

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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SINCE THE FIRST WORLD WAR the major ideological dispute has been seen in the conflict between Russian-inspired Communism and older social systems. This conflict, economical in origin and political in its past and present application, lies outside our present scope, but what decidedly does fall within our vision here is the present combat of mounting ferocity between Communism and the Roman Catholic Church—the Red versus the Black Internationals! This has not always been so. When the Russian Revolution in 1917 the Vatican at first welcomed the Revolution as (to quote a leading Cardinal) an “act of God, Divine vengeance on the heretical and persecuting Tsars,” who had been the secular champions of Rome’s ancient rival, the Eastern “Orthodox” Church. But since then much water has flowed under the Tiber bridges! Communism has for long ranked at the Vatican as “arch-heresy No. 1” and its prophets — Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin — have effectively superseded the heretics of an earlier day as the major enemies of the Church. The explanation for this sharp transformation can be sought either in the ideological field or in that of politics and economics. The atheistic ideology of Dialectical Materialism strikes at the very roots of Catholic dogma, whilst a totalitarian regime like that of the Vatican has everything to lose from successful rivalry!

1945 and All That

The mortal combat between the Vatican and the Kremlin assumed its present war-to-the-knife form in, and since, 1945, the date at which Russian Communism expanded radically into Eastern Europe and, later, China. Since that date the world power of the Catholic Church has been confronted by the world power of “atheistic Communism.” The Vatican recognises the danger, a new one even in its long experience, for while there have been many heresies in the past, this is literally the first time that the major heresy of the era has openly denied the existence of God. To this unprecedented danger Rome has reacted sharply. Protestantism and even its old bogey, Liberalism — bourgeois scepticism — have receded into the remote background. It is probably no exaggeration to say that for every other heresy mentioned once in the Catholic press “godless Bolshevism” is mentioned a dozen times.

Communism v. Catholicism in Eastern Europe

The real clash between the rival Internationals got going after 1945, the *annus mirabilis* of Communist expansion. Previously “godless Bolshevism” was confined to Russia, where Rome’s influence had been negligible. But the situation changed rapidly. Poland and Hungary represented traditional bulwarks of the Catholic Church, while Czechoslovakia was also largely Catholic. After 1945 the two rival creeds met in a head-on collision! For the past 12 years ideological war, the bitterest kind of war, has raged between them, culminating in the recent bloody events in

Hungary, in which even the most ardent sympathisers with the martyred Hungarian nation can hardly deny that an active, perhaps a major, role was played by the Vatican. The dramatic rescue and reappearance of the arch-apostle of anti-Communism, Cardinal Mindszenty, would appear to afford unanswerable proof.

“The Church of Silence”

The Vatican is a master of propaganda. It is a fact, indeed, that this overworked term was actually *invented* in ecclesiastical Roman circles: the still existing congregation *De Propaganda Fide* is actually the oldest ministry of information in the world. Roman propaganda has not been backward in stigmatising the alleged suppression of the Catholic Church in Eastern Europe and has coined the phrase, “The Silent Church,” the title of a not very informative pamphlet written by an Italian Jesuit, recently issued as a joint publication by the two Catholic propaganda agencies, the Catholic Truth Society and Sword of the Spirit. Roman Catholicism has *not* been reduced to complete silence in the East, but in any case the phrase is an ironic one in the mouth of the Church of the Inquisition, which effectively “silenced” all dissident opinion for a millenium. Actually the R.C. Church in Hungary, at any rate until recently, received an official subsidy from the “atheistic” Hungarian Government, while a contingent of Catholics about 28,000 strong came from Communist-controlled East Germany to the Catholic Congress in Cologne last September.

Clerical Strategy in Eastern Europe

Whatever its shortcomings in supernatural theory the Church of Rome is a worldly-wise institution with immense political experience. Clerical strategy knows well how to adapt itself to varying situations. In Spain and Portugal the Church backs clerical-Fascist dictatorships, while in more advanced countries in Western Europe it poses under the banner of “Christian Democracy” and even of “Christian Socialism.” In Eastern Europe it also adopts varying tactics. In Poland the R.C. Church appears to be “boring from within,” to be practising a policy of co-existence with the reformed Titoist Communist regime of Mr. Gomulka. In Hungary, no sooner was Cardinal Mindszenty newly released from gaol after plotting to restore the Hapsburgs with American support, than he proclaimed the restoration of Hungarian Feudalism under which the Catholic Church owned as much of Hungary as it held of England prior to the Reformation. The Catholic Church will compromise or persecute as the times require!

Catholicism and the Social Revolution

In the present writer’s opinion, Communism, whatever its periodical aberrations, marks a genuine social and intellectual revolution, an historic landmark. One can no more go back on it than one can ignore the French Revolution or

VIEWS and OPINIONS

Cardinal Mindszenty and the “Church of Silence”

By F. A. RIDLEY

the Protestant Reformation. No doubt Communism in turn will undergo that universal evolution which overtook the historic creations of Luther and Robespierre, but the underlying essence has come to stay. Despite the current uproar in Catholic circles against "godless Communism" there is already some evidence that the worldly-wise Vatican recognises the fact. Politically-minded rationalists will watch with speculative interest future relations between the Vatican and the Kremlin, whilst non-political freethinkers will recall the judgment of that shrewd Tory Protestant, the late Dean Inge: "Red Internationals come and go but the Black International remains." *Verb sap.*

[cf. *The Church of Silence*, by F. Cavalli, s.j., jointly published by the C.T.S. and the Sword of the Spirit; 4d.]

A Mind in Bondage

(A REPLY TO A THEOLOGICAL STUDENT)

By E. J. BARRETT

(Continued from page 390)

In all fruitful discovery, the essentially positive advantages which follow from the employment of this, the scientific method, have always been in inverse ratio to the chronically negative virtues of "blind faith" as an instrument in the search for truth. This approach is that of the blind man who hunted in a dark room for a black cat which was *not* there. On his theory this historic cat *could* have been found if "blind faith" in its existence had been entertained; if one only had the sense to "cast about" in the darkness, "really search," "seek," or use the method of "trial and error" in a last desperate attempt to locate the cat. Ample evidence of this is provided in the further declaration:

"We cannot prove anything until we know, and know we know everything." And you affirm "that this proposition is pretty correct and comprehensive."

It is neither one nor the other. It is surely self-evident that, without knowing everything, mankind, throughout the ages, has built up a staggering wealth of knowledge, culminating, today, in his most majestic achievement—his capacity to utilise for good or ill the great forces of atomic energy. Human life in our day and generation would be a barbaric business indeed if it were not for the emancipatory influences of man's control over his environment—achieved, as it has been, without the necessity of the proviso that he must know everything before he can know anything. More than three centuries ago, Descartes, by his investigation into the nature of certainty, proved that "there is one thing of which no doubt can be entertained, for he who should pretend to doubt it would thereby prove its existence; and that is the momentary consciousness we call a present thought or feeling; that is safe, even if all other kinds of certainty are merely more or less probable inferences." So our theologian's statement on this point was exploded three centuries ago and, as Ingersoll expresses it, "You have been standing with your back to the sunrise, worshipping the sunset of the day before."

But this is not the end of his muddlement. He says:

"Well, I assume, I suppose, that I exist; and that I have three sides, and yet am one: the physical or material, the spiritual, and the mental or intellectual—because I have evidence of them."

This is merely another version of the ridiculous doctrine of the Christian Trinity—a "truth" beyond the reach and realm of reason. We have this definition of it. "Once one is three, and three times one is one, and one is equal to one and the other two." But since when have "assumption," "supposition" and "evidence" been convertible terms, and what is the nature of his proof for the statement that he has three sides, body, mind, and spirit, all

absolutely distinct, yet all one? Belief in spiritual entities had its origin in the teachings of Pythagoras and Plato. Their primitive dualistic conceptions, however, have long since been rejected by philosophers—to say nothing of the scorn with which they are received by physiologists and comparative psychologists.

His letter is a most revealing document. Here is another gem which, like the others I have so far examined from the same mine, is certainly not remarkable for its lustre. He says:

"God does not run the world. I mean that he is not responsible for all happens in it."

That is just an expression of primitive anthropomorphism, a belief confined nowadays almost entirely to the mental infants of the human race. But, assuming the existence of God for the sake of this discussion, how does he reconcile his statement with the following explicit declarations?

"And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." Gen. I. 31.

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good." Prov. XV. 3.

"Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth?" Jer. XXIII, 24.

"For mine eyes are upon all their ways; they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes." Jer. XVI. 17.

Now, if he accepts the verdict of the Bible, that God is the author of all things, that he is omniscient and omnipresent, he must be held responsible for *all*, and not merely for *some* things that happen in the world. In terms of this thesis he would seem to confine God's operations to the provision of a spectacular Dunkirk now and again (the last one was claimed by the Christian Church as a special triumph of Divine intervention—despite the fact that 60,000 of his creatures were slaughtered on the beaches to make it possible) to painting pretty sunsets and rainbows, and providing similar thrills to gratify our æsthetic sense! But the appalling problem of evil remains to be explained—of Nature "red in tooth and claw," of war, earthquake, fire and flood, of famine and pestilence, and all the other horrors of human experience. Here in this problem of evil, which the subtlest theologians of every age have endeavoured to solve, we have the most complete and unanswerable refutation—the hideous and universal mockery of the whole theistic hypothesis. You cannot absolve God from direct responsibility for this criminal product of his own Divinity. The very contemplation of it revolts the conscience of every decent human being. In this context we may well exclaim with William Archer:

"Is it possible to deodorise a world which comes to us redolent of good, thick, stupefying incense-smoke, mingled with the reek of auto-da-fé? Can we beat into a ploughshare the sword of St. Bartholomew, and a thousand deeds of horror? God has been by far the most tragic word in the whole vocabulary of the race—a spell to conjure up all the worst fiends in human nature: arrogance and abjectness, fanaticism, hatred and atrocity."

(To be concluded)

PSYCHIC RESEARCH

I've proved that the thing is no fable.

I've gathered some pretty strong data.

For an hour I sat rapping the table;

It called up three spooks, but no waiter.

A.E.C.

—NEXT WEEK—

The Myth of Christmas

By H. CUTNER

Fallacy No. 1

By E. G. MACFARLANE

IN HIS LETTER on the subject "Public Enemy No. 1" in the issue for 16/11/56, Mr. F. A. Ridley gives the game away when he begins his letter by saying that he is concerned about the "international freethought movement" (my emphasis!). This word proves to me that Mr. Ridley is himself a victim of what I consider to be Fallacy No. 1, the idea that we can have anything international without first having accepted the principle I regard as Public Enemy No. 1. I refer to nationalism.

I have no doubt that it is this fundamental weakness in the ideology of Mr. Ridley that provides the beginning of an explanation of why he is so far off the main highway of human affairs. Let me ask him some rhetorical questions which may show just how far out of touch with the realities of the human situation his position really is.

No doubt he will have noticed that people all over the world have recently been exercising their minds over the actions of certain *leaders* and *executives* in public affairs. I refer to the orders given by Sir Anthony Eden for intervention in the Middle East and by Marshal Bulganin for intervention in Hungary. Now I need hardly ask if these two men are members of the Catholic Action Society or owe their power in any way to the fact of their membership of that body if they actually are. No; their power is a direct result of their having proved their reliability as supporters of British nationalism on the one hand and Russian nationalism on the other. Similarly, Colonel Nasser and President Eisenhower and the rest of the people whose names are currently talked about are far more dependent upon some form of nationalism for their prominence than any question connected with Catholic Action. There is not the slightest doubt that the major distortions of Mr. Ridley's thesis are there even if he cannot himself see where he is getting things out of focus.

Mr. Ridley's admission that Catholic Action is "an international organisation..." is, for me, sufficient to suspect that it is a weak and ineffectual force in public affairs since my observation has led me to the conclusion that *all* international movements suffer from weakness and ineffectuality. Power lies where political sovereignty is — i.e. with nationalism. And those who are content to accept the idea of nationalism such as is taught to them in schools and over the radio will naturally give their support to that form of nationalism as a matter of *primary* concern in public affairs.

So far forms of *local* nationalism have dominated the scene, with the disastrous results we read about. In Britain the "Sirs" and the "Lords" (who have received these titles for their fawning monarchy-mongering and Union Jack worship, not to mention their obeisance to the national God) have always been able to recruit a majority for the plans of local nationalism despite the fact that this is supposed to be a scientific era in which men are supposed to be able to think in terms of evolutionary process. In practice the intelligent attitude of mind is always suppressed in favour of the fanaticism generated by the monarchy and the local flag. Even university professors line up and salute the flag of a *part* of the world when in their work they will studiously avoid doing anything so obviously at odds with their general picture of the universe. In the same way, university professors (not *all* of them, of course) will parade to church and make their obeisances to the nationalised form of God which servile priests produce as their part of the idolatry of the *country*.

Here I cannot resist quoting from a letter by the "Bishop of the Diocese of Edinburgh" which appeared in *The Scotsman* (14/11/56). Writing of what was going on in Suez he laid down the following significant teaching: "Ultimately, I believe the present issue to be one of national self-defence, and I believe such to be morally right."

In the face of an *ultimate* principle of that nature it is obvious that we must either change the conception of nationalism which is operative in the minds of the people in the world or resign ourselves to the extinction of the human race due to the armed conflicts of *part*-nationalisms.

For my part, I think that if we have the necessary courage and thorough-going logic we can replace local nationalisms by a form of world-nationalism which would abolish the very possibility of international wars by teaching the people of the world to become fellow-nationals on a world-wide basis.

I am opposed to all "inter-national" movements since they leave the existing forms of nationalism untouched. By accepting these *part*-nationalisms all international movements are condoning the most dangerous principles of action in the world today. We must mount a direct attack upon all *part*-nationalisms and have a *whole*-nationalism with which to replace it. As *whole*-nationalists (i.e. world-nationalists) we will eschew all honours from monarchs and other representatives of existing nationalisms. I would ask all who see the necessity — the *urgent* necessity — of the reorientation to world nationalism to immediately return any honours which they have received from the Queen and inform her that they have changed their conception of nationalism. Only when they have done this can they feel that they have cleansed themselves to enter the new dispensation. The return would have great propaganda value too!

Definitions

- ATHEIST: One without invisible visible means of support.
 CATHOLIC DEMOCRACY: Rule of the people by the Papal for the Papal.
 CHURCH: A place where men who have never been to Heaven brag about it to people who will never get there.
 CLERGYMAN: A man who undertakes the betterment of our souls for the betterment of his pocket.
 CONGREGATION: An animal with many heads and no brain.
 CURATE: What is left of a theology student after the sense has been extracted.
 EVANGELISM: Nineteenth century faith with an American accent.
 FAITH: Belief without evidence in what is told by a preacher without knowledge about things without parallel.
 PAPAL DIPLOMACY: Lying in State.
 RELIGION: Superstition running away from truth and afraid of being overtaken.
 RELIGIOUS PHILOSOPHERS: Theologians systematising their delusions. D.S.

MORAL VALUES

The natives of the New Hebrides are on a very low cultural plane. They do not lie, they do not drink and their word can be trusted. One needs only mention their cannibalism and their weakness for poisoned arrows to round off this horrible picture of an extremely primitive civilisation. (*Let us See if the World is Round*, by HAKON MIELCHE, a Dane. Hodge and Co., 1944.)

This Believing World

The most astonishing thing in connection with the Suez crisis is that — so far — the Archbishop of Canterbury and the heads of all the other Christian Churches, including Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, the Plymouth Brethren (even including Rome, though it prefers being solo) have not called for a Day of Intercession and Prayer from all the world. Here was a wonderful chance for God Almighty, aided by Himself in the Person of His Son, to settle the whole matter; and yet there was not a sign from God's Representatives on earth. It is incredible. Has the Power and Glory of the Lord waned that much?

★

Then there is way in which our parsons are preparing for Christmas. In the *Sunday Times* we get, for instance, the Rev. G. W. Butterworth delighted to give us the glad tidings that "we welcome Christmas for its promise of universal peace and Easter for Christ's victory over death." Its promise of "universal peace" is rich indeed! One wonders whether in history there ever was a peace in which Christians had actually laid down their arms? Is it not a fact that Christians throughout history were either snarling at each other, or snarling at other religions, when they were not at war with each other, or at war with people who were not Christians?

★

As for "Christ's victory over death," one can only wonder what the reverend gentleman is talking about? The only victor in this matter is death itself, and if there has ever been a person called Jesus Christ, he died like everybody else in this world of ours. But even such a staid paper like the *Sunday Times* cannot prevent a parson from writing fantastic nonsense.

★

In boosting up religion the "Daily Mail" has called on the well-known cricketer, the Rev. D. Sheppard, for a weekly article. In one of these, we are told of a lady who lost her husband when she was 27, her son at 17, who has worked all her life, and has now lost a leg. She lives in one room, and goes out once a year. And what has she got in life? Why, says Mr. Sheppard, "the radiance which has transformed her room is Christ's"! And he adds, "We remember His death and rejoice in meeting with Him." And this rubbish is put forward for us as the reward this poor woman gets in the last years of her life. Is it any wonder why some of us look upon Christianity not merely as a religion for fools, but with the utmost contempt?

★

Another new Christian Church has been born. The building was formerly called "The Abode of Love" when the Rev. J. H. Smyth-Piggott was its presiding Messiah, aided by a few spiritual wives. Now it is in the hands of Mr. H. P. Nicholson, who calls himself "Archbishop of the Ancient Catholic Church." We understand funds were always available from a few wealthy women in the Smyth-Piggott era and perhaps Mr. Nicholson will find the same easy access to God as the Lord's Anointed (with the cash) as the late revered Messiah. Money and Piety — what beautiful words.

★

We have repeatedly stressed in these columns that even according to Jesus himself marriage is not indissoluble, and now it looks as if influential meetings like those of the Conferences of Evangelical Churchmen, and bodies like the Council of the Modern Churchmen's Unions find the doctrine of no divorce whatever "contrary to both the letter and spirit of New Testament teachings." In addition,

even the much applauded Marriage Service is coming under the damning criticism of being completely out-of-date and out of tune with modern ideas.

★

We are not surprised. Many of the rituals and services in both church and chapel are relics of a credulous age — ignorance was then rampant, and the vilest cruelties were accepted as part of life. Even Christians are now seeing all this, and it is comical to find them ready and eager to accept what once were the heresies of abandoned atheists — the unfortunate heretics being then plundered, persecuted, tortured, imprisoned, and often put to death. And always in the name of true Christianity!

The Rising Generation

XV — THE MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS

THE GOSPELS are full of all kinds of stories which Church leaders devoutly wish were never there, and one of them is the idiotic yarn related only in Matthew that Herod knew that a "King of the Jews" was being born, and "was troubled and all Jerusalem with him." Josephus, who narrates in detail the story of Herod, knew nothing whatever of this, nor for that matter did the other Gospel writers. Still, as the story of Jesus had to be made up somehow, it should not surprise us that they took over from paganism — and other sources — the story of "the massacre of the innocents" with embellishments, of course, of their own. "Herod," we are told in the most divine language, "was exceeding wrath and sent forth and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under." And this bald statement has inspired many truly Christian artists with some very remarkable pictures destined to instil the utmost horror against the deed, as well as thanks to God that "our Lord" managed to escape in time.

It seems needless to add that there is not a scrap of evidence that it ever happened. But one can hardly or never catch up with a good Christian lie, and this libel in particular must be believed in by all members of the Faith.

Almost exactly the same story was told of Krishna, the Hindu Saviour, as the famous — and Christian — Orientalist, Sir W. Jones, in his *Asiatic Researches*, was obliged to admit:

Krishna passed a life, according to Indians, of a most extraordinary and incomprehensible nature. His birth was concealed through fear of the reigning tyrant Kansa, who, at the time of his birth, ordered all newborn males to be slain, yet this wonderful babe was preserved.

And just as in Christian churches, Hindu artists have depicted the bloody event on the walls of Indian temples. There is also a huge sculpture at Elephanta depicting the babes being slain.

Krishna was only one of the many other Virgin-born Saviours, among whom can be named Salivahana, who also had a narrow escape when the "tyrant" tried to slay him. Even Buddha had several narrow escapes as an infant; so had Horus, while Zoroaster was exposed to many dangers when a child and had to fly into Persia — just like Jesus into Egypt.

It would be tedious to mention the many more or less mythical children who had almost the same fate and the same escape from death as Jesus had. The East was teeming with such stories, and all the myth makers drew upon them to suit their particular myth. The way of a Saviour had to be made rough, and Jesus was no exception. Our Christian sheep — as even Jesus called them — have to believe that the Massacre took place. I doubt if a single Bishop anywhere believes it.

H.C.

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.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening. Various speakers.
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.: R. POWE. Sunday, 11 a.m.: R. MORRELL and R. POWE.
West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, at the Marble Arch, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. ARTHUR and EBURY.

INDOOR

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street).—Sunday, December 16th, 7 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Germany and the Roman Catholic Church."
Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, December 16th, 6.45 p.m.: A Lecture.
Cardiff (Bute Town Community Centre).—Tuesday, December 18th, 7.45 p.m.: Brains Trust, N.S.S. representative, D. SHIPPER. (The others include C. of E. and R.C.)
Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, off Edgware Road).—Sunday, December 16th, 7.15 p.m.: J. SMITH, "Swastika over South Africa."
Head Office N.S.S. (41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1).—Friday, December 14th, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Comparative Religion" (sixth of six Study Classes). Subject this week "Religion and Society."
Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, December 16th, 6.30 p.m.: R. BARNES, "Third Thoughts on Stalinism."
Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, December 16th, 2.30 p.m.: L. WINTERBOTTAM, "That Great Britain is a First-Class Power, and should behave as such."
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, December 16th, 11 a.m.: Dr. HELEN ROSENAU, "Form and Function in Art."
West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Wanstead Community Centre, The Green, E.11).—Thursday, December 20th, 7.45 p.m.: J. SHEPHERD, "What Freethought means to me."

Notes and News

The Pope's appeal for blessings for the Hungarian people brought an instant response from that firm Vatican supporter General Rafael Trujillo, dictator of the Dominican Republic, a priest being despatched immediately to Spain to say masses in the Holy Chapel of the Picar of Zaragoza. Which should improve things considerably for the people of Hungary.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £133 5s. 8d.; E. Price, 5s.; F. Cooke, 10s.; M.W.B., £1; F. H. Eastman, 10s.; Wm. Craigie (New Zealand), 4s.; D. Harris, 5s.; T. Benton, 5s.; R. Coward, 10s.; T. Murphy, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. W. J. Parnall, 10s.; A. Hancock, 1s.—Total to date, December 7th, 1956, £137 15s. 8d.

SEVERAL demonstrations have been held in Spain to mark disapproval of the Soviet stand in Hungary and the organisers of these demonstrations have sent telegrams of loyalty to the Pope and to U.N.O. stating "the desire of Spanish Catholics that the force of right, truth and justice should prevail over those who trample on the rights of man and the freedom of independent peoples." People who live in glass houses . . . ?

★

IN the U.S.A. a Presbyterian clergyman, Dr. Clifton Moore, director of television for Los Angeles Presbytery, denounced "religious hucksters" who appear on television and "with a pattern of fear and condemnation of other religious groups, make use of the air lanes for their own monetary gain." He complained that "These religious hucksters do untold damage to the Church cause." What he wants is obviously protection for his own market.

★

No one imagines that any freethought, as we know it, is permitted in Spain, but in the course of his inquiries Mr. Shipper questioned the Spanish Embassy about it. The reply he received confirms what we knew and, in fact, suggests that there is now no official knowledge of what freethought is in the land of Francisco Ferrer. The reply from the Spanish Embassy Information Department reads as follows:

Not having any available information on the subject of "Freethought" in Spain, I am forwarding your request to our historical research department in the Archives of Simancas.

It is not improbable that they may be able to trace some mention of it in our history. Should they not be successful, I will approach the departments of palæontology and prehistory.

I am not up to date in recent discoveries, but understand that a new process of examination by radium analysis gives us renewed hope of throwing light on the mysteries of the remote past.—Yours sincerely, F. J. MAYANS.

Mr. Shipper now awaits with interest the results of their researches on the Stone Age freethinkers.

★

SEVERAL local Councils have recently been considering rating relief for parsonages. The N.S.S. has the matter in hand and more may be heard of it. Meanwhile, a Market Harborough councillor has protested against his Council's decision to allow such relief. He said that ratepayers were generally being called upon to pay a heavy increase in rates, and yet church ministers were now being made a "special class." "This is all wrong!" declared Mr. Palmer. He was told by the Chairman that other authorities had also granted relief and it "was accepted that ministers' homes were legally eligible for such relief."

★

IN districts where the articles called "Science proves the Bible was right" are at present circulating we call upon our supporters to try to correct this gross lie by means of letters to the papers in question. By "science" they mean Dr. Keller; by "the Bible" they mean some vestiges of historical events. Recent FREETHINKER articles by C. T. Salisbury (November 23rd) and H. Cutner (October 26th, November 2nd) may be used and quoted, stating source of reference. THE FREETHINKER. We shall be glad to hear of any successes.

Reason in Action

(A REVIEW)

UNDER THIS TITLE five leading members of the Humanist movement have indicated various aspects of the ethical philosophy to which the term "Humanist" is nowadays applied; the five being Messrs. Hector Hawton, Archibald Robertson, J. B. Coates, Donald Ford and H. J. Blackham. Mr. Hawton, as general editor, contributes also a brief preface.

All five essays illustrate in different ways and from personal angles that general outlook now prevalent in the R.P.A. and Ethical Union which may be described broadly as the oblique attack, a literary technique of *indirect* approach which appears to have superseded the more direct and more hard-hitting technique which characterised the R.P.A. in the heyday of its cheap reprints. To be sure, Mr. Hawton is regarded in some quarters as the arch-strategist of the newer technique! Our five authors do not so much attack religion in general or Christianity in particular as try to replace it with a broadly Rationalistic philosophy. It must be added that there is a rather sharp difference between the angle of the Marxist, Archibald Robertson, and the more conventional Humanist attitude of his four colleagues — in which respect Mr. Robertson reveals himself as the *enfant terrible* of the Rationalist group; the Marxist cuckoo in the Humanist nest, one might say.

In what is perhaps the most informative of the five essays, Mr. Blackham gives a lucid historical survey of the principal Humanist movements, ancient and modern, which have attained more than a merely local significance. Two stand out in marked distinction; Epicureanism in antiquity, and the movement usually called after the "Encyclopædia" in the 18th century. As Mr. Blackham indicates, these were not simply armchair philosophies but militant propagandist movements, which, incidentally, did not shrink from the kind of *direct* attack on current religion which our five authors apparently deliberately avoid, and then deprecate. Both Lucretius, the militant spokesman of the Epicurean school, and Diderot and his fellow writers of the Encyclopædia, shook their contemporary religion to its foundations by their direct assaults. In the case of the Epicureans this was recognised not only by the politically inspired paganism of Lucretius' day, but a little later by the up-and-coming Christians also. Clement of Alexandria (c. 200) tells us that when Paul launched his polemic against the pagan philosophers "it was only the Epicureans that the Apostle had in mind." Coming to our times Mr. Blackham outlines the modern developments that have recently culminated in the Humanist International Union.

What actually appear to be the prospects for an international Humanist movement preaching an obliquely constructive alternative to contemporary religion? *Reason in Action* is not a title indicative of an armchair clique engaged in merely academic philosophising. In my opinion the outlook for such a movement is not at present very promising. This is so, not primarily because of the current strength of organised religion, nor even because, as Mr. Hawton indicates, of the prevalence of such contemporary irrational philosophies as Logical Positivism and Existentialism but rather because of the present social set-up. For our age is pre-eminently one of fierce ideological strife and of perhaps an even more bitter war of colour tomorrow; not to mention the ever-present fear of the atomic bomb, which alone prevents world war, but at the heavy price of perpetual fear! Ages of fear are traditionally ages of reli-

gion. Our era is one dominated by power politics which have no notably ethical content! However, both the Epicureans and the Encyclopædist could rely on powerful *political* support. As Mr. Robertson has himself elsewhere suggested, the Epicureans stood for a *class* as well as for a philosophy. Lucretius expressed in language of burning intensity the *political* hostility of the Roman middle class against the corrupt aristocracy and its policy serving aristocratic religion. And the Encyclopædist (Voltaire, Diderot, etc.) were as much and as obviously the spokesmen of the "Third Estate" of the rising middle class in their revolution against absolute monarchy as they were the rationalist critics of an outmoded religious cult. I do not see any comparable prospects for contemporary Humanism. Christianity is more and more becoming identical with support for the economic *status quo*, whilst Marxism remains the effective creed of most of the militant movements of contemporary revolt. Marxism has certainly ethical and even Humanist aspects, but the great majority of English-speaking Humanists have not yet followed Mr. Robertson in seeking to combine Marxism and Humanism. I am afraid "Reason" will find it difficult to eventuate in "action" under such current circumstances. Our five will, I fear, have to wait for quieter times suitable for their quiet philosophy. Meanwhile, the World Union of Freethinkers will continue with the direct attack.

[*Reason in Action*. Watts, 8s. 6d.]

F.A.R.

Freethinkers Frighten Ghost

ON TUESDAY EVENING, November 20th, the Leicester Secular Society ventured into the field of the occult, when a travelling medium, Mrs. W. Grant, well known in Leicester "psychic" circles, accepted an invitation to come and show the unbelievers what the spirits could do.

The medium said she would tackle twenty questions outside her own sphere of knowledge; the spirits would, of course, answer them for her.

The proceedings began, and it was evident that the spirit intended to use Mrs. Grant's voice. Of the twenty questions, mostly compiled from the Quiz column of THE FREETHINKER, and put by Mr. Kirk, the Society's President, few were attempted.

The spook, which has had glorious successes in the presence of the faithful, completely crumbled in the presence of freethinkers. From being a howling success it could now only make howlers. Here are a few of the howlers:

The founder of Christian Science was Mrs. Eddie Baker.

The Angelic Doctor was St. Francis of Assisi.

Panpsychism was a type of being half god, half man.

As for Positivism, are you sure you haven't made the word up?

The spirit complained that the questions were too secular; it could only answer spiritual questions.

Could we get Mr. Chapman Cohen to the microphone? No, we couldn't. Could we get *any* known freethinker who had "passed on"? Oh, no! You can't demand anything from the spirits.

The spook withdrew with what dignity it could, no doubt resolving that in future it had better bestow its services only on those who already believe in its existence.

C.H.H.

Science Front

By G. H. TAYLOR

THE THEORY of an Expanding Universe was challenged a few weeks ago by Dr. Holmberg, of the Army Operational Research Unit, in a paper, "A New Explanation of the Recession of the Nebulae," to the Royal Astronomical Society. It has been generally accepted that the galaxies are rushing farther and farther apart, but Holmberg suggests this is a sort of optical illusion due to the structure of space, which may not after all conform to the Einsteinian Space-Time continuum. Space, according to Holmberg's speculation, is three-dimensional, but not in the old manner of Newton, based on Euclid. His new basis for a three-dimensional system is founded on Projective Geometry, not Euclidean, and he postulates Velocity as a dimension in its own right, instead of being, as now supposed, a derivative (Distance by Time) of other dimensions. The upshot of all this, so far as the "expanding" universe is concerned, is that observers separated by an astronomical distance from what they are observing, get the appearance of recession.

Dr. Holmberg's Universe would therefore constitute a restoration to stability, giving, as it were, a universe which "stays put." It is too early to judge whether Holmberg's paper will give rise to fruitful research, but a condition of its success will be that it should remove the difficulties inherent in the present theory of an expanding universe while at the same time not creating even more formidable ones. Meanwhile, the pious hope of Catholics and other devout Christians will be that the remaining problems will never be solved. A problem unsolved is a niche for God.

★

SEVENTY-THREE YEARS after Copernicus announced that Bible astronomers were all wrong in placing the Earth at the centre of the universe with every other heavenly body revolving around it, the very learned Churchmen who constituted the Inquisition placed the book containing this information on the Index Prohibitorum, forbidding their followers to read it. This was in 1616, and until 1835, 219 years later, it was only on peril of loss of his immortal soul that any Catholic dared read the truth. If the Church could have effectively enforced its prohibitions no books or other vehicles for the dissemination of knowledge which denied Catholic "truth" would have been allowed to exist. Yet, it is asserted that the Church encouraged scientific progress.

★

THE diminishing but fanatical few who still believe in Bible chronology for the age of the earth must get a shock whenever they read of the discovery of fossils whose age makes the Biblical Adam look almost like our contemporary. At a time when many papers are running the stunt, "The Bible is Right," there are items in other columns of the same papers to show — for those who use their brains — that the Bible is wrong. Approximately 150 million years is, for instance, given as the age of the recently found petrified oak from the Portland quarries (about ten miles from the petrified forest at Lulworth). Meanwhile, the bald claim that the Bible is right will continue in the headlines. Dr. Werner Keller having failed, a Dr. Schonfield is now being used. He, too, will fail, but there will be hundreds of others only too ready to hit the headlines so long as the silly season lasts.

★

PLANS for the celebration in 1958 of the centenary of the theory of evolution are already at an advanced stage. Darwin's *Origin of Species* was published in 1859 but the first

announcement of the theory of evolution by natural selection was a joint publication before the Linnæan Society of London by Darwin and A. R. Wallace. London will appropriately be the venue of the next International Congress of Zoology in 1958, and the surviving grandchildren of Darwin and Wallace have accepted honorary vice-presidentships of the Congress. The Darwin-Wallace Commemoration Lecture will be given, again most appropriately, by Dr. Julian Huxley. The sessions will be held in the Imperial College of Science, South Kensington.

★

A MOST startling recent discovery was a tribe of Honest Men. It goes without saying that they were not found in Christian lands. They were found in the jungles of Venezuela by Prof. Tentori, an ethnologist. He reports that these uncivilised people never lie, never make war, never kill and never rob.

They have no politicians, no advertisers, no crooks, and are so used to each other's honesty that they have no locks and keys, no monetary system, and don't even wear clothes.

All that remains is to protect these Piaora Indians from the Christian missionaries, with their civilising influences.

Marxist Christianity

By D. SHIPPER

SOME EXCERPTS from laws appertaining to religion behind the Iron Curtain may interest secularists:

Albania: "The education of youth is a matter for the State; religious instruction has no part in it."

"The Catholic Church may occupy itself with its duties, as long as these do not conflict with the laws of the People's Republic."

"Apart from religious doctrine, the Catholic clergy must inspire the faithful with loyalty towards the People's State."

Poland: "Clergymen holding ecclesiastical offices shall take the oath of allegiance to the Polish People's Republic." An excerpt from the oath: "Loyal to my duty as a citizen and to my priesthood, I shall exhort the faithful to respect the laws and the authority of the State, and to work eagerly for the economic development and the increased wellbeing of the nation. I promise not to do anything contrary to the interests of the Polish People's Republic."

U.S.S.R.: "Instruction of the under-aged or minors in religious doctrine in State or private educational institutions or schools is punishable by corrective labour for a period of up to one year."

Rumania: "In order to obtain recognition, each religion shall forward through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, for examination and approval, its Statute, including the system or organisation, management and administration used, together with the Articles of Faith of the respective religion."

"Public education shall be secular."

In spite of these restrictive-sounding laws, the position of the believer is definitely more favourable than that of the Eastern European Freethinker. For instance, Rumania recently received a visit from the Delegation of the Rabbinical Council of America. After their return to the United States, one of the delegation's four members, Rabbi David B. Hollander, New York, said: "The Government and the Federation of Jewish Communities gave us opportunities to see many Jewish institutions in Rumania, including synagogues, religious schools, institutions and ritual baths."

In their collective statement, published in the October 1956 issue of the Bucharest monthly magazine *Rumania Today*, the delegation stated: "We are pleased to see that children, starting from a young age, are being instructed in the teachings of Judaism in religious schools, which are staffed by highly qualified teachers."

Remember — "Public education shall be secular" . . . ?

The Communist countries seem willing to utilise religious leaders; the theologians, in turn, displaying their readiness to co-operate with any political power, provided they are permitted to retain some means of indoctrination.

Clergymen in the "People's Republics" take their oath of allegiance, not to the Almighty, but to the State. In contrast to the religious organisations, after enquiries covering every country in the Soviet bloc, I have been unable to discover any organised Freethought. Previously existing societies like the League of the Churchless (Czechoslovakia) and the bodies which published Freethought journals like *Glos Wolynch* (Poland) or *Volna Myslenka* and *Nova Skutecnost* (Czechoslovakia) are now, apparently, suppressed.

My contacts in East Germany, Bulgaria and Hungary asserted that Freethought was "unnecessary" as their countries are governed from a dialectical materialist and, therefore, atheist standpoint. We might assume then, that as Freethought is unorganised and "unnecessary," religion is organised and . . . ? Necessary for what?

Possibly by the time this is read, the Hungarians will have impressed upon their neighbour fellow-travellers (in the realms of politics and religion) the dangers of being "hoist with their own petard"?

Chapman Cohen on 'Helping God'

THERE IS SOME TRUTH in the statement that we are helping God. That is a game man, in his folly, is continually playing. When we see God's blunders we help him to correct them, and then praise his wisdom for providing them. When the deplorable and ignoble character of his ancestry is exposed, we help him by creating a fictitious one. When his character and doings in past ages are made plain, we assist him by creating a whole army of apologists to white-wash his reputation. Of course, it is the duty of children to help their parents; but that it mainly because, as the children reach maturity, the parent approaches old age and helplessness. Is that what Christians have in mind when they talk about helping God? I should not be surprised. For God does grow helpless as mankind reaches maturity. He is most powerful when they are in their childhood; most arrogant in his claims when they are most helpless. God and man cannot both grow at the same time. As one rises, the other falls; and a little less readiness to help God might result in less need for helping man.

CORRESPONDENCE

SCHWEITZER

According to Mr. Turney, I am akin to the Modernists, if not of them, because I have ventured to express esteem for a man who is nominally a Christian. I say nominally, since, like Mr. Turney, I think Schweitzer's identification of himself with the Christian world rests on rather slender grounds.

Mr. Turney is, of course, entitled to his preference for what he calls "our old Freethinkers." Personally, I hold the view that the duty of the Freethinker does not lie in being eternally against a Christian just because he is a Christian. I regard it as more important that the Freethinker should be an independent thinker, not much given to taking sides, but concerned to find by virtue of his own informed reason and judgment what of truth and of value there is in the world.

Mr. Turney imputes to Schweitzer the pretension of being a "good man." I see no evidence that Schweitzer makes any such pretension; he has too much humility for that. Your correspondent also questions Schweitzer's sacrifice in going to Africa. Well, if it was no particular sacrifice, why do we not find many other accomplished and scholarly men taking leave of our seats of learning and doing likewise? Mr. Turney further suggests that Schweitzer secretly revels in the publicity now accorded him. Even if that were so, it must be remembered that for the greater part of his life Schweitzer has been an obscure medical missionary out in Africa. It was not love of the limelight that sustained him in his work over long years; I don't believe it is today.

And lastly, why this slighting comparison of Schweitzer's life with that of "the meek and lowly Jesus"? Undogmatically I am of the historicist persuasion; but I don't see Jesus as humanity's best ideal. Anyway, his crude and narrow fanaticism would put me off. I think that Schweitzer in our day is easily his moral, spiritual, and intellectual superior.

G. I. BENNETT.

CONFESSION

Here in Malta one gets a close-up view of the Church in power. The laws of the Roman Catholic Church bind its members to confess all the sins they have committed to one of their priests. It is a fact that these same priests are ever eager to state that human nature is so poor that it is impossible for any individual to escape temptation; but they also maintain that, through their own intercessory powers, God forgives all such shortcomings in His infinite pity for the creatures He is alleged to have created.

In so doing, the priests are unwittingly stating that God has failed miserably in the act of creation. This may be so, but He can hardly be pleased to be reminded of His failure! If the priests will accept a little advice, I should suggest that the less they say about these faults the better it will be.

But the clergy (having little else to do) doubtless like to hear the innermost secrets of their flock. And — in countries where they wield real power — there is always the threat of eternal perdition for use against the truculent. This threat, in fact, is employed to keep the masses under clerical control.

What is singularly intriguing is the admission that priests, too, are liable to human failings. They are, indeed, wise not to confess them to the laity but only to one of their own caste, lest individual Catholics should conclude that, far from the priests being a superior or chosen order of humanity, they are frequently guilty, not only of follies but sometimes of vices and crimes.

It is also said that the priests do not divulge the secrets of their confessional. It may be true: it is one of the secrets of their monopoly. How else could they learn the intimate facts of the personal life of the faithful? If confessional trust were betrayed, control would be lost. One must perforce conclude that the clergy developed this type of confession in order to retain a firm grip on those poor fools who form the great mass of Roman Catholics.

VIGILANT (Malta).

ETERNAL CYCLE

Mr. Rogerson seems to reject the theory of an eternal cycle on account of its boredom. Surely this is the wrong attitude, on a par with wishful thinking, such as accepting the belief in survival because one doesn't like dying.

CONSTANCE FRATER.

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