

# The Freethinker

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IN THE YEAR 1543, there was published a volume on astronomy, which is usually regarded as having marked one of the most momentous, perhaps indeed, the most momentous, of intellectual revolutions in the annals of human civilisation. The title of this epoch making book was *De Revolutionibus Orbium Coelestium—on the Movements of the Heavenly Bodies*. The author, who barely survived the publication of his scientific bombshell, was Nicholas Copernic, Latinised as Copernicus, a Pole, and a canon of the cathedral at Frauenburg. Copernicus had studied astronomy in the Rome of the Italian Renaissance at the beginning of the century, under the Borgia pope, Alexander VI. His great work seems to have been completed many years before its final publication. But professional preoccupations, or the fear of the fierce opposition that his scientific unorthodoxy might arouse, and of its consequences in an intolerant age, had delayed the publication of the *Magnum Opus* until the author was (literally) on his death-bed.

## The "Copernican" Revolution

What has been aptly termed "the Copernican Revolution" deserves this appellation, since its demonstration of the helio-centric theory constitutes, beyond any doubt whatsoever, a major landmark, a red letter day, in the annals of human intellectual development. None the less, there has been a good deal of misunderstanding about the actual circumstances under which the "Copernican Revolution" began, nor was its titular author the Polish astronomer, Copernicus, quite the stupendous original genius that he is still popularly supposed to have been. It would be more true to say that Copernicus re-discovered the helio-centric theory than that he was its original discoverer. Indeed, if the evidence expressly cited by one highly competent historian of astronomy is correct, in one important aspect of his work the Reverend Canon Copernicus was little better than a self-conscious plagiarist.

## "I Return to Aristarchus"

It is common knowledge that, like most of the great intellectual innovations in human history, the "Copernican" theory did not obtain general acceptance until long after its titular author's death. It was only with the great astronomers of the following (17th) century, Galileo and Kepler, that the helio-centric theory obtained general acceptance from the scientific public, despite the fierce opposition of reactionary scientists and of both Catholic and Protestant "Fundamentalists". However, Copernicus' successors displayed a franker attitude than did their master: upon accepting the "Copernican" theory Kepler exclaimed: "Farewell, Ptolemy! I return to Aristarchus, under the guidance of Copernicus". This statement of the great Kepler is historically correct, for there was, actually, little that was new in the "Copernican" theory. 2,000 years

before the Polish astronomer began his revolutionary researches, the ancient Greek astronomers, like Copernicus, without the aid of telescopic vision, began a purely theoretical analysis of the nature of the visible universe, and, in particular, of the solar system, which, all things considered, must be held to rank as one of the most astonishing intellectual achievements in the recorded evolution of humanity. Moreover, it can be proved that Copernicus *consciously*, indeed, often verbally, based himself on the works of his remote Greek predecessors. These old Greek astronomers were far more original thinkers than was Copernicus, since they did not receive from their Egyptian

and Chaldean astronomical predecessors anything like such valuable and direct assistance as the Polish astronomer received from his remote Greek predecessors. It ought not to be forgotten that Copernicus lived in the "Rebirth" (Renaissance) of classical Greek culture.

## The Evolution of Greek Astronomy

Between its earliest beginnings in the 6th century B.C. and the classical text-book of Ptolemy, which concluded its effective evolution, a period of about 700 years elapsed, characterised by immense astronomic discoveries, which were almost miraculous, if one considers that the celestial observers had only their eyes, brains (and what brains!) plus the most rudimentary technical equipment, to work with. None the less, they did not start from scratch! As E. M. Antoniadi, the eminent French historian of Egyptian astronomy, has demonstrated, the connection between the priestly astronomers of Egypt and the Greek philosophers was very close, and the Greeks undoubtedly learnt much from their Egyptian predecessors, long before Alexander's conquest of Egypt and consequent foundation of Alexandria, finally brought Greek and Egyptian science into the closest combination at the Academy of Alexandria. Some of the greatest of the Greek thinkers, Pythagoras, Plato, Democritus, and many others, visited Egypt in quest of knowledge. Greek astronomy, however, at its highest point, soon outstripped its Egyptian originals.

## Aristarchus of Samos, the "Copernicus" of Antiquity

Under the above title, an English historian of Greek science (Sir Thomas Heath) has described the greatest of the Greek astronomers; actually, the title ought really to be inverted. It was Copernicus who borrowed from his Greek predecessor, not *vice-versa*! In the 3rd century B.C., Aristarchus had already advanced the helio-centric theory. It is interesting to note that the Pagan theologians denounced Aristarchus much as their Christian successors were to behave towards Galileo. Even Aristarchus was not, perhaps, entirely original; before him the Pythagoreans had apparently taught the helio-centric theory, and had made at least one celebrated convert in Plato, who, however, was a mystic rather than a scientist, whose theological concep-

VIEWS and OPINIONS

## Copernicus and Greek Astronomy

By F. A. RIDLEY



tion of astronomy was sharply attacked by the Greek materialists, Epicurus in particular.

However, it was Aristarchus who developed the "Copernican" theory long before Copernicus. When, accordingly, Kepler stated that he returned to Aristarchus via Copernicus, he said no more than scientific honesty and the actual facts warranted. As the learned Italian astronomer, Prof. Schiaparelli, noted, "Aristarchus of Samos proclaimed that the same helio-centric system was probably true, which Copernicus was later to rediscover".

### Ptolemy and the Church

The daring theory of Aristarchus did not meet with the eventual success later attained by its modern successor. The geocentric theory of the Egyptian priests, which is so much more flattering to human vanity, eventually triumphed. As embodied in the later text-books of Hipparchus and Ptolemy, it dominated human thinking up to the time of Copernicus at the Renaissance. Whilst the powerful influence of the Christian church played a determining role in this intellectual counter-revolution, the failure of classical astronomy to *prove* its helio-centric theory beyond dispute, was partly due to that lack of observational techniques, which was "The Achilles Heel" of Greek science. It is not unlikely that Copernicus would, similarly, have failed to

establish his system, but for the subsequent opportune discovery afforded by the invention of the telescope by Galileo? It may be relevant to recall that many *scientists* rejected the theories of Copernicus, for example, Francis Bacon, just as Aristotle and other Greek philosophers had rejected such contemporary theories as the helio-centric theory of Pythagoras and the rotundity of the earth. It was only when the telescope arrived that the helio-centric theory became self-evident, until which time "common-sense" and the actual evidence of the senses, appeared to discredit it in an obvious manner — can we not see the sun rising in the East and setting in the West?

### Aristarchus and Copernicus

In 1854 the original MS. of Copernicus was discovered at Prague. It includes an explicit reference to Aristarchus of Samos and the Pythagoreans as the original discoverers of the helio-centric theory. This reference was deleted by Copernicus himself! From which it appears reasonable to conclude that the Polish astronomer actually realised how fatal such an admission would be to his own reputation as an original pioneer.

Perhaps we can further conclude that the clerical mentality of Canon Copernicus was scarcely as elevated as his undoubted scientific eminence?

## SIN SHEDDING

By G. H. TAYLOR

IT IS WELL KNOWN that the primitive practice of god-eating survives today in the Eucharist, based on the story of the Last Supper and the words "This is my body", etc. Anthropology records many variants of this practice, which has originally the purpose of acquiring some character held by another body and absorbing it into the body of the eater. The chieftain's heart is eaten because it contains his strength and his worldly power, the body and blood of Christ are taken because they hold the promise of other-worldly resurrection.

What is perhaps not so generally known, however, is the reverse process. Just as holiness can be acquired by the direct method of being eaten, there are, similarly parallel practices of the eating of sins. The purpose here is to get rid of the sin (or taint, or *tabu*) by having it eaten up by some animal or transferred into a tree, or even consumed by some primitive priest who has the necessary magical protection against ill effect. The parallel doctrine in the Churches today is, of course, that of Christ as Redeemer, or, as one might put it, the Sin-Bin of humanity, enabling mankind (according to the doctrines of the Fall and the Atonement) to avert the wrath of God.

Varieties of sin-eating may be consulted in the authoritative *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (Hastings). From some parts of India sin-eating is recorded as a funeral rite, evidently to cleanse the departing spirit. The corpse of the King of Tanjore (d. 1801) was burnt, and a portion of the bones then mixed with boiled rice and eaten by twelve Brahmans, who were able to dispose of this load of "wickedness".

As late as the 17th century in England, at Hereford, there lived a kind of professional sin-eater, "a long, leane, uglie, lamentable raskell", whose method (paid for) was to have the sins of the diseased transferred to bread and a bowl of beer, which he then, with equal skill, consumed over the corpse.

Sir J. G. Frazer in the *Golden Bough* describes many ways of the transference of sin, evil and sickness to animals, trees, effigies and inanimate objects. Branches, for

instance, may be rubbed against the affected part of the afflicted individual and then buried so that animals may take the disease into themselves and thus give it a new lodging. He describes as a cure for a headache the tucking of the hair into an incision made in the bark of a tree, the head then being violently wrenched away; and also the holding of a young frog in a babe's mouth to cure the mouth disease known as "frog" (Aptha).

Public evils, as distinct from private, have in semi-civilised peoples been similarly lodged in animals or human outcasts, the victims then being killed. In Leviticus XVI, 21-22, we read:

Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send him away by a fit man into the wilderness. And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities in a land not inhabited. And he shall let go the goat in the wilderness.

The Biblical instance of the Gadarene swine is also well known. Yet this same Bible is the book held up to us as the divine source of truth, salvation and moral uplift.

### The Index

THE *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, or *Roman Catholic Index of Forbidden Books*, is published in Rome by Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, and may be obtained, price 10s., from Messrs. Burns, Oates and Washbourne.

This is a polyglot edition, and would-be readers will require a knowledge of most foreign languages to be able to read it. There is *no* English translation published.

As there is no mention of Tom Paine, Ingersoll, G. W. Foote, J. McCabe and numerous other Freethinkers of repute, readers will understand that the only complete copy is in the Vatican archives.

As a matter of interest, recent additions to the *Index* include: Jean Paul Sartre, 1948, André Gide, 1952, Camille Muller, 1953, and Bernhard Scheichelbauer, 1954, and about ten others, all during the last six years. C.H.H.



# Moral Law as Proof of God

By ERNEST BUSENBARK

THEISTS CONTEND that the existence of a divine law-giver is attested by man's recognition of the supremacy of the moral law. This is called the ethical argument for theism; that from the existence of beauty and harmony is called the esthetic argument.

Much uncertainty, however, prevails concerning the moral law, because, unlike the Ten Commandments, its terms have not been definitely stated. Constant efforts are made to give weight to the moral law by emphasising that offences against it are not merely acts contrary to social rules but are offences against God-given commands.

It is held that without the moral law there would be no sense of right and wrong, no deterrent to crime, no incentive for any one to live an honourable and upright life, and civilisation would soon be replaced by the ruthless struggle of the jungle. But there are wide differences of opinion among theologians, not only regarding what activities properly come within the moral law but, also, whether such a law exists. For any opinion given by one authority, contrary opinions can be quoted from equally important authorities, while analytically-minded critics question the whole idea of a moral law, contending that a natural law can be only one which prevails throughout the universe, like magnetism or gravitation. Moreover, if an omniscient creator had wished to provide such a law, his infinite intelligence and sense of justice would have prompted him to make sure that his commands were fully known and understood by implanting in the minds of all peoples of the earth certain innate ideas or immutable, unchanging moral truths prevailing with absolute similarity in all parts of the world, at all times, and under all circumstances. It is clear that no such law exists or has ever existed. Esthetic or moral ideas are relative, not absolute, and exhibit wide variations. They vary from country to country, from community to community and from century to century, and even from decade to decade.

In certain parts of the world women who are nude except for a bracelet or a string of beads about their ankles feel fully dressed, but, without these ornaments, consider themselves shamefully exposed. In India, a widow who commits suttee by throwing herself upon the funeral pyre of her dead husband is highly praised for her self-sacrifice. Among savage or semi-civilised peoples in many parts of the world, ideas of good and evil are badly confused and lying, cheating, theft, and robbery are not regarded as criminal offences: even rape, polygamy, infanticide and incest are commonplace. In some regions, religious prostitution is still approved by the people and, in others, husbands lend their wives or daughters to overnight guests as tokens of hospitality. In all parts of the world there are customs which would be considered extremely shocking to natives of other regions.

Theories regarding what would happen if there were no moral law, the loss of personal integrity and honour, the rise in crime, retrogression of society to the law of the jungle, etc., are academic. The rather loose body of ideas called the moral law is not the invention of any particular people or of any religious system, nor are morals necessarily dependent upon belief in a supreme creator and lawgiver. As religions came into existence, they did not bring with them entirely new moral laws; instead, they adopted well tested customs already observed by the people.

As soon as primitive tribes began to live in small settlements or villages of mud huts, at the dawn of civilisation,

they found it necessary to consider the relationship between individuals of the community, and there gradually came into existence such customs, restrictions and codes of rights and duties as were deemed necessary for the welfare of the population as a whole. The ethical quality of these codes became higher or lower with the advances or retrogressions of the people who created them. In some parts of the world they reflected a fairly high degree of culture long before the Bible was written and before any of the present religious systems existed.

The widespread misconception regarding the origin and nature of laws concerning human conduct began very early in history. As the first crude religious and political systems began to take form, priests and tribal chieftains soon learned that it would be easier to persuade the common people to obey their commands if they were led to believe that such commands were not devised by the priesthood, but were handed down by the god or gods.

History is a record of gradual changes in laws, customs, taboos, and religious beliefs; yet, religious leaders still endeavour, and with much success, to convince the unthinking and uneducated that present-day conceptions of right and wrong are God-given and therefore unchangeable and eternal.

[Reprinted from THE TRUTH SEEKER, U.S.A.]

## Cornish Notes

Two ancient stone monuments were removed recently to Treslothan Church, with the aim of furthering Catholic influence in the county. Fr. Foley, the chief Papal spokesman in Cornwall, identified them as "Norman" and "Catholic". Unfortunately for this priest, the myth was exposed by a professional archaeologist. It was Fr. Foley, we recall, who wanted the Luther film banned. On examining the monuments he found that both were of Saxon origin, incised with a weathered but distinctive border of Greek Key pattern and the Saxon word "Aegvred" engraved on one.

★

A WRITER in the magazine *Dog World* requires the ban on Sunday dog shows lifted, and wants to know if "The Pundits of Piccadilly" (the Kennel Club) spend their Sundays at home in the parlour reading the Bible. More power to him in working for a brighter Sunday.

Even in this sphere Christian intolerance rears its head. The average dog enthusiast who, through his employment, cannot attend a weekday show, must not enjoy himself on Sundays.

No one stops these religious bigots from spending their Sundays as they please, yet they are always ready to prevent others doing likewise.

★

THE CHURCH ARMY that invaded Helston to win it to the Cross departed without capturing one soul for Christ. They blamed their defeat on Satan's three Generals—Anti-Christ, Indifference, and Apathy. Apparently General Commonsense was not referred to.

D. J. CROWLE.

Even if we think it desirable to carry on with the myths of the creation, the flood, and the chosen people, we have not got the time.—H. G. WELLS.

Truth is tough. It will not break like a bubble, at a touch; nay, you may kick it about all day, like a football and it will be round and full at evening.—THE PROFESSOR AT THE BREAKFAST TABLE.



## This Believing World

One of our premier national weeklies, the *Sunday Times*, sports a regular religious item many of which remind one of that reverent rigmarole we are cursed with on the BBC, "Lift up Your Hearts". The other week, it was on "Thanksgiving", by the Rev. S. M. Berry, packed with a knowledge of God which even the Pope would have difficulty in equalling. "God cares nothing", he piously informs us, "which men bring to Him except the offering of themselves". He called this "a trite conclusion". It is supremely wonderful how these men of God know their Master so well — without even any personal contact. And there are newspapers which can publish this "trite" . . . !

★

Alas, to the discomfiture of the whole of the Spiritualist world, Borley Rectory has at last been debunked. It is not haunted, it never was haunted. The idea that it ever was, was due to the "dishonesty, credulity, and inefficiency of the late Harry Price". Indeed, until he himself made it the "most haunted house in England", very few people had ever heard of Borley Rectory. Thus, the three investigators of the Society for Psychical Research whose book on the "hauntings" has just been published.

★

A few weeks back, we were taken to Borley Rectory by the BBC on television, and there was no doubt, from a variety of witnesses, including a brigadier-general, a very old lady, and a very young boy, that it was undoubtedly haunted by a "nun" — though it is only fair to say that one of the reliable witnesses gave us also a ghostly coach and horses. If the visit had been longer, no doubt there would have been more witnesses and more "hauntings". After all, these visits have all expenses paid, and some definite ghostly results are expected. However, will this devastating exposure of humbug and credulity convert "believers"? Not on your life.

★

One of our eminent detective story writers, Miss Dorothy L. Sayers, has, we are sorry to say, deserted this purely secular field for re-writing "sacred" stories from the New Testament mostly in modern slang. Poor Onesimus, for whom Paul "beseeched" Philemon, appears to have been something of a wrong 'un, and Miss Sayers had a lot to say about him recently in *Everybody's*. The story of the young man who confessed to Jesus that he had sinned, Onesimus (we are told) got "from Paul who heard it from Dr. Luke". And one of Onesimus's friends asks him if he "got nabbed in the end". The language all these people use is often heavenly slang, and as far removed from Holy Writ as one of the poems of William Barnes.

★

Miss Sayers is not altogether to blame for she is quite hopelessly Fundamentalist; but her ingenuity in solving murder mysteries, curiously enough, has never been given the chance of proving the historicity of Jesus, Paul, and Dr. Luke. This seems a pity, for quite a large number of Rationalists as well as all Christians would love to confound

—NEXT WEEK—

HEREDITY

By G. H. TAYLOR

the extreme scepticism of the mythicists. Besides, the idea of even doubting God's Precious Word must fill her with horror. It is so much easier to enlarge stories from the Bible with pure invention, imagination, and slang — qualities which Miss Sayers has in abundance. And it pays better.

★

Even if the spirit of the late Alexander Korda cannot be invoked so soon, our psychic contemporary, *Psychic News*, has weighed in with the hot news that the eminent film producer once offered "to make a Healer a Film Star". So far glamour girls and boys only hit the top lines — but just fancy what a Healer would have done for the cinema! Sir Alexander made more than one fortune but with a Healer he would certainly have become a multi-millionaire. Who knows? — as everybody is alive in the Spirit World, Sir Alexander may still make his Healer the greatest star Summerland has so far produced.

## BILLY LOVES THE £ORD

The following is reprinted by kind permission of the *Glasgow Evening Times*, from an article headed, "Those Six Amazing Weeks netted £26,000".

THE financial details of six amazing weeks in Scottish life this spring are shown in the balance-sheet of the religious revival campaign led by Billy Graham, the American evangelist.

In purely financial terms the campaign — sponsored by Protestant denominations and known as the All-Scotland Crusade — showed a profit of £26,722 7s.

There have been various "follow-up" campaign expenses since the Crusade closed in April, and the balance-sheet, compiled voluntarily by a leading Scottish firm of chartered accountants, shows that the Crusade committee had £12,353 8s. 7d. in hand when the balance-sheet was made up.

### Not Charged

It is noted that the expenses of Dr. Billy Graham and his American team had been met by the Billy Graham organisation and were not charged in the accounts.

At the same time, the sheet also shows that from the surplus there has been a donation of £12,000 to the Billy Graham organisation.

Over-all the crusade, conducted mainly through meetings in the Kelvin Hall, Glasgow, had an expenditure of £44,895 13s. 3d. and an income of £71,618 0s. 3d.

The biggest single source of income was the collections taken at the 38 meetings held in the Kelvin Hall. Those produced £31,980 11s. 5d., about £800 a meeting.

Between 14,000 and 17,000 persons attended each meeting, and the collections at each were over in from three to five minutes.

The collection at the final rally at Hampden Park, when the gathering of 100,000 was said to have been the largest congregation in the history of Scotland, produced £3,574 5s., and that at Ibrox Park £1,690 2s. 2d.

Donations totalled £24,237 8s. 1d. and the sale of hymn books brought £3,570 19s. 11d.

Among miscellaneous items of income were cloakroom receipts at the Kelvin Hall, £136 5s.; and £114 9s. for broadcasting fees.

The main item of expenditure was £24,385 16s. incurred in auditorium equipment and expenses.

Publicity cost £7,129 5s. 2d.; postages £2,886 4s.; wages £2,467 0s. 9d.; and honoraria to voluntary staff £607 15s. The telephone bill was £434 9s. 10d.



# THE FREETHINKER

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## 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.

J. WEAVER.—In comparing soul with sound Mr. Ta'bois was comparing function with function.

J. F. HOGAN.—Thanks for interesting details of your fight against superstition.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Central London Branch N.S.S.—Lincolns Inn Fields, Kingsway, W.C.1.: Every Tuesday, 1 p.m. Tower Hill: Every Thursday, 1 p.m. Speakers: J. M. ALEXANDER, W. CARLTON, and others.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.

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 A. 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

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street).—Sunday, February 12th, 7 p.m.: Mrs. A. CLARKE, "My Recent Visit to China".

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—February 12th 6.45 p.m.: G. H. MILLS, "A Convert to Atheism".

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 14th, 7.15 p.m.: Mrs. N. SPILLER, "World Conference of Women in Ceylon—their Progress for the Future".

Glasgow Branch N.S.S. (Central Halls, Bath Street).—Sunday, February 12th, 7 p.m.: L. EBURY, "Science, Progress and Religion".

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, February 12th, 6.30 p.m.: Capt. J. F. HUTCHINSON, "Atlantic Charter Brotherhood—Substitute for War".

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, February 12th, 2.30 p.m.: COLIN McCALL, "The Secular Basis of Culture".

Orpington Humanist Group (Sherry's Restaurant, High Street, Orpington).—Sunday, February 12th, 7 p.m.: Lady V. FLEMING, "The Role of Humanists in Home and School".

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—CEDRIC DOVER, "Racialism and Peace".

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, February 12th, 7.15 p.m.: V. NEUBURG, "Education in England Today".

## Notes and News

WE take pleasure in announcing that THE FREETHINKER has obtained the permission of Mrs. Margaret Knight to print the hitherto unpublished epistolary debate on Christian doctrines between herself and the late Ashley Sampson, at the time a well-known disciple of C. S. Lewis. Mrs. Knight has written an introduction to the series, which will begin soon.

## The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £1,064 19s. 1d.; Miss D. G. Davies, £1; A. Hancock, 1s.; G.E.R., £1; S. C. Merrifield, 7s. 6d.; J. H. Charles, £1 1s.—Total, £1,068 8s. 7d.

Donations should be made to "The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund" and cheques made out accordingly.

ARRANGEMENTS have now been completed by the Central London Branch N.S.S. for the Joseph McCabe-Chapman Cohen Memorial Meeting to be held at Holborn Hall, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1. The speakers are Mr. S. Silverman, M.P., and Messrs. Avro Manhattan, Hector Hawton, Colin McCall, and J. M. Alexander. The chair will be taken by Mr. S. Salter at 7.30 p.m. Admission is free and it is hoped that members of the N.S.S., readers of THE FREETHINKER and friends will do their utmost to make this meeting a great success.

★

SPEAKING at what "proved to be Malta's first anti-clerical meeting for twenty years" (*Manchester Guardian*, 28/1/56), the Prime Minister, Mr. Dominic Mintoff, accused the Roman Catholic Church of "setting a trap" for those who voted for Malta's closer union with Britain. The Bishop of the neighbouring island of Gozo had instructed priests to refuse absolution or to send out of church any Catholics who expressed approval of integration. Our admiration goes out to Mr. Mintoff, who told the Church to stay out of politics. Some idea of his task may be gathered from the further report that cheering crowds surrounded the Archbishop of Malta, Monsignor Gonzi, shouting "Down with the enemies of the Church". Or from the statement by Mr. Edward Ellul, Malta's Commissioner-General in London, that "the intervention by politically minded ecclesiastics using their spiritual powers is liable to frighten some voters, especially women in the villages, who are much under the influence of the priests". It requires courage to oppose the Church of Rome on the George Cross Island; it is good to know that the Maltese Premier possesses such courage.

★

A FORTNIGHT ago we mentioned that Mr. J. L. Shepherd of the West Ham and District Branch N.S.S. had been carrying on a lengthy controversy with Christians in the *Essex Express and Independent*. Congratulations are in order again with the appearance of a two-column reply to critics in the issue of January 27th. Here is a short excerpt from Mr. Shepherd's answer to the Rev. R. W. Sorenson, M.P.: Atheism is "as negative as slum clearance", and "Surely the comradeship which Mr. Sorenson wishes to see is more easily attainable in a free-thinking atmosphere where no one considers that he holds all and the only truth, but is prepared to exercise a healthy scepticism not only concerning the views of others but about his own as well. My atheism arises from the fact that for me what is offered as evidence of the Christian—or any other—God is insufficient for belief". Mr. Shepherd is due to speak at the next West Ham Branch meeting (Wanstead House, E.11, Thursday, February 23rd) on "Christianity's Responsibility for Crime", and we hope that Freethinkers in the district will give their support to the Branch on this and subsequent occasions. The Hon. Secretary is Mr. F. G. Warner, 83a Dawlish Road, Leyton, E.10 (Tel. Leytonstone 1580), from whom further details may be obtained.

★

WE regret that last week's issue incorrectly announced Mr. Ridley's article *The Vatican and the Russian Revolution* as appearing this week. It has, of course, already been published—on January 13th.



## Some Questions Answered

By H. CUTNER

A CHANCE REMARK of mine — that I was an out-and-out Malthusian — brought hot haste a reply from Mr. G. L. Dickinson who, in about two dozen lines, not only (metaphorically) wiped me off the face of the earth, but also the redoubtable Malthus himself, and his many Freethought followers like Bradlaugh, J. M. Robertson, Ingersoll, Foote and Darwin, as well as a whole host of economists like Prof. East of Harvard, Dr. Julian Huxley, William Vogt, Dr. C. V. Drysdale, and many, many others. I have not the heart to enter into a Malthusian discussion with Mr. Dickinson. In any case, this is not the journal for it. But if any reader wants to study the matter for himself he should get hold of the P.E.P. Report on *World Population and Resources*, just published, or read a review of it, say, from the pen of Dr. Julian Huxley (*News Chronicle*, December 3rd, 1955).

Dr. Huxley's review is headed, "Man is Three Generations from Ruin", and he, like most economists with a biological training, is appalled to find that world population is increasing at the rate of 90,000 every day in the year; and at the same time two-thirds of the people in the world are under-nourished. For Mr. Dickinson, this is nothing at all, and can be remedied by a mere turn of the hand; but for any humanist, the picture is terrible. Unless the problem, as envisaged by Malthus, is steadily faced and not put off by dreams of what science and atom power are going to do in the near future, the teeming populations of Asia will have a lot of most unpleasant things to say and do — to say nothing of what can easily be the fate of Europe if unrestricted increases in population are allowed — nay, even encouraged. As Dr. Huxley says:

If nothing is done about it, in two or three generations human growth will become pathological and mankind will have become in very truth a cancer on the body of the Earth. More and more resources of the world will be dissipated, and yet more and more human beings will be physically and spiritually under-nourished. Earth will be bled white, all to maintain an increasing multitude of frustrated and under-developed parasitic creatures.

But, as I have already said, THE FREETHINKER is not exactly the journal in which detailed discussions on aspects of the Population Problem can be studied. The above Report will (or should) prove its importance to everybody who has the welfare of humanity at heart.

Then — if I may be allowed to butt in — there is that terrific query as to whether we ought to ask the question "why?" in science. It is quite true to say that the late Chapman Cohen strongly opposed it as not being valid. On it and a few other questions, though he did his best to convince me that I was quite wrong, I preferred to ask "why?" whenever I liked, and incurred his great displeasure. I still fail to see why I should not ask "why?" — indeed, I still do. Mr. Cohen claimed that in asking it I was invoking the ghost of a God, and I said I wasn't — and we left it at that.

Why should I not ask why a rose smells beautifully, or it doesn't, why flowers thrill us with their beauty while dead animals (which we eat) make many of us shudder? Why are there millions of stars and galaxies in the heavens? But I could go on asking "why?" to thousands of scientific puzzles and I intend to when I like in spite of the many very clever people who, for some reason I am not able to fathom, appear to think that if science answers the question "how?" I ought to be satisfied. Well, I am not satisfied — ghost of a God or not.

Then there is the Dutch Scientific Humanist who says that I am against Humanism. I excuse him for this radical mistake on the grounds that, as English is not his native language, he could quite easily have misread the article in which I dealt with it. Of course I am not against Humanism. On the contrary, indeed, I am all for it — but I strongly object to claiming Humanism as something which only Rationalists can legitimately claim. Any Christian or Buddhist can be a Humanist, and we have no sole rights to whatever is inferred by the word any more than Christians have right to such a word as justice, or mercy, or love.

But Mr. Liedermoooy plays another card. In Holland at least, a Humanist, he tells us, does not act as such because, like Christians, he expects a reward in Heaven, but acts with no hope of any reward. It is purely altruistic.

This is the kind of attitude which I most strongly resent. I do not say that Christians acting as Humanists never think of the after life promised to them by their Faith. But I do say that a Christian like Father Damien was moved by his own essential humanity when he sacrificed himself to help the neglected lepers — and I am sure he would have acted in the same way had he been assured of no reward in Heaven. Does Mr. Liedermoooy want us to believe that a Christian soldier, rescuing his comrade under heavy fire in which he loses his life and for which, if he didn't, he was likely to get a Victoria Cross, was actually thinking of a reward in Heaven as well, and that, if there had been no reward promised in Heaven, he would not have tried to rescue his comrade?

It is bad enough to claim Humanism as solely for Rationalists, but I hope we shall never agree with our Dutch friend in his preposterous nonsense about rewards or no rewards whether in Heaven or not. The men and women who so often do things which require doing, who do them often at considerable loss or inconvenience to themselves — like those who help the sick and orphan children and unwanted animals — should be honoured by us irrespective of whether they expect or not a reward in Heaven. Let us at least be tolerant of all Humanists.

A reader is puzzled at the "IHS" of Christian symbolism. These three letters are the initials of *Jesus Hominum Salvator*, and he has been told that they really have some connection with Bacchus. Now right at first, this reader and others must understand that pretty nearly everything in Christianity has been borrowed — or, to put it more colloquially, *pinched*. Not only Judaism but Paganism was ransacked to give us the story of the Saviour of Man, the Virgin-born Son of God, the great Miracle-Monger who rose from the dead and flew up to Heaven to sit for eternity with God Almighty on a diamond-studded Throne.

The learned in the Church have known this quite well but religion is too deeply ingrained now to be given up by most people, and not many of them will even listen to be told that as Jesus is (on his own confession) "the Light of the World", that is, the Sun, we need not be surprised that he has some of the attributes of one of the Sun-Gods called Bacchus. It would take too long at the moment to show why Bacchus was one of the many representations of the Sun, but any Classical Dictionary — like Lempriere's — will give any interested reader a good deal of information about him and the sources which can be consulted.

IHS is really a wrong adaptation of the three Greek letters YES, which was the name of Bacchus or Sol the



Sun. The central letter in *Greek* is like our H. If you add US to YES you get YESUS, which is for all practical purposes IESUS or JESUS. Robert Taylor deals with Bacchus in a very interesting chapter in his *Diegesis*, but orthodox Christians will pooh-pooh any idea that Christianity is a re-hash of Pagan myths; and, of course, as the *Diegesis* is very rare, few people can read it, and fewer still are interested enough in following Pagan parallels to Christianity. The story of Jesus turning water into wine surely proves his identity with the God of Wine — as Taylor clearly saw and was damned for his temerity in exposing the Christian hoax. I may one day deal more fully with the jolly, drunken old God Bacchus from whom not only Jesus received some of his traits but Moses. Paganism makes a fascinating study.

## Ask at your Library

"Horatio Bottomley" by JULIAN SYMONS.

Published by The Cresset Press, 11 Fitzroy Square, London, W.1.  
Price 21/-.

THE STORY of Horatio Bottomley is as interesting as a good novel and as amusing as any comedy.

Every country periodically produces a number of swindlers who have one trait in common — which is their chief asset — the art of instilling confidence in their dupes. Bottomley possessed this *in excelsis*, and, as well, a dozen other qualities not possessed by the ordinary financial crook.

He was a magnificent speaker who could hold a mob spellbound by his oratory. He had the great gift of humour, a ready tongue and was generous to his friends with the money of which he robbed others.

His personal expenses were lavish. He kept a stable of racing horses, cellars of champagne and maintained practically a harem. Born of poor parents, he resolved, at an early age, to be a success from the money standpoint.

At first he was attracted by the Secularist attitude to life; he did odd jobs on *The Secularist* and later on *The National Reformer*, but his heart was set on money, not ideals. However, he did profess an admiration for Charles Bradlaugh which, however, was not mutual, for Bradlaugh is said to have expressed the opinion that Bottomley would come to no good end.

Such was his extraordinary vanity that, because of his resemblance to Bradlaugh, he deliberately encouraged the idea that he was the illegitimate son of Charles Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant. At the time of Bottomley's birth, Annie Besant was 12 years old. People who knew her pronounced her to be a remarkable and a talented woman; but she must have been even more remarkable than she was thought to be to have produced a child when she was twelve years old.

Bottomley's mother's maiden name was Elizabeth Holyoake, a sister of the great Secularist Reformer, so Bottomley did have some connection with Secularism, but not for long. There was no money in it, and the one thing Bottomley believed in was money.

The story of how he acquired money and of the many financial and dubious companies he floated and of the various shady schemes he got away with, is most vividly and delightfully told by Mr. Symons.

We know that Bottomley was a rogue and a swindler and that he fooled not only the poor people who trusted in him so absolutely but also the men who ranked high in financial and political affairs on whom he impressed his personality. Yet, rascal as Bottomley undoubtedly was, Julian Symon's story arouses not alone pity, for one who might have done so much for his fellow men, but also admiration for his keen sense of humour which made him

a most likeable rogue. Even while serving his prison sentence of seven years, he could still jest at his own sorry plight, and when a visitor to Wormwood Scrubbs who knew Bottomley saw him stitching mail bags and remarked, "Ah! Bottomley, sewing?" Bottomley replied, "No, reaping".

It was Dr. Johnson who said that patriotism was the last refuge of scoundrels, and the First World War, when Bottomley was an M.P., gave him the opportunity of posing as a whole-souled patriot. He conducted a recruiting campaign which drew enormous audiences, and made men rush to join the Army and fight, and, in the cases of thousands of them, die for the Bottomley brand of patriotism. What the audiences did not know was that Bottomley was being paid, and paid handsomely for organising these recruiting meetings, and it came as a shock to his supporters to learn that Bottomley received nearly £27,000 for these patriotic meetings; which proved, if proof were needed, how absolutely correct Dr. Johnson was in his summing up of patriotism.

In a short review such as this, it would be impossible to follow the career of Horatio Bottomley. Let the reader ask at his library for this book. It will not fail to amuse him.

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

## Monarchy or Republic?

By E. L. ROBERTS

[The discussion on Monarchy, started by Mr. Macfarlane, has drawn many letters, and this article, summarising as it does the opinions of most who have written, will conclude the controversy.—Ed.]

SOME would appear to be as innocent of the real nature and function of the Monarchy as others are about religion, but the principle of royalty is actually as vulnerable as the idea of a god.

First, the Monarchy is a socially obsolete, artificially preserved, ancient anachronism in modern life. It incorporates the principle of hereditary appointment — a gross violation of democratic ideals.

The "Royal Family" and all their hangers-on are grossly overpaid for their few socially necessary duties. The splendid luxury of their lives is in glaring contrast to the austerity and hardship of millions of people, whose work is of considerably more value to the community. The cost of the Monarchy is a scandalous waste of public money. Cancer research, the welfare of the blind, infirm, orphans and disabled veterans of wars depend upon organised begging, while millions of pounds are squandered on royal residences, royal yachts, royal trains, royal tours, and royal occasions.

The enormous amount of effort, time and money expended in the glorification of the sovereign is a disgrace to the nation and a disservice to the people, upon whom it exercises a mentally stultifying influence. Its result is the creation and cultivation of popular illusions as to the quality of royal individuals and the encouragement of irrational adulation and uncritical obeisance to a figurehead.

Royalist propaganda and publicity has the effect of providing a colourful diversion from unpleasant events that might otherwise stimulate progressive thought and action.

The Monarchy is the last bastion of political and religious reaction. The Monarch is trained from early life to support the *status quo*. His constitutional powers are in reserve in case a genuine people's party should come to power.

It is nonsense to say that the Monarch is above politics.



He is perfectly well aware that some politics keep him on the throne, while other politics want him at the Labour Exchange and the throne in a museum.

The existence of an hereditary privileged class of wealthy idlers is anti-social. It encourages snobbery, jobbery, fawning and corruption. The attainment of power and position, wealth and privilege solely by birth or connection, is destructive of the ideal that such things should only be the reward of merit and service. Royalty is national nepotism.

The hereditary constitutional monarch performs no useful function that could not be performed by a president at a fraction of the cost. The office should carry no political power, but its holder would, as the *chosen* "symbolic representative" of the nation, be responsible for greeting distinguished foreign visitors, opening new enterprises, conferring earned awards and decorations, etc.

## National Secular Society Executive Meeting

A MEETING of the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society was held on Wednesday, January 18th, 1956. Present: Mr. F. A. Ridley (President), in the chair, Messrs. Barker, Cleaver, Draper, Ebury, Gordon, Hornbrook, Johnson, Shepherd, Taylor, Tiley, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer, Mr. Griffiths, and the Secretary. The Financial Statement was accepted; Mr. L. Ebury was elected to succeed Mr. E. W. Shaw as Trustee. New members were admitted to the Parent, Dagenham, Manchester, Merseyside and West London branches. Agreed to meet expenses of the Birmingham and Manchester meetings of Mrs. Knight. Annual dinner arrangements were reported and Annual Conference arrangements considered. Bradford Branch resolution re accommodation for the Secretary was acknowledged; members were doing their best in this connection. A policy proposal from Mr. S. Salter was read and a committee formed to consider implementing same, Mr. Salter to be invited to serve on this. Report from Fyzabad Branch, notice of meeting from Central London Branch and other items of correspondence were dealt with. It was agreed to send a donation to the *Indian Rationalist*, which was in a precarious financial state.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### OVER-POPULATION

With reference to Mr. Reader's article in your issue of January 6th (which was particularly interesting in pointing out that the energy obtained from a gram of uranium 235 depended upon a lot of energy being put into getting the uranium, to begin with), I would like to make two comments: (1) The population of the Chinese People's Republic is somewhere about 570,000,000, and that of India about 389,000,000. It is such nations as these which need to limit their enormous numbers, rather than the less numerous, slower breeding and (in general) more highly developed peoples of the West. (2) His reference to "medieval stake and rack, 1939-1945 torture chamber and crematorium; and latterly, nuclear fission", might, in fairness have added the crushing subordination of the individual to the state, in Communist nations, showing such unlovely examples as, e.g. Russia—forced labour (see Otto Larsen's *Nightmare of the Innocents*); China—forced labour, public executions (afterwards copied in mimicry by children) (see R. Greene's *Calvary in China*), and "brain-washing" (see Guy Wint's *Spotlight on Asia*).

G. W. CLARK.

### DARWIN'S THEORY AND MR. McKEOWN

In the letter by R. McKeown (January 20th) we have yet another revival of the famous (or is it infamous) Haeckel "forgeries". This catalogue of mendacities attributed to Haeckel and the hypocritical parade of Germanic scholarship, i.e., "Dr. Brass" of the "Kepler Bund", the document signed by "thirty-six scientific men", I well

recollect thirty or forty years ago, in the old Hyde Park days trying to track down poor Haeckel's misdeeds. Not to my surprise, I found these stories being circulated in Hyde Park by Roman Catholic debaters and, as Chapman Cohen told me, a Catholic liar is no ordinary liar.

The only English reference I could find was a pamphlet written by a certain Fr. Gerard S.J. In no standard work in English could I find any reference to Haeckel's forgeries. Mr. McKeown recommends to us benighted heathens a Mr. R. E. D. Clark in *Darwin—Before and After*.

Mr. McKeown does not tell us this book was specially written for a *religious publisher* in Ludgate Hill to denigrate Darwinism—in the interests of religion!

Mr. McKeown should know that Freethinkers have no creed or sacred book. There is no occasion for a Freethinker to make "wild statements" or commit "falsifications". The probability is that Mr. McKeown is not interested in the present standing of Natural Selection in the present day study of living things. If he were he would find that the theory of Natural Selection still stands up to the modern experts.

Of course, we quite understand how it is that Darwin's theory so goads religious bigots to fury and dishonest inference, because in its explanation of species formation it so obviously leaves God out of account.

ROBERT F. TURNER.

### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

C. W. James speaks of hanging and flogging as deterrents. This is not born out by statistics. In those countries which abolished hanging the murder rate has gone down, a result which hanging failed to bring about. Violence never cured violence. I'm sure we all have sympathy with the victims but would wish to follow a course which led to a decline in their number.

L. STARLEY.

### IMPOSTORS

Originally Mr. Ratcliffe's protest was only against the inclusion of the Labour Party in my personal list of impostors. It would seem, therefore, his particular taboo is the Labour Party. As a Freethinker, I do not believe in taboos.

The fact that the Freethought movement is composed of all shades of political belief is *not* a reason for withholding the expression of opinion for fear of giving offence. Criticisms of any value have always offended the orthodox and rigidly correct. The duties of a chairman are more than that of being a mere robot.

JIM BARROWMAN.

Like Mr. Ratcliffe I cannot accept the Glasgow chairman's interpretation of chairmanship. As an individual he can have any opinions he likes, but as a chairman he becomes an official spokesman of the N.S.S. and should not display political leanings which his fellow members may not share. Good chairmanship involves a self-imposed discipline and self-restriction of freedom. The good chairman does not therefore hog the society's platform for political propaganda.

S. MCNAIR.

### THE TURIN SHROUD

May I protest, if only feebly, against Mr. Howell Smith's characterising me "as exploding with wrath and scorn" against those who "disagree with me". Mr. Howell Smith has a right, provisionally or otherwise, to think what he likes about the Turin Shroud. I have a right to criticise him—and it was not I but he who dragged in the Shroud as a "reply" to the Myth Theory of Jesus. I could have dealt with it and his provisional opinion much more strongly—but Mr. Howell Smith has always appeared to me, in spite of his severe criticism of "many theological dogmas", the *beau ideal* of a reverent Rationalist, and I refrained.

H. CUTNER.

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