

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXV—No. 47

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fourpence

THE Disestablishment of the State Churches of England and Scotland has formed part of the practical programme of the National Secular Society ever since its inception. It is now interesting to note that, arising from the recent tragedy of Princess Margaret and Group Captain Townsend, the demand for Disestablishment is beginning to be heard in the secular press, sometimes in most unlikely places. At present this demand is, so to speak, whispered and furtive, but the recent fiasco has obviously strengthened it considerably. So anomalous a situation is, in any case, a glaring anachronism in the light of modern religious statistics, and also in the changed circumstances of the British Commonwealth. The demand for such an elementary act of justice cannot, we imagine, be long delayed. Perhaps within the present generation, certainly within the present century, "The Church of England by law established" will become a thing of the past. The N.S.S. will, yet again, have pioneered an important social and constitutional revolution in the national life.

An Historical Paradox

People usually tend to take for granted the circumstances in which they find themselves, consequently we seldom notice how anomalous in reality may be a situation which is motivated by the circumstances attendant on a long vanished state of affairs. The relationship which still officially exists between church and state in England and Scotland represents such an outmoded anomaly, it is really quite amazing that this island, the cradle of the Industrial Revolution and of the Theory of Evolution, should lag so far behind even relatively backward countries in its current constitution. The official separation of church and state represents the current state of affairs in both the great world powers of our era, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., divided as they are in so many other matters. Even god-ridden India, with a largely illiterate population, officially recognises in its public law, the separation of church and state. In this connection, England and Scotland—for our monarch is *ex officio* a member of both the English and the Scottish churches—rank with the most backward contemporary lands, such as Spain, Portugal, and the Muslim east. In the mid 20th century we suggest it constitutes an intolerable anomaly, the negation of both reason and of democracy.

The Dead Hand

In the recently concluded affair which involved a royal princess, the dead hand of the Established Church and its medieval morality appear to have been the deciding factor. There appears little doubt that the "wicked uncle" in this modern fairy tale was His Grace Geoffrey, by God's Grace Primate of All England. It is not the first time in recent years that the cassoched figure of an Anglican Archbishop has flitted through the labyrinth of a royal romance, pronouncing, as it were, the word *taboo* over a royal marriage

with a divorced person, the ecclesiastical equivalent of a "displaced person." The (now) Duke of Windsor turned a deaf ear to ecclesiastical counsels, and preferred a voluntary exile with the woman he loved rather than bend to the ecclesiastical censor. The princess has evidently proved more vulnerable to such pressure.

An Unpopular Decision?

The British people consist mostly of "commoners" and since 1940 the Air Force has ranked high in the estimation of a nation which, but for its self-sacrificing gallantry, would probably now be slaves in the Nazi New Order. But, more than this, we think that the backstairs machinations of the Archbishop and his secular confederates, the

people whom the late Sir Stafford Cripps once described in an unguarded moment as "the Buckingham Palace gang," are the reverse of popular in our century of "the common man." No man, for example, could describe the pious Lord Beaverbrook, that plutocratic Bible-banger, as an enemy of religion. Yet his paper, the *Sunday Express*, recently published a powerful editorial demanding an end of this consistent ecclesiastical interference with the personal affairs of the Royal Family. The *Sunday Express*, like all successful newspapers, gives its readers *what they want*. Evidently Mr. John Gordon, who wrote the article, does *not* think that what they want is more of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

C. of E. Founded on a Divorce!

The Roman Catholic Church is at least consistent in its unyielding opposition to divorce. The Church of Rome was not founded on a divorce, whatever may have been the case with the "Rock of Peter." But for the Church of England to object to the entry of a divorced person into royal circles must surely rouse the Homeric laughter of King Henry VIII in his tomb, and rouse the ashes of Archbishop Cranmer to make protest! For the Church of England owed its initial existence to a divorce. If the Vatican had proved more complaisant in giving his divorce to the English "Defender of the Faith," Henry, who lived and died an orthodox Catholic in matters of Faith, would probably never have launched his spiritual offspring, the Church of England. If ever anyone ought to have a partiality for royal divorce it should be His Grace of Canterbury! When one hears of Cranmer's successor objecting to a divorce one is reminded of the historic reply of Sir William Harcourt when Queen Victoria once asked him whether in his opinion subjects were ever justified in deposing their sovereign, "Madam, I am too loyal a subject of the House of Hanover to say *never*." *Verb. sap.* The present royal family owes its throne to a revolution; the present Church of England owes its existence to a royal divorce.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Remove the
Dead Hand!

By F. A. RIDLEY

Remove the Dead Hand.

It is high time that in a self-styled age of democracy this backstairs rule of ecclesiastical cliques and the application of their medieval ideas should come to an end. Already the British constitution is the laughing stock of Europe on account of the medieval fossils with which it is burdened, such as the medieval union of Church and State. In the days of the first Elizabeth, when England was still predominantly Christian, the anomaly was bearable. In the England of the second Elizabeth, when Christianity in general and Anglicanism in particular, are the creeds of a dwindling minority, the anomaly is unbearable. It is indefensible that the head of the Commonwealth should still be the official "Defender of the Faith" in which only a minority of its citizens believe. End the outmoded connection! Disestablish the Church! Remove the Dead Hand!

Open Letter

To the Editor, San Jose Mercury.

Dear Mr. Con :

In the Public Forum for May 14th Mr. Walker H. Lewis of Susanville, California, proposed that the Federal Constitution be amended to forbid anyone who does not believe in the existence of a God to hold public office or to teach in the public schools of this Republic. He said that non-belief in a Supreme Being is a "poison" that should not be "scattered among young people," that "it is against everything America was founded on and stands for."

Mr. Lewis should know that the existence of a God—any kind of a God—is neither a demonstrated truth nor a self-evident truth nor a truth which has unquestionably been supernaturally revealed. He should know that atheism and agnosticism are one side of an age-old controversial question of which theism is the opposite side. There is nothing "poisonous" about atheism or agnosticism per se. As was shown by the answers to the late Prof. James H. Leuba's secret questionnaire in 1933 an overwhelming majority of America's greater scientists in that year most of them teachers in colleges and universities, were atheists.

Mr. Lewis also should know that the Constitution of the United States is and was deliberately made a purely secular document. It nowhere contains the word God nor any word or phrase that is meant to be an equivalent. Its authors were intelligent and cultured men who knew that atheism and agnosticism were points of view which had been and were held by men and women of good intellect and good character. Hence they caused the Constitution to provide specifically not only for complete separation of religion and government, but also for the making of affirmation, instead of taking an oath by any person who is elected to public office in the United States Government, including the President himself. Moreover (in Article VI) they made it a point to say that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

As for Mr. Lewis' statements that "atheism is the material the Communists are made of" and that "all Communists are atheists," neither of these assertions is true. Many atheists are strongly pro-Capitalist (I know at least a score), and it is a matter of indisputable record that millions of religionists, a majority of them in Italy, are members of the Communist Party. Atheism and Communism have no necessary connection. Atheism is a philosophical point of view. Communism is a politico-economic ideology and practice. I am an atheist, and I am also ardently, a Jeffersonian American.

Thomas Jefferson, the revered author of the American Declaration of Independence, would never have supported a proposal such as that of Mr. Lewis. On the contrary: he would vigorously have opposed it. Jefferson was not afraid of equal freedom of speech and inquiry for everybody in all matter of controversy. In a letter on Aug. 10, 1787, he advised his sixteen year old nephew to "question with boldness even the existence of a God." In his Notes on the State of Virginia he said: "It does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are twenty gods, or no God." In his First Inaugural Address he declared that even an erroneous opinion "can always safely be tolerated where Reason is left free to combat it."

I do not doubt that Mr. Lewis means well; but his proposal as to atheists and agnostics is, to quote his own words, "against everything that America was founded on and stands for." A constitutional amendment such as he proposes would serve to destroy, not to preserve, the basic civil rights and liberties upon which our representative democracy depends. Such an amendment would bar from public office such men as the Hon. Culbert L. Olsen, who made a distinguished record as a Governor of California, a man who has stated in a public address (and to me personally) that he does not believe that there is a God or an after life. Such a constitutional amendment would exclude from the teaching staffs of our public institutions of learning such highly respected men as the late John Dewey, the American philosopher and educator.

U.S.A.

ROBERT H. SCOTT.

SECULAR EDUCATION

The attitude of the Churches in this question reveals more than the blessed seem to realize. A really alive Church never worries about religious education—it is confident of its ability to get on without it by the force of its missionary efforts. The Puritans in Colonial America would have nothing to do with it, though their decadent descendants are beginning to clamour for it. We also see the amount of intellectual honesty there is in the average cleric; he is quite willing to have children taught myths which he knows are nonsense, and it worries him not at all. Having failed to teach religion to adults, the Churches are now making a great effort to teach it to children who are not old enough to understand it. The questions which religions try to answer have occupied the minds of great thinkers for centuries, yet the parson expects the eight-year-old to give all the answers, and never doubt them for the rest of his life.

A common excuse for this indoctrination is that believing the story of Noah keeps children from becoming juvenile delinquents. The pious were rudely shocked when Mr. A. MacIntyre, lecturer in the Philosophy of Religion at Manchester University told the conference of Modern Churchmen at Oxford in July, 1955, that the homes of churchgoers produce slightly more delinquents than the homes of non-churchgoers, according to his studies. Although Catholics attribute delinquency to "godless modern schools," it is well known that Catholic schools produce far more than their proportion of delinquents; e.g., in Glasgow it was found that of the ten schools that produced most delinquents, eight were Catholic. Considering that Glasgow is two-thirds Protestant, godly schools are certainly not the answer to delinquency.

HIBERNICUS.

Why Did The Romans Persecute ?

By G. I. BENNETT

THAT the Romans persecuted the Christians is common knowledge and the theme or setting of such popular stories as *Quo Vadis?* and *The Sign of the Cross*. But why did the Romans persecute? This is an interesting question. We can perhaps best answer it by dealing with the circumstances surrounding the persecutions under the Roman Empire.

A piece of correspondence between Pliny the Younger and Trajan throws some light on what was for long the official attitude in regard to the treatment of the Christians. In A.D. 112, Pliny, as governor of Bithynia, wrote to the Emperor for guidance on this point. His province was a difficult one in which the Christians formed a very large part of the community. He sought to know whether the name Christian itself was punishable, or only the crimes attaching to the name. Trajan replied that no universal rule could be laid down. Christians were not to be hunted out. If brought before the governor, and proved guilty, they were to be punished. But if they denied that they were Christians and demonstrated this by offering supplication to the Gods, or if, being Christians, they formally recanted, they were to be pardoned. Anonymous accusations were not to be considered; they did not accord with the spirit of the age.

Adhering to the same policy, Trajan's successor Hadrian made the point that, whilst Christians might be unpopular, their unpopularity was not to prejudice their trial. Charges against them must be proved beyond doubt and prosecutors bringing false charges must be heavily punished. The name was an offence, but there must be no injustice.

Throughout the first and second centuries A.D. persecution was indeed so sporadic, unthorough, and localised that, so far from limiting or suppressing the growth of Christianity, it had rather the opposite effect of being a stimulus. In the third and fourth centuries, when increasing barbarian pressure made the need for unity paramount, persecution took a new and severer form. It was then, unlike formerly, usually set in motion by an imperial edict. But even the harshest measures of a Diocletian or a Galerius could not now stamp out Christianity; it had become so numerically strong and had spread itself out everywhere. The day had almost arrived for it to "take the saddle." No doubt Constantine favoured the Christians; but there was, one suspects, more of political astuteness than religious fervour in his proclaiming Christianity the official religion of the Empire. Seeing how many were by this time its devotees, such an act would have the effect of doing what the pagan cults could no longer do—it would unify the Roman world.

Yet, to go back to the beginning, when Christianity first came on the scene the Roman authorities did not distinguish between it and Judaism, towards which latter they accorded very considerable latitude. From first contact, the Romans found the Jews most difficult and intractable, but, remarking the fanatical attachment of that race to their religion, had no wish to inflame dangerous passions all too easily inflamed. So long as the Jews made an annual sacrifice on behalf of the Emperor in the Temple at Jerusalem, they were prepared to allow that that test of political loyalty (for so they regarded it) was sufficient.

It shortly became apparent, however, that a small but growing religious minority were refusing to perform even so token an act in the name of the Emperor, and that their appeal, though addressed at first simply to Jews, was in truth to men and women everywhere, whatever their nationality or place of birth. This strange sect, an offshoot from Judaism, whose members were soon to be known as Christians, met together in

secret, often by night, for what purposes could only be darkly suspected. But rumour made busy, as rumour does, with what little it knew, and presently it was being circulated that these gatherings were really orgies of shameless lust and cannibalistic feasting (St. John VI, 52-9 could be so construed). Then sedition began to be talked of: the fierce prophetic language of nascent Christianity lent itself to the interpretation that its adherents really wished to overturn the social order. Were not these people with Christ on their lips, and a cross as their symbol, really enemies of society, doing nothing to assist the State in its work of administration, and even plotting and scheming to weaken it and compass its downfall?

In A.D. 64 much of the city of Rome was burnt down in a fire of unknown origin. But since Christians were known to have predicted its fiery destruction with evident relish, this was sufficient, in Nero's view, to establish their guilt as authors of the actual fire. Thenceforth to be a Christian was charge enough on which to be convicted and punished; and in Nero's reign many owning themselves to be Christians no doubt suffered.

But neither then nor later during the first two centuries was there any general edict condemning Christianity. In the absence of a hard-and-fast rule, cases were brought before the local magistrate who, by virtue of his police powers, could pass sentence on disturbers of the peace. How alleged offenders were dealt with depended upon the way in which the magistrate interpreted the nature of the offence. And so persecution was of unequal incidence. A series of isolated punitive measures, which is all we have record of in the first and second centuries, was not enough to suppress the Christian faith. Had the Roman government in that period been determined on suppression they might well have succeeded. As it was, however, the Christians were able, without serious hindrance, to organise their Church life, which steadily grew and prospered.

Nevertheless, they incurred keen resentment. If there was a visitation of famine, disease, or some other unlooked-for misfortune, the hagridden populace unfailingly attributed it to the evil-doing of the Christian Deity answering the prayers of his supplicants. Some Roman governors, not by nature hotheaded or superstitious, found it extremely hard to resist the multitude's demand for vengeance. Thus in the earlier days—particularly in the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius—persecution was often originated by the mob rather than by official initiative.

But it certainly appeared to the Roman of the day that the Christians hated mankind. From the first it was evident that they anticipated with joy the return of Christ when, in a mighty conflagration, all but themselves would perish. Then, later, they went out of their way to provoke hostility and enmity so that they might obtain the martyr's death. They scorned marriage and family life and exalted celibacy. They refused to shoulder civic responsibilities, avoided the social life of the times, and would not serve in the imperial army. They held a creed and preached a doctrine about the meek, humble, and simple inheriting the earth, which seemed to aim at social revolution. Taking no part in the Roman State religion, they remained contemptuously aloof. Some of the more foolhardy openly mocked at it and even outraged pagan sentiments by wilfully damaging pagan religious statuary.

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

We were delighted to see the "News Chronicle" had an article by Glyn Griffiths "lamenting the passing of the old Hell-fire Welsh preachers." Heartily we agree with him. What kind of a Christianity is one without Hell, Hell Fire, Demons, Devils, and Witches, playing a prominent part? It is unthinkable, and we are glad to see a sturdy movement is so strongly supported to reinstate such precious auxiliaries. Mr. Griffiths appears to be heart-broken that modern Welsh preachers now have to "sublimate" their graphic descriptions of Hell and what it does to sinners so that they can go home "and view the Sunday play on television." Cannot the true Christianity of Christ Jesus easily knockout T.V?

The coming "unity" of the numerous Christian Churches so often broached by speakers from its many denominations, received a shocking set-back the other week. The *British Weekly*, speaking (so it claimed) for the Free Churches, went for the Archbishop of Canterbury tooth and nail for his TV interview and the comments he made about the part played by genuine Christianity in the sacrament of marriage. "He was not concerned with truth," said the *British Weekly*, "but with social usefulness to achieve a desired social end. This is blasphemy. . . ." This is bad enough for any archbishop, and proves once again how these Christians love each other.

But the cream of this "Unity" joke is that the *Methodist Recorder* and the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead disagree violently with the *British Weekly* and its claim that it represents the Free Churches, and agree with Dr. Fisher on "Christian marriage." And where does "our Lord" come in all this? We haven't the least idea.

The Lord's Day Observance Society whose members tearfully plead with everybody to observe the Lord's Day as a Sabbath Day when in actual fact there is nothing whatever about it being the Sabbath Day in the Bible, is now out to "close everything on the Lord's Day." This should include the BBC, TV, and ITV, which desecrate its holiness perhaps more than anything else in the country. A host of comedians, actors, and singers, work as hard on Sunday (or harder) than they do on weekdays—even harder than on Saturday, the true Sabbath instituted by God Almighty. And what about the technicians?

And also what about the work done in the transport services, and the people who keep gas and electricity going? For sheer Christian impudence the L.D.O.S. would take a lot of beating, but of course very few people take it seriously. And certainly not our cardinals, bishops, and parsons.

The American Knights of Columbus have discovered that "belief in God is not enough." It is not enough to say that you believe in God but don't go to church. You have to believe and go to God's Church, the Roman one, and then you'll be full of the Grace of God, the True Grace, that is. If you go to any other Church, then you won't get the True Grace. You won't believe why God created you—and so on. The average Christian can let loose a lot of drivel but in this he is no match for the Knights of Columbus.

We were intrigued to read that according to the Rev. G. A. L. Lloyd, preaching the other Sunday in St. Paul's, it was "insidious secularism" that was doing so much damage to the Church of England, and therefore it ought to be dis-established. It might have been "scientific Humanism" or even "Rationalism" that was doing the damage but Mr. Lloyd had to tell the truth, and he knew it was what Christians often call "blatant" or "effete" Secularism that was the real enemy. Congratulations to Mr. Lloyd!

WHY DID THE ROMANS PERSECUTE ?

(Concluded from page 371)

The Roman was proud of his civilisation and its achievements; but these Christians, who everywhere were seeking new converts, were undermining its foundations, insidiously sapping its vitality. Constituting in effect a State within a State, they were a danger that pagan Rome to be true to itself could not ignore. So long as a man gave evidence by word and deed of his political loyalty to Rome he could privately believe what he liked in respect of religion. But writes R. H. Barrow in *A Short History of the Roman Empire*, "in no age was the opposition of the Church and the world clearer. Society and the Government showed to religion in general a tolerance which has had no parallel since; yet because of its beliefs Christianity answered tolerance by intolerance." And all the time its numbers and influence were increasing. Beginning as a religion of the dispossessed and powerless, it was to permeate before the dawn of the third century to the highest ranks of Roman society. No longer confined to the unlettered it was destined to be the religion of educated men, the crude prophecy of earlier years giving place to carefully reasoned apologies in finished literary style. Thus, near the close of the second century, the Christian Tertullian was able to boast exultantly: "We are but of yesterday, yet we have filled every place belonging to you: cities, islands, fortresses, towns, assemblies—even the camps, your tribes, your electoral divisions, the palace, the Senate, the law-courts. The only thing we have left to you for yourselves is your temples."

Why did the Romans persecute? A general answer would be that they did so because they conceived Christianity as a subversive and dangerous element infiltrating into every branch of civil life. And in the light of such Christian utterances as Tertullian's, the issue must have appeared menacingly plain to the Romans: the survival of imperial Rome with its age-old revered forms and traditions, or its usurpation and destruction by a mode of thought and mode of life alien to all for which pagan civilisation essentially stood. To understand the odium attaching to the name Christian we have but to put ourselves in the place of the Roman citizen living in the early years of our era. What, in his place, would have been our reaction to so great a threat to the life and future of our Empire?

TAKE YOUR WIFE

I have no patience with a Freethinker who goes to a Secular meeting and leaves his wife at home, or lets her go to church. Of course he must respect her freedom. He must not try to govern her will. He must refrain from every shadow of coercion. But he is bound to use every possible persuasion, without being ostentatious or offensive. And if he is a good husband, and a tender father, she is very likely to listen. If a woman both loves and respects a man she will go a long way with him. It was a woman, not a man, in the old story, who said: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God." And if the Freethought husband can make his wife a Freethinker, he will make his children Freethinkers too. Surely this is worth a strong and patient effort. It is idle to talk about converting the world unless you make a beginning at home.

G. W. Foote.

THE FREETHINKER

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

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. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

To Correspondents

CORRECTION.—In the Rev. J. L. Broom's article, p.346, 1st col., l. 3, the quotation from Sir A. Lunn should read, "The humanist avoids certain actions not because they offend God but because they injure other people."

MRS. F. WILLIS.—Auguste Comte founded Positivism. The contemporary Humanist Movement has only slight affinity with it, and completely dispenses with Comte's humanist ritual of saints, etc.

F. MARRIOTT JONES.—The first English monarch to touch for "king's evil" (scrofula) was Edward the Confessor, the last being Queen Anne—one of her "patients" being Samuel Johnson.

R. FOX and C. WHALLEY.—See "Notes and News" for information about tickets for the Margaret Knight meeting at Manchester on Dec. 11.

GUNASEELA VITANAGE (Ceylon).—Please shorten if for publication: meanwhile sent to Mr. Clark.

F. WINKLER.—Experiments on oranges by Yerkes, author of *Almost Human*, showed them to have the power of insight into problems, just as Kohler found with chimpanzees. Thorndike, another worker on animal behaviour, finds insight at the level of the Primates.

A.F.G.—"Religions scowling downward from the skies
With hideous head and vigilant eyes of hate!"
is a translation of Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura*).

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, WHARRAD, NEWTON, SHEPPARD and MURPHY.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday at 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1.0 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and CORSAIR. Every Sunday: 8 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, CAVANAGH and others.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday and Sunday at 8 p.m. Messrs. PARRY, THOMPSON, and other speakers.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and WOOD. *The Freethinker* on sale at Marble Arch.

INDOOR

Bradford N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, November 27, 6.45 p.m.: F. L. AGAR, "The Impact of the Cinema on Modern Thought."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Tuesday, November 27, 7 p.m.: D. G. MACRAE, M.A., "How is Social change Possible?"

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, November 27, 6.30 p.m.: Mrs. DIANA PURCELL, "What I Believe in."

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street).—Sunday, November 27, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The Vatican and Ecclesiastical Fascism."

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £1,018 8s. 7d.; R. Taylor, 5s. 0d.; W. T. Hawks (South Africa), £2 2s. 0d.; W. Adams (Canada), 8s. 0d.; A. Hancock, 1s. 0d.; Mrs. F. Stanton (In memory of Mr. and Mrs. F. Terry), £1 0s. 0d. Total, £1,022 4s. 7d.

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (64 George Street).—Saturday, November 26, 3 p.m.: Alderman W. BROTHERTON, J.P., "Trade Unions and the Community."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, November 27, 2.30 p.m.: F. T. WALKER, "The Philosophy of Liberalism."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Sunday, November 27, 11 a.m.: Prof. T. H. PEAR, "Intellectuals: their Nature and Functions Today."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.).—Sunday, November 27, 7.15 p.m.: A Lecture.

Notes and News

WELL over a hundred tickets have already been sold for Mrs. Margaret Knight's meeting at Manchester (Chorlton Town Hall) on December 11th. Parties are expected from Liverpool, Bradford and possibly other places. Tickets and information can be obtained from the Hon Secretary of the Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Mrs. Hilda M. Rogals, 25 Derby Road, Withington, Manchester 20) who is organising the event.

* * * *

In the Nation-wide Anti-Litter Campaign a parson of Blyth, Northumberland wrote to the Council complaining of the litter around his church on Market Days. The church is situated at one end of the Market Place. Not content with that, he suggested that the members of the Council should parade on Friday and Saturday nights and clear up the mess. This brought a rejoinder from Alderman R. C. Proctor in open Council to the effect that he had a better suggestion to make. As the litter was worst on dry windy days he suggested the parson should pray for occasional showers and no wind on market days and that, as the parson was a professional Christian, if he was as efficient at his job as he believed Councillors were inefficient at theirs the problem would be solved. Alderman Proctor pointedly remarked that as the reverend gentleman paid no rates for his business premises he might have displayed some Christian humility instead of impertinence. The local press merely reported that Alderman Proctor had described the parson's suggestion as impertinent.

* * * *

In a recent broadcast extract from one of the Oxford Union debates a speaker commented on a remark by a female American student on seeing one of the University chapels: "Gee! That's the cutest little God-box I've seen!" (irreverent laughter by the students).

* * * *

At a recent anniversary meeting of the Bristol Methodist Mission the Lord Mayor called for a "Christian Crusade to save the world." He reminds one of the American diplomat who urged Egypt and Israel to "settle their differences in the true Christian spirit."

NEXT WEEK

JESUS ON TELEVISION

By the late JOSEPH McCABE

The Daily Suppress

By E. G. MACFARLANE

RECENTLY I had the happy task of taking part in a "Matter of Opinion" meeting at which all sorts of questions could be put up by members of the audience—thus giving the "panel" opportunity of dealing with any aspect of our social lives. In this case the Lord Provost of Dundee represented the Labour Party and a Vice-chairman of the Conservative Party represented its point of view. The other members of the panel were a member of the Scottish Nationalist Party, a member of the Liberal Party and myself as a representative of the World Parliament Party.

The first question asked involved comparing modern education with old-fashioned (i.e. "thirty years ago") and I pointed out that the dead hand of the propagators of Christian doctrine through the state schools had been slackened through the years but that we still had much to do to shake it off; and, moreover, that education and indeed thinking generally is stultified by respect for the authoritarian pronouncements of supporters of all the ancient religious doctrines.

I knew that a representative of the local newspaper was present at the meeting and I wondered whether he would get a true report of the ideas I was propagating published. I wasn't very hopeful because I have had a great deal of experience with the methods of "selection" employed by the press. Although I call them "The Daily Suppress" they will never admit to "suppressing" anything. They merely find it necessary to "select" "this" rather than "that" for publication since space is limited and they have to print "what the readers want"!

In this case, however, the reporter rather gave the game away before the event. When the question "Should religious instruction in schools be abolished or should provision be made for those who do not agree with religion to state their views in school?" came up, this reporter said in conversation to some of the audience, "I won't be able to get any criticism of religion printed."

Now when you try to imagine this sort of thing going on all over this country and indeed probably all over the world on similar lines (according to whether the established faith happens to be Moslem or Christian or Atheism!) it is not difficult to see how the application of ordinary intelligence and common-sense to our social problems is frustrated. This daily suppression (for that is what it is despite all talk of "selection"!) is perhaps going to cost the human race its very survival. There is always plenty of space for reactionary outlooks like that of Billy Graham who bawls about "back to the Bible." He is met by Prime Ministers and Monarchs and is given lots of the best times on T.V. and Radio to propagate rubbish which the merest tyro of free-thought could demolish if he were allowed similar facilities. Those who demand, and get, privileges for the dissemination of orthodox views on life and living among the young people of this country through the schools are also protected by the press if they happen to do something which merits public comment of a critical nature by a freethinker. For instance, I know perfectly well that if I tried a "letter to the Editor" dealing with a recent visit by a clergyman to me—in connection with the "Tell Scotland" movement (an effort to get the people back to Church and orthodoxy in this district)—I would find that my letter would not be printed.

Actually the incident merits publicity. I had learned from one of my voluntary informants that I was to get this visit. The forewarning helped to forearm me and I had explained the position to two other freethinking friends who

were on hand at the time of the visit. Together we grilled the minister on his beliefs and found that he really believed that Christ was not a normal product of biological propagation—although he admitted that the theory of biological evolution was "probably true." Although we pointed out that this idea that Christ was "the only begotten son of God" was mere superstition and fairy-tale for ignorant people he would not relinquish his position on that point. He has already abandoned one half of the Bible but the angels and guiding stars and virgin births of the second half still bemuse his brain—just as the brains of the vast majority of the rest of the people in the world are bemused by insupportable ideas of life after death, transmigration of souls, spirit world, national destinies and many other ghoulies and ghosties of the human imagination. This is the rubbish which a real newspaper service would help to eradicate from the minds of men. Unfortunately most newspaper editors are just as ignorant of scientific criticism and logical thought as the people they serve and write for. When some of them begin to respect the truth and are undismayed by the "risk" they may be taking in publishing the truth about matters of this kind I may reconsider my opinion of them—meantime, to me, most papers fully deserve the disgraceful title, The Daily Suppress.

E. G. MACFARLANE.

Drooping Violets

Can anybody tell the writer where are now to be found those valiant defenders of the Christian Faith who lustily sing "Dare to be a Daniel" and "Stand up, Stand up for Jesus" and then seek out opportunities to substantiate their Christian claims? The writer happens to belong to a branch of the N.S.S., which conducts secularist propaganda, both indoor and outdoor, throughout the year and persistently throws out an open challenge to debate in public any of the Christian claims and dogmas, with duly registered professional advocates, or enthusiastic amateurs. It is found that both professional and amateur Daniels are most discreet about venturing into any lion's den and will adopt any subterfuge and use any tactics to avoid becoming entangled in open discussion with a real unbeliever. The few parsons who do venture into the open air appear most careful to avoid taking questions from known unbelievers and in no circumstances will allow a known critic to follow up with further questions.

The latest excuse invented by one local parson, who had been inveigled into making tentative arrangements for a debate between a local secularist and the Reverend Professor of Divinity at the local training college, was that the secularist was incompetent and would be unable to make a case against the professor. When the local secularist reminded the parson that he himself had made the arrangements and chosen the subject to be debated and further suggested that the parson himself might take the professor's place and perhaps contrive to let the poor unfortunate infidel down lightly, or, alternatively, that his Champion of Divinity could be matched against a secularist of rationalist of national reputation and standing, the parson was discreetly silent.

Some time ago the Primate, Archbishop Cyril Garbett of York, issued a fervent appeal for laymen in the Church to qualify themselves to enter into intellectual discussion and to defend their Christian beliefs. There has been no noticeable response to this fervent appeal. This is hardly

surprising, when the professionals who are paid for the job are so persistently backward in setting the example. When the lions of the different denominations will only conduct staged debates with "stooges," how can the unpaid amateurs be expected to offer themselves for execution?

Can this be another case of fools hesitating to rush in where the saints, professors and angels fear to tread? Have the professional divines and theologians discovered in this century that they can no longer make even a reasonable show of defending their crude superstitions against intelligent opposition, and is not their seeming bashfulness prompted more by the weakness of their case than by any consideration of the tender susceptibilities and shortcomings of their unbelieving critics?

LUKE STRAIGHT.

Atheists 4, Catholics 1

THREE Freethinker readers who happened to be in Eire (separately) at the time of the furore over the Eire-Yugoslav football match have sent us accounts of the general excitement following the Dublin Archbishop's unsuccessful ban on the match. The Catholic hold on Eire has to be experienced at close quarters to be fully realised.

* * * *

Apparently the Dublin paper *Standard* "set the ball rolling" a few days before the actual kick-off, with "reports" about the ill-treatment of Catholic clergy by Tito's atheists. The Archbishop then brought out his big guns, aimed at the Balkan tyrant and his ball-chasing ambassadors. And the Archbishop almost succeeded. In fact, had not the arrangements been so far advanced he certainly would have succeeded; there can be no doubt about that. As it was, many important people shivered in their shoes. The President of the Republic suddenly found he could not be present at the game, as he had intended, and the government sought to explain the issuing of visas for the Yugoslavs as a sort of oversight, due to inadequate discussion of the project. Radio Eireann cancelled broadcasting arrangements. The team trainer withdraw from the match, and the Transport Football Club and Army Athletic Association withdrew their support, as well as sundry lesser organisations.

* * * *

Even the ground itself was picketed, with papal flags and slogans protesting against the game. Twenty-five thousand Irishmen took no notice and attended the match. An open letter was addressed to the Yugoslav team by the Catholic Association for International Relations, on the lines the Archbishop had laid down. The best joke came from the League of the Kingship of Christ, which had the audacity to inquire whether members of the Yugoslav team had come for the express purpose of gaining political refuge in Eire. Come to Eire for prosperity and freedom!

* * * *

We have not heard that the Irish Labour Party, which has ministers in the Coalition, has protested against clerical interference with the people's rights. Possibly they accept the pronouncement of the Bishop of Cork, who said the clergy were "the final arbiters of right and wrong, even in political matters."

G.H.T.

When scepticism comes in later life the priest has always a ready warning. "Don't forsake the religion of your mother." He tries to throw the doubter back at his mother's knee. Occasionally he has the audacity to ask, "Would you call your mother a liar?" And the worst of it is that this irrational appeal is too often effective.

G. W. FOOTE.

A Modern Canterbury Tale

By LOUIS. S. VERNON-WORSLEY

FOR pure evasive humbug it would be hard to beat the statement made by the Archbishop of Canterbury to interviewer Richard Dimpleby in what will henceforth become known as the Princess Margaret affair. The Chief Prelate is reported as saying,

1. That the Princess decided *alone*, without pressure from either State or Church.
2. That she was guided by Conscience, and that when she knew what God's Will was in the matter, she made her decision accordingly.
3. That only those who prayed for her realised what she was going through but nobody else did so.

Let us examine these assertions more closely. In the first place, every sane person is held before the Law to be personally responsible for their actions, and must in the last analysis make their own decisions. This fact is so elementary, that the Archbishop's reference to it can only be regarded as an attempt to cover up his own interference.

His second point smacks strongly of cant, for neither he or any other human being can possibly know the Will of God, despite the Church's dogmatic assertion to the contrary.

His third point that the average person was not capable of assessing the unhappy girl's dilemma, is a typical specimen of the Theologians arrogance, and is an insult to the intelligence of large numbers of people who felt for her in her sorrow, although they gave no public demonstration of this fact like the alleged Christians.

This grievous upset in the lives of two most admirable people—for was not Group Captain Townsend one of the heroes of the Battle of Britain—must now take its place with other shattered romances of Royal Personages, another of which is of too recent origin to need recapitulation here. There are however, other serious issues to be borne in mind, in which both State and Church stand indicted as being hypocritical and intolerant, to wit, Divorce Law and the Legitimacy Acts, and we must be the only country in Europe that persists in clinging to Legal measures which are both unchristian and illogical. These cruel enactments only became the Law of the Land through ecclesiastical bigotry and domination. The inclusion in the Legal Code of this country has been responsible for inflicting hardship and misery of mind upon hundreds of thousands of our citizens. That the Church should consider itself the Moral Censor of the nation is but another demonstration of theological arrogance, and if we have become Pagan as "The Cloth" asserts then they are to blame.

The records of religious history clearly disclose that the Church originally obtained its hold over the ancient tribes through the fear and ignorance then rife. Only the Priests in the main were educated in such a situation it is only natural that the masses who could neither read nor write, should put their trust in the Clergy. The latter were not slow to seize such an opportunity for spreading their doctrines, and by adding prophecy to their teachings, they swayed multitudes of people. It is a far cry from those bygone days, but even the dim mists of antiquity cannot obscure facts which are patent to any intelligent person.

In order to strengthen their hold on the minds of their followers they assiduously propagated the idea that they were the Ambassadors of God, and that the Beatitudes of Truth, Beauty and Goodness were attributes which they alone possessed. In view of this it is not difficult to see how Religion has obtained through the Ages such a hold on the minds of human beings.

Correspondence

THE HOW AND THE WHY

In my previous letter I showed where Mr. Ridley confused determinism and fatalism. Instead of replying he says, feebly and irrelevantly, that in a book he has seen by Mr. Trent, the latter allows for determinism in his astrology. But what Mr. Trent said in his book is not in dispute. What is in dispute is what Mr. Ridley said in *The Freethinker*, and instead of admitting his confusion he jumps about like a scalded cat and quotes this other author who says something quite different—and as relevant as the flowers that bloom in the Spring. So my previous letter completely answers his "reply."

Mr. Ridley is no happier when dealing with the How and the Why. He wants me to believe he used Why in a physical sense. Then why did he contrapose it to the How?

If Why is used in the physical sense what is the function of the How? Astronomy, he said, tells us how the universe evolved but cannot yet tell us why. Nor should it. The question "Why" is invalid, as Cohen showed. The physical sense is covered by the How. The Why is only of use to the religious and purposive.

Mr. Ridley leaves the door wide open for our Christian opponents.
H. J. GRATOREX.

GOD AND THE VALUE OF "PI"

Every schoolboy knows that the value of "pi" is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter. He also probably knows that this value can never be (or has never been) ascertained exactly, but is approximately $3 \frac{1}{7}$ th. A more accurate approximation is 3.1416.

Circa 2600 B.C. the Egyptians calculated the value of "pi" as 3.16049, which is correct to only the first decimal place. Even so all these approximations are better than that of the Babylonians who assumed that $\pi = 3$. This value was held for centuries and is the value recorded in God's book in 1 Kings, vii, 23 and 2 Chron. iv, 2, where He tells us they—"made a molten sea 10 cubits from the one brim to the other; it was round all about—and a line of 30 cubits did compass it round about. . . ."

Alas! that is where both God and the Babylonians went astray, as the modern schoolboy goes astray the first time he uses a pair of compasses. He discovers that the radius steps exactly 6 times round the circumference and then wrongly assumes that the length of the circumference is exactly 3 times that of the diameter. He overlooks the fact that the steps he makes with his compass do not measure sixths of the actual circumference but merely short cuts (chords), round it.

This seems to be the reason for God's error, for on his own showing He "did compass it round about."

RUBY Ta'BOIS.

LEGAL MARRIAGES IN BRITAIN

Is the writer of the first note in "Believing World" (Nov. 11), correct in stating that "it is not the Church marriage which is legal in this country"? Is not a Church marriage of equal legality with a marriage before a registrar? A certificate of Church marriage is recognised as valid in the Divorce Courts, as proof of the marriage which has to be proved before a decree of dissolution can be granted. If the writer of the paragraph is accurate, it would mean that all religious people would have to go through two ceremonies, one the registry office and one at some kind of church, and this certainly is not so.

C. H. NORMAN.

[Surely Mr. Norman is aware that a marriage in church is legal only if the church has been registered for marriages? EDITOR]

HUMANISM OR SECULARISM?

Mr. Cutner, in his review of Roshwald's *Humanism in Practice*, has said some things about Humanism with which I am in very cordial agreement. I have on different occasions written three articles concerning Humanism, but it never has been a term of which I am particularly keen. It is equivocal in meaning, and that hardly commends it to scrupulous thinkers—especially freethinkers!

Yes, Mr. Cutner, secularism is a better word. There are those who are pleased to call themselves Christian Humanists—but who ever heard of a Christian Secularist? Mr. Cutner also mentions the appellation Humanitarianism. Where humaneness is the idea to be conveyed this is in every way a satisfactory term, and I don't know why anyone should seek any other.

It may be of some interest to record that I have for years been a member of the Ethical Movement—but how I hate to hear it nowadays called the Humanist Movement!

G. I. BENNETT.

RELIGION IN THE FORCES

The suggestion has been made by a Committee of the King George Jubilee Trust that religious instruction should be compulsory in the Forces.

They teach a man how to kill his fellow men by bomb, bullet and bayonet and if he is a Commando he is shown how to sever the jugular vein efficiently with a knife and how to fracture the gullet with a blow (*vide* Emmett Dunn). Then they propose to give him compulsory religion.

These religious fanatics are without doubt the greatest hypocrites it is possible to imagine. There is one bright spot; if the suggestion is ever put into force the ranks of the unbelievers will be considerably swelled.
D. SKELTON.

EDUCATION?

I see you publish yet another article in *The Freethinker* appealing for action against religious services and Bible Study in schools. It is much more important to secure for parents the right to decide whether their children shall go to school at all, but I cannot remember any article in *The Freethinker* pleading for this freedom.

To many of us religion is not the only objectionable feature of school life. We are opposed to the medical inspections, the vaccination campaigns, the collections for charities, and the distribution of pasteurised milk.

Occasionally we may have personal dislike of staff or scholars and do not wish our own to come under any undesirable influence.

We may even be so quaint as to enjoy the company of our children and resent being deprived of it but, whatever the reason, the parents are the natural and proper guardians and should have the right to choose.

Yours, etc.,

C. N. AIREY.

FROM A NEW READER

I am a new subscriber to your paper, which I am glad to read though I cannot agree with all it says, and I feel grateful to you in helping to smash the powers of priests and official religions—one of the greatest sources of human misery!

PETER STODDARD.

WAS JESUS "IDOLISED"?

Your correspondent "J.R." who accuses Mr. Du Cann of "always boosting up Jesus" has read your brilliant contributor with little understanding or profit, I think. Constantly Mr. Du Cann places the portraits and words of their own Jesus beside the portraits and words of modern Church ecclesiastics, thereby convicting them (by the glaring and forcible contrast) of hypocrisy, treachery and time-serving in face of their own proclaimed Jesus' standards.

That is not "boosting" anyone.

It would be useless, and indeed, insane to reproach Christians with not aiming at the ideals of Secularist. It is by their own pretended ideals that they stand self-condemned.

Again, it is one thing for "the common people" to hear a speaker gladly because he is interesting and provocative (as Jesus was) but quite another to espouse his cause or "idolise" the speaker. Mr. Du Cann is on sound ground in pointing out (what has to be slurred over by the Church in modern democratic days) that Jesus was all for "the few" and against "the many." He denied the capacity of the multitude for salvation. "Few there be that find it" was his harsh word. And he selected his favoured Dean Inge was fond of pointing out.

You can hardly maintain that a person is "idolised" when not a hand is raised to protect, and not a voice to protest, against condemnation and death.

Yours, etc.,

J. GAVEL.

Can Materialism Explain Mind? By G. H. Taylor. Price 4s.; postage 3d.

"EQUALITARIAN BULLETIN." Free copy. — Apply C. E. Ratcliffe, 13 Madeira Road, Clevedon, Somerset.

FURNISHED Room, ground floor front to let, might suit Freethinker.—Apply 62 Balham Grove, S.W.12.

NEW N.S.S. GENERAL SECRETARY desires permanent unfurnished accommodation in London area for self and mother. Suggestions welcomed. Replies to Colin McCall, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

FRIENDLY informal international house. Plentiful food, company. Moderate terms.—Chris & Stella Rankin, 43 West Park, Eltham, S.E.9. Tel.: ELT. 1761.