

# The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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FREETHINKERS are people who hold that reason should be permitted to operate freely in every phase of human thought and activity; that even so-called "sacred" beliefs should be subjected to critical analysis. The religious believer, on the other hand, insists that the basic dogmas of religion should be accepted on faith. The intellectual scrutiny of such dogmas, he asserts, implies doubt, and doubt is impious, even sinful.

Note that the adherent of a particular religious belief does not object to a rational appraisal of religions other than his own; it is his personal beliefs, and those only, which should be unquestioned.

## The Emotional Content

Religion is, in words of Professor James, essentially an "affair of the emotions". True, the ordinary believer will offer reasons for his beliefs when such beliefs are challenged; but such reasons are secondary; they follow, they do not precede, belief. That is to say, the reasons put forward are so many rationalisations. Investigation will nearly always reveal that the doctrines propounded by a votary of a particular creed or cult were instilled into his mind before he was capable of reasoning.

Childhood is an impressionable age, and ideas injected into our minds in our early days, although they may be modified in later life, are rarely eradicated completely. Always there is a strong emotional resistance to change. Rational considerations are submerged by emotionally toned attitudes.

## Reason the Guide

Let me make it clear that I do not decry emotion. Life without emotional expression would indeed be colourless. Without emotion there can be no bonds of love and friendship; no appreciation of beauty. True, there would be no tears, but likewise there would be no laughter; there would be no grief, but also no joy. Emotion is an individual and social necessity. All that we affirm is that emotional feelings should not be permitted to override reason. Reason may not be an infallible guide, but it is the best we have; and were it allowed to operate freely there can be little doubt that it would speedily solve our economic problems and cure our social ills. Unfortunately, it is rarely permitted to function freely. We approach the problems of life with what we might call "prefabricated ideas", ideas which inhibit the reasoning processes and lead to intellectual stultification. And one of the main obstacles to enlightenment is religion.

The Freethinker holds that in science we have the supreme expression of the human intellect, and it is to science that we turn for aid in the solution of the manifold problems of life.

## Science and Religion

The scientific view of the universe is in sharp contrast to the basic assumptions of religion; it can, in fact, be stated

positively that the scientific outlook is the very antithesis of the religious conception of things. The scientist takes his stand on Natural Causation; the religionist on Supernatural Causation. These two concepts are utterly irreconcilable.

When I say that the scientist takes his stand on the concepts of Natural Causation, I am not suggesting that there is no scientist with a belief in a god. I am aware that there are some scientists who profess Theism. All that I am claiming is that, when he is conducting scientific investigations and experiments, even the religious man of science excludes the supernatural from consideration. We may put it that no scientist, as a scientist, takes the super-

natural into account. When a chemist, in conducting an experiment, fails to get the anticipated result he does not assume that a supernatural entity has interfered; he decides that he has made some error in his calculations, or that some foreign substance has got in despite his precautions, and he starts all over again.

## A Self-Existent Universe

It should be emphasised that the modern scientific outlook implies the complete rejection of supernaturalism. The universe is regarded as self-existent. It is held that the forces inherent in nature are adequate to account for every phenomenon in nature. The religionist also starts with a self-existent entity; he calls that entity "God" and attributes to this God a creative function.

In affirming a self-existent universe the Freethinker is mindful of the dictum of William of Occam, which states that entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity, a dictum known as "Occam's Razor". Applying Occam's Razor to the problem before us, we can put it that supernatural causes should not be presumed until natural causes have been exhausted, that is, until they have been shown to be inadequate. And who is going to undertake that task?

## Matter a Storehouse of Energy

Recent researches into the sub-atomic world have revealed that the basic entities are tremendous storehouses of energy; that the ultimate particles of matter possess a hitherto unimagined complexity. Aggregations of these fundamental entities give rise to still greater complexity, and it becomes evident that in the cosmic forces we have all we need to account for phenomena, including the phenomena of life and mind. There is no need whatever to invoke an extraneous force to account for the manifold forms of existence.

In starting with a self-evident universe we are on the firmest of foundations. We know the universe exists; we are in it and of it. Our every sense testifies to its objective reality. The existence of a God cannot similarly be demonstrated. At most it is an inference. As shown, it is a needless postulate. We can say that the supreme justification for the rejection of the God-idea is that it is unnecessary.

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## Freethought and Religion

By JOHN BOWDEN

### A God in a Vacuum

The creationist does not appear to realise that he has to start with a God in a vacuum. In asserting creation he has to assume that there was a time when nothing existed but God. But how can a being exist when there is no place for him to be? How can such a being see when there is nothing to see? How can he think when there is nothing to think about? And how could such a being construct a universe when there were no materials for construction? "Creation out of nothing" is a meaningless phrase.

The postulate of self-existent elements is a necessity of thought. Given these self-existent elements, all else follows.

Most religious folk today, the more cultivated ones anyway, are prepared to admit the operation of purely natural forces in most phenomena. They concede, for instance, that it is not necessary to invoke supernatural influences to account for the movements of the heavenly bodies. Some are even prepared to admit that the weather is governed by purely natural laws.

*(To be concluded)*

## Review

**The Glorious Saudi Era**, by ABD-EL-AZIZ. "Mondial" Press, 16 Dareeh Saad Street, Cairo.

THIS is a Saudi propaganda book, dedicated "To H.M. King Saud and to the English Library", and gives us some idea of Islamic tolerance, and an insight into the Saudi mentality.

Accusations of intolerance directed at Islam may best be judged by examples taken from the home of Islamic culture, Saudi Arabia, personified by King Abdulaziz Ibn-Saud and now by H.M. King Saud.

We are told that Ibn-Saud "formed committees of religious men having offices throughout the kingdom with full authority to fight wrongdoers and prayer-neglecters". "The foreigner may be mystified at not seeing monuments or statues in the squares of Saudi-Arabian cities". And the reason? "They were conflicting with the belief of adoring none but God". Further, the traveller "may be astonished to watch the policemen at prayer time, wandering through shops and cafés asking people to hasten to the nearest mosque". In case the puzzled onlooker may wonder why, "It is the heyday of the religion realised by the late great Abdulaziz and his pious successor, H.M. King Saud".

On acceding to his throne, Ibn-Saud intended to stamp out lawlessness, and we learn that "Every traveller to the Holy Land, disinfecting his spirit, going on a pilgrimage or visiting the Prophet mosque, had to write his will". Somewhat perturbed at this, the King called the various tribe leaders together and promised them an annual payment if each would be responsible for the safety of travellers in his own zone. Apparently the tribe leaders were not particularly enthusiastic about this, "But the King turned against them in anger and swore in the name of God to put the Islamic law into effect and would therefore kill the leader in whose zone a murder was committed should he fail to bring in the murderer, and would amputate his hand should he not bring in the thief".

Here is another instance of the kindly nature of Ibn-Saud. "Once a Bedouin told him that he had seen a sack of maize on the road. Apprehensively he questioned him how he knew that it was maize. The Bedouin answered that he had touched it with his finger. The King ordered the finger to be cut off. Thus, every Bedouin could not touch any precious or trifling thing thrown on the road. . . . Thus ideal peace was accomplished, achieving the welfare

of the citizens, Arabs and all Muslims, as Ibn-Saud and his successor had grappled with the heavenly wisdom through which the country was proud that crime and theft were now non-existent. America, Great Britain, France and Switzerland could not keep pace with Saudi-Arabia in Public Security."

In such ways, we learn, the King "built a new, clean, healthy and uniquely pious society that is far away from vice; so theft, crime, dissipation, drink and unemployment are absolutely non-existent in Saudi-Arabia. It is an ideal, willing, rich but ascetic society, since Ibn-Saud forbade theatres, dance halls and cabarets, which conflict with the teachings of Islam".

It is not to be wondered that "His Majesty's life was one of the most thrilling stories of strife for religion, humanity and justice. On November 9th, 1953, he went to Heaven. What a loss! But his soul sees the people's hearts consoled and faithfully surrounding H.M. King Saud, whom God made the next Abdulaziz".

The son was a worthy successor. "When he was seven he studied reading and writing. Having exceptional intelligence and inborn talents, he could learn the Koran by heart and comprehend its commentary within two years." He now grants 2,000 Saudi ryals as a Royal Bounty to anyone who learns the Koran by heart. To what better purpose could their time be put?

D. SHIPPER.

## To a Spider

Malign, and feller yet —

An evil thing!

Crafty, self-centred, set

Within your witch's net,

On watch, waiting.

A score of eyes, eight claws,

A stomach vast,

Pronged and procreant jaws,

Cords, wove from belly-pores,

To hold all fast.

Pity the luckless fly

Caught, flying by,

In your spun treachery:

In vain his struggles be,

He's doomed to die.

Through weariness? Oh, no!

More bitter death!

From your veins venoms go,

Poison his pulses slow,

And choke his breath.

A shrivelled victim, he

Lies in your power,

Whom you may gloatingly

In your foul larder see,

And last, devour.

Did God let spiders be,

In humour grim,

Enigma endlessly

To puzzle wits, if we

Would fathom *Him*?

REX CLEMENTS.

—NEXT WEEK—

**CHARLES DICKENS AND STATE-MURDERS**

By C. G. L. DU CANN

# Political Catholicism—Spain v Ireland

By F. A. RIDLEY

RECENTLY, thanks to my friend Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, I made the acquaintance of an important book published originally in U.S.A. which is of particular interest to Free-thinkers, *The Irish and Catholic Power* by Paul Blanshard, whose previous books on Catholicism in the modern world have been best-sellers. The author, whom I had the pleasure of meeting when he was over here not long ago, writes as an observer of liberal views who sees the R.C. Church and its world-wide activities from the standpoint of an American democrat primarily interested in the preservation of the secular constitution of the U.S.A., in which the official separation of Church and State is a pillar of the constitution. The principal opponent, as he emphasises repeatedly, of this basic conception, is the Vatican and its local representatives.

We are nowadays familiar with "Internationals" of various kinds, especially in political and economic spheres. As Mr. Blanshard convincingly demonstrates, Irish Catholicism not only forms part of the "Black International of Rome", but is itself a kind of "International" on its own! He points out that while the Irish Republic is a democracy in form, it actually constitutes a clerical republic. And yet the actual influence of the Irish Church and hierarchy *outside* Ireland is far greater and more extensive than within its comparatively narrow boundaries. Our author makes the point, which the present writer has repeatedly stressed in these columns, that the expansion of Catholicism in Great Britain during the past century is ultimately far more due to the Irish immigration, consequent upon the potato famines of the "hungry forties", than to such English movements as the much publicised Oxford Movement. In England, and still more in Scotland, Catholicism is primarily Irish; Glasgow and Liverpool, for example, being largely Irish cities. However, Great Britain is not the most important spiritual colony of the Irish hierarchy and its missionary priests: the powerful Catholic hierarchy of U.S.A., now the principal financial reservoir of the Vatican, is largely Irish, as is also the R.C. Church in Australia. As Blanshard indicates, all the contemporary Cardinals in the Anglo-Saxon world are Irish, or of Irish extraction. In Africa, Irish priests form the backbone of Catholic missions and exercise a corresponding degree of influence. In point of fact, as our author says, the special type of Catholicism associated with Ireland may be described as a force, not only in Irish circles, but even in world affairs, a kind of international body inside the larger International which centres on the Vatican.

Not only, insists our author, does Irish Catholicism constitute a kind of religious sub-species of Catholicism but it also represents a special kind of "Catholic Action", of Catholicism in relation to the secular and political world outside the Church. In contrast to Spanish Catholicism, whether that of Torquemada and the Inquisition or to its present thinly disguised revival under the Franco regime, Irish Catholicism may perhaps be described as *indirect* rule. That is, the Church, though virtually all-powerful, in fact ostensibly keeps in the background. In Eire, unlike Spain, full religious toleration exists in theory, and with only some minor infractions such as discrimination against Protestants in some special (chiefly educational) capacities. In Eire the R.C. Church is *in fact* not even established officially. For the time being it contents itself with a "special position" as officially laid down in the Constitution of 1932.

Moreover, in form at least, the Church exercises no *direct* political authority in the Republic, where full political democracy, including the party system and even proportional representation are protected by the Constitution. Unlike Spain, which is under a political *and* religious dictatorship in which totalitarian rule with but the barest exceptions is officially endorsed by the Concordat of August, 1953, between Franco and the Vatican; Ireland is *in form* a modern political democracy where even the secularist principle of the separation of Church and State is partially recognised. As Mr. Blanshard aptly comments, the Irish type of Catholicism is politically Rome's most advanced concession to the modern world. It is of the type which the Vatican is most likely to try to impose on the Anglo-Saxon democracies, in preference to the Spanish and Portuguese model.

None the less, as he demonstrates with a wealth of factual detail, this state of things is largely superficial and misleading. Though not so obtrusive, *indirect* rule on the Irish pattern can be *in practice* quite as dictatorial as the need arises. Our author proves by recent instances in Irish history, notably the case of Dr. Browne in 1950, that, whatever may be the legal position, Eire is ultimately a clerical republic. When the Bishops crack the whip the politicians run for cover! Robert Ingersoll was a true, as well as an eloquent, prophet when he predicted that Home Rule would be Rome Rule. The Irish type of indirect rule is just as autocratic *when necessary*, and just as effective, as the traditional type.

The Vatican is nowadays conducting a world-wide offensive in both the "spiritual" and political spheres, and its eventual outcome is a matter of profound significance, in particular to secularists like our author, to whom the permanent separation of Church and State constitutes the most valuable aspect of the "American way of life". At present the Vatican appears undecided as between the Spanish and Irish models. The fundamental characteristic of the former is a totalitarian regime with the official recognition of a single religion, with only the most grudging toleration for non-Catholic Christian sects and a *total* prohibition of non-Christian cults and of anti-Catholic propaganda. Such a regime is guaranteed by a similarly totalitarian and politically exclusive State. In the Irish model there is room for religious "co-existence" and political democracy. This holds in theory and practice *except* where, as in the Browne case, the Church is directly challenged. At present the Spanish model is in force in Spain, Portugal and a number of Latin American republics — in Colombia, for instance, where Protestant missionaries have been fiercely persecuted in recent years. The Irish model perhaps sets the standard for the Anglo-Saxon democracies in America, Britain and Australia. In general the more advanced lands within the Church of Rome, such as Germany and France, tend towards the Irish model, while the more backward areas may be expected to follow Spain. The present pro-Fascist Pope appears to favour the Spanish model but may be succeeded by a more liberal Pope, perhaps even by an Irish-American Cardinal who will break the Italian monopoly and perhaps aim at the much coveted conversion of the U.S.A. to Catholicism.

Whatever the outcome, *The Irish and Catholic Power*, with only one aspect of which we have here dealt, is an important work for secularists. Ask at your library, or, better still, buy it.

## This Believing World

The famous English actor, Alec Guinness, has just joined the Church of Rome. Previously, he belonged to the Church of England, and then became "nothing" — which very often is the prelude to a complete conversion one way or 'tother. In his case, as he saw the Pope and looked upon him as a "saint", it means that from now he will be a fervent believer in Fatima, Lourdes, the Turin Shroud, the Veronica Handkerchief, Holy Relics (even if admittedly fraudulent) and Weeping Madonnas, to say nothing of all the Church's traditional Devils, Angels, and Hell. Still, all this belief is far better than "nothing", as Mr. Guinness would gallantly admit.

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Just as Roman Catholicism is the power behind Eire and Spain, so is the Dutch Reformed Church behind nearly all the reactionary moves of the South African Parliament. And in very things is it more powerful than in censorship. From letters appearing in some S.A. newspapers can be seen how often it steps in to prevent some novel being imported or read or some pictures to be seen which are not in accord with the unadulterated Calvinistic minds of the pious censors. It looks as if the works of Shakespeare, with *Venus and Adonis* and the *Rape of Lucrece* will soon be banned in South Africa for evermore!

★

According to a recent article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* not so very long ago Australian Universities were packed with students who were atheists, agnostics, Communists, and even Freethinkers. This has now, thank God, all changed. Australia's undergraduates are these days much more concerned with religion than with politics or even sex. Even if they are not quite convinced Christians, they are at least deists, and that is a blessing for which God Almighty must be thanked.

★

The curious thing is, however, that after filling nearly two columns of jubilant expressions of gratitude at this religious change of heart, the writer depressingly admits at its close that the universities can "still muster a company of atheists, Communists, and Freethinkers". We fervently commiserate with him. What a terrible disappointment it must be to a pious journalist to admit that God Almighty has so egregiously failed to bring *all* the undergraduates to their knees and unctuously grovel.

★

Canon Norburn's disbelief in the cardinal teaching of true Christianity — the story of Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden — has brought forth more lamentations in Bolton in a single week than Jeremiah managed in 1,000 years. One lady — a Mrs. Moxrop — has, however, a victory plan against such blasphemy. It is that every Christian in the land should immediately waft up to Heaven as many prayers as possible to convert the unbelieving Canon and thus "reveal the truth of the Scriptures". How pleasant it is to record the sturdy Christianity of Mrs. Moxrop and her complete Faith against infidel parsons! After all, if there was no Garden of Eden, there could have been no Fall of Man, and we should have to dispense with our Blessed Saviour. A horrible thought.

★

In spite of the BBC's constant call to Christ, the Easter show in London seems to have been more than a flop. The *Daily Express* writer, William Hickey, painted a very gloomy Good Friday in its churches. He was "surprised" — surprised at "the empty pews, sparse congregations, and hollow echoes". There were only 200 "worshippers" in

Westminster Abbey, and only 100 in St. Paul's, which can seat 3,000. There were only one dozen people in the congregation in London's oldest church, All Hallows-by-the-Tower, which has that famous notice prominently displayed — "Not everyone who enters this church is converted. Please watch your handbags, etc.". It must be heartbreaking for a humble adorer of "our Lord" to find that her handbag vanished whilst she knelt in devout supplication. Surely Jesus should be able to look after his own in a church?

## The Rising Generation

### II—THE LORD'S PRAYER

FROM the way in which the Bible is referred to and boosted up at school and on the radio by fully qualified Christian clergymen, most of you young people are apt to imagine that any criticism of the Holy Book is quite invalid — that is, that the "unbeliever" has no case. Of course, the Bible has been in the past, and is still so considered, as the Book of God; and this means, as John Bunyan, the famous author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, said, "Every book of it, every chapter of it, every word of it, is the direct utterance of the most high".

Bunyan's attitude is still the attitude of all or nearly all the priests and parsons who speak for the BBC; but if our young readers were to get hold of the many books written by crowds of reverend gentlemen still in the Church, they would be surprised at their admissions. For the Bible is packed with contradictions, with absurd statements, with ethical teachings no longer followed, and with "variant readings going into thousands. Let me give you an interesting variation which you can all test for yourselves. In the "Lord's Prayer", which all boys and girls have to repeat over and over again, and which is most solemnly intoned on every occasion the Church and its ministers can get it in.

There are dozens of "versions" of the Bible, but the principal one is that known as the Authorised Version, of which there must be millions of copies in existence. It was, however, found so full of faults and mistakes, that about 70 years ago a new translation was ordered; and the result of many years of hard work was the "Revised" Version. One of the things drastically revised was the Lord's Prayer. The one you have to say so often may *not* be the Lord's Prayer after all. That one contains 66 words. It contains in the R.V., only 55. Actually, the revisors took out 15 of the holy words, added a few new ones, and altered the rest. So you can ask your teacher which was the genuine one. Jesus is responsible for?

And if you can get another "version", that is, another translation of the Bible, take a look at the one translated by the very eminent James Moffatt. His Lord's Prayer is different from both the A.V. and the R.V., and both the A.V. and the Revised Version omit "For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen". This is only one of the thousands of "revisions" the Bible has undergone, and we hope to introduce you to a few more in succeeding issues of this journal.

For Your Bookshelf

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# 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.

**DAVID RUDGE.**—The historian Macaulay expected the Papacy to outlive Protestantism. It was Hilaire Belloc who said "All that is not Catholic is returning to Paganism"; incidentally, this was in a newspaper series to which Chapman Cohen also contributed (1926, *Manchester Evening News*).

**R. SAUNDERS.**—Some Liberal Christians have watered down the doctrine of the Atonement to one of moral redemption rather than physical. Yet many of them try to square this with a physical crucifixion.

**R. WILLOWS.**—A life such as Jesus is supposed to have lived could hardly have failed to arrest the attention of social observers. Pliny merely mentions meeting some Christians, while Celsus, who is contemptuous of them, simply retails Jewish legends.

**BOLTON FREETHINKERS.**—Keep up the good work. In the *Bolton Evening News* you have one of the most fair-minded of our provincial newspapers.

**G.F.W.**—To call matter "dead" is a peculiar way of referring to it. What is dead was presumably once alive. Perhaps you mean inorganic, or non-living. But non-living does not mean non-active.

**A. WINGATE.**—The Pope who said "I am Tradition" was Pius IX. Thus he "inherited" the infallibility of the past.

**MISS K. WILLIS.**—You say God has spoken to you. If you are his echo, he appears to have said the silliest things.

**K. LISLE.**—Charities under Christian auspices are frequently pointed to by Christian apologists who conveniently forget that the need for such charities has arisen under a Christian-controlled social structure.

**THEOSOPHIST.**—You say you believe in the existence of Elements. If you will send us a sample, we will examine them. If they are not material things, then for what material things do they serve as an exclusive label?

**"B. BROAD."**—You say "matter has lost its solidity". Then what does the word "solid" denote? If matter is not solid, what is it?

**T. S. WALSH.**—The claims of Christian Science have been exposed by such works as *Our New Religion* by the late H. A. L. Fisher, and more particularly by *The Faith, the Falsity and the Failure of Christian Science* (Allen and Unwin, 1926; various authorship) in which we read (p. 227), "Upon her death Mrs. Eddy's estate was appraised at three million dollars".

**H. SCOTT-ROPER.**—Very interesting, and thanks for praise. Now why retain the label "Christian" when you have shed all its main doctrines?

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE.

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

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, April 15th, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The English Reformers".

## The Knight—Sampson Letters

A FEW REFLECTIONS

By MARGARET KNIGHT

THREE WEEKS passed, bringing no answer to my last letter, published last week, and I thought that Ashley had at last tired of the argument. Then I heard, to my consternation, that he was dead! He had suffered from an incurable form of pituitary grand deficiency, and there had been little hope that he could live beyond middle age.

My sorrow at his death was shared by his many friends. Ashley, whatever one might think of his views, was a charming and sensitive person, whose natural goodness confounded his earnest attempts to convince me that he was a monster of wickedness, restrained only by his Christian convictions. I feel that he would have been happier as a Humanist; but I may be wrong.

Looking back on the correspondence after ten years, I do not feel that the hours we spent on it were a waste of time. Neither of us, as is obvious, made the slightest dent in the other's convictions. But though we ended as far apart as we began, we had each, I think, gained a clearer understanding of the other's position; and perhaps become more articulate in expressing our own.

Above all, the correspondence helped me to formulate a principle that I have never had cause to revise: namely—argue with committed Christians as an intellectual exercise, if you, and they, enjoy it; but do not hope to alter their views. If you are out to make converts, stick to the floating voters; of whom, as I said in my speech at the N.S.S. Annual Dinner, there are thousands, perhaps millions, in the country, ready to become declared Humanists at a word, if only we say the right word.

## Notes and News

MR. W. T. WILLIAMS, M.A., M.P., has accepted office as President of the Liberation Society in succession to the late Dr. Henry Townsend. Mr. Williams, who is a barrister-at-law, has served as a chaplain and welfare officer of the Royal Air Force and as a tutor in Manchester College, Oxford. He served as Parliamentary Private Secretary to two Ministries in 1950 and 1951. The Society for the Liberation of Religion from State Patronage and Control (to use its full name) was founded in 1844 with the object of securing equal rights and privileges for all religious bodies in this country. The Humanist Council has subscribed to its funds.

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THE Dagenham Branch N.S.S., having completed its first year of activity, will be celebrating the occasion with a dinner and social on Saturday, April 21st. This will be held at the Railway Hotel (also known as "The Spotted Dog"), adjacent to Barking Station, which is easily reached by the District Line. Following a reception at 6.30 p.m., dinner will be served at 7 sharp, and there will also be music and dancing (music provided by the Eric Hicks Trio). Any reader of THE FREETHINKER will be welcome, and should telephone Dominion 1916 or write to Mr. G. W. Warner, 214 Fitzstephen Road, Dagenham, Essex, for tickets, 16s. each.

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THE N.S.S. Annual Conference will be held in the Stork Hotel, 1 Queen Square, Liverpool, 1, on Sunday, May 20th, 1956. Details will follow.

# A New International Language

By H. CUTNER

ONE OF THE REFORMS in foreign relations long due is an international language. What we don't want in this is a lot of useless talk about it by UNO or similar bodies. If there is such a language—and there is—the governments of all countries should make it compulsory in all schools.

Every "diplomat" knows how difficult it is to conduct negotiations with other countries unless very capable interpreters are present and, even then, negotiations often fail because of elementary misunderstanding. But leaving aside these immense international difficulties, the ordinary tourist is frequently put off visiting foreign countries because he cannot understand the natives. Peoples of different races are far more ready to discuss their opinions in an atmosphere of understanding than in one in which very little is understood.

During the Middle Ages, when the Church was all-powerful, there was the universal language of Latin which travelling scholars could use; and the fact that Latin is still taught—and quite uselessly—in our schools proves how strong was its hold in intellectual circles. Even after years of Latin study in our schools and universities, there can be but very few students able to discuss in Latin political and other problems. And that is the test. Merely to know comparatively few words, and a few phrases is hopeless in conversation; and most people are ready to admit that they prefer the English translations of Latin classics than the heart-breaking job of reading the originals.

All this should lead me to champion Esperanto, which has certainly stood the test of time, and which so many Freethinkers have so enthusiastically praised. And up to a point Zamenhof's work in inventing a language which is easy to learn and speak deserves all the eulogies it has received. I have met many Esperantists, and I never failed to agree with them in their advocacy. But it has always been the individual who has taken it up, and never the governments of the world. Until that is done, until all schools make it a "must" right through the years, until one day at least is devoted wholly to it so that history, literature, and many other subjects can be as easily discussed as they are in the native language, even Esperanto must fail.

Moreover, people must be told that Esperanto is not meant to displace the native language. It is an "auxiliary" language. It can never displace a language like English or French, so rich and varied in its literature.

But is Esperanto the final auxiliary language? I do not think so. I think there is another one much easier to learn and to read. And I want to call attention to it. Already it is attracting many people who have been put off by the rather uncouth words—so many ending in "j"—which a page of Esperanto presents; though when one gets used to it, perhaps it is not so ugly as at first sight.

This new language is "Interlingue" and its great advantage is that it uses words and expressions as far as possible which are more or less similar in other languages. There are thousands of words in English and French which are similar, and the inventor of Interlingue has made it possible for readers almost at a first glance to recognise them in the new language. The man who invented Interlingue is Edgar de Wahl and he first came in contact with Volapuk, which was a good and sincere attempt at providing a new language, failing perhaps because it was far too complicated and difficult; then he became an Esperantist; and when he saw that the next new language, Ido, was only an imper-

fect version of Esperanto, devoted twenty years of his life to evolving the language which is now called Interlingue.

Right at the outset, he saw the immense number of words nearly like each other in so many European languages, and decided it was not necessary to invent new ones as their very inconsiderable differences gave little difficulty in understanding them. And he chose the simple grammar of English as his base for grammar. As for pronunciation, in speaking Interlingue, he decided that the vowels should be pronounced as in Italian, and the consonants as in English, with a few variations easily learnt.

As this is not meant to be an "instructional" article but merely one introducing it, I think readers will be interested to see how Interlingue compares with Esperanto. So here are a few sentences:

## Esperanto

La vera lingvo internacia ekzistas. Ĉu vi scias, ke estas eble skribi en lingvo senpere komprenebla por kleraj personoj de ĉiuj nacioj? Tiu lingvo preskau mirakla estas nomita: Interlingvo. Ĝi entenas la kvazaŭan tuton de la vortoj komunaj al ĉiuj kulturaj lingvoj de la okcidento.

## Interlingue

Li ver lingue international existe. Save vu, que it es possible scriir in un lingue immediatmen comprensibil por persones cultivat de omni nationes? Ti lingue presc miraculosi es nominat Interlingue. It contene li quasi totalite del paroles comun a omni lingues cultural del occidente.

## English

The real international language exists. Do you know that it is possible to write in a language which is immediately comprehensible for educated persons of all nations? This almost miraculous language is called Interlingue. It contains nearly the totality of the words which are common to all languages of occidental civilisation.

It would be very surprising if at first glance the reader would not find the Interlingue far more easy to read than Esperanto. This does not mean, of course, that after a few trials, Interlingue will be as easy to read as English; but it does mean that it is incomparably easier than Esperanto to learn once the few simple grammatical rules and a certain number of words have been mastered.

But above all, what is required is that it should be taught in all schools as an auxiliary language and let Latin be the prize language in theological colleges. Latin is almost useless in our daily life, and of no use whatever on the Continent, unless one spoke it as well as Cicero, even in Rome.

Look at our own International Freethought Conferences—how many languages must one know to make it a success? By success I mean that those attending can really talk to and understand each other. To be able to follow a difficult argument in French, German, and, say, Hungarian, as well as in English, and for one man to respond in the four languages so that those brought up in them can understand what is being said, is not quite as easy as some people think.

Properly taught at school for a number of years, Interlingue would make a Freethought Conference a tremendous success, for only one language would be needed for all the people attending. Will this ever be done? I am afraid not in my lifetime. Governments are far more interested in propagating the outworn creeds of Christendom.

Those who want more information about it will no doubt whatever easily decipher the following:

Interlingue es immediatmen comprensibil al tot mundo civilisat. Il es ja usabil in omni branches del tecnica, comercia, e literatura pro que it adopte li international nomenclatura universamen conosset. Prospectes e gratuit informationes che Interlingue-Institute Cheseaux s. Lausanne, Svissia.

CONTROVERSY

# Was Malthus Mistaken?

Affirmative: G. DICKINSON

Negative: G. I. BENNETT

IN HIS RECENT ARTICLE in THE FREETHINKER on "The Necessity of Birth Control", Mr. G. I. Bennett says he cannot understand anti-Malthusians. This is possibly due to the fact that he seems unaware of arguments against Malthus other than those he quotes.

Mr. Bennett probably remembers the famous — or infamous — Indian famines. Since the days of those famines the population of India has actually increased. There are no such famines today. Can it therefore be said that these famines were due to excess of population?

Not long ago the people of sparsely inhabited Ireland suffered from a potato famine. Was this due to pressure of population?

Mr. Bennett should re-read Malthus's review of what he calls the "positive checks". In all cases he will find that vice and misery are due, not to increase of population, but to unsocial ignorance, rapacity, bad government, unjust laws and destructive warfare.

If such a strong tendency to increase in population exists, why do well-to-do families die out? How is it, when every premium is offered by hereditary titles and possessions, that in an aristocracy such as the English, peerages will lapse and the House of Lords is kept going only by fresh creations?

We have in modern times seen many communities advance in population. Have they not at the same time advanced even more rapidly in wealth? Where else would you find wealth devoted more lavishly to non-productive uses — to costly buildings, fine furniture, luxurious equipages, statues, gardens and yachts? Do not these things characterise places where population is dense, rather than where it is sparse?

Where will you find most of those whose labour is non-productive, men of elegant leisure, soldiers, policemen, servants, lawyers, men of letters? Is it not in densely populated countries?

If we examine the facts which Malthus brings forward to support his theory, we shall find they do not support it. The analogies he uses may also be ruled out of court, and there are facts which the theory of Malthus cannot account for.

Whilst unjust laws and would-be demagogues rule, how can it be said that vice and misery are not due to these evils? How can we ignore the great factor of "man's inhumanity to man"?

Malthus says that population tends to increase faster than the facilities for providing food, but if food-producing powers and facilities are prevented, impeded or curtailed by unjust laws, can we blame pressure of population. Let us examine the facts and see whether the theory of Malthus really does account for them. G. DICKINSON.

Scattered among my cuttings are the reported remarks of such men as Lord Boyd Orr, the former Director-General of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation. In what he described as "my last warning to mankind", eight years ago, he said of the ecological crisis, "We have less than fifty years in which to stave off catastrophe, and the chances are not too good".

I also have the text of an article contributed to *The Sunday Times* by hitherto so sanguine an agricultural expert as Sir John Russell, summarising the position as he saw it in June 1951: "The world's population grows rapidly. Every three seconds two additional mouths have to be fed, and this goes on day and night year after year. The two is steadily becoming three, as medical science keeps more and more babies alive. At the same time the cultivable area of the world is shrinking owing to soil erosion and other causes. Can farmers go on increasing their output of food to feed these multitudes, or are the new-born babies spared an early death only to live a hungry life?" Questions to which Sir John could give no reassuring answer.

I don't know what Mr. Dickinson thinks of statements like these — and one could add to them by the score — by authorities in their own right, with no political or other axe to grind, but they should make him chary of dismissing Malthus as a mistaken theorist. Of course, Mr. Dickinson has an axe to grind. He prefers to see the problem of feeding the earth's hungry millions not as — to quote from a published letter of his — "a problem of production but of distribution". I won't deny that the world's economy may be at fault, nor that war is criminal waste and a source of much misery. Neither will I dispute the exacerbating effects of greed, bad government, wilful destruction of foodstuffs to keep prices high, and over-sucieny in the midst of insufficiency. But we are guilty of dangerous unrealism if we ever lose sight of one of the greatest threats to our survival — excessive propagation.

It is useless to cite India as a country where famines do not now occur (they are, in fact, a recurrent calamity of that unhappy land); still more futile to assert that such famines as have occurred were not bound up with population growth. I could quote testimonies from many sources about India's Mathusian plight; but it will perhaps suffice here if I refer to the official India Health Survey of 1945, wherein is a frank acknowledgment that such steps as can be taken to improve Indian standards of life "constitute only a temporary expedient, because a limit to economic productivity will be reached sooner or later, and controlled growth of population must . . . outstrip the productive capacity of the country".

As regards Ireland, Mr. Dickinson implies that, because by our standards it is sparsely inhabited, the potato famine from which it suffered in the middle of last century was due to causes other than that of over-population. He would do well to remember that, in considering whether or not a land is over-populated, the extent of its natural resources, and the state of its development at a given time, cannot be disregarded. Though inherently a poor country, Ireland is relatively prosperous today. But its population now is only three to four millions, as against its all-time maximum of eight and a quarter millions when struck by the failure of its potato crops in the years 1846-48. Yet the Irish numbered only just over a million in the 17th century when the potato as a field crop began to be cultivated by them.

## G. I. BENNETT'S REPLY TO MR. DICKINSON

MR. DICKINSON suggests that I am "unaware of arguments against Malthus other than those he quotes". He states that, if we examine the facts, we shall find they do not support Malthus's thesis. Well, I have been interested for years in the world food and population question, and I only wish my critic could see the heavy dossier of newspaper and magazine cuttings I have collected that bear upon it. Many of these are simply pieces of straight reporting where no attempt has been made to state a case. Yet one and all they furnish convincing evidence of the essential soundness of Malthus's theory.

With some eight million people living close to the edge of the herbage, it was inevitable that the failure of the Irishman's staple food should bring famine; and, in fact, "hundreds of thousands starved to death outright or died of the effects of malnutrition", and more than a million emigrated. But this disaster reversed the demographic trend, and fewer and later marriages have been the pattern of Irish life ever since.

Mr. Dickinson's point about well-to-do families dying out does nothing to invalidate the Malthusian view, according to which population tends to increase faster than the means of sustenance. Well-to-do families constitute only a small minority of any society, and not with minorities was Malthus concerned, even if (as is unlikely) such families were on the decline in his day. The subject of differential birthrates, and the new problem to which they are giving rise, is not one we can relevantly pursue here. But for those who may be interested, it is all most fascinatingly discussed in *Human Fertility: The Modern Dilemma* by Robert C. Cook, whose thesis is that, as people climb the educational and social ladder their reproductive rate tends to fall, and that there is an inverse ratio between education and intelligence on the one hand and fecundity on the other.

Is it not true, asks Mr. Dickinson, that many modern communities have increased in numbers and wealth at the same time? It is certainly true. Let us note, however, that these communities are not simple agrarian communities, but scientifically advanced, industrially developed communities whose growth in population has been the *consequence* rather than the *cause* of technological progress and increased wealth. And even in their case, world conditions do not warrant the supposition that their population expansion can continue indefinitely without risk of lower standards of life.

It is easy to look for human scapegoats; but the fact remains that we live in a world of limited food-producing capacity—after due allowance has been made for what science has done and may well do in the future to improve food yields. The burden of the Malthusian case is that those who blink at this fact, and transgress the laws of prudence, must suffer the savage consequences of Nature.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### A REPLY TO MR. YATES

Mr. A. Yates has tried to appraise my "category-mistake" disproof of the deist's "One God", but he makes—I am sorry to say—an unflattering mess of it (December 23rd, 1955). Mr. Yates's mistake No. 1 is his assumption that gods cannot be classified and cannot comprise a class, because the referents (denotations) of the word "gods" do not exist. Well, the first glance into any textbook of comparative religion will certainly knock him out with amazement (see A. C. Bouquet, *Comparative Religion*, pp. 94-95, Pelican Book, 1953, 4th edition). For his information I may add that logicians make classes of everything imaginable as an individual. Certainly, the referents to the word "gods" do not exist. It is the *names* and their *meanings* which are classified by the historians of religions.

Mistake No. 2 is the fathering on me of his own misstatement, "he uses the classification of gods as proof that a single god cannot exist". What I argued was that the existence of any single and all particular (named) gods has been long ago disproved by the combined experience of civilised men. What still rests to be debunked is the (logical) fallacy that there can be a referent to the words "one god" (misspelled as "One God") after the believer himself had denied referents to all instances of the word "god". The self-contradiction is not in *my* belief, but in the modern deist's belief who *denies* that there exists a referent (denotation) to the proper name "Yahweh" or to the word "god", and then *asserts* again that there exists a referent to the words "one god" (misspelled "one God"). Mistake No. 3 consists in Mr. Yates's blindness to the deist's self-contradiction.

That was what I called "category-mistake" of "one-God-in-General", which is a violation of the identity principle, namely, that

a class of gods cannot be larger than itself. There exists no extra god called "god".

The rest of the article is irrelevant to my case. But some recitations may help. The Christian monotheist (he is really a theologian) means by "the god" and "the creator and ruler of the universe", the same thing, Yahweh (see Peake's *Commentary on the Bible*), and Yahweh belongs, of course, to the class of gods. Mr. Yates ought to read carefully what I said.

The atheist bases his unbelief both on his experience and on principle: his experience goes against all particular mythic gods, and his logic against this "one extra god apart from all gods".

Things are what they *must* be also according to the Church's doctrine of the God's omniscience: the theist implies that everything happens exactly so and not otherwise, because everything was laid down by the God's fore-knowledge before all Creation. The theist's god, Yahweh, did absolutely everything before Creation when he laid it down in his Book of Days (Psalm 139, 16).

But I am not here concerned with the disproof of Yahweh in his Book—stolen from the more civilised Babylonian gods. This was notably done by the Dean of Exeter: "At all events, that hopelessly external conception of an anthropomorphic and quite incredible God, which the atheist Charles Bradlaugh, in common with all Christian people, rightly rejected, was quite worthless in belief. In the matter of belief in Saturn (or—for that matter—in Yahweh—G.S.S.), we are all Protestants". (*The Recall to Religion*, pp. 26-27, London, 1937).

In conclusion, I challenge Mr. Yates to brush up on semantics and do better next time.

GREGORY S. SMELTERS (Australia)

### HOW DO YOU VIEW?

Do you by any chance view the frantic efforts by the Christian apologists to exploit the facilities of television? On March 13th the Glasgow Christian Forum, consisting of two professional parsons and a real live professor of mathematics, dealt with questions from the Scottish Christian Industrialist Union. The members of the union were apparently seeking some expert and professional guidance from *non-industrialists* on how to behave. One would have imagined that members of such a union should be independent of professional advice. As might have been expected, the panel, having no industrial experience, were somewhat at sea, but on the whole were agreed that the best thing to do was to believe as normal human beings, endeavouring to understand the other fellows' problems and difficulties, trying to see his point of view, allowing him the same rights that we claim for ourselves and generally practising a reasonable tolerance.

It seemed quite superfluous to have a TV programme to deal with the innocuous questions asked. One would have imagined that all the questions could have been adequately dealt with by say, the union's secretary, by the shop steward, whether an atheistic Communist, a Blue Tory, or a Pink Socialist, or even the shop foreman in the case of such members of the society as were incompetent to think for themselves on the matter.

A new "star" has appeared in the Christian galaxy in the person of a Professor of Mathematics, who professes also belief in Christianity. They, of course, fail to notice the Professors of Mathematics who *don't* profess belief in Christianity. On the programme in question he said he had never met a real atheist. One would like to know how he would define "atheist" and "Christian". One also would like to know how Prof. Coulson has escaped rubbing shoulders with Professors Huxley, Bronowski, Hoyle, Lytleton, Russell, etc., etc. Actually there is no difference in the behaviour of decent Christians and decent atheists.

[Considering his professional status, Prof. Coulson's standard argument in the sphere of religion has to be heard to be believed. The average N.S.S. speaker would completely efface him in 15 minutes. The Christians are welcome to him.—Ed.]

### SUPPORT FOR MR. MACFARLANE

The tearing down of antiquated devotions to nation and states, the substitution of a larger patriotism to the human race, is in my opinion, worthy of your attention, especially in view of possible human-race suicide by H bomb warfare! CONSTANCE FREEMAN

A first and quite blameless way of criticising science is to point out that science is incomplete. That it grows fast is indeed its commonest boast; and no man of science is so pessimistic as to suppose that its growth is over. To wish to supplant science as to regard its conclusions as largely provisional is therefore more than legitimate.—SANTAYANA.

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