

The Freethinker

Vol. LXXVI—No. 1

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fourpence

In the year of our Lord 1845, the Reverend John Henry Newman, Vicar of the University Church of Saint Mary at Oxford, completed an immense and highly technical work entitled "An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine." Immediately he had finished his *magnum opus* Newman quitted the Anglican church, and passed over to the "Italian Mission" the then universally execrated Church of Rome. There, after a generation of vicissitudes, he eventually became a Cardinal (1879), and ranks today as perhaps the most eminent Christian theologian of the 19th century. Whilst not his most popular or widely known book, "An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine" is perhaps the masterpiece of its remarkable author, and has probably exercised a greater influence upon the subsequent "Development of Dogma" than any other theological work published during the 19th century.

"Always, Everywhere, and by All"

Prior to the publication of Newman's essay, which incidentally at first received a very hostile reception from both Roman and Anglican theologians, orthodox Christian theology, Catholic and where orthodox, Protestant as well, adhered to the famous maxim propounded by Saint Vincent of Lerins (5th cent.) that absolute truth is to be found in the accepted doctrines of the universal Catholic church, and that the ultimate test of the truth of any particular dogma is whether it has been acknowledged, "everywhere, always, and by all." That is to say that since the earliest beginnings of the Christian church its system of fundamental dogmas, has been universally accepted, and has subsisted unchanged from New Testament times till the middle of the 19th century. Prior to the publication of Newman's epoch making book, both Catholic and Protestant theologians agreed with this fundamental proposition. The Protestant Reformers, Luther, Calvin, and their followers, concurred with Rome on this point, all that they disagreed about, was *what* precisely were the universally accepted dogmas upon which the Christian church had always agreed.

The Origins of Theological Criticism

Such a point of view was still possible at the Reformation, but with the origins of theological and biblical criticism, it soon became an impossible position to hold. The cardinal and fundamental dogma of the Trinity was, for example, totally unknown to the writers of the New Testament. The few references to this dogma to be found in *our* New Testaments have been demonstrated by biblical scholarship, to be the interested interpolations of a later age which did believe in this dogma. For the first millennium of its existence, the church believed universally, or as near to it as makes little difference, that the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary was actually offered to Satan, and not as is now universally believed, to God, and innumerable theologians can be

demonstrated by their quotations to have held this view. Similarly, with regard to other dogmas particularly emphasised in Catholic circles; Origen, one of the ablest Fathers of the Church did not believe in eternal punishment, St. Augustine rejected the infallibility of the Pope, St. Thomas Aquinas rejected explicitly the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. Obviously very few of the present dogmas of the church had been universally received, "always, everywhere, and by all." In the teeth of modern knowledge of church history the canon of St. Vincent had hopelessly broken down.

Newman's Theory of Development

Newman's immense knowledge of church history, enlightened by one of the most subtle intellects of his century, enabled him to see this,

and, with much courage, for theology is notoriously conservative and suspicious of new ideas, he set to work in his famous "Essay" to find a new, and more rational criterion by which yardstick it would be possible to measure the truth or falsehood of dogmas. This essential yardstick he found in the idea of "Development." Briefly, the case for "Development" runs something like this: From the earliest days of the Christian church, Christianity has been a dogmatic religion embracing certain definite beliefs. On this point Cardinal Newman agreed with St. Vincent of Lerins. But the church only "defined," and only *explicitly* "formulated" its dogmas under pressure from heretics, who *explicitly* denied them. Hence the individual dogmas of the churches were only unfolded *gradually*, and even eminent theologians were ignorant of them, or formulated them inadequately, prior to their official promulgation by the church, as a necessary part of the Christian religion. This theory would explain, for example, why Origen did not in the 3rd century believe in Hell, the existence of which, and the eternal punishment in which, had not yet been officially defined. It would, incidentally, also explain why Newman himself rejected Papal Infallibility *before* 1870, but then accepted it, *after* it had been officially defined as a necessary dogma in the Vatican Council of that year.

Newman and Darwin

Newman published his *magnum opus* in 1845, that is 14 years before the publication of Darwin's "Origin of Species," which first put the theory of evolution on a scientific basis. It has sometimes been claimed that Newman anticipated Darwin, but a close acquaintance with the work of these two great thinkers does not confirm any such claim, "Development" in fact, *explicitly* excludes evolution. For example, the embryo of, say an ape, "develops" into an ape, but it cannot transform itself later into a new species; all its potentialities are present *implicitly* from the start, all that happens later on, is that they gradually become *explicit*. There is no change in *kind*, as evolution presupposes. The acorn develops into an oak, but *not* into anything else sub-

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Newman and the Development of Dogma

By F. A. RIDLEY

sequently. Far from being complementary, "development," as expounded by Newman, and evolution in the Darwinian theory, are mutually *exclusive* terms.

Newman and Modernism

After Newman's death (1890), at the turn of the present century, there arose an avowedly "Modernist" movement in the church of Rome, soon to be ruthlessly suppressed, and its leaders summarily excommunicated, by the Vatican. The "Modernist" leaders Loisy, Tyrrel, Von Hugel, based themselves avowedly on Newman's theory of "Development." They wished to "develop" Catholic theology still farther! They actually went very much further than Newman, who certainly did not hold that the founder of Christianity himself knew nothing of the dogma of his own Deity, as Loisy suggested in his book on "The Church and the Gospel." Newman was no "Modernist," none the less the seeds of "Modernism" can be found in his "Essay on Development" which narrowly escaped being condemned by Rome as a result of the critique which the "Modernists" professed to find in its pages.

A Theological Landmark

When read even today, Newman's masterpiece still remains a deeply impressive work, not only by reason of the learning and subtlety which it indicates, but also because of the magnificent style of its author, one of the greatest literary artists of his century. In the annals of theology the "Essay" represents one of the few really notable books, and its author was one of the very few theologians who have made any original contributions to their dubious "science." Newman was, perhaps, the last Christian theologian of outstanding ability, and like most really original books, his *chef-d'œuvre* has exercised much greater influence after its author's death than it did during the great Cardinal's own life-time.

Capital Punishment in New Zealand

By ARTHUR O'HALLORAN (Dominion President N.Z. Howard League for Penal Reform)

CAPITAL punishment is a controversial issue in New Zealand. At the present time it is being widely discussed and from end to end of the Dominion there is a rising tide of feeling which favours abolition. The subject is an embarrassing one to the Government. Eighteen months ago opposition to the execution of three Niue Islanders was so insistent, so spontaneous, that the Government changed its mind at the last minute and reprieved the young Islanders.

Recently three executions in Mt. Eden prison, New Zealand's biggest jail (and incidentally its "Maximum Security" prison) has brought hanging vividly before the minds of New Zealanders. One of the murderers hanged was a young Maori, twenty years of age. Another was a young emigrant from England, whose mother flew twelve thousand miles in a desperate but vain effort to save his life.

Many factors have contributed to the upsurge against hanging in the Dominion. One factor, consciously or unconsciously, was the hanging of Ruth Ellis in England. Another, and perhaps a more potent one, is the growing feeling that the claim made for the re-introduction of capital punishment some five years ago, that it would be a deterrent, has proved specious, or at least it cannot supply favourable statistics. There has been no drop in

the homicide rate, although murders have, during the past five years (since the abrogation of capital punishment) been committed in the "shadow of the gallows." Many organisations have, during the past twelve months, pressed for the abolition of hanging. Among these have been church organisations with a large membership. Smaller bodies such as the Society of Friends, the Theosophists and the N.Z. Howard League for Penal Reform have brought the matter prominently forward. The last mentioned society has inaugurated a national campaign for Abolition and is meeting with much success. In furtherance of its campaign it has addressed letters to six or seven hundred ministers of religion throughout the Dominion; it is arranging meetings, panels of discussion and in a variety of ways publicising the issue. Several newspapers have given wholehearted support to the campaign. By way of concluding this article, with the permission of the editors of *The Freethinker*, the Howard League leaflet, "Shadow of the Gallows" is reproduced below.

HANGING MUST BE ABOLISHED

Because the claims made by those responsible for the re-introduction of capital punishment in New Zealand—that it would be a deterrent to murder—have proved to be fallacious.

Because the countries and states which have NO DEATH PENALTY have a LOWER rather than a higher percentage of homicides.

Because capital punishment is irrevocable and denies all possibility of rectifying a mistake should new facts come to light AFTER execution.

Because it "is an act of despair."—(Lord Templewood, former Home Secretary.)

Because it is an act of revenge.

Because a high percentage of the murders known to the police are committed by the insane and most of the others are the result of fits of passion.—(Lord Templewood.)

Because it is barbarous and degrading. "Hanging is so barbarous that only barbarians can support it."—(Comment by a Conservative M.P., House of Commons.)

Because there HAVE been wrongful convictions and innocent persons have been hanged as a result.

Because it stimulates morbid sensationalism and has led to imitative crime.

Because children discuss the grim details of an execution.

Because the State and the community ought not to answer the criminal with his own weapon—destruction. Even where for their own protection they have to resort to force, their action should express the higher values of law and justice.

Because persons have been hanged who were mental defectives or whose sanity was in doubt.

Because the basic attitude to ALL criminals should be, if possible, REFORMATION.

Because most murderers are not without some redeeming quality or qualities.

Because many murderers have NO conviction for ANY OTHER crime. Whilst in prison many are model prisoners and upon eventual release make good citizens for the remainder of their lives.

Because an execution puts a strain on the prison staff which they should not be called upon to bear. In England there are examples of prison officers of ability and devotion who have left the service rather than be associated with executions.

"No one can leave the slaughter-shed without a deep sense of humiliation, horror and shame."—(A prison chaplain.)

"I feel quite unclean after having taken part in a hanging."—(Governor of a British prison.)

Because an execution causes suffering to the innocent relatives of the murderer with no advantage to the relatives of the victim.

Because "accidents" and bungling sometimes make the carrying out of the sentence even more horrible than it is intended to be.

Most people who support punishment do so because of a false idea—the mistaken notion that only fear of hanging prevents people from committing murders.

The truth of the matter is that most murders are committed on impulse or under strain without any thought of the consequences. The cool, calculating murderer, who is the exception, is influenced by the chances of escaping detection, not by what kind of punishment is meted out.

The 1956 Bear-Garden

By R. READER

MOST things fool either some people all the time, or all the people some of the time. The atom, thanks to popular press and religious neurosis, does better. It is as honest as a conjuring trick. "Take a gram of uranium 235. Bombard it with neutrons. Matter is converted to energy, the transformation equation containing the term C^2 , where C , plain C , is the speed of light, or 186,000 miles per second. Gentlemen, omitting tedious calculation, one gram of U235 gives as much heat as hundreds of tons of coal! Hundreds of tons!" (Astonishment, and a vision of every man his own factory, and week-end trips to the Moon.)

Sleight of hand does it. "Take a gram of U235." "Willingly, but where is it?" "In the earth, of course, but all mixed up with tons of other things. You'll need machinery, friend, to sort it out, and tons of steel, copper, aluminium, and what-have-you to make the machinery. And then you must either take everything there, or bring the tons of other things here. You'll need ships, friend, and something to drive them. Human graft to set the business creaking. And when, much later, you actually have a gram of U235, you'll need more machinery to bombard it, and Back Room accommodation to prevent it giving more harm than heat. In short, friend, in order to obtain raw materials, apparatus, transport, and exploitation, you'll need coal—and plenty of it. How much? Well, let's say 3,000 tons for every gram of U235 in service." (Groans, and the contemporary reality of fuel cuts, power cuts, mining disputes, strikes, protracted delivery delays, falling exports, rising costs of living, etc., etc.)

"Crazy? Not a bit of it. Coal takes time to yield its heat to boilers, but uranium 235 can release energy instantaneously, producing hell fire to satisfy Bible prophets. It is this, friend, not vulgar economy, that makes it so interesting."

Even more interesting, to the rationalist, is the philosophical aspect of this grotesque affair. A score of countries are burning up dwindling world coal, ostensibly for economic return; actually to acquire force to destroy themselves and others. Why? What drives the young physicist, whose training has inculcated scrupulously honest consideration of facts, to "earn" his living by this tragic foolery? "The economic system" is no answer; all "systems" are up to their necks in it. No; the whole thing is one particular aspect only of a much greater whole: world-wide malaise. Put that malaise into one sentence, and what is it? "In the West, housing, fuel, and transport shortages, traffic accidents, unemployment and economic paradox; in the East, dictatorship and traditional flood and famine; everywhere, restlessness, irritation, frustration, discontent, hatred, and racial discord; the whole promising violent, premature, disintegration for anyone, anywhere, any time." Any schoolboy can see the common factor. Whether the difficulty is to force yet more traffic along yet more congested roads; construct yet smaller flats to hold yet more tenants; to feed yet more millions; or, at uranium level, to design yet larger guided missiles to kill yet more people, the problem is always one of *number*. The tangible cause of this malaise—overpopulation—shrieks at us. But suggest that action should be taken. Your suggestion will be condemned as selfish, in bad taste, immoral, disgusting, taboo. . . . Why? Partly because we all have financial fingers in the population pie. We all experience emotion, desire, and passion. The exchange of services to satisfy these things constitutes

business, and, since such a thing as dishonesty *does* exist, it is logical that payment by services should be insisted upon in return for services. Unfortunately, we of 1956, as all previous generations, are too numerous. In this overcrowded world the sum total of desire far exceeds the possibilities for its gratification (witness the growing discontent of native hordes, those ripe fruits of religious "enlightenment"). As a result, the primary legitimate exchange of business has degenerated into a struggle to obtain *more* gratification for *less*. Hence the 1956 bear-garden. Obviously no class or money "system" which ignores population pressure can remedy this situation. Monkey business, with tangible food, clothing, and shelter, makes an emotional appeal to our physicist which quite outweighs the intellectual judgment that tells him journey's end is world suicide.

Economic considerations, however, are not the whole story. Childish trust in the security of large numbers is inseparable from religious dogma, and the neurotic delirium of sick brains, long since dead and buried. Today, most people can see through canting, hypocritical, religious belief. They can see, for example, that many pious "New Elizabethan" heads, today talking glibly of a precious heritage and stones in silver seas, would, under Elizabeth Tudor, be rotting high and dry on Temple Bar for selling England to the Papacy. To that extent, at least, they are not fooled all the time. But they cannot see anything selfish, stupid, and dangerous in begetting large numbers of children. They have retained an evil religious principle, and—let us be quite honest—have thrown away certain good things, which are essential to any society living above anarchy. The only hope for mankind is that collective human intelligence, if such still exists, will cultivate the rational religious sentiments of honesty, industry, kindness, tenderness, and generosity, and uncompromisingly reject the smouldering inferiority, jealousy, antagonism, and compensatory pride, arrogance, and overweening conceit of religious neurosis, that scourge which has produced medieval stake and rack, 1939-1945 torture chamber and crematorium; and latterly, nuclear fission, with all its possibilities of even greater suffering.

The Christian Forum

By H. DAY

THE writer, with probably some millions of other fee paying licence holders, viewed recently a televised Christian Forum consisting of the Abbot of Downside representing the Roman Catholic and extreme fundamentalist version of Christianity; the Rev. Dr. Donald Soper expressing the non-conformist and presumably modernised type of Christianity; and the noble Lord Hailsham, formerly Quintin Hogg, representing the Anglican Protestant in the supposedly ultra-modern version. This forum had been assembled to deal with religious questions from fifth form schoolboys from which apparently the cream had been skimmed, seeing that the more forward were engaged in preparing for an imminent exam and the more sporting were in bed in readiness for a tough match on the morrow. As usual, in these affairs, it was quickly obvious that all the questions had been hand picked and very well vetted, so that there should be no awkward ones. Why these experienced and astute apologists should choose to deal with such innocuous questions as were submitted, is a question which may well have exercised the

(concluded on next page)

This Believing World

It proved very interesting to note the reactions of the TV team when recently faced in "Is this your problem?" with a religious one. A refugee Jewess married to an Englishman, both quite indifferent to religion, were disturbed as to what to do with their daughter who had been brought up *without* religion, and was therefore quite indifferent to it. Her parents actually asked the team how could they instil religion into her!

There was not the slightest hesitation in all their answers. It was to allow her to imbibe all the religious instruction not only that her day school but her Sunday school could give her. And one of the advisers, the Rev. Brian Green, was quite certain that if this were done, no doubt whatever the child would go to church and take her mother with her. And God would grant, we are sure, the indifferent parents and the child and the TV team a special halo for such a brilliant solution to the problem.

From our own point of view we call special attention to this case because for sheer incredible stupidity it would be hard to beat. Here are parents quite without any religion, and a young daughter that doesn't want it, and it will now be forced on to her. Could anything prove more eloquently how absolutely necessary is the work of the N.S.S. and *The Freethinker*? One almost despairs of ordinary intelligence in ordinary people when such a case is discovered.

That highly religious phrase "the Grace of God," can now be beautifully changed by the addition of only one letter, and it will prove to be far more suggestive. It should be "the Grace of Gold" as that tremendously popular evangelist, the Rev. B. Graham, has so piously proved. His collections in the recent Glasgow campaign for God and Jesus brought in "a total income" we are officially told, "of £71,618, out of which a profit was made of £26,772," and all in six weeks! Truly, the fable of Christ Jesus can still make the shekels roll in!

In our contemporary "Picture Post," a series of articles has appeared entitled "The Road to Faith" in which the author, a Mr. Charles Hamblett, sets out to show that "the muddles and follies of the world can be reconciled by Christian faith." Christians have been doing the same kind of thing for nearly 2,000 years, and have so far egregiously failed. In truth, nothing the world has discovered yet to help mankind has been so stupendous a failure as Christianity; but so long as journals will pay good fees, journalists come up in thousands to prove how everything evil in the world can be dispelled by plenty of doses of "the Christian Faith."

Mr. Hamblett is naturally nothing if not daringly original. "In these articles," he unctuously tells us, his purpose is to give us a "clearer understanding of God." Not religion or theological dogma, "but of God." No other writer has ever done this before. And how do you come to "a clearer understanding?" You must "read the Bible and accept the word of Christ." Nobody has ever read such divine advice before Mr. Hamblett discovered it as the only way to get rid of the world's worst muddles.

The astonishing thing is that journals with huge circulations, with staff members who are often as devoid of any Faith as the most irreligious Materialist, will admit this

dreary drivel year in and year out. Who does it convert? How many of these ignorant articles have brought a genuine Freethinker to his knees grovelling before Christ Jesus? But so long as they are well paid for, our superior journals can always get crowds of Christian articles packed with God, Jesus, and Sin, and readers who are convinced that mouthing these words often enough not only will rid the world of evil, but will bring believers as Mr. Hamblett says, "Face to face with God!" It is almost unbelievable.

THE CHRISTIAN FORUM

(Concluded from previous page)

minds of many viewers, though it may not have occurred to many such to wonder why the Forum could not have been confronted with a maturer audience which could have been expected to propound some real questions regarding the fundamentals of religious belief and theory. Whilst the questions selected were deliberately chosen to be unimportant and were capable of being dealt with in varied ways, it was obvious that the forum members were at some pains to avoid being too controversial. Not one of the questions selected called for direct and unequivocal handling and not one of them had the slightest bearing on the fundamentals of religious faith, belief, theory or practice.

It was quite obvious that no two of the three professing Christians accepted any common interpretation of Christianity and therefore could not apply such teaching in the interpretation of social and political problems. The urbanity of the R. C. Abbot was so diplomatic and non-committal, that one had cause to wonder just why he neglected the opportunity to propagate Catholicism. The contribution of the Rev. Donald Soper merely served to emphasize his personal views as a Socialist Pacifist for which, of course he is entitled to some respect, but one wonders more and more how this parson has acquired a reputation even amongst his own followers as an infidel slayer. One suspects he has never been confronted on the public platform with a real infidel.

The contribution of the noble Lord Hailsham, who so obviously belongs to the Huppah Ten, which finds the *status quo* so eminently suitable to its requirements, was amusing rather than stimulating, entertaining rather than enlightening. The obvious disagreement between him and his more modernist fellow sitter was delightfully intriguing. One understands that the noble Lord has some standing in the legal profession and that politics is now merely a part time diversion for him, but one wonders just how he manages to reconcile the precise thinking and logical deduction of the legal sphere in which he is engaged, with the woolly nature of his religious thinking (if such it can be called). The noble Lord delivered himself during the programme of the ponderous but utterly meaningless pronouncement that "God is truth," but did not apparently think it at all necessary to define truth. Seeing that other religious apologists equate God with love, and with spirit, one is somewhat at a loss. If God is synonymous with truth, love and spirit, and if God besides being "spirit" is also "a spirit," it would seem that a proper question for a Christian Forum is *What is God?*

NEXT WEEK

THE VATICAN AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

By F. A. RIDLEY

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

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

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 Branch N.S.S. (Mechanic's Institute).—January 8, 6.45 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Henry the Eighth and Princess Margaret."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Tuesday, January 10, 7.15 p.m.: T. E. M. MCKETTERICK, "Coal, Oil and Diplomacy."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, January 8, 6.30 p.m.: J. MURUMBI, "Africa in a Modern Society."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (George Street).—Saturday, January 7, 3 p.m.: "One-day School," HECTOR HAWTON (Director, R.P.A.), Dr. H. S. FERNS (Birmingham University), Chairman, Ald. W. BROTHERTON, J.P.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street).—Sunday, January 8, 7 p.m.: N. BERRY, Lantern Lecture, "China Today."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, January 8, 2.30 p.m.: J. HARRISON, M.P., "The Return to Toryism."

Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant, High St.).—Sunday, January 8, 7 p.m.: P. A. HORNIBROOK, "The Enemies of Progress."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.).—Sunday, January 8, 11 a.m.: Mrs. MARY STOCKS, B.Sc., "Jews and Arabs in the Middle East."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1.).—Sunday, January 8, 7.15 p.m.: A Lecture.

— NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY — 50th ANNUAL DINNER

followed by Social & Dance

SATURDAY, 4th FEBRUARY, 1956

at the MECCA RESTAURANT,

11-12 Blomfield Street, E.C.2.

Reception 6.30 p.m. Dinner 7.0 p.m.

Evening Dress Optional

Guest of Honour: MRS. MARGARET KNIGHT

Tickets from the Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1.

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £1,046 2s. 1d.; Wm. MacKee, £1; A. Hancock, 1s.; C. R. Bossomaier, £2; E. W. C. Oatham, 6s.; J.T., 5s.; H. Williams, 4s.; R. Reader, 8s.; A. Allman, 10s. Total £1,050 16s. 1d.

Notes and News

HIGHLY successful meetings were reported from Birmingham and Manchester, where Mrs. Margaret Knight addressed large audiences on December 10th and 11th respectively, on behalf of the local branches of the National Secular Society. On both occasions the audience numbered about 450, and the press reports would of course increase the total number of contacts. With Prof. P. Sargent Florence (Birmingham Univ.) taking the chair on December 10th there were a number of students present in the audience, and this was also the case at Manchester, where Mr. C. M. Hansel, Lecturer in Psychology at Manchester Univ., was on the platform. The Chairman here was Mr. Colin McCall, Secretary of the N.S.S. There were many visitors from other northern towns, and three presidents of N.S.S. Branches were on the platform, in Mr. F. E. Monks (Manchester), Mr. H. Day (Bradford) and Mr. W. Parry (Liverpool). Floral decoration of the platform was by Mrs. H. M. Rogals, Secretary of the Manchester Branch, who organised the occasion with what Mrs. Knight described as "streamlined efficiency."

It is most pleasing to record that Mrs. Knight had a very fair and factual report in the *Daily Sketch* this time. Considering the abuse which this paper poured on her a year ago this must be considered an important advance. The *Daily Sketch* report fastened on to Mrs. Knight's factual evidence tending to associate religious training with delinquency and particularly in the case of Roman Catholics. Under the heading, "Mrs. (no God) Knight's New Shock," she was quoted:

"The view that religious training reduces delinquency is not borne out by facts," and "In spite of intensive religious training Roman Catholics are the most delinquent group in the country. . . . The proportion of Catholics in the country is about 8 per cent., yet the proportion in Holloway jail is about 26 per cent. The proportion in boys' Borstal institutions is about 23 per cent." Economic factors might be taken into account, but "In Holland, for example, where everyone has to state his or her religion on the census form, the highest proportion of convicted criminals is consistently found among Catholics. The lowest is among those who describe themselves as of no religion."

The *Manchester Guardian* report was similar in substance. Mrs. Knight also quoted from *The Freethinker* article of December 9th, on "Catholicism and Crime in Australia."

Among numerous questions put to Mrs. Knight were the following:—

Does the B.B.C. censor broadcasts or are you free to say what you want?

—Mrs. Knight replied that her broadcasts were censored but she had received very courteous treatment.

Is there any chance of your doing further broadcasts?

—Mrs. Knight said she had been told by the B.B.C. that other Humanists must be given a chance first.

After her lecture of December 11th Mrs. Knight (whom we are proud to number among the readers of *The Freethinker*) became a member of the Manchester Branch of the N.S.S.

Atlantic Waves

By COLIN McCALL

G. W. FOOTE once delightfully described Sunday school as the place where Alfred and Angelina meet to read the Scriptures—and flirt. And in the past the church has often acted as a marriage bureau as well as a registry office. I now read that a 50-year-old American organist had such difficulty in shaking off the attentions of a 35-year-old admirer and her mother, that he had to keep changing his church. The ladies—it was alleged—“had endangered his job by regularly sitting as close to the organ as they could get and staring steadfastly at him,” and the younger one was eventually barred from attending the church at which he was playing. Later the ban was lifted—after the organist had moved elsewhere. The young lady denied any romantic interest in the musician, but added most expressively “his music sends me.”

A New York Methodist minister abroad in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, the Rev. Paul Castor, staged a three-day hunger strike in October as a protest against empty pews in his church. One lady in his congregation said that she was glad he did it because it “brought home to some people that they were getting too slack in their church affairs.” Apparently the fast had the desired effect for, a week later, the church was crowded. But what will happen when the novelty wears off? Perhaps the Rev. Castor has another stunt up his sleeve; or maybe the lady will be the next performer.

So much for the lighter side of American religion. In a newspaper mistitled *Common Sense* (New Jersey) which devotes most of its early September issue to the support of segregation and the condemnation of communism on McCarthyist lines, a negro newspaperman, Mr. J. W. Jones, endeavours to explain why God is responsible for the former. Mr. Jones's two opening sentences are decisive. “Our Creator is the originator of segregation; He is the originator of different colours among men”—is the first; “No one can question God's wisdom for doing things”—is the second. And it must be admitted that this is an effective way of disposing of any argument that might arise. The article could well have started and ended with those four lines. But Mr. Jones is not content with that. “Why do some men hate the law?” he asks rhetorically. “Yet it is holy and right” he answers, equally so. Perhaps his most foolish statement is that “Segregation has not kept any person from succeeding in life.” But this runs it close:—“According to history there are five fundamental races of people on earth: Asiatic, Malay, European, African, and American.” History, indeed—tell that to the anthropologists!

Even a brief note on religion in the U.S.A. would be incomplete without reference to that remarkable publicist, Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. Turning to an article in his *Faith in Action* series in the *Chicago Sun-Times* (23/10/55) one reads:—“Nothing in all the world so much changes a wife and a husband as the birth of a child. When a mother swings open the portals of the flesh, she has already co-operated with one who is now an earthly father and also with One who has always been a Heavenly Father. As a biological offspring, the child has a father but, as a person bearing the divine image, the child has a Divine Father.” With its verbal jugglery and its absurd metaphor this is a typical example of religious journalese. Can any reader

resist a smile at the “portals of the flesh” passage? I certainly cannot. And the article ends like so many others—meaninglessly. “Each time a child is born into the world, God whispers a secret; He adds a new dimension of immortality to the universe; He makes the clinging hearts of husband and wife feel a little nearer as they look into that new, strange and mutual hope which came to them from God.” Yes, readers, that is the TV Bishop, Fulton J. Sheen.

I prefer to end rather differently: to turn from American Religion to American Freethought. Representatives from twelve existing organisations met on 19th and 20th November, 1955, at the Jan Hus Memorial Hall in Chicago and formed the “American Rationalist Federation.” Believing in the old maxim that unity is strength, the Federation aims “to co-ordinate on a national scale the efforts of local, autonomous Rationalist, Secularist, Freethought and like-minded organisations in preserving the principles of separation of church and state, and to promote Rationalism which is defined as the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason and aims at the establishment of a system of philosophy and ethics verifiable by experience, independent of all arbitrary assumptions or authority.” A provisional constitution was approved by the Conference and it is to be submitted to the various participating and interested bodies. Attacks on democratic liberties and attempts to abolish the traditional separation of church and state are two current American evils that the Federation is determined to resist. I know that all British Freethinkers will join me in wishing it success.

Alas! Poor Ghost!

By A. R. WILLIAMS

FREQUENT re-reading of Hamlet increases one's doubts of the Ghost's authenticity. It is conceivable he was a minion of the Prince, an employed servant or actor; in modern language a stooge, a lay figure set up by Hamlet; perhaps a palace spy or detective engaged by him to discover evidence justifying his suspicions. Such elaboration fits with Hamlet's intricate mentality.

Hamlet loved to dramatise his methods. This recurs all through the play, as in the players' scene to entrap the conscience of his uncle.

Also in his saddened anxious mood Hamlet may have thought the Ghost of his father ought to appear to him, desired its assurance, had tried methods of raising the late King's spirit. Failing those Hamlet staged the materialisation as he imagined it should be.

His reception of the news from Horatio is significant. Such an apparition might well leave a man dismayed, puzzled beyond collected thought, incapable of intelligible expression of his feelings.

Instead Hamlet questions the watchers as drily as a barrister in a civil case. A good comparison, for his questions are largely leading questions, as:

“But where was this?”

“Did you not speak to it?”

“Hold you the watch tonight?”

“Armed, say you?”

“Then saw you not his face?”

“What! Looked he frowningly?”

“Pale or red?”

“And fixed his eyes upon you?”

“Stayed it long?”

“His beard was grizzled? No?”

The questions of a man who knows what the answers ought to be if his hireling is obeying orders. They are designed to ensure the acting has been successful. Evidently it was, so he may proceed.

That Marcellus struck at the Ghost with his partisan and hit nothing proves nothing. The ordinary superstitious wight as Marcellus appears to be would not dare to approach within striking proximity of a reputed spectre. Merely he waves his weapon about at a safe distance, motions more automatic than directed.

In addition to his calculating questions Hamlet's comments are equally disingenuous. He says :

" 'Tis very strange."

A commonplace which any common man might utter. Seeing his hearers unconvinced of his credulity he hastens to add :

" Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me."

" I would I had been there."

" I will watch to night."

Then he ejaculates the vulgar boastful oath of the period :

" I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape and bid me hold my peace."

For obvious reasons he binds the three witnesses to silence, because much talking might lead to discovery of who the Ghost is.

After their departure he soliloquises. Lest they overhear he indulges in the statement to keep up the deception :

" My father's spirit in arms !"

strengthening this by saying :

" All is not well ;

I doubt some foul play "

The moral conclusion :

" Foul deeds will rise,

Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes."

is the playwright's popular appeal, not Hamlet's opinion.

Satisfied the Ghost's disguise and movements are effective Hamlet goes to the interview. Remembering the Ghost has been primed the dialogue here is revelatory. Hamlet's long speech on first seeing it, from :

" Angels and ministers of grace defend us !"

down to the string of questions :

" Say, why is this ? wherefore ? what should we do ?"

is rhetoric, partly to cover his own uncertainty as how best to speak and act appropriately, more to influence his listeners in favour of regarding the apparition as authentic.

So he has no qualms or difficulties in following the Ghost to a remote spot. The Ghost's hints of awful experiences in purgatory are stock material of current theology. His declaration that he is sworn to secrecy is characteristic of spiritual experiences, departed spirits having never yet been known to make a statement worth hearing.

The Ghost's account of the murder must have been already known to Hamlet. At Wittenberg he picked up outlines of what medicine and chemistry were practised at the time. Questioning of all concerned in preparing the King's corpse for burial would reveal details of its physical condition enough to rouse Hamlet's suspicions nearly to certainty ; but not decision.

As a political crime it is obvious. Who else but Claudius stood to gain anything from the late King's death ? And his hasty marriage to the willing Gertrude confirmed Hamlet's fears. He was thoughtful and intelligent ; it was merely putting together scattered indications to deduce what had happened. Only definite proof was lacking.

After the Ghost's departure Hamlet's conversation with his friends is light, easy, wellnigh frivolous, entirely at variance with what should have passed had the Ghost been

a real ghost as well as the honest one Hamlet says it is.

He starts by hailing Horatio gaily with :

" Hillo, ho, ho, boy ! come, bird, come."

The scene takes place upon the platform before the castle. Wonderfully convenient for the ghost-disguised man to walk underneath and pronounce " Swear !"

By now Hamlet feels so safe in the drama he has staged that he turns jocular toward and about the Ghost, saying casually :

" Ah, ha, boy ! say'st thou so ? art there, truepenny ?

Come on — you hear this fellow in the cellarage — consent to swear."

And " Well said, old mole ! can'st work in the earth so fast ?

A worthy pioneer !"

Not only Yorick was a fellow if infinite jest. Hamlet equally jokes in the presence of death, as men of many-faceted minds will to relieve the tension.

Later, still uncertain, he torments himself by doubts, equivocations and consideration of possibilities. Notice the Ghost's revelations have not convinced him in the least. He has to take his own human line, fitting together fragments of fact as he can get them, never at all sure, the prey of his own reservations.

Even his uncle's guilty behaviour at the parallel play leaves him hesitating, and finding excuses for not killing the man he is supposed to be assured supernaturally is the murderer of his beloved father.

Finally Hamlet himself demolishes the whole likelihood of the Ghost being anything but a device of his own invention by saying :

" The undiscovered country from whose bourn

No traveller returns."

The Kremlin and the Church

By KARL LIDAKS

AFTER the 1917 October Revolution the Russian Soviet Government separated the Orthodox Church from the State, with the result that the Church was deprived of tremendous wealth and the clergy lost many privileges including the luxurious standards of life to which they had been accustomed. Naturally they were opposed to this revolutionary policy which took away from them the riches and advantages they had previously enjoyed, and a section of the Orthodox Priesthood became actively political and joined the Counter Revolution whose leaders promised to restore to them all the spiritual power and material wealth they had lost.

When religious opposition to the policy of the Kremlin assumed such proportions as to be inconvenient to the Government, those priests who were engaged in counter-revolutionary plotting were persecuted, but the Kremlin never engaged in any campaign of wholesale extermination of the Orthodox Clergy. Nor did it persecute church members who kept out of anti-Government agitations. Moreover it made no real effort to destroy the doctrines of the Orthodox Church. The reason for this tolerance was that the Kremlin was politically far-sighted and realised that docile elements in the Church could be moulded to conform to the Soviet pattern and to be a pillar of the state in the future.

An interesting sidelight was thrown on the attitude of Christian churches elsewhere to the way in which Russian Communists manipulated religious affairs to their own advantage when, in 1923, the Kremlin appointed Father Ivan to rule the Orthodox Church in Latvia, then an independent state. The Latvian Government protested and the

people nearly rose in rebellion, being quite sure that this priest appointed by the Kremlin was a Russian agent in their midst. Yet the leaders of world Christianity—the Pope, Archbishop of Canterbury, Patriarch of Constantinople and Protestant Archbishops in Sweden and Germany—ignored the Latvian protest! Why? Because Latvia was a *secular* state with no established church. Latvia bowed before its powerful neighbour, and Ivan, the Kremlin-nominated Metropolitan, with a high salary from the Latvian Government, denounced reforms advocated by Latvian progressives during his stay in their country. Truly religion is the worst enemy of socialism, education and the people's welfare.

The main three reforms overthrown by Ivan, acting under Kremlin orders, were (1) the expropriation of the land out of the hands of the Orthodox Church and other landlords, and its apportionment among the peasants (representing the end of land exploitation and the sweating of agricultural labour), (2) the separation of the Church from the State, so that all creeds must be supported financially by their own adherents, and (3) the abolition of all hereditary titles and class privileges. Because Ivan attacked and destroyed these reforms under the pretext of upholding Christianity against Secularism, the Christian leaders of other countries were deaf to Latvian appeals for support, ignoring the facts that behind him was the power of Russian Communism and that he had dealt a mortal blow to the hopes of Democracy of countries on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. When Ivan's tasks had been accomplished he was killed by Soviet agents, who burned his body in his house near Riga.

Later, in 1940, when the Red Army occupied Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the Kremlin appointed Father Sergy as Metropolitan over the Orthodox Church in these lands. The next year, when the Red Army was driven out by the Germans, Father Sergy remained behind and became a pro-Hitler propagandist. I saw and heard him in a film in a cinema in Riga. Speaking in Russian, he called upon not only members of the Orthodox Church but Christians all over the world to reject Communistic propaganda and to distrust Communist claims to be sympathetic towards Christian beliefs. In 1944 he was killed on a highway in Lithuania by means of a Russian army weapon. As many such weapons had been abandoned by the retreating Russians his death could not be ascribed to Russian handiwork. This is what the Soviet radio said at the time: "Man reaps what he sows. Sergy betrayed his country and became a tool of German propaganda. He then tried to betray Germany to the Allies for gain, but the Gestapo, alert as always, discovered his plot and killed him."

Both Ivan and Sergy were buried in the St. Pocrow Orthodox Cemetery in a suburb of Riga. In Tzarist days it was known to the people as "The Devil's Cemetery" because there were buried, with great splendour and official ceremony, noblemen, governors and prominent priests who had oppressed and deceived the common people, also members of the Tzar's military forces who had been killed in opposing the revolution of 1905. The Government of Latvia took drastic steps to erase from the popular memory the description "The Devil's Cemetery," but the name was revived after Ivan's and Sergy's burial in St. Pocrow's.

What a strange parallel! The seeds of Orthodox dogma and priestcraft were planted in Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland (all non-Russian, non-Orthodox countries) by Russian Tsars operating with extreme fraud and cruelty. Today the same superstitious and unprogressive Orthodox Church is used by the Kremlin to further the aims of Russian Communistic Imperialism.

Fifty Years Ago

THE men of God pilot us to Heaven but they are not anxious to go there themselves. Heaven is their home but they prefer exile, even in this miserable vale of tears. When they fall ill they do not welcome it as a call from the Father. They do not sing "Nearer my God to Thee." We do not hear them say, "I shall be home soon." Oh, no! They indulge freely in self pity and cling like a limpet to this wretched sinful world. Congregations are asked if they can not do something, a subscription is got up and the man of God rushes off to the seaside, where prayer, in combination with ozone, restores him to health, enables him to dodge going Home, and qualifies him for another term of penal servitude on earth. (*The Freethinker*, January 7th, 1906.)

Correspondence

MONARCHY OR REPUBLIC?

Whilst in agreement with Mr. E. G. Macfarlane as to the desirability of disestablishing the Church of England, I would venture to question the wisdom of abolishing the Monarchy "in favour of the setting up of a true single-class republic."

I have often wondered what republicanism entails beyond a grand protest against the monarchy. Does it mean that a president should be elected as in other countries? If so I for one, and doubtless many other freethinkers, would object, for most presidents create strife, trouble and political purges.

In Britain we have fortunately arrived at the stage when our monarchs are neutral and peaceful. Any movement backwards to the old days of dictatorial powers would be resisted to the uttermost.

Therefore it is in the interests of our British people that the monarchy, as limited, should be retained, but it should not be the perquisite of one family as at present. Is the royal family so vastly superior to the rest of mankind that the head of the state should be automatically chosen from their ranks? In these democratic days the practice is wrong. It is also wrong that the nation should have to finance the relatives of the king or queen. In no other high office of state does this remarkable and expensive custom prevail.

A better system for choosing the monarch would be to leave the appointment to Parliament, who could choose the king or queen much as they do now the Speaker of the House of Commons. The flummery and ecclesiastical rigmarole which is gone through whenever a change takes place in the monarchy is unnecessary.

How is the National Secular Society affected by all this? Our Society advocates the abolition of all hereditary and racial distinctions and privileges, and we should, therefore, support the principle of the open and public appointment of our country's unpolitical monarch whenever a vacancy occurs.

ALFRED D. CORRICK.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Mr. F. A. Ridley in his article of 9-12-1955 stops short of a convincing case. Are we to give a killer the opportunity to kill again?

Would it be more humane to inflict a painless death rather than to imprison a person for many years? A. STEPHENSON.

Special Book Offer

While stocks last we can offer the following parcel containing: *Lift Up Your Heads* (Kent) published 3s. 6d.; *Thomas Paine* (Chapman Cohen) published 1s.; *Marriage, Sacerdotal or Secular* (Du Cann) published 1s.; *Rome or Reason* (Ingersoll) published 1s.; *Age of Reason* (Paine) published 2s. 6d.; *What Is The Sabbath Day* (Cutner) published 1s. 3d. The whole parcel (valued 10s. 3d.) offered to readers of *The Freethinker* for 7s. 6d. post free. Cash with order. Strictly nett.

MORALS WITHOUT RELIGION

By MRS. MARGARET KNIGHT

Price 6/-

Postage 3d.

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