemous atheistical PROTESTANT writer who, by criticising the Roman Catholic Church, is playing the game of the Communists and their fellow-travellers." In short, Mr. Blanchard, always according to the same priest, is a Communist and should appear before the Christian Senator McCarthy's committee to be screened. In connection with Mr. Blanchard, his friend and defender in the Republic, Dr. Sheehy-Skeffington, the courageous liberal Professor of Trinity College, has recently been elected to the Senate. I do not know how much he can do, but I wish him every success and rejoice at knowing that a genuine liberal sits in the Senate of the Republic. In the recent Cardinal Newman celebrations for the centenary of the National University, the Premier, Mr. Costello, publicly declared that as for him there is only one College, namely, that founded by Cardinal Newman. He was reviving, by that statement, his old contempt and hatred of Trinity College, to which, in a previous year, he had refused Government help, saying that those who wanted to go to a University should go to the National, and that one College—the National and Catholic, of course—was enough for Dublin. Quite recently the National University has granted honorary degrees to personalities of different nations, and among the recipients was Prof. Gedda, the Pope's physician and leader of the Italian Catholic Association, who in Italy is regarded by the Christian-Democrats as a menace to freedom. Señor Artago, the Spanish Minister for External Affairs, as you know, was also leader of the Catholic Association in his country, and

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Mrs. A. Vallance, £2; Bayard Simmons, £2 2s.; Valentina Manouso, 10s. 6d.; Thos. Owen, 6s.; J. Toudic, 5s.; E. W. Henstridge, £1; A. Hancock, 2s.; Maurice Byrn, £1 1s.; Anon., 9s.; R. Bordon, 5s.; C. A. Sweetman, 10s.; Mrs. Ellen M. Sandys, £1 1s.; Wm. Griffith £3 3s.; R. Stewart, 10s.; G. W. Warner and Family, 10s.; Mrs. F. M. Clarke, 5s.; P. Victor Morris, £1; A. Brooks, 10s. Total, £15 9s. 6d.

### To Correspondents

ALVIN McELVAIN.—See current article by G. I. Bennett.

### Lecture Notices, Etc.

#### OUTDOOR

- J. CLAYTON'S meetings.—Sunday, September 12, Padiham, 3-15 p.m. Blackburn Market, 7 p.m.
- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.
- 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.).—Sunday at 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.
- 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. At Deansgate Blitzed Site, 7-30 p.m.: C. MCCALL.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, September 12, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, September 12, 7-30 p.m., Old Market Square: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.
- West London Branch N.S.S.—F. A. RIDLEY, H. ARTHUR, L. EBURY, C. E. WOOD and W. J. O'NEILL. Hyde Park, every Sunday, 5 p.m.

#### INDOOR

- Junior Discussion Group (South Place Ethical Society), Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1. Friday, September 10, 7-15 p.m.: P. G. KEELER, "National Health Service."

## Notes and News

The recently published statistical review of England and Wales for 1952 shows another proportional increase in Registry Office marriages. Since 1844 this rise may be indicated by the following figures:—

Year	Per 1,000 marriages
1844	26
1899	150
1914	241
1934	284
1952	306

There is not the slightest doubt that marriages without religious ceremony would be more frequent if the ordinary registry office could compete with the church or chapel in making the event more of an "occasion" than is possible in its characteristically prosaic setting.

NEXT WEEK

COMMENTS ON THE PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH TO THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION

Prof. Gedda, as is obvious from his remarks, looks upon him as a luminous example. Our Irish priests, after all, envy the Spanish and Portuguese people for having Franco and Salazar and never fail to exalt them as perfect instances of Catholic leaders. The term "FASCISM" has disappeared in Ireland, and, as far as the Church is concerned, there are only Catholics and Communists in the world to-day. We have, so to speak, a new history and a new geography. In the schools, under the jealous watch of the Christian Brothers, and under their heavy sticks, the pupils equate catholicism to freedom, goodness and happiness. Starting from such premises, Spain and Portugal are happy and free countries, blest by God!

Maria Duce, a fascist and anti-semitic organisation, wants to establish in the Republic a Catholic Dictatorship based on the teaching of the Papal Encyclicals, driving out Protestants, Atheists and Freethinkers. Not one clergyman has so far dared to raise a voice of protest against this organisation, and I am afraid that Ireland with her Maria Duce, her Legion of Mary, and the communist-cell-like Sodalities, has never been so ripe for a dictatorship as now.

#### POPULATION PROBLEM AND POLITICS

In the recent report on Population, a messy bulk of statistics, none of the compilers or Catholic commentators, lest they enrage the Church, have even dared to give a hint about the true problem which lies in the emigration of the Irish—that is to say, that people flee from the island to find elsewhere more freedom and happiness, and that they are mainly concerned with escaping the tyranny of a Druidic clergy. In short, in that report they have failed to reach the heart of the matter.

In Ireland the clergy have a finger in every pie, and I daresay, they are in the pie itself. They are always trying to substitute the politicians and are always eager to discredit them. It is a sad thing to be a politician in Ireland, as witness the dramatic Dr. Browne affair in 1951.

The founder of the powerful "Muintir na Tir" (*People of the Land*) organisation is also a Catholic, Canon Hayes. In a recent article "Portrait Gallery" in *The Irish Times* (14/8/54) we read about him: "Sure of himself? Very decidedly. Autocratic? Perhaps. He admires those who get things done . . . In his sitting-room hangs an autographed portrait of Mussolini, a memento which he treasures . . ." Knowing the good relations which existed between the Roman Catholic Church and Mussolini—who will ever forget Pius XI's slogan, "Mussolini, the man of Providence"?—there is no doubt that Canon Hayes finds inspiration by looking at that portrait and can visualise Ireland ruled as he would like it with Church nominees as the Government.

#### THE MARIAN YEAR

The Marian Year, as one would expect, has been duly celebrated in Ireland by the issue of a special stamp showing the Virgin Mary and Child. Strange to say, not even in Italy, the so-called "Cradle of Catholicism," does this happen. But in Ireland they are always ready to remember Catholic events: Holy Year, Marian Year, Newman Year, etc. Probably Irish artists are already busy preparing a new stamp for some future event or new dogma because, as you know, the Church gives a big margin of imagination as to what the next dogma will be.

We read in the *Dublin Evening Mail* (7/5/54) "INDUSTRIAL TRIBUTE PLAN TO MARK MARIAN YEAR"—"They (the organisers), with members of Catholic Societies Vocational Organisation Conference, will travel throughout Ireland in the next week to further the cause of the Industrial Tribute by which workers are asked to voluntarily remit one hour's pay to a fund to be sent to the Pope." As you can see, a Catholic "Stakhanovism" is openly encouraged.

#### CENSORSHIP

As for the Censorship, a few more hundred books have book added to the 4,057 already banned. The latest book by our President of Honour, Bertrand Russell, O.M., F.R.S., *Nightmares of Eminent Persons*, has recently been laid low by the axe of the Censor. Dr. Oliveira Salazar, Portugal's Dictator, has said: "Literature is the mental pabulum of the people. Like other foods, the food of the mind must be protected by the State from poison and adulteration," and we can be sure that the Irish Censorship Board subscribes fully to this declaration.

As you can see, in Ireland the Roman Catholic Church avails herself of the "secular arm" to keep "bad" books and contraceptives out of that sacred land. But what is worse is that she identifies herself with Ireland. According to a recent slogan, "If you lose Catholicism you lose Ireland," in other words, the Church *is* Ireland.

I am sorry to say that my country lives still, in this twentieth century, under a grim mediæval outlook, and Rationalists and Freethinkers lead a very hard existence in such a prehistoric environment.

## Praying for Rain

By BAYARD SIMMONS

SO many reports have appeared in the Press of appeals by farmers to the clergy that the latter will pray for the cessation of the torrential downpour of rain that has been such a distressing feature of this summer. Usually the prayers thus offered to the Almighty are for the sending of rain to a thirsty earth. The following is a veracious account of what happened when such a request was made a few summers ago.

The whole land was athirst, it wanted rain; the grass was brown, the cherries did not swell; the scorching sun—nothing could be more plain—to harvest hopes sounded a doleful knell; the farmers went to Parson to complain. "For God's sake, rain! This drought will ruin spell." "Spell?" thought the cleric, "just the very thing; I'll work a spell and rain in torrents bring."

He tried, and failed; he tried and failed again, his magic spell, it seems, would work no more; louder the husbandmen did yet complain, clamouring at the Rector's kitchen-door; was not the Church's magic on the wane? It sometimes worked when it was tried before. "It seems you pray as poorly as you preach. Please try once more," the husbandmen beseech.

He tried, he failed; he tried—but why repeat? The Devil surely laughed to see him fail; no drop there fell; no rain came in a sheet; they would have welcomed even snow or hail; the downcast Rector could no longer bleat, his prayers were clearly lacking in avail; but at the moment he abandoned hope he thought, "God damn my eyes, I'll try the Bishop."

Behold him seated in the Bishop's Palace, a villa on the outskirts of the town; the Bishop's wife, a worthy soul called Alice, sat by an unlit fire in old blue gown; while near the window stood an ancient chalice (from Antioch) of silver, and renown: for the Right Reverend Mungle was no fool, but chairman of an antiquarian school.

His Lordship sometime laboured in the East, stuffed full of deserts, rarely knowing rain; where no one seemed to trouble in the least if he should never see a cloud again; these torrid lands support both man and beast; none prays for rain; to Allah none complain about a total lack of due humidity, such pleas would be considered imbecility.

Allah His children has provided for; the Faithful thank

their Father for His care; much has He given, and will give still more without reminder by a whining prayer; He for the Faithful has great boons in store; Allah is bountiful, His gifts men share: the Ruler of the World, compassionate, diverted is not from His purpose—Fate.

His Lordship listened to the Rector's plaint, listened in silence, but with twinkling eye; possessed with patience of a patron saint, he heard him out; then, with a gentle sigh, said that he thought that there was something quaint in this idea of altering the sky made by Jehovah, Who in this world did plan to be of service to His Children—Man.

"Have they no gratitude, that they complain of God's creation, deeming it is 'bad'; that to be amended, as by legerdemain by you or me—such ignorance is sad: hear now this story of a real bane; return unto your flock, bid them be glad that England never knew this Rain of Death, on which the Orient wastes no futile breath."

"Get back to your good farmers; bid them go to church next Sunday; tell them this my tale, a story of a veritable woe, against which prayer, or magic, can avail nothing at all; inform that they know naught in their island of this awful flail: tell them to praise their God with thrice thanksgiving, that they ne'er saw this 'Death Rain of the Living.'"

Here is the Bishop's story:—

At peep of day, when light—swelling and swirling over the world's edge, in luminous sky, shining pearl-pink—drove darkness onward to its western lair, upon an eminence I stood, and, eastward gazing, saw it come.

On the horizon's line I saw that cloud, no bigger than a hand, nor wider than the moon. It seemed a piece of night, detached, a patch of darkness left in that swift flight; and as I watched, it waxed, moving towards me, moving ever westward.

The gathering blackness seemed to promise rain, unseasonable rain; a noise I heard as far-off thunder, rumbling round the sky, or distant waterfall, impossible in that flat land.

The peasant paused and beat upon his breast, and dogs, like poor whipped curs, slunk off to seek out sheltered corners; cattle bowed their heads and patient stood, as man and beast then stood, waiting, hopeless waiting.

It came; they came; Man's enemy was come.

The pioneers of that Black Horde came flickering on the leaves, on blades of grass, on all green living things, which stirred as under heavy rain. Then with swiftness, startlingly, as a dropped blanket, black, outspread, down came the swarm: locust, the dreaded locust.

That cloud, at first no bigger than man's hand, nor the moon's width, darkened the climbing sun. Two or three miles in depth, in width, two score, they wheeled aloft a while, then earthward poured, a Rain of Death on a green land.

## Young Jeshu

By A R. WILLIAMS

FEAST of the Passover ended. Thousands of provincial Jews travelled homeward. A company from Nazareth had made a day's journey. Walking afoot carrying chattels, resting in the heat of the day, gossiping in groups which broke and reformed so that all news might circulate, accommodating their pace to the steps of women and children and old people, stopping for refreshment and prayers; the inhabitants of Nazareth had by afternoon gone only a few miles northward from Jerusalem.

Coming to trees shading a well the Nazarites decided to stay here the night. Preparations for the evening meal

started. A bearded, heavy-faced man was breaking sticks for the fire. Bearing a waterpot on her head to him came a young woman with compressed lips and troubled eyes. She demanded, "Jussef, where's young Jeshu?"

The man looked all round the encampment, then responded, "I don't know, hasn't he been with you?"

"No. He's not a baby now. I thought he'd be with you men."

Jussef shook his head and picked up another stick. Marah set down the waterpot with a bump and cried, "I suppose I must look after him as I always do. Anybody'd think. . . ."

Biting her lip to prevent a conclusion which might recoil on herself she hastened away. From family to family she went making inquiries, but none had seen her son. Each person took it for granted he was in other company, presumably with his parents.

Showing increasing vexation Marah continued her search till she halted before a dark, pretty girl and exclaimed, "Mary, have you seen my Jeshu?"

With a saucy pout of her lips the child answered, "Why should I've seen your boy?" A youth laughed and said, "I'm not surprised you ask. She seems fonder of Jeshu than of her brothers. But we've made her stay with us to-day. Jeshu hasn't come near."

Hurrying back to her husband Marah said, "Oh Jussef, Jeshu's nowhere to be found. What shall we do?"

The man looked back along the dusty road toward Jerusalem. He replied, "Go and look for him. He must be left behind."

"Yes, yes," assented the mother. "Come!"

Without delay she set off. Jussef followed, soon overtaking his impetuous spouse. Traversed by an anxious mother and an equally concerned though more phlegmatic father the journey became a few hours steady tramp. Before night fell the parents returned, dusty and hot and tired, but triumphant in the recovery of their son.

At twelve years young Jeshu was a tall lad, like his mother in face and build. His eyes and lips had the same eager mobility, somewhat the same hardness, with a tinge of fanaticism. Now the boy's face bore expressions of annoyance mingled with shame and some defiance, which increased as villagers of Nazareth gathered round with inquiries. Jussef said nothing. Marah did the talking. Now her lost child was found her anxious grief changed into angry resentment.

"Where d'you think we found him?" she cried. "In the Temple listening to the Elders. Why they didn't drive him away I can't understand." Her voice rose shriller as she continued, "When I spoke to him he said he'd something more important to do than come with us."

Marah seized him by the shoulders and shook him, muttering, "I could beat you till . . ."

Turning to her husband she questioned, "Aren't you going to punish him? He's too big for me, or I would." She paused, adding, "You're his father, so it's your duty."

He of Magdala, father of young Mary and other progeny, produced the means by which he enforced discipline; a cane.

As he took it Jussef made no comment. Neither did Jeshu, but drew himself up as though determined to bear his punishment unflinching. Jussef lifted the back of the fringed tunic, twisting his fingers in the boy's abundant black hair, bending the lad forward. So Jeshu stood naked, his form slim and shapely, his skin smooth.

Six times the cane descended till the flesh was barred with red weals. Except for a catch of the breath and a jerk of the body which caused ripples about his back and sides the sufferer showed no signs of pain. Lookers-on

nodded approval. Boys stared, some uneasily. A few girls smiled or laughed, enjoying the spectacle.

All except one. In the background stood the child Mary. Laughter and sauciness had gone from her face, the pout from her lips. At each stroke of the rod her shoulders heaved, her breath came in quick gasps, and drops welled into her eyes.

Released Jeshu walked slowly away adjusting his garment, his head hung down to conceal his agonised features and the tears which came despite his efforts to contain them. The throng dispersed talking. Jeshu disappeared through the trees. Reaching a grassy spot he threw himself face downward and allowed the tears full flow.

A moment later a little girl dropped on her knees beside him, whispering, "Don't cry, Jeshu. I'm sorry for you if no one else is." Slowly the lad turned his face. Mary laid herself alongside him. She drew the sobbing boy's head to her breast and held it pillowed there, her dark hair mingling with his as she caressed him.

## Northern Notes

By COLIN McCALL

THE Rev. J. P. S. Morton, Vicar of St. James's Church, Barrow-in-Furness, called on Furness folk to celebrate the day of his patron saint. Speaking with typical Christian certainty on unknown matters, he recited Gospel stories of Christ and James and said: "Herod killed St. James's body, but a real, true, living St. James, who belongs to Christ, is alive in Heaven. He is our brother in the Communion of Saints. . . ." These are "facts" according to Mr. Morton. So, too, are the stories of Jairus's daughter, the Transfiguration and Gethsemane. They are facts because they are described in the New Testament. Mr. Morton is a perfect example of the type of Christian for whom the present existence of names proves the past occurrence of events associated with them.

Another Christian, writing in the *Grange* (North Lancs.) *News* under the pen-name "Pilgrim" is equally certain of other Christian facts. "We are 3-dimensional," he says, "body, mind and spirit," and the best recreation is the renewal of all three parts of our being. The Church, of course, takes care of the third dimension and "Pilgrim" asks his readers to attend a place of worship when on holiday. But he repeats the old claims that Christianity was responsible for hospitals and education, and thus credits it with caring for the first and second dimensions also. And so it is necessary to indicate again that neither claim is valid. Leaving aside India, China and other parts of the world where medicine has a history antedating the Christian era, I quote from Professor Charles Singer's essay on "Graeco-Roman Medicine" in *New Worlds and Old* (Heinemann). State physicians, he tells us, existed as early as the fifth century, B.C., and in Roman times "district physicians were early appointed in Italy and the custom spread to the provinces, beginning with the army and associated first with *valetudinaria*. . . . From the military *valetudinaria* it was no great step to the construction of similar institutions for the numerous imperial officials and their families in the provinces. Motives of benevolence came in and public hospitals were founded in many localities. The idea passed to Christian times." In education, too, the pagans anticipated the Christians. Dealing with the period 300-146 B.C., Professor Paul Monroe wrote of Roman education: "At the close of the period schools were well established; they presented the appearance of a system corresponding to our elementary, secondary and

higher education." (*Source Book of the History of Education for the Greek and Roman Period*: Macmillan).

Church restoration and rebuilding funds are being launched in many places, for the houses of God are not immune to the ravages of time—or the death-watch beetle! The most popular begging method in the north is for the parson to sit outside his church with a collecting box, but the High Lane (near Stockport) Parochial Church Council has adopted a novel means of raising £4,000 towards a new £5,000 vicarage. The idea is a "bricks and mortar" collecting scheme whereby one department of the vicarage will be nominated each month and the money allocated to it. It has been announced that the cash raised for the kitchen is equivalent to ten bags of cement and 813½ bricks (that half brick may come in handy!). During September the collecting theme is to be the bathroom. I feel that the Church Council is to be commended for its worldly wisdom in giving priority to the sanitary requirements of the new building.

I have recently received a most curious, and badly constructed epistle, without date or address, ostensibly from God Almighty. At least, the writer adopts the rôle of the latter and delivers a sermon in the first person singular. "I have given you the Earth," he says; "I have arranged temptations," but "I have given you many indirect signs" also. He even refers to "My Son Jesus Christ." No doubt this is particularly satisfying to the ego of my unknown correspondent but, with unconscious humour he goes on to accuse me and my kind of considering ourselves "Supreme Beings." It is really amazing how some Christians can get things twisted.

## Correspondence

It is disquieting to note that comparatively few people have anything to say about the strict censorships which prevent millions of people in strongly Catholic countries from having a knowledge of some of the world's great scientific and philosophical literature.

In contrast to this, we often find that many Roman Catholics vehemently protest whenever some country restricts the propagation of their faith.

To my mind the "price of liberty" is more than "eternal vigilance," for, as the French writer Charles Péguy (1872-1914) said: "He who does not shout the truth when he knows the truth becomes the accomplice of the liars and fakers."—Yours, etc.,

PETER BROWN.

Re George Miller's recent article on "Newspaper Religion," the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, which he mentions, never loses an opportunity of slinging religion at its readers. The issue of 23rd August includes a "gem," indicative of the editor's opinion of the mental level of his readers.

A mare—God's creation—had become blind. Mere man operates and restores the lost vision. God is then suitably thanked at a service attended by other animals—man included. No doubt the unseen audience included an influenza virus or two, or maybe a "polio" microbe, and possibly a tapeworm. God was accorded due thanks on behalf of all. This in the 20th century, too!—Yours, etc.,

WILSON STOTT.

I have recently seen some figures which tell us that more and more people are choosing the secular way of getting married, though Catholics are naturally the exception. It is more often the girl who objects to the civil registrar—even though she herself has no particularly strong religious beliefs. This, I feel sure, will continue to be the case until a non-religious marriage can show equal dignity with a church wedding. Why don't the freethinkers press for more suitable municipal wedding ceremonies?—Yours, etc.,

ELLIS ALLEN.

NATIONAL SOCIETY OF NON-SMOKERS (est. 1926) exists to enable members to travel, eat and enjoy entertainment in an atmosphere free from tobacco smoke. Young and old invited to join. Details from hon. sec., 23, Lyncroft Avenue, Ripley, Derbys.