

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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DURING THE PAST DECADE we have witnessed a tremendous come-back, described elsewhere by the present writer as a counter-reformation, on the part of the Roman Catholic Church. To students of the chequered evolution of that extraordinary institution this is not surprising. As the Protestant historian Lord Macaulay, writing at a time when Protestantism was still militant and aggressive, remarked

in a famous passage, the Church of Rome has survived repeated vicissitudes in the past and has displayed repeated resiliency in recovering, again and again, from seemingly irreparable disasters. The counter-reformation of the 16th century represents the best-known of such come-backs. But

this remarkable demonstration of vitality, inseparably associated with the name and fame of Ignatius of Loyola and his Company of Jesus, is not by any means the only example of a largely successful counter-reformation in the annals of the R.C. Church. Nor, as is now evident, was it the last: the counter-reformation of our own day equals it in vehemence besides embracing a global strategy unknown in more limited ages.

The Permanent Strategy of the Vatican

In the course of its 19 centuries' long struggle against a hostile world and rival creeds the Vatican, the permanent general staff of the totalitarian Church, has evolved a permanent strategy based on permanent principles, most clearly displayed in relation to the successive crises that have overtaken the evolution of secular society. They may thus be defined: when faced with the rise of new social and intellectual forces the Vatican allies itself with the threatened old order and sells its services in return for recognition and effective collaboration. But at the same time Rome sends out, so to speak, exploring parties into the future, with the object of ascertaining the lie of the land. If the new forces eventually prove irresistible then the Church gradually and with infinite dexterity sheds its old allies, gradually disentangles itself from its old associations and finally compromises with what cannot be avoided. In recent centuries the Jesuits have been the supreme experts in carrying out this policy — so much so that the word Jesuit has long been synonymous with double dealing and ecclesiastical sleight of hand.

The French Revolution and the 20th Century

The cynical observation of ex-Bishop Talleyrand that "we" are winning but that he didn't yet know who "we" were, is the effective motto of the social strategy of the Catholic Church. This is very clearly indicated in the successive reactions that have existed between Catholicism and modern society since the French Revolution. Rome fiercely opposed the great bourgeois revolution with its liberal democracy and capitalist economics. Down to 1848, the "year of revolutions," and even down to the end of the 19th century, Rome remained the bulwark of the pre-

capitalist social order, of absolute monarchy and of the feudal landowners. But as capitalist democracy gained momentum the R.C. Church gradually dissociated itself from its old allies. We witness nowadays the remarkable spectacle of the formerly intransigent enemy of capitalism and of bourgeois liberalism and democracy, selling its services to capitalism and loudly proclaiming itself to be

the outspoken champion of democracy against "godless" and totalitarian Communism. One not versed in the tortuous diplomacy of the Vatican might well consider this current assumption of the role of defender of democracy by the oldest and most absolute totalitarian society in the world, as

a clear case of the pot calling the kettle black. The secular dictatorship at Moscow at least only refers to *this* world, while that of Rome lasts for eternity: the "concentration camps" of the Vatican only begin beyond the grave!

A Modern Historian

The political and social strategy of the Vatican in recent years has formed the subject matter of a remarkable series of books and pamphlets by the brilliant Anglo-Italian publicist Avro Manhattan. In his *magnum opus*, *The Catholic Church against the 20th Century*, an international best-seller, Mr. Manhattan has produced a heavily documented account of what may be accurately described as the era of the Catholic-Fascist alliance against modern democracy and secular civilisation which, in the annals of the Vatican, is inseparably associated with the name and pontificate of Pope Pius XI (1922-39) and of his then secretary of state Cardinal Pacelli, now Pope Pius XII. During this precise era the Vatican allied itself with the Nazi and Fascist dictators, hoping to use Fascism as the secular sword of the Church with which to destroy "godless Bolshevism" international Marxism and Communism, whilst simultaneously settling accounts with its older foes: Liberalism, Democracy and Freethought. Mr. Manhattan has described the policy on a world-wide canvas, supplemented by an astonishing wealth of documentation, in his *Catholic Church against the 20th Century*, whilst in a subsequent smaller study, *Terror over Jugo-Slavia*, he has given the case-history of one of the least known and most brutal of the Fascist regimes of that terrible era, the clerical-Fascist dictatorship of General Pavelic, who exterminated his own enemies and those of the Vatican with a thoroughness that would have roused the envy of the Spanish Inquisition and on a scale that would have made the perpetrators of the massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve (1572) green with jealousy.

Rome Switches to Democracy

However, all things end, and Fascism, except in Spain, ended in 1945 with the military collapse of Hitler and Mussolini. But the evergreen Vatican did not fold up with its allies; it switched over with its usual unobtrusive effi-

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Dollar and the Vatican

By F. A. RIDLEY

ciency from Fascism to Democracy, a changeover the more remarkable in that it has been accomplished under the control of Pius XII, who, as Cardinal Pacelli, was one of the principal architects of the era of clerical-Fascist alliance. The Vatican never puts all its eggs in the one basket, and even during its pro-Fascist era never altogether neglected its democratic allies, a fact which perhaps Manhattan tended to overlook in his earlier works? Nowadays we are all democrats and the Papacy, the oldest and most absolute dictator on earth, is a Democrat till, presumably, "the times do alter"?

The Vatican and America

The greatest world power of the present post-Fascist era is America, the great current exponent of bourgeois democracy and the major champion of the "Free World" against Communism. In his *Dollar and the Vatican*, Mr. Manhattan gives us, as in his earlier books, a comprehensive and heavily documented study of this most recent era of political and economic collaboration between the Vatican and the Washington Wall Street regime of the Stars and Stripes and the Almighty Dollar. The alliance is already far advanced in both the economic sphere, where the Vatican derives most of its present income from the dollar-economy of the U.S.A.; and politically, where the Catholic

Church has most effectively constituted itself as the chief ideological ally of American democracy and capitalism in its present cold war against Communism and Marxism. As our author effectively indicates, it will not be the Vatican's fault if the alliance is not completed on the religious field also, for Rome is at present working overtime to convert the land of the Pilgrim Fathers to the "One True Church" and to transform traditionally Protestant America into the world-bulwark of Rome. The numerous facts adduced by our author in this connection constitute an alarming prospect to all lovers of real democracy, not to mention freedom of thought.

Our author demonstrates the qualities we have learned to expect from him. This is a "must" for democrats everywhere, for the current world-offensive of the Vatican constitutes the greatest and most permanent menace of our era. Nowadays the German Federal Republic, which was conceived in the Vatican, and America, Rome's present major ally, are the two main theatres in which the global strategy of the Vatican is most evident and persistent. All readers should either buy the book or see that it is in their public library. This book is both important and timely.

[*The Dollar and the Vatican*. By Avro Manhattan. Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1, 21s.]

Leicester Log

PASTOR NIEMOLLER, the 62-year-old Lutheran minister of anti-Hitler fame, speaking at Leicester, expressed outspoken dissatisfaction with his Christian religion. Commenting that half the world's population was living between hunger and starvation, he was alarmed that "the state of the world showed that Christianity had not lived up to its precepts" (whatever he supposes its precepts to be!). Christianity, he lamented, "had preached the glad tidings nearly 2,000 years ago, yet the world was full of enmity and mistrust." We were not now "the beloved children of God." His remedy — believe it or not — was *more Christianity!* Thus he joins the ranks of those frantically seeking to arrest the decline of their religion by advertising it as the world's wonder-ointment to cure all ills.

It is hoped there will be a good attendance at the Secular Hall on Sunday (October 7th) for the visit to Leicester of Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, who will speak on "The Catholic Menace Today." Mr. Hornibrook is a mine of information on the subject, and an excellent meeting is assured.

The indoor syllabus of the Leicester Secular Society is now complete for the first half of the season, and includes "The Robertson Centenary" (H. Cutner, October 21st), "The Dollar and the Vatican" (Avro Manhattan, December 9th) and "Christianity and Progress" (T. Mosley, December 23rd).

Describing football pools as the "modern craze," Canon Eaton of Leicester takes his revenge and "gets a kick" out of sending his coupons back without stamps.

A recent picture in a Leicester newspaper puts the whole case for Sunday freedom in an effective way. It shows a disappointed group of children in a local park on the Sabbath doing their best to play with locked-up swings. Current correspondence on the matter has given Mr. C. H. Hammersley the opportunity of pressing the Freethought case with his usual effectiveness. Meanwhile, the Arch-deacon of Loughborough has thought of a new reason why people should observe the Sabbath. By doing so they will

avoid nervous breakdowns! He should learn that boredom, no less than excessive activity, can be a cause of depression and breakdown.

The Padre of the *Evening Mail* has been complaining about the abundance of "small coins in the collection plate," contrasting it with the good old days. A correspondent in the controversy which followed reminded him that in the "good" old days "the children (who invariably left school at the age of nine before they could have better reasoning) were indoctrinated with the theme: 'The rich man in his castle, the poor man at the gate, God made them high and lowly, and ordered their estate.'

"This, together with the neatly framed epistle hanging in the schoolroom—'The rich man has as much chance to go to Heaven as the camel through the eye of a needle'—did indeed satisfy the poor ploughboy, trudging home at the end of the day for the princely wage of a shilling or so per week. No doubt the 'wealthy farmers' (to quote The Padre) subscribed to the church buildings, etc., and possibly a stained-glass window provided the necessary insurance to get to Heaven. Also in the village schoolroom of these days, there was a picture illustrating the devil, armed with a pitchfork, with which he tossed poor sinners into a fiery cauldron, wherein could be seen a seething, writhing mass of tormented souls.

"I ask The Padre: Why was this calculated method of keeping man ignorant, causing much poverty, disease and misery, sanctioned by the church?"

The latter question is purely rhetorical; no one ever expects The Padre to give a sensible answer.

FROM EAST GERMANY

THERE are no special associations or newspapers for Freethinkers here, and this is actually quite reasonable, since all our main newspapers and magazines write from a dialectical-materialist, and therefore atheist, point of view. Or to put it another way, a Freethinkers' association would have no real mission here, as it undoubtedly has in West Germany and in many other countries.

JOHN PEET (Editor, *German Report*, Berlin, W.8)

Will Britain Go Catholic?

By ANDREW PEARSE

A CERTAIN AMOUNT of interest has been occasioned by a statement of the Archdeacon of Halifax that, in half a century, this country would be a Roman Catholic nation if things progressed at their present rate. Made locally, it was reprinted in the *News-Chronicle* and excited considerable notice. The statement outlined several Roman Catholic methods of propaganda which are already well known to any who have looked into the subject. It went on to emphasise the semi-political methods of the Roman Catholic Church. But its closing remarks were significant. It urged that members of the Church of England do not show the same loyalty as do Roman Catholics and that a part of their loss of power is due to this fact.

The Archdeacon's remarks upon the tactics of the Roman Catholic Church merely prove that an autocratic and powerful body is using every means at its disposal to secure power and gain supremacy. From their own point of view, nobody can blame them for so doing! The real problems are not touched upon by the Archdeacon at all. They lie in the whole question of social life. Roman Catholicism is a natural ally of the right-wing; this may well be the reason why it collects converts of the Evelyn Waugh variety. It is no friend to democracy and is opposed strongly to libertarian and democratic ways of life. Socialism in any form is anathema to it and its general economic position is that of the small-scale capitalism known as distributism. In modern England, it stands in opposition to the progressive forces which have arisen during the last hundred years and have recently brought to birth the welfare state and far-reaching social reforms. Accordingly, it has achieved a certain popularity with people of right-wing views and has drawn the teeth of those non-Roman Catholics who are themselves enemies of social and political reform. The last century has seen a considerable increase in its numbers but it may well be asked how far this is due to immigration from Ireland the large influx of foreign workers who have come to England since the war.

The really interesting part of the Archdeacon's anti-Catholic protest lay in his failure to grapple with the sociological implications which he raised indirectly. His real grumble was about Roman loyalty and Anglican disloyalty. Here again, there are several reasons. The autocratic and compact nature of the Roman Catholic Church is capable of generating a loyalty which is of a kind not so easily provoked by more amorphous bodies. For example, the Church of England does not set forth a common credal tradition and does not draw its lines too tightly. For the thinking Anglican, loyalty can easily merge into exploration and his basic loyalties would then grow to be to the spirit of truth wherever it may appear rather than to an exact or particular set of dogmas. The Roman Church covers the whole of experience with a compact and neatly labelled dogmatic scheme for which it demands either acceptance or rejection. Exact loyalty is therefore far more easy to procure. Its rules and habits of churchgoing are more clear-cut than are those of the Anglican layman, whilst it does not set out to be inclusive by dragging in everybody and anybody who is willing to be so dragged. Obviously, these positions lead to a strong *esprit de corps* at the very points where Anglicanism is weak; the more especially in a country where Rome is not in control and desires to be seen as on its best behaviour.

But there is another problem which the Archdeacon does not face. Whether or not Rome is worthy of loyalty is

a question which pertains to the person considering yielding his loyalty over to the Church. At the same time, the Church of England acts in a manner which all too frequently forfeits loyalty from its adherents and turns them into critics or into members of the ranks of the indifferent. Recent statements concerning the sale of church sites afford a good picture of the big business organisation which underlies the Church of England as it is. Gradually, a highly bureaucratic form of church government has been evolved with the bishop as the managing director. His staff of officials conduct the business for whatever profit level is possible, whether in terms of souls or of financial receipts. Religious or social questions must be subordinated to a general demand to keep the business going. Anybody who gets in the way or who is awkward in one way or another must be steam-rollered out of existence. If a clergyman opposes the diocesan bureaucracy, he will soon be made to feel the weight of his sin. Whenever necessary, the diocesan lawyers will be dragged in to make his life a burden and a misery. We know of individual cases where all of these things have happened and they account for the increasingly low intellectual level of candidates for ordination. Thinking men are growing less and less ready to put their necks under this particular iron heel. We used to say much of the low standards of Roman Catholic hedge priests. A goodly proportion of Anglican ordinands seem to possess the whole of Roman vices without Rome's excuses!

Turning to social matters, we find a black record of reaction over the years. Writing in 1823, William Benbow, the radical, outlined in *Crimes of the Clergy* a whole series of clerical offences. Some, like the Irish bishop who was unfrocked in 1822 for attempted sodomy, were of a sexual kind but not a few of his clerics appear as sheer oppressors of the poor and needy. Many years later, a similar picture was drawn by the high church writer, Joseph Clayton, in the *Bishops as Legislators*, a study of the voting records of the bishops in the House of Lords. Nearer our own time, it is merely a matter of common notoriety that the local church will be steeped in political and social reaction to preserve the church as a tight little sanctuary for their views.

In the last resort, loyalty must include loyalty to the spirit of truth. But can it be said that Anglican leaders are over-anxious to prove themselves as qualified leaders of thought and culture? Only a year or two ago, we had the degrading spectacle of the Archbishop of Canterbury blessing the Billy Graham mission. The American ranter had accumulated numbers and it was necessary to be on the winning side! Dr. Fisher has certainly not contributed anything to progressive scholarship, whilst he here allied himself with the crudest type of transatlantic fundamentalism. Or we turn to London, the centre for most cultural movements of national life and thought. The Bishop is an elderly man who has the reputation of having been appointed as a "caretaker." So far as we know, he has written nothing and has no outstanding name as a preacher. His doctorate is an honorary decoration and we know nothing of him as a scholar. Around him in the depressing picture are the usual collection of nonentities, and the whole effort of the diocese is strained to keep the system at all costs. When we asked one strictly orthodox cleric for the nature of the Bishop's qualifications, we were told that he was a devout man! We would prefer to make no comment as such a phrase must have a specialised meaning in

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

When the late Sir Arthur Conan Doyle produced his world-famous photographs of fairies he was, much to his disgust, laughed at. What could possibly be more convincing than these delightful little folk, six inches high, dressed in perfectly cut ballet clothes, hopping from flower to flower, when presented to us on a photograph? How can a photograph lie? And yet for nearly 30 years a sceptical world has refused to believe in their existence—and was even still more sceptical about the fairies capering about at the bottom of somebody's garden without being photographed.

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And now we have a distinguished Air Chief Marshal, Lord Dowding, who laughingly tells us that he has believed in fairies for 20 years. Good for him! Our silly sceptics must be put in their places. Moreover, we discover that there are at least 3,000 adults in Britain who believe in their existence, and many claim to have seen them; just as, no doubt, there have always been people who claim to have seen pink elephants, after a little carousal, of course. And these fairy believers go even further—they have seen gnomes in conical hats, and elves with pointed ears, and all have naturally "an active sex life."

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Lord Dowding also believes that there are millions of people who believe in fairies, but his own fairies, while falling in love, are unable to have children. We expect that they, like Topsy, "just grows." Captain Craufurd, who is the Founder of the Fairy Investigation Society, has often spoken to fairies at the bottom of his garden, but has, curiously enough, never been able to photograph them. What a pity! He might have even converted the N.S.S. this way.

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Although Atheism on the air is about the last thing the BBC would allow from a genuine Atheist, it is always ready to permit a genuine Christian to go for it so long as Christianity is shown as the only antidote to blatant unbelief. The other evening, the Rev. C. H. Valentine, the Vicar of Highbrook, was given 20 minutes to teach hearers "the Religious significance of Atheism" which he most solemnly and reverently did. Actually, all Atheists were intensely religious, he said, and they were quite right to ask Theists properly to define their God, and quite right to throw overboard any definition which appeared to them invalid.

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So Theists should always define God in a way that Atheists cannot answer—as Mr. Valentine always does. His definition is that God is "Reality," and no Atheist can possibly deny Reality. Therefore God exists, and Mr. Valentine would not be surprised if all or at least most Atheists worship Reality in private—for worship must always be an absolute necessity for every human soul, Atheists included. Thus the reverend gentleman has saved Christianity, given Atheism a nasty jolt, and was no doubt handsomely paid for it. God bless the BBC!

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There is no need to be rude to Mr. Valentine or to repel his smashing arguments which, we are sure, he believes to be literally impregnable. Bless his heart, he is entitled to talk about "religious" Atheists, or God Almighty the "Reality," as often as he can get people to listen to him. But we can say that rarely have we heard more undiluted incoherence mixed up with definitions so ludicrous as in this "Talk" sponsored by the BBC. Surely, the Corporation could do better than this?

The "Sunday Mail" has had a special investigation as to whether Scotland stands where she did—in spite of Rabbie Burns. The answer is an unequivocal yes. In many parts the wireless is banned, the TV and the cinema are taboo, football is wicked, dancing is almost the sin of sins, there is no theatre, and whist drives are a direct invitation to the Devil. But religion . . . ! It is there in all its powerful glory, praise the Lord! Night after night, "religious services are held," we are told, and they are packed with the God-fearing people—fear is the operative word—and life with the Brethren is always serious and stern. "Not only for the Sabbath, for a period, but for every day of the week, the year, and for ever and ever, Amen." God be praised!

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But there are still two more prohibitions. One is that women should shut up while in church, and the other is, they must not cut their hair. And, believe it or not, the women all agree and follow these injunctions faithfully! We can only gasp for breath, and wonder.

WILL BRITAIN GO CATHOLIC?

(Concluded from page 319)

clerical circles and there is no scientific way of testing the exact sincerity of things of the heart. But what is such devotion when compared to a life devoted to the spirit of truth and the quest of the things of the mind? Here is to be found a stern call to loyalty such as is implied in the disciplines of science. But we cannot find anything to provoke any especial loyalty in the esoteric devotion of an old man with a reputation in an inner circle for devoutness, spending what energy he has in keeping going a business which is in obvious decay. We were also told by our same informant that he had a reputation for wit, and we were promptly recounted two *bon mots* which, in charity, we can only hope were apocryphal. In clerical circles, wit is often so insipid, or so unkind and satiric, that we should require far better evidence than this before we found in the latest claimant to clerical witticism the powers of a Sydney Smith or a Rabelais! Certainly, in the life of official ecclesiastical London, we find little or nothing to call for our loyalty or to demand our support.

It is such questions as these which the Archdeacon should consider. Perhaps he does not want to do so! They show a form of Roman ecclesiastical autocracy with a rising humanism and the old landmarks merely rotting away. In the midst of this battle, orthodox Protestantism has already almost gone down; evangelical nonconformity died as a social and political force 30 years ago with Dr. Clifford. Anglicanism stands as a halfway house and is in a position of weakness due to laxity of definition. In practice it is in such a state of decay that it cannot be expected to control the situation and will be lucky if it keeps alive at all. Some of the things which have come to light when discussing problems of London's redundant churches and the manner of their disposal seem to show the immense weaknesses which underlie a proud façade. It has the social and moral prejudices of a pedestrian and declining section of the middle classes and is a business speedily going downhill. Here are a few of the reasons why there is the failure, which the Archdeacon so deplures, to whip up any strong loyalty or keenness to renew a moribund institution. We are not prophets and we do not predict the future, but we would suggest that when the 50 years which he foretold are up, his successor will be bemoaning the situation and the lack of loyalty with even more reason than does the Archdeacon of Halifax of today.

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. GRANTHAM.—We have no doubt that your astronomical explanation of Matthew 10 has some basis, but it has obviously been edited out of all recognition and can now mean anything. But for the early Christians Jesus was to come again—a fact emphasised by Schweitzer in his *Quest for the Historical Jesus*.

E. MORE.—Many thanks for copy of the *Two Worlds* with its reference to the spirit of Bradlaugh being easily called up by a medium. This is not sillier than the way mediums have always called up people like Julius Caesar, Shakespeare, Lincoln—and even Adam Bede!

(Mrs.) GRACE HARDING.—You will note that almost immediately after entrusting Peter with the Keys of Heaven Christ rebukes him with "Get thee behind me, Satan!" The authenticity of the passages is, of course, another matter.

G.M'GANN.—Some species of adult whales are toothless, yet have teeth in the embryonic state before birth, probably as a recapitulation. Can you believe in an Almighty Designer, who would be so clumsy as to waste his time making teeth that were not to be used?

CONSTANCE FRAZER.—Though we do not yet know all the things the brain can do, we know some of the things it can't do. It cannot reverse the laws of physics, for instance.

E. N. PORTER.—Gold and Bondi uphold continuous creation but Hoyle's position has become uncertain.

AMOS MALKIN.—The Archbishop of Canterbury told reporters (according to a message from Vienna) that he "admired the Roman Catholic Church" and had "made many efforts to establish closer links with it."

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.45 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, SMITH and FINKEL.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings most evenings of the week (often afternoons): Messrs. THOMPSON, SALISBURY, HOGAN, PARRY, HENRY and others.

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

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

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bristol Downs).—Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: DAVE SHIPPER.

West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR, EBURY and others.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street).—Sunday, October 7th, 7 p.m.: L. EBURY, "The Secular Movement Today—Its Dilemma."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, October 7th, 6.45 p.m.: H. DAY, "Challenge to Religion."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, off Edgware Road).—Sunday, October 7th, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Freethought Faces the Future."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 9th, 7.15 p.m.: F. C. SONDHI (Vice-President, Hindu Association of Europe), "The Essence of Hinduism."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Newcastle Chambers, Angel Row).—Thursday, October 11th, 7.30 p.m.: R. MORRELL, "The R.C. Church and Socialism."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, October 7th, 11 a.m.: MARGARET KNIGHT, "Intellectual and Emotional Beliefs."

THE FREETHINKER SUSTENTATION FUND

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Notes and News

SOME months ago we acclaimed the re-establishment of the Edinburgh Branch of the National Secular Society under the efficient Secretaryship of Mr. William Cronan. After a welcome visit from Mr. H. Day of Bradford, the branch set about developing its own speakers on the well-known site—just off Princes Street—the Mound. We are pleased to report that the venture has met with the success it deserved. The Treasurer, Mr. Victor Murray, opened appropriately with an "Outline of Freethought" and a discussion with a foreign missionary ensued. By all accounts this was grand stuff and Mr. Murray acquitted himself splendidly. An English Muslim was the next challenger, but the Edinburgh Chairman, Mr. N. Slemen, was more than his match in debating "Was Mahomet the True Prophet of God?" These and other members of the Edinburgh Branch have certainly earned the congratulations of fellow Freethinkers. It is good to know that the Mound will echo with their voices, and the Scottish capital will be the better for it.

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A HUNDRED years ago, October 1856, De Dageraad, the Dutch equivalent of our National Secular Society, was founded in Amsterdam, and is thus one of the oldest (if not the oldest) national organisation of its kind. The festal celebration of the centenary is at present being held at Amsterdam from October 3rd to 7th.

QUIZ

- To whom do these descriptions apply?
 - "The most learned fool in Christendom."
 - "... writes like a genius and talks like Poor Poll."
 - "Darwin's bulldog."
- Under what condition is the Pope claimed to be infallible?
- What institution is dubbed "the burial ground of German philosophy"?
- Fill the blank: Constantine is to Christianity as _____ is to Buddhism.
- Who was the last Catholic King of England?
- What are these saints particularly known for? (a) Augustine (of Kent); (b) Simeon Stylites; (c) Francis of Assisi.
- Which Italian monastery was the scene of a prolonged battle in the last war?

(Answers on page 324)

NEXT WEEK

DR. SCHWEITZER ON RELIGION

By C. G. L. Du CANN

The Atom Through History

By G. H. TAYLOR

(Concluded from page 311)

Criticising religious arguments that the newer physics is destructive of materialism, Prof. Susan Stebbing remarks: "It is odd to find that the view that 'all is mysterious' is to be regarded as a sign of hope. The rejection of the billiard ball view of matter does not warrant the leap to any form of Idealism."⁵ She finds that the "Christian apologists have been eager to wait upon the pronouncements of the physicists, so thankful to be assured that *we* put into nature the laws we profess to discover, and finally that the chairs we sit on are not solid." (ib.)

As a matter of fact, if matter were found to consist of hard, inert, unchanging lumps, no one could possibly be a materialist at all, because out of such blocks only a persistently dead universe could result. Consequently, since things *are* in motion, there would be room for postulating extra-natural agencies to account for that motion, and monistic materialism would be an impossible theory.

So far from immutable atoms being the monopoly of materialists, it would actually seem that those who did hold this view were none other than the upholders of religion. At a time when Haeckel and McCabe were claiming the atom to be an evolved product, composed of finer particles, theistic physicists like Balfour Stewart and Christian apologists like the Rev. W. Profeit⁶ were pinning their faith on the indissoluble atom as a God-made article. This, no doubt, would well suit the anti-materialists, for as Bergson most significantly contends, the only way to prove materialism false is to show that matter *is* inert, for in that case there is room for an *elan vital* to account for its movements.

A house is composed of matter; it is material. If it is pulled down there are still the isolated bricks, which, like the house, are material. Similarly, when the atom is resolved into electrons and protons, we are still dealing with material things. The same holds if we analyse light or probe into the newly-found furniture of the atom. Whether we conceive electrons as particles (which is best for large-scale phenomena) or foci of waves (which is best for small) or vortices in the ether, etc., does not concern the materialist as such. What does affect his philosophy is whether they resist the category of matter; that is, whether there is one that has no space-time relations, no mass and no weight. If we choose to call matter energy, or radiation, or light, then over four million tons (weight) of it is emitted from the sun (space) every second (time). Not without some scorn Prof. Needham remarks: "It seems to have become a commonplace ecclesiastical exhortation that 'relativity' or the researches of modern physics have destroyed the old-fashioned materialism and by substituting electric charges for atomic billiards balls have made matter less material."⁷

Sir W. J. Pope quotes the electron as "an elementary unit of matter"⁸ and Loeb and Adams as "a unit of matter which carries a negative charge."⁹ In dealing with light, too, it is possible to calculate the velocity of its particles, called photons. These newly-found things are material; such is allowed by the informed cleric, Bishop Barnes, who writes: "The truth is that energy... belongs completely to the material world."¹⁰ Dr. C. E. M. Joad also concedes, somewhat belatedly, that "to affirm that it (matter) is a series of point-instants, a hump in space-time, or a collection of charges of positive and negative electricity does not affect its materiality."¹¹ Sir Oliver Lodge grants light and electricity as material, and not merely

physical, and Sir James Jeans acknowledges that "The material universe remains as substantial as ever it was."¹²

Electrons cannot be seen with the naked eye like tables and chairs: they can, however, be photographed as particles (passing through a gas) and again as waves (passing through a metal film). Similarly, the corpuscular (Newton) and undulatory (Fresnel) theories of light are now seen as complementary.

We may take the testimony of two physicists who are strongly anti-materialist. Eddington tells us that "an electron is no more (and no less) hypothetical than a star. Nowadays we can count electrons one by one on a Geiger counter as we count the stars one by one on a photographic plate."¹³ The phrase in brackets is apparently in respect of his philosophical Idealism. Bavink agrees: "Electrons and protons are just as much substances as the old mass points and there can be no doubt that Bohr's original model of the atom, with its analogy to the planetary system, is well within the customary mechanical mode of thought."¹⁴

Finally, we may tabulate nature's building bricks, as at present known, somewhat as follows:

- (a) *the Proton*, with a positive electric charge and (standard) weight of one.
- (b) *the Neutron*, discovered by Prof. J. C. Chadwick, also with a weight of one, but having no charge (neutral); it is, as it were, an uncharged proton. It is present in the nuclei of all atoms except Hydrogen, whose nucleus consists of only one particle, the proton.
- (c) *the Electron*, with a negative charge and a weight of one 1838th. Electrons can be isolated from atoms, as in cathode rays.
- (d) *the Positron*, found by Prof. Blackett in 1932, with a positive charge and a weight like the electron's. It was first found in cosmic rays and then abstracted from ordinary atoms.

More kinds of particle may be found: from the nucleus of heavy Hydrogen, in fact, comes Urey's "deuteron," having the same charge as a proton.

So far from having destroyed the atom, physics has, as Rutherford says, dissipated all doubts as to its reality. That is, the old atomic conception is still useful in problems where there is no need to take into consideration its composite nature, a consideration usually unnecessary to the chemist, for instance; and as Prof. H. S. Allen has explained, the classical conception still holds good in macro-mechanical problems. To explain such things as radioactivity and spectroscopy, however, where the structural complications are highly relevant, the newer features must be considered.¹⁵

As Bohr remarks: "Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of the present position in physics is that almost all the ideas which have ever proved to be fruitful

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|--|---|
| (5) <i>Philosophy and
the Physicists</i> | (11) <i>Matter, Life and Value</i> |
| (6) <i>Creation of Matter</i> | (12) <i>The Mysterious
Universe</i> |
| (7) <i>The Sceptical Chemist</i> | (13) <i>New Pathways
in Science</i> |
| (8) <i>Matter and Energy</i> | (14) <i>Science and God</i> |
| (9) <i>Development of
Physical Thought</i> | (15) <i>Electrons and Waves</i> |
| (10) <i>Scientific Theory
and Religion</i> | |

in the investigation of nature have found their right place in a common harmony without having thereby diminished their usefulness."¹⁶

Therefore "it is a mistake to suppose that recent discoveries have discredited atomism" (*Outline of Science*, ed. Sir J. A. Thomson); though many of our postulates have had to be re-examined, "this does not mean the abandonment of the principle of mechanism" and "the old mechanics remains as valid as ever for the realm in which it was developed to operate" (Prof. L. Hogben).¹⁷

(16) *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature*

(17) *The Nature of Matter*

A Note On Buddhism

By H. CUTNER

LET ME ADMIT that I always take a rather cynical delight when I learn of the missionary activities of Buddhists and Muslims in this country. Few things can be more exasperating to the Christian religious world than having the tables turned, so to speak. Up to comparatively recently, it was always considered wrong for a Muslim or a Buddhist to convert a Christian. In Christianity, any Christian will still proudly tell you, God himself has given us his greatest and final revelation; and Christians have every right to travel to the four corners of the world carrying the Gospel of Christ to the "heathen." On the other hand, who wants Buddha or Mohammed except ignorant foreigners?

Personally, I should like to see Buddhist temples and Islamic mosques erected in prominent parts of our land as centres of intense missionary activity to convert the benighted Christian to the much superior glories of Asiatic creeds. We might even erect towers with their muezzins calling the faithful to prayer four times a day. A number of English Muslims in Piccadilly holding up the traffic in this way would provide a ludicrous commentary on Christian missionaries who really imagine that they have a right to go to other countries and interfere in local customs as much as they like, all in the name of their own mythical Deity.

This brings me to a beautifully produced booklet (though quarto in size) entitled *Buddhist Wisdom for the West*, specially designed to bring erring Christians to Buddha. The compilers of these essays might even think that they could rope in Freethinkers as well. How little they know of Freethought!

The very first quotation given from Buddha is one of his "eight stanzas" — it sounds more impressive if called "Paramatthaka Sutta" — and is as follows:

The person who is prejudiced in favour of one particular philosophical system is prejudiced against other systems. Such person disputes and does not overcome the habit of disputing.

For the life of me, I cannot see why this is so wonderful. I certainly am in favour of "mechanist Materialism" and am very strongly opposed to Idealism; and I certainly am always ready "to dispute" my preference with anybody. So what? I do not know. Whether Buddha said it, is of no consequence whatever. In any case, the editor of *Buddhist Wisdom* must himself be prejudiced in favour of Buddhism, or he would not have put out this booklet; and if this is not also "prejudiced against other systems" — what is it?

I find also that another "stanza" tells me, He should not found nor favour any organised system of philosophy either by word or deed. He should not consider himself "better" or "worse" than another, nor "equal."

That is, we should never consider ourselves better than, say, Hitler. To a Buddhist, that would be a crime. This seems to me to carry the doctrine of "equality" to insanity. When I first read Rhys Davids' *Buddhism* I felt pretty

certain that if Buddha was really responsible for some of the things the author said he said, Buddha must have been insane.

I am told that "all the teachings of the Buddha can be summed up in one verse: To refrain from all evil; To do what is good; To purify the mind." For me, it looks suspiciously like impudence to claim that this represents the teaching of Buddha *alone*, and that we should never have had it but for Buddha. It is ordinary secularistic teaching which grew in our social behaviour as man became civilised. All ethics have taught the idea that man should "refrain from evil and do good." The picture we get of Jesus is that he went about "doing good" — though it must be obvious that in all ages and in various countries, what is "good" and what is "evil" may be quite different. Burning heretics alive was considered by all Christians "doing good"; and propagating heresy was in turn considered to be "evil." Some Buddhists look upon killing bugs, fleas and rats as "evil," while others look upon a man grovelling in front of a statue of Buddha as "good."

A gentleman called the Venerable U. Thittila of Burma once broadcast to the BBC (it is given in *Buddhist Wisdom*), and he must pardon me if I find his address funny. He tells us that "the Buddha can point the way" but "we must tread it ourselves." How very clever of him! We are always being pointed "the way," and, of course, we have to do things ourselves. And what is the really great teaching of Buddha — the most sublime, which is supposed to make us breathless in wonder? It is Nirvana — "the final release from suffering." This does not mean the kind of release (or relief) we get swallowing an aspirin to get rid of a bad headache, but Death. Well, we don't want Buddha or anybody else to tell us about Death, for we know that is the fate of all living beings; and what is on the "other side" Buddha knew no more than any of us. To the Freethinker, it is just annihilation; but lots of people (including Buddhists) think Death sounds more inviting, or at least is not so terrible, if given the name "Nirvana." If death ends all — and it does — all teaching must inevitably succumb to it. When we are dead, we can't teach — it is the end. I have never been able to see in "Nirvana" anything but an excuse for Buddhists to talk a lot of clap-trap. For example, Rhys Davids in *Buddhism* writes like this:

Never in the whole history of the world has the bare and barren tree of metaphysical inquiry put forth, where one would least expect it, a more lovely flower that grew into the Fruit which gave the nectar of Nirvana... Though laymen could attain Nirvana, we are told of only one or two instances of their having done so; and though it was more possible for members of the Buddhist order of mendicants, we only hear, after the time of Gautama, of one or two who did so. No one hears of such an occurrence; but the Buddhist hopes to enter, even though he will not reach the end of, the paths in this life; and if he once enters them, he is certain in some future existence perhaps under less material conditions, to arrive at the goal of salvation, at the calm and rest of Nirvana.

This kind of thing seems to me an insult to our intelligence. Whether there is a future existence or not can only be accepted on evidence; and so far no one has ever produced a scrap of evidence to prove that we survive death. And to talk about the "calm and rest of Nirvana," as if anybody could possibly know he was dead, is just — as I have said — clap-trap.

One of the writers in this symposium is Mme. Alexandra David-Neel of France, and she begins her article by pointing out how the "personalities" of the "enlightened philosophers and religious masters" have changed "at the hands of their self-styled disciples." What she means is that their followers have never done justice to Jesus, Mohammed, or Buddha, but have given the world wrong impressions about these "Masters," especially travestying their doctrines. The

truth is, of course, that no one knows what Jesus or Buddha actually "taught" (if this is the right word) because the books about them containing their teachings were not written until many years later. In the case of Jesus, our Gospels were compiled about 150 years after his (supposed) death, and what he said in Aramaic was translated into Greek. In the case of Buddha, it was centuries later. There is no evidence that anything either said was handed down in the form we have. And as far as I am concerned, I have found no evidence whatever that anybody called Jesus of Nazareth (or Jesus Christ) or even Buddha ever lived. I fight shy of what are still called "Sacred Writings," complete with capitals; I object to a *man*, if he ever lived, being called the "Heavenly one," the "Blessed One" and so on.

As to what Buddha thought of the Soul seems to me to be a waste of time. He knew no more about it than any of his disciples, or even an Australian aborigine. Buddhism is, of course, packed with "mysticism" which is almost always thrown overboard when a Buddhist missionary wants to convert a non-Buddhist. Only later does one learn what a lot of "deep thinking" there is in the Buddhism of true "initiates." That is why we are told so much about Buddhist "Wisdom."

OPENING LECTURE

We are glad to hear as we go to press that the Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. had an excellent and well-attended first meeting addressed by Mr. D. Shipper on "Freethought: Home and Abroad."

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. (a) James I; (b) Oliver Goldsmith; (c) T. H. Huxley.
2. When speaking *ex cathedra*.
3. Oxford University.
4. King Asoka, who made Buddhism the state religion.
5. James II (1685-88).
6. (a) The introduction of Christianity to these islands, the spot commemorated by the Augustine Cross (near what is now Ramsgate), n.b.: Augustine's priority has been challenged on the grounds that there were Christian Bishops in Ireland before he landed; moreover, these Bishops were probably active in parts of north-west England. (b) Living in a state of filth, in order to show the supremacy of the soul over the body. (c) Kindness to animals.
7. Cassino.

CORRECTION.—On pp. 307-8 the names Philip Vivian and Vivian Phelps should be interchanged, the latter being his real name. I was misled by a signature on one of his letters to me. G.H.T.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE EXPANDING UNIVERSE

I thank you for your comments to my letter, both published in your issue of September 14th. Regarding the origin of the basic substances; neutrons, compressed radiant energy and hydrogen atoms; Mr. Taylor's "datum"; it is correct that in this connection we have at present no knowledge. Mr. Taylor, however, considers that with the growth of modern psychology and philosophy (and one must add the more exact sciences) such lack of knowledge is likely to be overcome.

If nothing is known, and if there is no generally accepted hypothesis regarding the origin of the "datum," is it logical to rule out even a theistic idea of creation?

Unless we can visualise that matter and/or its constituents never had a beginning, and can put up arguments in support of such an idea, it would seem that every theory of its origin can be met with the tax *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. J. C. FULLER.

[I am not sanguine that the exact sciences can make the final solution to the problem of the datum, dealing as they do with phenomena, and not with noumenon. Philosophy has the last word. But philosophy is only valid so long as it takes the clues provided by science. The problem is a most engrossing one, though somewhat divorced from the throb of everyday affairs. If Lt.-Col. Fuller's interest is shared by other readers it might be made the occasion for an article or an interchange of views on this fascinating theme

when the pressure of topical matters permits. Meanwhile, the theistic solution is ruled out *a posteriori*. That is to say, even if for the sake of argument we agree to overlook the initial difficulties of definition and meaning, and provisionally imagine the universe to be held in thrall by a supreme Mind, the ensuing empirical tests soon dissolve such an idea.—G.H.T.]

DR. SCHWEITZER

I am surprised that Freethinkers seem, shall I say, a little overawed by the work of Albert Schweitzer, who, whatever his accomplishments, and whatever his social value in the medical sphere, holds quite untenable and easily refutable beliefs in the realm of theology. In this connection his defence of Christianity is pitifully feeble, and one looks to THE FREETHINKER to debunk him. F. BARNETT.

[Hear, hear! And a criticism of Schweitzer's beliefs by our contributor, Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann, will be published in a forthcoming issue of THE FREETHINKER, a copy of which will be sent to Dr. Schweitzer.—ED.]

HOW HIGH IS THE HIGH CHURCH?

Just how high is the High Church of England? Is it only a few inches from Heaven? In the High Church they serve Mass and burn candles, as in the R.C. Church, thus showing an inferiority complex, a direct acknowledgement of the superiority of Catholic ritual. Wars were waged (1588, 1715, 1745) to impose Catholicism on England, yet the same puerile practices remain. A. EZE.

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 19TH.—Present: Mr. F. A. Ridley (Chair), Messrs. Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Corstorphine, Ebury, Hornbrook, Johnson, Shepherd, Taylor, Mrs. Venton and the Secretary. Mr. Shipper attended as guest. Apologies from Messrs. Draper, Gordon, Griffiths and Tiley. New members were admitted to Birmingham, Bradford, Central London, Edinburgh, West Ham and Parent Branches (11 in all). Application for formation of Wales and Western Branch was approved. Grants to this branch and to Central London were agreed. Trustees were authorised to purchase a house in Watford and re-sell it to the Secretary. Messrs. Ridley and Shepherd were selected to speak for Bradford Branch. Reports were given on Humanist Council meetings and World Union of Freethinkers Congress in Geneva. Mr. A. R. Williams of Worcester was proposed for the Rules and Standing Orders Committee. Request for an Interim Conference was discussed at length, and the Secretary instructed to write to the branches who favoured it, asking if they considered that the formation of the Rules and Standing Orders Committee obviated the necessity of such a Conference. A request from Central London Branch for use of a room at the office for a week-end school was approved. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, October 24th.

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