

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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ONE OF THE MOST sensational events in the long evolution of the Papacy was the temporary, but dramatic, suppression of the "Company of Jesus" — or Jesuits, to give them their commonly-accepted name — in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Between the years 1773 and 1814, the Jesuit Order was pronounced by the Papacy to be "abrogated, annulled and extinguished for ever." Such was the solemn Bull, *Dominus et Redemptor noster* (Our Lord and Redeemer) issued by Pope Clement XIV, official successor of St. Peter, in 1773.

A State within a State

The official reason for the dissolution lay in the degeneration and even downright financial corruption alleged by their accusers against the famous "Company": the Society founded by Ignatius Loyola, had not — so the Bull complained — continued to produce those "fruits of the Spirit" which had so pre-eminently distinguished its opening years. No doubt there was truth in this allegation for, in an era so penetrated by the latitudinarian spirit as was "The Age of Reason," the great fanatical Order appears to have lost much of its ardour, but it did not indicate the real reason for such a startling reversal of policy on the part of the Vatican. The fact was that, by the middle of the 18th century, the "shock troops" — as the Jesuits may aptly be termed — had become so powerful as to represent a rival to the Papacy itself. The Company had become a Church within the Church or, more accurately, a State within the State, negotiating on equal terms with European monarchies. In China, Jesuits were appointed high mandarins and became the confidential advisers of the Emperors; whilst, most striking of all, in South America they actually created an independent, sovereign state — their famous Paraguayan "Reductions" — where they exercised despotic sway, and where the subjects of even Catholic States were kept out by armed force. Such a proud international position had become incompatible with that of an ostensibly religious Order, vowed to preserve perpetual poverty and to remain in permanent subjection to Rome. By the middle of the 18th century, the General of the Jesuits who, under its constitution, ruled the Order with unchallenged authority, had become a world power: the equal and the potential rival of the Papacy itself.

The Pope of the Dissolution

Pope Clement XIV was himself a former monk — a Franciscan — created Cardinal Lorenzo Ganganelli, an Italian, like all Popes since the Reformation. As we may learn from his published letters (a French translation of which is extant in the Library of the British Museum), Cardinal Ganganelli was a liberal and cultured prelate of a type more common in ecclesiastical circles in the 18th than in the following century, when the French Revolution engendered a corresponding fanaticism in the ranks of its clerical opponents. In his correspondence, Ganganelli speaks

politely and even appreciatively of his eminent contemporaries, the deist, Voltaire, and the avowed atheist, Frederick the Great of Prussia. Some of his literary judgments retain a permanent interest. He seems to have been one of the first to deny that Thomas à Kempis wrote the famous *Imitation of Christ*, which he ascribes to an Italian abbot named Gersen. Bishop Berkeley he describes as "a brilliant lunatic," whose idealistic metaphysics outraged common

sense! For a moment his tolerant attitude disappears when he refers to an Italian translation of Locke, and he angrily demands that the Republic of Venice should exercise its right of censorship by deleting a passage in which the English philosopher advances the daring

theory that matter itself might be capable of thought. Despite this lapse from his usual urbanity, Ganganelli was evidently liberal in theological matters, like his predecessor, Pope Benedict XIV, to whom Voltaire had dedicated his play, *Mahomet*. In one letter Ganganelli refers to contemporary saint-worship in terms that remind one of a Protestant revivalist. According to the future Pope, Italy was full of bogus relics, winking statues, and religious impostures of every kind. A theologian holding such views would not have been partial to the Jesuits, who have been notoriously prone to encourage superstition if they deemed it *ad majorem Dei gloriam* — "to the greater glory of God." The future Pope refers to the Jesuits rather slightly as polished writers without much deep erudition.

The Pope and the Jesuits

When this Franciscan monk eventually ascended the throne of St. Peter in 1769, he found that the Jesuit problem had been brought to a head by, of all people, the "Most Catholic" King of Spain who, studying political rather than spiritual interests, had just expelled the Jesuits from his vast American empire and had forcibly occupied the famous Jesuit "Republic" of Paraguay: a dramatic episode recently powerfully represented on stage and radio in the play, *The Strong are Lonely*, by a German author, with Mr. Donald Wolfitt in the leading part. The suppression of the Jesuit state roused the other Catholic monarchs to demand similar suppression — a demand in which the French "Encyclopædists" ardently concurred. Since the successors of Loyola possessed their vast political and economic power by virtue of their religious status, their formal dissolution could only be the act of the head of the Catholic Church, the Pope. The Jesuit question overshadowed the brief and unhappy Pontificate of Pope Clement and he must often have mooted, one imagines, the "cursed spite" of Hamlet at a point in ecclesiastical history when the times were so conspicuously "out of joint."

"Let them be as they are, or not at all"

At first he tried to effect a compromise: if the Jesuits would voluntarily accept reform at the command of the Pope, and would agree to renounce their more flagrant political intrigues and commercial speculations — non-religious activities which had nothing to do with the aims

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Dissolution of the Jesuits

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

and objects of the Order, it might still be possible to spare them. But such compromises were rejected out of hand by the totalitarian Order; the General turned the Pope's proposals down in a celebrated phrase: "Let them be as they are, or not at all!" There in this haughty swan-song was the intransigent spirit of Loyola. The formal Bull of Dissolution followed on August 16th, 1773.

Jesuits Poison the Pope?

Pope Clement did not long survive the Decree which made his brief Pontificate memorable in ecclesiastical annals; he died in 1774 amid the universal belief that he had been poisoned by the Jesuits. The question remains undecided. The holy fathers are known to have justified assassination in recognised text-books in Jesuit seminaries, and who could deserve assassination more than the Pope who had declared the Jesuits themselves to be "extinguished for ever"? One thing seems certain: the Pope, like Oliver Cromwell before him, probably died, not by assassination, but the fear of assassination. A contemporary diplomat declared that the Pope "died of fear of dying." It is known that Pope Clement spent his closing years in dread. It was

a melancholy end for the man who seems to have been one of the best of the Popes.

"His Atheistic Majesty"

From 1773 to 1814 the Jesuits were officially proscribed at Rome. During this period, whilst banned in the Catholic world, they found strange protectors elsewhere: the adulterous Catherine of Russia and "His Atheistic Majesty" the King of Prussia, Frederick the Great. "Old Fritz" boasted that "His Atheistic Majesty" remained the Jesuits' most faithful protector. However, the troubles of the Jesuits were soon over: the French Revolution in 1789 threatened the old regime in Church and State with destruction. In 1814, after Napoleon's fall, Pope Pius VII officially restored the Jesuits, "those powerful mariners who have so often steered the bark of Peter through its misfortunes," declared the Pope in his Bull of Restoration. The Jesuits had been actually saved by the French Revolution! Again, the Jesuits led the Church. Needless to say, Pope Clement, the Pope of the Dissolution, has *not* yet been canonised! Nor is there likely to be, we imagine, another Pope of that name.

Death Ends All

By ANDREW DICKSON (New Zealand)

WHY am I so sure that death is the chief and final end of all life—human, animal or vegetable, and human in particular, man being the highest form of intelligence known. By observation and diligent research through ancient and modern works of philosophers and scientists and by the latest tests and analysis of matter, I can come to no other conclusion. Nature is but an endless series of efficient causes. She cannot create, but she eternally transforms. There was no beginning like that stated in Genesis and there can be no end of the Universe. In material nature there is no evidence of a God. Our ignorance is God; what we know is science.

Nature without passion, and without intention, forms and transforms, for ever. She neither weeps nor rejoices. She produces man without purpose and obliterates him without regret. She knows no distinction between the beneficial and the hurtful. Poison and nutrition, pain and joy, life and death, smiles and tears, are alike to her. Neither merciful nor cruel, she cannot be flattered by worship nor melted by tears. She does not know even the attitude of prayer. She appreciates no difference between poison in the fangs of snakes and mercy in the hearts of men. And yet man continues to believe that there is some power independent of and superior to nature, and still endeavours, by form, ceremony, supplication, hypocrisy and sacrifice to obtain its aid. His best energies have been wasted in the service of this phantom.

All religious superstition has had for its basis a belief in at least two beings, one good and the other bad, both of whom could arbitrarily change the order of the universe. The history of religion is simply the story of man's efforts in all ages to avoid one of these powers and pacify the other. Both have inspired abject fear. Until this belief is thrown aside, man must consider himself the slave of phantom masters, neither of whom promise liberty in this world.

Man must learn to rely upon himself. Reading Bibles will not protect him from the blasts of winter, but houses, fires and clothing will. Looking back through the corridors of time and the dim long years that have fled, humanity has suffered more than can be conceived while basking in the sunshine of delusion, ignorance, superstition, and misery, hoping to obtain the aid of some infinite phantom supposed

to be superior to nature. Of what use have the Gods been to man? A deity outside of nature exists *in* nothing and *is* nothing. There is but one way to demonstrate the existence of a power independent of and superior to nature, and that is by breaking, if only for one moment, the continuity of cause and effect. Pluck from the endless chain of existence one little link; stop for one instant the grand procession and you have shown beyond all contradiction that nature has a master. Change the fact, just for one second, that matter attracts matter, and a god appears. The rudest savage has always known this fact, and for that reason always demanded the evidence of miracle; that is to say, a violation of nature; that is to say, a falsehood. No one, in the world's history ever attempted to substantiate a truth by a miracle. Nothing but falsehood ever attested itself by signs and wonders. No miracle ever was performed from the air. Finally the last particle of the necessary chemical in our own bodies ceases to function, a purely natural process, but this is what we call death: extinction or cessation of life. The idea or belief of a soul leaving the body is too primitive and foolish to discuss here again.

I spread the truth, I share the light.
I do not dread eternal night;

Upon the shore of death the trouble of this world casts no wave. Eyes that have been curtained by the everlasting dark will never again see the light of day. Lips touched by eternal silence will never speak again. Hearts of dust do not beat. The dead do not weep. In the rayless gloom is crouched no shuddering fear. The dead are wrapt in the dreamless drapery of eternal peace and eternal sleep. There is no future and no past, but only an eternal now. Both time and space have ceased to be.

A priest once told me that death has only one real drawback, that is, it is permanent. I would add that its impertinence, bad manners and intrusion are most objectionable at times: otherwise we need have no dread of death—"The poor man's friend".

—NEXT WEEK—

LIFE, MARRIAGE AND THE VIRGIN MARY

By W. L. ARNSTEIN

The Two Contemporaries—1

By H. CUTNER

BY ONE OF THOSE STRANGE COINCIDENCES which sometimes appear in biography, the two greatest Freethinkers of the nineteenth century, Bradlaugh, the Englishman, and Ingersoll, the American, were both born in 1833, both were outstanding speakers, and both were consummate lawyers. Bradlaugh, it is true, never got beyond the job of a lawyer's clerk, but very few of his law contemporaries, even those with great successes at the Bar, could equal his mastery of a difficult case in law. Ingersoll's prose poetry still makes his lectures and essays fascinating reading, but, rather strangely, very few of Bradlaugh's have survived. He was more concerned with presenting a *factual* pamphlet—a well-reasoned case against religion, or on some aspect of economics, than with the beauty and graces of the English language. Ingersoll was, by a happy chance, able to do both.

They are not, however, the two contemporaries I wish to write about in this essay. Dying within about a year of each other comparatively recently, they filled the freethought canvas for over fifty years, and they will be as difficult to replace as were Bradlaugh and Ingersoll.

Joseph McCabe was born in 1867, Chapman Cohen in 1868, and in their long lives they both achieved a great reputation though it would be hard to find two convinced Freethinkers so extraordinarily dissimilar. Both made science in the ultimate the great antidote to the superstition and credulity of religion, but their approach was on more or less different grounds. Just as Bradlaugh and Ingersoll never met—this certainly is passing strange, for Bradlaugh went thrice to America—so it is doubtful, even if they did meet, whether McCabe and Cohen ever exchanged a word with each other. G. W. Foote met all his contemporaries as far as I have been able to find out; and even with the one who played him a most shabby trick in the notorious "Atheist Shoemaker" case—George Jacob Holyoake—he never bore any rancour, and welcomed his contributions later to THE FREETHINKER. There appears to have been nothing like this with McCabe and Cohen.

Joseph McCabe came from a Roman Catholic home and was destined for the Church—or perhaps he destined himself into it. Certainly at first he did not want to join the Franciscans in whose church in Manchester he served in the sanctuary, but a lay brother eventually overcame his resistance and at last he joined the monastery.

The early days of Chapman Cohen were quite different. He appears to have had literally no religion in him, nor was there any in his early home life which influenced him in the least. A voracious reader, he could not be kept from books in his youth and early manhood—and, curiously enough, he devoured "penny horrors" as ardently as he studied Spinoza and Herbert Spencer. All was grist to his mill, a book was a book to be read and to keep if possible. He began, in fact, very early in life to live with books, and to them, and not to this or that professor, did he owe his education.

In his unconventional *Almost an Autobiography* (written about 1939) Chapman Cohen tells us that before he was eighteen, he was "familiar with Spinoza, Locke, Hume, and Berkeley" and revelled in the *Dialogues* of Plato. That philosophical background had the profoundest influence on his later thinking as a Freethinker must be patent to all who followed his weekly contributions to the journal of which he was so distinguished an editor.

It is not surprising therefore to find him despising—more or less—what may be called *factual* knowledge. "Mere knowledge," he claimed, "is not difficult to

acquire." And so he was never greatly impressed with the kind of books which came from Joseph McCabe and similar writers. Not that McCabe did not also have a philosophical training. It is a great mistake to imagine that a Roman Catholic priest must necessarily be a fool, or be "uneducated." On the contrary indeed. He is, of course, obliged to assent to the theological system Rome imposes on all its followers, and is discouraged to read works on the *Index*, or heretical books of any kind. But the youths who have found a "vocation" and enter a monastery get a good grounding in languages and the classics. To secure admission "to the monastic garb," McCabe tells us in his *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, he studied at home French grammar, and a book like Fénelon's *Telemaque*, Greek grammar and the Gospel of St. John, Xenophon, some pages of the *Iliad*, Latin grammar and the works of Nepos, Cæsar, Cicero, the *Catilinæ* of Sallust, the *Germania* of Tacitus, the *Ars Poetica* of Horace, Livy, the *Æneid*, and fragments of Ovid, Terence, and Curtius. Whether this kind of reading is better or worse than that which Chapman Cohen indulged in is a problem which is not very easy to decide; but it is interesting to note that the learning of the ancient Greeks appealed to Cohen, though he certainly never read Greek, or indeed any other language but English. He quotes Prof. Dewey's "They achieved the idea of science" with enthusiasm because it was not the mere tabulating of scientific facts which mattered to him, but the general idea of investigating their bearing on the Universe which compelled his admiration.

It is impossible to understand the contribution these two men, both outright and forthright Freethinkers, made to the Cause they loved without knowing what it was which impelled them to advocate Freethought from such different angles. With completely different early backgrounds, is it any wonder that for Chapman Cohen the approach was bound to come from the general point of view of philosophy, while for Joseph McCabe it was, at least partly, from the academic and scholastic philosophy which he was obliged to imbibe as part of his theological training. His reaction was naturally a turning to science—not merely the *idea* of science, but to its tremendous accumulation of *facts*, the facts of physics, astronomy, anthropology, and so on. Thus, while Chapman Cohen tried to undermine religion through philosophy as far as possible, McCabe's attack was principally based on the *facts* of evolution and all they implied against the idea of a Special Creation; and therefore against religion.

You claim a vegetarian Christ?
But think what dubious dish
Was served Him, and ('twould seem) sufficed,
An honeycomb—and fish!
From such queer text you turn your glance:
He *must* be no flesh-eater.
You'd swear it, though by some mischance
He'd swallowed Simon Peter.

Luke xxiv. 42, 43.

H. S. SALT.

BANKERS AND PRIESTS

IN Perth, Western Australia, special services were held for members of the Bankers' Institute of Australia. The Archbishop of Perth, Dr. Moline, lapsing unwittingly into honesty, stressed the similarity between the ideals of the banking profession and those of the Kingdom of Heaven, both talking of *future* plans, yet more interested in *immediate* returns for capital outlay.

This Believing World

Although the Churches have produced in the past such Saintly Women as Joanna Southcott, Ann Lee, and, of course, Mary Baker Eddy, we now have to add a lady to the list who declares that not only is she literally without Sin, but is a Manifestation of God; and "to deny it would be blasphemous." Miss Sheena Govan is the leader of a sect called "The Nameless Ones," and — according to the *Woman's Sunday Mirror* — she has not only a "close relationship" to God but has had "visions"; she can heal the sick and, though her "message" is the "same as Christ's," she has "added something to it."

★

One of her followers is convinced that she is Christ, for he has even seen a halo round her head, and that ought to persuade even the hardest-headed of unbelieving Materialists. But the biggest proof that Sheena is really Jesus Christ is that recently "she was attacked from a Glasgow pulpit" for her teachings were rank "heresy." Just like Jesus, in fact. He also was charged with being a blasphemer and look how he is worshipped now! In any case, why shouldn't a Christian woman be the Son of the Living God? We hope Miss Govan will carry on the good work with or without her halo.

★

The irresistible Bishop of Bristol was given the task of explaining to children over the radio what exactly was the "Atonement"; and, as unfortunately he hadn't the slightest idea, his explanation itself would have required a heck of a lot of explaining. But we did notice that he appeared to know nothing about the dear old solution of the mystery current in our younger days. This was: it meant "at-onement" and presumably the "one" meant you. This solution is just as lucid as Dr. Cockin's meandering through a welter of words, not all sound and fury, but meaning literally nothing.

★

It would have been impossible for the *Sunday Times* in its articles on "Immortality" to ignore the vital claims of Christian Scientists who, at one time, were so sure of "Everlasting Life" that they were all convinced Mother Eddy herself would never die. It must have been a shock to them to find that not only had she passed on like other less wealthy mortals, but also that she, who had proclaimed for over 40 years that there was no such thing as "evil" or "illness," had to be given drugs to cure her exactly like blatant infidels. And then she died.

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One would have thought that the article on what Christian Scientists were sure about "Immortality," written by a military man, would have produced some evidence of "Life Everlasting," even in the angelic presence of Mother Eddy — but we have to record, alas with pain, that it was nothing but a funny hash of words dragging in Christ Jesus and, of course, Mrs. Eddy. Not a scintilla of evidence was produced in favour of "Immortality." But did even the Editor of the *Sunday Times* expect any evidence?

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The Churches — as Churches — are still at loggerheads about divorce, though it would not be unfair to say that most of their "heads" don't care two hoots. The true object of all this talk is to make people believe that marriage is a "sacrament," and can only be conducted by priests; whereas they know perfectly well that in most countries the only legal marriage is the one performed by the State. But even our bishops have to admit — as they do admit, even on the radio or on TV — that no one knows what Jesus really said about divorce.

In Mark he declares that marriage is for keeps; while in Matthew he says in effect, *except* for adultery. The Churches dare not throw Matthew overboard, but many bishops and staunch supporters of the Church of England prefer to stand by Matthew, and not by Mark. As the right of people to shape their own lives is being recognised more and more, the Churches will have to give in and throw Mark overboard. And divorce is not the only thing about which the Churches will have to give in.

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We note that there is now an "Anglican Church Movement" in Australia — 9,000 men are visiting all Church of England families to find out if they believe in the Kingdom of God? Well, if they are really C. of E. they *must* believe in the Kingdom, and also they *must* believe they are all going there. But the Movement is bound to succeed, anyway, for it has the Divine Blessing of such Great Men of God as the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Archbishop of Sydney, and the Presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A. And if they can't guarantee the Kingdom of God, who can?

Lingering Lucifer

By LEONARD MARTIN

ANYONE who is at all elderly and who does some reflecting, must have become aware that one major event that took place since he wore knee breeches has mysteriously never been chronicled in the daily press.

That is the unlamented popular demise of one Satan, the Devil, Old Nick, the fallen and rebellious angel, Beelzebub, or whatever name or alias he went under; at all events, dead as far as thinking people are concerned. It is only in fundamentalist circles, newspapers, church organs or old-time sermons that his name is mentioned. Others, using picturesque or figurative language, do occasionally allude to him, but in the same vague manner that justice, Uncle Sam or John Bull are used, words without any material substance.

About fifty years ago one of the best of best sellers, Marie Corelli, whose annual latest work in the publishing season was awaited almost with bated breath, devoted a book to His Majesty, which she called *The Sorrows of Satan*. He appeared to be a suave modern gentleman, rich, wearing the latest fashion, and every time some woman was faithless to her husband, or some churchwarden ran off with the collection, or some previously respected rector or church organist became too familiar with the choirboys, he was supposed to have suffered as deeply as any Saint, and Marie, no doubt, would have put it that he had been stabbed to the very heart.

It was all very well when the populace was quite sure that the earth was flat. Heaven was above; Hell was below; quite simple. As the late Dr. Inge once said, in effect, Copernicus destroyed the physical Heaven; he also destroyed the fiery nether regions of our young days. Where were they? There was no place in space left for them. So, instead of once having been a place somewhere underfoot, these products of the fertile human imagination, according to modern churchmen, have been mysteriously transformed into torturing states of mind. The substance has vanished; the idea remains. But the old and wily enemy of mankind is still kept going in Christian Churches.

Many an individual, charged in a criminal court with some crime or other, still advances, as a plea in mitigation: "Satan tempted me!" But he is never called to give evidence. So the old gentleman's soul perhaps, not exactly marches, but drifts on, after all! Among the intelligent, however, his death may be assumed. And there is no statue to commemorate him, according to the best guide books.

THE FREETHINKER

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Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. Members and visitors are always welcome at the Office.

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.

D.W.—Dr. Abraham Myerson has reported that the destruction of certain glands by a gunshot wound may change a man's entire character.

M. BARRETT.—Amelioration of a crippled condition is a possibility of nature, not of "miracles." Crutches may sometimes be left behind at Lourdes, but never a glass eye or wooden leg.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Every Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, MURRAY and SLEMEN.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, SMITH, CORSAIR and FINKEL. Sundays, 7.15 p.m.: Messrs. MILLS, WOODCOCK, and SMITH.

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) — Thursday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE. Friday, 1 p.m.: R. POWE.

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

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, March 17th, 6.45 p.m.: J. ROCHE, "History of Ireland."

Bristol Rationalist Group (Hermes Room, Guildhall Chambers, 26 Broad Street).—Thursday, March 21st, 7.30 p.m.: Dr. F. H. GEORGE (Lecturer in Psychology, Bristol University), "Automation and Human Values."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, off Edgware Road).—Sunday, March 17th, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Church and State."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 19th, 7.15 p.m.: H. J. KLARE (Secretary, Howard League), "A Programme for Penal Reform."

Head Office N.S.S. (41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1).—Friday, March 15th, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The History of Civilisation" (fourth of six Study Classes). Subject this week: "Religion and Society." (Admission 1/-.)

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 17th, 6.30 p.m.: Debate on Communism between R. SANSOM (Anarchist) and F. WESTACOTT (Communist).

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall Parliament Street).—Sunday, March 17th, 2.30 p.m.: C. PRIESTLEY, B.A., "Christianity and Intellectual Integrity."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, March 17th, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Paradox of Ireland."

Notes and News

DETAILS of the Congress of the World Union of Free-thinkers, to take place in Paris, will be given next week. Meanwhile, readers might note the change of date to September 6th to 10th, 1957.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £197 1s. 2d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; R. DeSalle, £1 1s.; The late J. Watson (Chester), 5s.; R. Pearce, £1; North London Branch (N.S.S.), £1 1s.; H. T. Derrett, £1.—Total to date, March 8th, 1957, £201 9s. 2d.

THE Central London Branch of the National Secular Society will hold its second annual Chapman Cohen-Joseph McCabe Memorial Meeting in the Holborn Hall on Thursday, April 4th, and the theme will be "Personal Liberty." The speakers will be Mr. Will Griffiths, M.P. for the Exchange Division of Manchester, Mr. Frank Haskell, of the National Council for Civil Liberties, Mr. Hector Hawton, of the Rationalist Press Association and Editor of *The Humanist*, and Mr. F. A. Ridley, President of the N.S.S. Further details will follow.

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OWING to pressure of work, Mr. Harry Newton has resigned as Honorary Secretary of the Bradford Branch N.S.S. after a year of office. His successor is Mr. W. Sheppard, of 47 Milford Place, Leeds, 4, to whom we send our best wishes for a long and successful term. Mr. Newton's last letter reported a debate, for which he took the chair, between Rawdon Baptist College and the Bradford N.S.S. Held on Tuesday, February 26th, this was well attended and the Society's representatives were Mr. H. Day and Mr. F. J. Corina.

★

In a long leader to greet the birthday of the new republic of Ghana, the *Manchester Guardian* made some very interesting observations. These were marred somewhat by the remark that "There is a fine Christian heritage." Last September we quoted from a copy of the *Ashanti Times* in which another leader regretted that criminal statistics in the Gold Coast showed that there were more Christian prisoners than there were followers of any other religion. "As in the previous year," it said, "Christians are trying to outdo their pagan brethren in committing crimes. 4,523 of them went to prison [in 1954-55] as against 3,162 pagans, with the Mohammedans a close third." This will not surprise readers of THE FREETHINKER, but it might cause some raising of the eyebrows in the editorial room of the *Guardian*. A fine Christian heritage indeed!

World Problem No. 1

IS KISSING A MORTAL SIN for the unmarried? Worried lovers may relax; it is only venial, said Rome's clerical monthly, *La Palestra del Clero*, last week. The kiss that started the discussion was confessed to his priest by a 15-year-old village boy. Mortal sin, said the priest. The anguished youth went to a second confessor, who told him he had committed only a venial one. Back went the boy to the first priest, who, in turn, wrote to *La Palestra del Clero* for guidance.

There are two fundamental Church documents on kissing, answered the journal's theological advisers: one by the Council of Vienne (1311-12), one by Pope Alexander VII, who reigned from 1655 to 1667. Both agree that if two unwed people kiss with intent to fornicate, they commit mortal sin, whether or not fornication follows. But if there is no such intention, if the kiss is only a "carnal delight limited to the act of kissing — if further consequences are neither indulged in nor thought of, the sin is only a venial sin." Kissing that begins venial may turn mortal, warned *La Palestra*. "The spiritual direction of young adolescents," it summed up, "is delicate and difficult."—*Time*.

This has quite upset us. We wait in an agony of suspense while the great theological minds solve the problem.

Unfair to Humanists

By G. H. TAYLOR

UNDER THE ABOVE TITLE an article by Mr. Driberg in *The New Statesman* draws attention to a recent talk by Sir Richard Acland on the Western Regional service, attacking the BBC policy in religious broadcasting.

Acland, who is a schoolteacher in a London secondary school, has to sit through religious broadcasts to schools and describes the atmosphere in which they are received by older boys. His job is to try to get the discussion going when the broadcasts have finished, and this sometimes hangs fire. Indeed, some boys, he admits, are more concerned with writing up their Physics notes than with attending to Christian propaganda.

The remedy for this indifference is to get some opposition. "Here in our midst there is a widely supported religion or philosophy called Humanism," he said (Mr. Driberg had access to the actual script) and "Humanists believe that all the forces needed for the ennoblement of man and society are to be found in man himself. . . ."

Now follows an important admission. He went on to point out that these young fellows "know perfectly well that this Humanism, in one form or another, is in fact the philosophy of somewhere between a quarter and two thirds of the masters who teach them."

Acland (himself a Christian) has to admit that Humanism is only mentioned in such broadcasts when some Christian speaker wishes to refute it.

What a howl of protest would shatter the BBC if it only permitted Socialism to be discussed by Tories! Or *vice versa*.

The fact that Humanist views are always excluded, he observed, suggests to the boys that there is "something rather fishy" going on. "If authority plugs something, then *prima facie* there is something wrong with it; if authority

excludes something, *prima facie* it is rather alluring." Fifty years ago silence was on the side of the Churches, but today, he thought, it was on the side of materialism or of indifference. Therefore Humanist broadcasts should be permitted, not only on democratic grounds, but as an assistance to Christian propaganda. Humanist exponents are not lacking but (as Driberg points out) they are to be found in such discussion programmes as the Brains Trust, and not specifically as opponents of Christianity. This does not apply to school programmes. The Christian-controlled BBC simply dare not let the Humanists get at the child!

The idea that Christianity is going to gain from being opposed on the air is a beautiful theory. Acland, we are sure, really believes it, and it was the official Methodist view at the time of Mrs. Knight's broadcasts. Those broadcasts were in fact the one and only time such a theory has been tested. And the Christian BBC discovered that such a power of good was done to the Christian religion by those broadcasts that they have been putting on militant atheist broadcasts ever since. Never a day passes but the religious broadcasting is accompanied by atheist attack, so that the greatest possible benefits to religion shall result. Or is the BBC sceptical of Sir Richard's theory?

But if Acland really has confidence in his theory, let him pursue it with all the influence he commands. As a proselytising Christian it is his *duty* to do so. Let him give full support to the Humanist Council in its request for fair play on the air.

To say that Christianity is going to gain from anti-Christian broadcasting is theoretical. To say that the BBC dare not risk a two-minute talk by the N.S.S. Secretary amidst a whole half-hour of Christian propaganda is *not* theoretical: it is historical fact.

Atlantic Waves

Major-General Watlington, commandant at Fort Carson, Colo., issued an order compelling church attendance of men under him. Some of the men got this news to the Denver papers and the General quickly backed down when he got inquiries from Washington about it. He tried to save face by saying that he did not mean they *had* to, that he was only *encouraging* them to.

★

Forty-nine convicts in Mississippi were recently baptised in a muddy irrigation pond, while a choir of 18 Negroes stood on the banks singing hymns. It surely must have been a sight for the gods.

★

Joseph Lewis, President of the Freethinkers of America, has asked the Supreme Court of New York State to force the State Education Commissioner to remove the words "Under God" from the approved public school version of the pledge of allegiance to the flag. Martin J. Scheiman, attorney for Lewis, asked the court: "How can the traditional separation between Church and State be preserved if children of tender years are exposed, without any choice on their part, to religious dogma in their classrooms?"

The law officer of the Education Department said that the Commissioner had not *ordered* that the words be used in reciting the pledge; he had only *recommended* that it be done. This is just disgusting sophistry. He knows very well that any school teacher who had the courage to leave the words out would become the target of religionists and vote-seeking politicians on investigating committees, especially in the Roman Catholic controlled public schools in

New York City, and would be hounded out of the profession, or even jailed on a charge of subversion.

★

The N.Y. *Sunday News* says that now that the U.S. has officially adopted the motto "In God We Trust," this will show that the vast majority of people do put their belief and trust in a Supreme Being. It says that this has been true ever since the U.S. declared its independence. If this is true, it seems queer that not one of the founding fathers is on record of ever having proposed it for a national motto or to put it on our money. *E Pluribus Unum* was their motto. Nor did the men who ran the post office when adhesive stamps were invented think of putting these words on the U.S. postage. No, these old-time Americans were singularly forgetful about such things. It remained for a newer kind of American of a different kind of religion to think this up.—*Liberal*.

The following are among many similar advertisements noted recently in American newspapers:

"I possess *dynamic powers*. Nothing impossible with God. Send donation to *Stella*."

"Blessed dreams. Send \$ for blessed candles. Blessed Oil. Blessed Incense.—Rev. Prof. Jordan."

"Evil Spirits removed. Evil Eye removed. \$."

"Allah speaks. Read about Allah and the Flying Saucer. Contribution with order. . . ."

"Ann Marie will help you. Gifted adviser. Three questions \$. Problem \$. Send birth date."

"You *dare not* tell anyone. But you can tell God—through me. . . Prices . . ."

Freethought Abroad

AUSTRIA

In the process of expanding its activities in Austria is the new Körperschaft der Kirchenfreien, whose headquarters are in Graz. One of the leaders, Richard Felster, tells me that although they are only just beginning their work, they have already nearly five hundred members, mostly in the Graz area, but also in the other large towns and country districts of Austria.

Alive to the dangers of Catholic Action, they seek to defend the freedom of School, Marriage Laws and Church, and to resist Catholic indoctrination.

The Körperschaft issue a monthly bulletin, *Der Kirchenfreie*.

FINLAND

The Finnish Freethought Union is a composition of 47 branches spread throughout Finland. The total membership figure is over 7,500. The entrance fee is 50 Finnish marks, and the annual subscription is 200 marks per member. From these fees the branches retain 12.50 and 80 Finnish marks respectively, the remainder being transmitted to headquarters.

The Union, which is affiliated to the World Union of Freethinkers, has a set of aims and objects largely similar to those of the N.S.S. The branches organise many lecture-meetings and supply lecturers; subjects tackled by Judge Väinö Voipio, one of the best-known lecturers, for example, have been: "Morals and Religion," "Sad Aspects of Christianity," "Society's Pressure on Freethinkers," and "Evidence of Theologians."

The branches run study circles of their own and help to distribute the Union's monthly magazine, *Vapaa Ajattelijä* (*Free Thinker*), besides other literature issued by the Union.

Vapaa Ajattelijä is beautifully produced and prints a fine list of literature, including many of the writings of leading Finnish Freethinkers and translations from other languages. (Works by Ingersoll were translated into Finnish as early as the beginning of the century.)

The Union suffered great losses in 1955 and 1956, when their chairman, Professor V. T. Aaltonen, and then his successor, Professor V. Ruutu, died.

Both were fearless fighters for Freethought, Professor Aaltonen writing many excellent books, for instance, *Why I am not a Christian*, *The Truth About the Church*, *Workers in the Shackles of the Church*, and *Why I am a Freethinker*.

Professor Ruutu did not write books. Professor Ruutu wrote mostly from the viewpoint of historical knowledge and politics. Ruutu was a professor of political science, whereas Aaltonen was a professor of chemistry and forestry.

For this interesting information I am deeply indebted to my correspondent, V. H. Suutari, secretary of the Finnish Freethought Union.

NORWAY

The Norwegian Human-Etisk Forbund continues to progress, and since its formation has received a great deal of Press publicity. When the Forbund held their inaugural meeting last year, 500 invitations were despatched by the committee, and a surprisingly large attendance of 400 resulted, indicating the demand for this type of organisation among Norwegian intellectuals.

The Forbund plans to examine Norwegian laws, exposing examples of legalistic religious discrimination and to obtain improved conditions in schools for the children of Rationa-

list parents (Norwegian law states an intention to "give the children a moral and Christian education," morality and Christianity being, apparently, accepted as synonymous). In Norway the State Church is the Lutheran and the Government maintains about 1,000 ecclesiastical institutions. Although approximately 95% of the population are claimed as Church members, the Forbund state that few of these are regular churchgoers, only being listed as "adherents" because of the traditional Christian baptism. As in Britain, some favour the separation of Church and State. The Church has a stranglehold on birth, marriage and funeral ceremonies, and the civil birth register is administered by the ecclesiastical authorities. This means that birth registry and baptism are practically accepted as synonymous and Rationalists must (at present) apply to a clergyman to obtain a birth certificate for their children. The Forbund seek to break this ceremonial monopoly.

The Forbund is hoping to influence the formation of similar groups in neighbouring Scandinavian countries (Sweden and Finland each have one active *Freethought* society, Denmark has no group of our type).

On September 6th, 1956, the first public meeting to be held was well attended and at the start of this year the Forbund had 430 members.

DAVE SHIPPER.

CORRESPONDENCE

FROM CHICAGO

I enjoy THE FREETHINKER about as much in the rationalist field as anything I read. Possibly, being British, the flavour and "tone" of your publication is different enough from our periodicals here to hold my interest down to the smallest item.

Chicago is a Roman Catholic-controlled town. The Mayor, Chief of Police, Fire Chief and most judges or lesser magistrates are Catholic. Right now we are going through a battle between the Lutherans and the Catholics. The Catholics intimidated a local television station into cancelling a showing of the movie "Martin Luther." You should have heard the howl that arose when the nominally passive Protestants became aware that the back-on collar boys had yanked this movie off the programme. Naturally, the Catholics denied asking their parishioners to raise a fuss over the showing of this "infidel" picture. They were so sanctimonious about the whole matter. It is possible that the television station may yet gather courage enough to put on the movie.

J. J. WILSON (Chicago).

A REPLY TO MR. McCALL

The General Secretary's footnote to my letter (8th inst.) holds less water than a wide-mesh sieve. As its name implies, the *raison d'être* of the N.S.S. is to propagate Secularism, not pacifism. It is now more than ever apparent that the N.S.S. organisation has been captured by Pacifists, Communists and others who are using it for their own ends, to the detriment of Secularism. It needs a thorough cleansing and the so-called "Immediate Practical Objects" disavowed. The British action in Suez had absolutely nothing to do with Secularism and should not have been officially noticed by the N.S.S. Is there any sane reason for excluding Anthony Eden and his like from the N.S.S.? There must be thousands in the Forces with Secularist leanings, but they will have nothing to do with a society which is both pacifist and communist.

If the N.S.S. is to survive it must reform on the lines indicated. Otherwise it must be prepared to see another society arise devoted to Secularism without any tags. This does not mean that we genuine Secularists would refuse to work by the side of those holding political views not shared by us. It means that they would not be allowed to use our organisation to propagate them.

The objects of a genuine Secularist society might be expressed thus:

1. To relieve men's minds of the fear of God.
2. To rescue children from the clutches of the clergy.

I believe that a society with those avowed objects would receive a large measure of support, and might, with vigorous propaganda, deliver the *coup de grace* to the Churches within this century. Without such reform the N.S.S. is moribund.

W. E. HUXLEY.

Rejoinder:

It is not so apparent to me that the National Secular Society has been "captured by Pacifists, Communists" or "others." Indeed, at present I have Conservatives to the right of me (over Suez), Com-

munists to the left of me (over Hungary) and I am being "volleyed and thundered." But I see no reason for dismay; the Executive Committee acted within the legitimate interpretation of our Immediate Practical Objects when it addressed letters to the Prime Minister and to the Soviet Ambassador, and I know that many members endorsed our actions. Curiously enough, our critics of the left seem to overlook the first letter; those of the right, the second. If the Society has been "captured" by Communists, how does Mr. Huxley explain the protest over Soviet intervention in Hungary? His suggestion is absurd. Secularism is "concern for this life," and that surely involves concern with such important matters as war and human suffering.

COLIN MCCALL.

J. M. ROBERTSON

I have no wish to appear to be taking sides between Mr. Cutner and Mr. Norman; each in his own way holds my highest esteem. Mr. Cutner is always associated in my mind with the many delightful meetings in the past with Chapman Cohen. I have since World War I followed with close attention Mr. Norman's courageous attitude on all matters relating to the freedom and significance of the individual in our society and his views as expressed in the Liberal press have almost always met with my approval and support.

I suppose at one time or another I have read practically everything J.M.R. wrote, with the exception of the Shakespeare matter. I heard Robertson lecture on one occasion and I thought he was a fine-looking man, but not overgifted with a sense of humour. He provided us with whole armouries of facts and arguments, but it was only grim determination that impelled us to read them.

To me his style did not improve with the years. His last work, *The History of Freethought in the Nineteenth Century*, was as dull and as stodgy as such a tremendous subject could possibly be.

It is hardly necessary to remind Mr. Norman that Robertson was not the only progressive minded man tipped over mentally by the war hysteria of the 1914 outbreak.

To read the clownish effusions today of Haeckel, Hyndman, H. G. Wells, McTaggart and so many others is, and was, enough to make us wonder if science and reason are a protection against sycophantic emotionalism.

ROBERT F. TURNEY.

John M. Robertson influenced me so much in my twenties that I should feel ashamed now if I did not cross swords with Mr. C. H. Norman. I listened to J.M.R. on many public platforms, and was always impressed by the dignity and courtesy of his polemic. I differed from him over the 1914 war; but so many eminent pacifists went over to the war party then that his defection did not surprise me.

His *History of Free Thought* I still think a magnificent work of scholarship. The *Letters on Reasoning* should be in the hands of every young man who has a taste for argument. I did not agree with all of it then, and I still disagree with him over Determinism; but there!—can Mr. Norman quote a single philosopher whose every doctrine he supports? Mr. Norman dismisses Robertson's work on Shakespeare with the one word, "Absurd." I find it a monument of scholarship, and full of interesting thought. On the other hand I disagreed entirely with the *Fallacy of Saving*. Let me conclude by naming two books which Mr. Norman does not mention: *Pagan Christs* and the *History of Christianity*, both most valuable contributions to freethought. For a man who looked forward to a public career, Robertson showed remarkable courage in defending unpopular causes. I think he deserves the admiration of freethinkers.

HENRY MEULEN.

J.M.R. AND BOTTOMLEY

Re the letter of C. H. Norman, there is no doubt that J.M.R. fell in the estimation of a good number of freethinkers during the attack made upon Germany in 1914. He seemed to completely lose his better sense, and proved himself a Chauvenist and Jingo of the worst kind. The appointment as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade gave him security. He was not the type of a Bradlaugh. Nevertheless, J.M.R. did his bit to free men's minds from the false teachings of the Church. Let us forget the error he made and think only of the good he left for posterity. The real villain of the 1914-18 "war to end war" was Bottomley. I saw this scamp at one war meeting accept eighty guineas for what he termed his No. 2 speech before he went on the stage. He was offered a cheque, but Bottomley said, "No thank you; I want the cash before I start," and the secretary had to run around the shopkeepers to borrow the money, and the audience was kept waiting for half an hour. Bottomley's No. 1 speech cost 100 guineas. I heard them both, and both were the same old stuff. His opening lines were always the same. With his eyes closed, he would say, "I believe that the great God has ordained that the British Empire shall rule the world." Loud and prolonged cheers from the hoodlums!

PAUL VARNEY.

TEACHING ATHEISM

The recent announcement by the Soviet Union instructing all schools to teach *Atheism* should interest some of your readers.

THE FREETHINKER has been teaching "Atheism" in the form of Secularism-Humanism, Rationalism, etc., for nearly a century, but Atheism has been watered down with more respectable words that are adopted by so many "milk and water" disbelievers, who embrace one of the several political parties in Britain—all of whom pander to various religions.

The elected M.P.s, with their Governments, comply with Church dogma and I doubt if there is a confessed *Atheist* among them.

Those who call themselves "rationalists" allow their children to be taught Christianity at our schools.

Alas! there are very few Atheist schools in Britain. The godless Russian Government of Communism is concentrating on educating their children in Atheism and presumably on Republicanism as well.

Sixty years ago there was a large section of the public who were Republicans—viz., those who opposed monarchies.

The word Republican has been prostituted all over the world where Christianity exists—notably in the U.S.A.

Can any good thing come from Russian? Yes. I think so.

FRANK BURGESS.

[In order to "teach Atheism" we should first have to teach *atheism*. The one is irrelevant without the other. We are more concerned with teaching children *how* to think than *what* to think.—ED.]

LECTURE REPORT

MR. H. CUTNER's lecture on Spiritualism for the Merseyside Branch on March 3rd drew an appreciative audience who filled the room at the Stork Hotel. It caused a lively discussion—particularly from the Spiritualists present. A feature of the evening was the Branch's energetic Secretary, Mr. T. Hogan, taking flashlight photographs during the lecture. Mr. Cutner wishes particularly to thank Mr. and Mrs. Allen, of Hightown, for their most kind and generous hospitality to him.

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