

The Freethinker

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AT THE 1956 Annual Conference of the National Secular Society, a resolution on the agenda dealing with the *Concordat* concluded in 1929 between the Vatican and the Italian Fascist régime of Mussolini, had to be left unheard on account of lack of time. Later, the present writer brought the matter up at the annual meeting of the International Executive Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers held at Geneva last August. After an animated discussion, the general meeting endorsed a proposal by the leading French Freethinker, Mr. J. Cotereau, to put, not only the Italian *Concordat*, but the entire problem of the current relationships between Church and State on the agenda of the International Congress to be held in Paris from September 6th to 10th, 1957.

The Spanish Concordat

The current importance of this subject is underlined by the recent (1953) *Concordat* concluded between the Vatican and the present Spanish clerical Fascist régime of General Franco. This written agreement, copies of which can, I believe, be obtained from the Spanish Embassy, is doubly important not only for professed rationalists, but equally for all democrats and, indeed, in the last analysis, for all modern-minded people. It is so especially on two grounds: firstly, because the Vatican-Franco *Concordat* represents the high watermark of Vatican influence to date in the Western world; and secondly, because it underlines with conspicuous clarity the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards dissident minorities and, indeed, to the whole question of religious toleration in the 20th century. The Catholic Church, as Pope Leo XIII once noted, has often to wait for what His Holiness termed "happier times" before putting its policy into operation. Meanwhile, in more mundane epochs, such as his — and ours — the Vatican has to resort to compromises and half-measures. This tendency is notably illustrated in the Franco-Pacelli *Concordat*.

Exit the Inquisition!

The 1953 Roman-Spanish *Concordat* is the most favourable to Catholicism yet concluded between the Papacy and any modern Catholic state. In several respects, as has been noted before in this column, its tendency is decidedly medieval; again, as in the Ages of Faith, Roman Catholicism becomes the "One True Church," the only legitimate religion of the Spanish nation. None the less, even there, Rome has retreated in some respects from the positions which she once took for granted "in happier times," notably the High Middle Ages, when the physical extermination of heretics represented the first and most solemn duty of every Christian state. In the recent *Concordat* there is no mention of either the Holy Inquisition or of *autos da fé*, those sanctified bonfires which, to the profound satisfaction of the Church and to the delirious plaudits of the multitudes of onlookers, consigned to the flames both the books and the persons of the heretical rebels against the

Church of Christ. The "Most Catholic" Kings of Spain, and that redoubtable destroyer of heretics, the Dominican Grand Inquisitor, Torquemada, would no doubt have raised their eyebrows at this omission; but there it isn't! The worldly wise Church of Rome in the mid-twentieth century realises that in the words of the apostle, "There is a time for all things"; for burning and for refraining from burning; until and unless the Ages of Faith return, the stakes and the consecrated faggots remain in abeyance. Meanwhile, exit the inquisition until maybe "happier times" return, when Rome may again resume her medieval practice of automatically converting heretics into combustible fuel!

Rome and Toleration

The modern as distinct from the medieval policy of Rome in relation to rival religious cults, was recently summarised in an article written in the famous Jesuit journal, *Civiltà Cattolica*, which has a semi-official status in Vatican circles. The relevant passage stated: "The Catholic Church endowed by Divine Mandate with the sole rank of the one true Church, claims exclusive privileges for herself, for it is Truth alone and not error that has the exclusive right to proclaim its mission. As for the other religions, the Church will not suppress them with the sword, but it will insist that by legitimate actions worthy of human dignity, they will not be allowed to circulate their false doctrines."

One may add that the 1953 *Concordat* embodies the above principles pretty accurately. In it, there are no provisions for the suppression or execution of heretics as, for example, there would have been prior to 1808, when Napoleon, inspired by the liberal principles of the French Revolution, finally suppressed the Spanish Inquisition. Actually, the legal right of religious minorities to exist is explicitly recognised in the *Concordat*. None the less, the actual toleration granted is of the narrowest kind; indeed, it really amounts to a bare permission to exist and to conduct religious ceremonies in licensed premises behind closed doors and without any public propaganda or advertisement of any kind. Meanwhile, the Catholic Church enjoys the full protection of the law and the official *status* of the only officially-recognised State Church. This is the present Vatican attitude towards toleration; it represents the most favourable variation of the 20th century attitude of Rome, and the one most consonant with the general principles enunciated above in the Vatican organ itself. In Spain the Catholic Church does not officially "brandish the sword" against alien creeds; it even allows them a legal existence. But it circumscribes this, and it jealously reserves the monopoly of full religious existence and exclusive freedom of public propaganda for itself.

The Irish Model

The Spanish *Concordat* represents the most favourable terms the Vatican can extract in the mid-20th century. A less, but sufficiently favourable variant is provided by the current relations of Church and State in the Irish

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Church and State

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

Republic, a system of indirect rule as opposed to the more direct relationships established between Rome and Spain by the 1953 *Concordat*. In Eire, unlike Spain, the Church is not officially established, nor are the Protestant and other religious minorities *legally* limited in the exercise of their rights to the public practice and propaganda of their cults. Rome is not the only recognised religious authority in the Irish Republic. In theory, at any rate, THE FREE-THINKER, containing openly anti-Catholic arguments, can be sold in the streets of any Irish town (but it might be wise to caution would-be sellers, at any rate outside Dublin!). The Irish constitution is thus a good deal more liberal than that envisaged under the present Spanish *Concordat*. However, if reports speak truly, Rome manages to do pretty much as she likes under the "indirect rule" in Eire!

Church and State in Protestant Lands

The Church of Rome is, of course, totalitarian Christianity. In the non-totalitarian Protestant lands, whilst the pro-

blems of Church and State exist, they are much less urgent, for the last word usually lies with the State. Accordingly, whilst most Freethinkers would advocate the separation of Church and State, in, say, England and Scotland, the matter is not of the same urgency as in relation to Rome. History proves that Freethought can co-exist, as here, with a Protestant State-Church. Equally it proves that, in the long run, it cannot do so where Catholicism, with its exclusive claims, has succeeded in establishing itself. No doubt, at Paris, full weight will be given to the above considerations; perhaps, in view of the prospective world-wide diffusion of rationalist ideas, the future relations of Church and State will be considered also in relation to the great non-Christian religions of the East.

[NOTE: All Freethinkers interested in this important subject should write to the Spanish Embassy for a copy of the 1953 *Concordat*. They will also find much valuable information in *The Irish and Catholic Power* by Paul Blanshard.]

Was Malthus a Malthusian?

By G. DICKINSON

I HAVE NEVER UNDERSTOOD how the name of Malthus ever became synonymous with birth control. I cannot imagine Malthus himself regarding the idea with any favour, and I am more than inclined to believe that he would condemn the practice.

His *Essay on Population* was written in reply to William Godwin's *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice*. Godwin maintained that want and misery were attributable to human institutions; Malthus shifted the responsibility to the Creator. The doctrine of Malthus, as at present held, may be thus stated in its strongest and least objectionable form: That population, constantly tending to increase, must, when unrestrained, ultimately press against the limits of subsistence, not as against a fixed, but as against an elastic barrier, which makes subsistence more and more difficult; thus, wherever reproduction has had time to assert its power, and is unchecked by prudence, there must exist that degree of want which will keep population within the bounds of subsistence.

Throughout his *Essay* Malthus continually insists that want and misery are due to the "niggardliness of nature," and not to the rapacity of man. He is endeavouring to convince the reader that there is nothing we can do about it, that the process is as inevitable as death and we can but resign ourselves.

It is important to note that nowhere does Malthus suggest limitation of population, except by what he calls "moral restraint," i.e., refraining from intercourse. If we read his other works we must conclude that he would certainly not recommend prevention by birth control. The point of Malthus' argument is that all this is "ordained." He accepts the dictum of "The rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them, high or lowly, and ordered their estate." His *Essay* is written in support of this.

Such a theory spreads quickly and strikes its roots deep. It agrees very well with certain Christian principles. According to Malthus, we have on one hand population increasing at a certain rate, and on the other subsistence increasing at a slower rate. In order to prove his point, that the rapacity of man was not responsible for the want and misery of the world, Malthus was obliged to adopt the position that these misfortunes are the result of inexorable forces. He succeeded beyond his own expectation, for reasons which are not hard to discover. His theory will not stand the test of real examination, and there are facts

which disprove it. Read in the light of his other works, it is difficult to see how his *Essay* supports the view of modern Malthusians.

Religious Revival

THE FIGHT for Sunday cinemas at Maesteg (South Wales) followed the usual pattern of (a) press controversy, (b) protest meetings organised by the clergy, (c) public petitions, and (d) the final plebiscite.

At a "Town Meeting" to test public opinion the local ecclesiastical bodies announced their intention of packing the hall early with aged supporters, a typical trick, running true to form (Christian form), and, of course, the Sabbatarians won by 628 votes to 122.

The pressure for Sunday freedom was maintained, however; petitions were presented and the poll was taken on February 20th. The clergy strenuously opposed Sunday cinemas to the bitter end, and made unflattering comments (to say the least!) about the morals of those who voted against them. We now leave them to gnash their teeth over the result: For Sunday cinemas, 3,919; against, 3,394.

Agitation for similar rights has now started in Pontypool, with a public meeting on March 18th.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY

On SUNDAY, MARCH 3RD, the L.S.S. celebrated the 76th anniversary of the opening of the Leicester Secular Hall. Mr. Geoff Kirk occupied the chair, and the guest speaker was Mr. F. A. Ridley, who paid tribute to the efforts of Owen and Paine, and especially to the ordinary unknown freethinkers of the past, who, by their collective efforts were able to bring about the more liberal atmosphere in society which we enjoy today. All this in the face of determined opposition of organised religion.

As industrialisation spreads to the more backward countries, as it is doing today, other religious systems, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, will begin to lose their hold on the peoples of the East, as Christianity has declined in the West.

Mrs. Cartwright continued the meeting with a talk on North Malaya (where her son is a teacher) illustrated with lantern slides.

C.H.H.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN

AVRO MANHATTAN asks:

"WHY IS THE PRESS AFRAID OF IT?"

Report from Poland (The Freethought Struggle)

[For the information assembled in this article we are indebted to the Information Officer of the Polish Cultural Institute, of 81 Portland Place, W.1.—G.H.T.]

LAST MONTH saw the establishment in Warsaw of two societies devoted to the furtherance of Freethought: the Atheist Intelligentsia Club, and the Society for Secular Schools.

The precipitating factor in the formation of these bodies has been last December's agreement between the Church and the State on the introduction of religious instruction as an optional school subject. Polish Atheists and Agnostics, particularly those concerned with education, are anxious to guard the principle of equal rights and tolerance for the non-believing as well as the believing, and to assert the right, laid down in the agreement, to create secular schools where the non-believing population is large enough to warrant this.

The aim of the Atheist Intelligentsia Club is in fact the defence of children not choosing religious instruction against discrimination in contravention of the spirit of the recent agreement. The initial meeting of the club charged the newly elected committee to establish contacts with other similar bodies in other towns, and to work towards the re-creation of the Polish Free Thinking Society, which was forced to cease activity some years ago.

The Society for Secular Schools was established at a meeting in Warsaw called by a group of parents, teachers and educational workers, in response to many requests from parents anxious to restrain discrimination against children not opting for religious instruction. It was pointed out that the Polish Union of Teachers had fought for many years for the principle of the secular school, and that the agreement had caused the Society of Friends of Children (a body established in the inter-war years, which set up a number of secular schools) to lose its *raison d'être*. The meeting endorsed a programme for the new society, which embodied the following points: the early creation of secular schools in numbers appropriate to local needs; conditions of complete tolerance for non-believing children where numbers do not justify creation of secular schools; severe penalties for infringement of the principle of mutual tolerance; the guaranteeing to secular schools of conditions that will allow them to become true centres for the dissemination of materialist thought; and guarantee of free action for the society.

Representatives of the Ministry of Education were present, and among supporters of the new society were the President of the Polish Union of Teachers and Professor Kotarbinski, newly elected President of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

On January 30th *Zycie Warszawy* reported on the development of the Society for Secular Schools in these words:

The Society's programme is still in the course of elaboration, but some main lines are becoming discernible. The basic unit of the Society will be the circle, and this may be based either on the place of work (many applications for membership come from people who are not parents of school age children, but are in agreement with the Society's aims), or on the school. Four commissions have been established: organisation, statutory, propaganda, and education. The last-named of these is at present considering the desirability of introducing church history and elements of philosophy into the school curriculum. Branches of the Society have so far been set up in Lodz and Katowice, as well as in Warsaw, and an organising committee is also being formed in Cracow. [trans. N. E. Orna.]

An interview with Professor Kotarbinski on secular education was recently published in *Zycie Warszawy*. This distinguished logician said:

"The Act introducing religious teaching is, as I understand it, a concession on the part of rationally thinking people to a wide public whose thinking on this subject is, unfortunately, irrational. The Act itself is in accord with the feeling for justice and rectitude, and satisfies the demands of conscience, in that it allows the generality of adults to adopt a position towards religion that accords with their own convictions. However, the practical consequences of the Act can show themselves contrary to freedom of conscience, and I understand that in many cases children who do not enrol for religious education, as well as their parents, have encountered pressure from their environment that does not accord with the postulate of freedom of conscience.

"I think it necessary that parents, teachers and supporters of secular education should organise for the systematic defence of their own beliefs. One of the most beneficial means of such defence would be the creation of completely secular schools, in which religious education would have no part. The purpose for which such schools should be created is that of proving in practice the superiority of completely secular education over 'mixed' education. In particular the competition between the two types of school in raising the ethical standards of education would be of great significance for both. Often, in circles indifferent to religion or even rationalist, the idea still persists — quite unfounded — that only religious education can ensure a high moral character, so it is necessary to show in practice that secular schools can succeed in educating ethically.

"In those cases where establishment of a secular school is not possible, and the children of unbelieving parents attend schools with religious education, the solution must lie in a spirit of tolerance towards the beliefs of others, from both sides.

"The role of the teacher in this is important. The teacher should not have to express in his own name anything that does not agree with his own convictions. The principle that Polish teachers should follow is that of education in society of a spirit of mutual tolerance between people of differing convictions."

THE FREETHINKER will follow up these developments in Poland and report accordingly.

A SHOCKING OVERSIGHT

WHEN the January Glamorgan Quarter Sessions began at Cardiff, it was discovered that witnesses could not be sworn in, owing to the fact that, by a shocking oversight, there was no Bible in the court. The appeal, "I suppose there is nobody present who has a New Testament on them?" by the chairman, Mr. Hubert Llewellyn Williams, o.c., brought the appalling discovery that of the assembled litigants and observers not one was pious-minded enough to carry a copy of the Holy Book, even the defendants preferring to rely on the help of the law rather than that of the Lord. However, after a frantic search, a copy of the New Testament was procured and the Law, in all its serene yet awesome majesty, continued (with God's help) to dispense justice.

This Believing World

How easily any man, no matter how brilliant he is in another field, can get lost in a plethora of words can be seen in the brave attempt of Mr. Christmas Humphreys to find "Immortality" in Buddhism. It is only, however, a limited immortality, for the aim of Buddhism is to teach absolute annihilation. But the real point of his article in the *Sunday Times* is — how can an eminent barrister, as he is, believe in the Oriental dreams and fantasies of Buddhism without evidence? Of course, he admits that the "after life" is of "small importance" — but fancy any man, used to dealing with evidence, believing in it at all!

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So even the "Daily Mail" which, in defending religion, is almost Fundamentalist, finds "TV is so wrong about religion." And this in spite of the fact that the Rev. S. Phipps (of ITV) gleefully claims that "the Church has never before had such an audience." And also, as Mr. Peter Black points out, that the BBC's *Christian Forum*, "TV's demonstrations of Christianity in action, have been first rate, stimulating stuff." In his article, Mr. Black exposes the utter absurdity of showing bishops arguing with bargees, or women preachers questioning Teddy boys, or engineers dismally complaining that they "saw little evidence of Christianity in practice."

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To put all these failures right and bring in real (or true) Christianity bang on the map again, Mr. Black wants to see Bertrand Russell brought in, "or some other deeply religious Agnostic." So at last the noble Earl is one of a number of "deeply religious Agnostics" — or is he? In any case, we are assured that "it is fatal to pretend that Britain, 1957, is made up of mainly religious people and a few honest doubters." Of course. Most people are not even honest doubters. They are almost all *indifferentists* — but some still go to church, still sing hymns to Jesus, still call in the Church for baptisms, marriage, and burial, and will always indignantly deny that they are not Christians. How many Members of Parliament refused to take the Oath of Allegiance?

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That distinguished "Sunday Times" reviewer, Mr. Cyril Connolly, discussing a book by Mr. J. Middleton Murry, has discovered that, just as there are Christian Scientists, so there are Christian Humanists. We thoroughly agree. We can add to the list — a lengthy one — Buddhist Humanists, Theosophical Humanists, Anti-Vivisection Humanists, and even Rationalist Humanists. The word "Humanist" can fit them all — and a very good word it is. But it does not *distinguish* Freethinkers.

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Christian Humanists, continues Mr. Connolly, need not accept the Resurrection except as a "symbolic truth" — whatever that is — but if they do, they are "very close" to "seeming" a true Christian; and following Mr. Murry, we are told that "the supernatural element in Christianity is dead." And, of course, "we know" that Jesus "lives now in the hearts of individual and mortal men and only there." In other words, one can give up everything which distinguishes Christianity — miracles, devils, angels, etc. — and so long as you have Jesus in your heart, you are a Christian Humanist.

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On the other hand, we have the Rev. S. Phipps (who is the ITV Director of Religion) and his Divine show put on the other Sunday, entitled, "What's the Difference?" It was

pure, unadulterated Fundamentalism with "The Cross" having nails hammered into it, and jeering Jews shrieking at Jesus crucified, much in the manner of Miss Dorothy Sayers at her worst. Mr. Phipps, however, "laments" (according to the *Daily Mail*) that he has no converts! No one in Cambridge "is converted." Still, he intends to tell his "vast audience the Gospel, the Good News." And what better way is there than to show Jews shrieking at Jesus on the Cross? If that is not Good News, what is?

Angel Voices, Ever Singing

By LEONARD MARTIN

ON ONE OCCASION, when I was travelling by ship through the tropics in ideal weather, the usual religious service was held in the tourist quarters, near the stern, on Sunday evening. The preacher was the reverend headmaster of a well-known boys' school in South Africa, an appendage of one of the Anglican cathedrals there. His subject was Angels. He spoke of them as you or I would speak of President Eisenhower or the Pope,

"Well, well," I thought, "fancy a university graduate being on such familiar, matter-of-fact, matey terms with what is, after all, only a myth."

But, taking him at his word, supposing there are, or were, angels, what sex were they?

"Oh," you will reply, "female, of course."

Yes, there is foundation for it. If I call somebody "an angel," it will probably be a Jill rather than a Jack!

And there is Scott with his "ministering angel, thou." No unshaven male nurse, of course!

On the other hand, when nude cupids are depicted, which I take to be immature angels, they are invariably shown to be males, and that is so even in religious paintings. And Gentile at that.

I know of one exception to this. If ever you visit South Africa as a tourist, you are sure to be taken to Groot Constantia, about ten miles from the City of Cape Town, to see the State wine farm, in the most beautiful of grand surroundings. The pediment of the main door is a scene in stucco, or plaster, as it is called locally, the work of an eighteenth century artist, in which several cupids appear, in a kind of bas relief, all white. They must be pagan cupids, because they are so thoroughly enjoying themselves, romping about and sampling the huge bunches of king-size grapes for which this part of Southern Africa is so famous. Over the whole presides a pagan god, in his birthday suit, quite unashamed.

Some of these cupids are females; others are — rather loudly — male. There is a yarn current that on one occasion, some of these boy cupids lost their genitals through climatic wear and tear. The man who was called in to repair the omissions made an easy job of it by turning them into girl cupids. And so they have remained.

Well, back to more mature cupids, or the singing angels. No one in religious circles has ever satisfactorily explained what else they have to do in these days, now that modern Churchmen have explained that heaven is no longer, thanks to Copernicus and Co., a place, but a condition of mind.

Formerly, angels were a kind of telegraph messenger, minus uniform. Even that simple job is no longer in existence, and like God, what is there left for them to do, except adorn paintings or decorate pediments?

The food supply and other concomitant matters lead to such practical difficulties and tangles in the higher regions that it had better be left there for the theologians to solve. After all, they began it.

THE FREETHINKER

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All Articles and Correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

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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 propuganda.

J. R. DUNCAN.—Fr. J. Furniss's *The Sight of Hell* can, we fear, no longer be obtained. In its day, especially in Ireland, it was a "best seller," together with *The Terrible Judgment and the Bad Child*. Their truly religious descriptions of children frizzling in the red-hot rooms of Hell were always endorsed by the Holy Roman Church; but somehow or other, it appears nowadays very reluctant to admit that their Man of God was right. We may later devote an article to Fr. Furniss and his magnificent work for Hell as a white-hot place.

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

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40 Cannon Street).—Sunday, March 31st, 7 p.m.: T. MILLINGTON, "Blinkers."
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, March 31st, 6.45 p.m.: J. M. THORNTON, "Catholicism."
- Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, off Edgware Road).—Sunday, March 31st, 7.15 p.m.: Social Evening.
- Head Office N.S.S. (41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1).—Friday, March 22nd, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "The History of Civilisation" (sixth of six Study Classes). Subject this week: "Evolution of Civilisation." (Admission 1/-.)
- Holborn Hall (Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1).—Thursday, April 4th, 7.30 p.m.: Chapman Cohen-Joseph McCabe Anniversary Meeting. Subject: "Personal Liberty."
- Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 31st, 6.30 p.m.: P. BRODETSKY, M.A., "Religion and Politics."
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Wheatsheaf Hotel, High Street).—Sunday, March 31st, 7 p.m.: F. J. CORINA (Bradford), "Confessions of an Atheist."
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, March 31st, 2.30 p.m.: F. BESWICK, M.A., "World Government."
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, March 31st, 11 a.m.: R. HEPBURN, M.A., PH.D., "Humanist Ethics and Theological Ethics."

Debate.—Socialism (S.P.G.B.) v. Religion (Catholic Evidence Guild.: Sunday, March 31st, 7.30 p.m., 52 Clapham High Street (near Clapham Common Station). Admission free.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £204 5s. 8d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; S. C. Merrifield, 5s.; A. Pigott, £1; Mr. McGough (North London Branch N.S.S.), 10s.; W. J. Gough (South Africa), 4s.—Total to date, March 21st, 1957, £206 5s. 8d.

Notes and News

We should like to urge readers again to do all they can to prevent their local councils from granting rate relief on clergymen's dwelling houses under Section 8 of the Rating and Valuation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 1955 (see article *Rate Relief for the Clergy*, THE FREETHINKER, 11/1/57). The councils have the power to grant or to refuse such relief, and ratepayers have the right to protest against preferential treatment for the members of a particular profession. Remember that churches themselves already enjoy rate relief, whereas hospitals, for example, do not.

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UNSUCCESSFULLY opposing a move to grant relief on vicarages, manses and presbyteries in Blyth, Northumberland, Alderman R. C. Proctor, Deputy Mayor of the Borough, said: "Churches do not pay rates. They now want to escape paying rates for clergymen's dwelling houses. I think the claim is mean and dishonest. Mean because we already clear away the litter from around the church without payment, and now they want us to clear away the parson's potato peelings without payment. Dishonest because they do not state in their application what proportion of relief they think they are morally entitled to." "To claim the services of the Corporation and at the same time to try to escape paying towards the cost of those services is bad social morality," added Mr. Proctor, and we cannot see how any fair-minded person could disagree with this. Nevertheless, Blyth Council granted 50% relief. Here is a local issue on which all Secularists should make themselves heard, and heard immediately. Do not wait until relief has already been granted.

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THE Central London Branch of the N.S.S. is closing its successful season with a social to which members and friends are cordially invited. Among those who will be present are F. A. Ridley, Bonar Thompson, and G. H. Taylor. There will be also songs, music, recitals and quiz contests. Admission 6d. (including refreshments). We hope this "end of the season" meeting will be enthusiastically supported.

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AND a final word on the same Branch's Chapman Cohen-Joseph McCabe Anniversary Meeting. The subject, "Personal Liberty," is one on which these two outstanding Freethinkers had very decided views — so we hope their admirers and friends will make the meeting a bumper one. The speakers will be Will Griffiths, M.P., Frank Haskell, Hector Hawton, F. A. Ridley, and J. M. Alexander. Admission is free.

★

RELIGIOUS listeners to the ITV play, *The Biggest Thief in Town* (March 14th) must have been disconcerted by the continuous fun made out of Biblical utterances quoted for purposes of crime, contributing to the success of this farcical play. The value of the Christian Bible as a guide to morality has not been exposed to such ridicule for a long time in this medium; indeed, we doubt whether the pious BBC would have accepted the farce.

The Two Contemporaries—3

By H. CUTNER

FROM THE OUTSET, Chapman Cohen decided to attack religion in a more or less different way from that of previous Freethinkers. He knew enough of the Freethought attack on the Bible to be able to use it when occasion demanded, but he felt that that side of Freethought (as I have already intimated) had been completely dealt with by Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, and Foote. Another approach was needed. And he began his fifty years of weekly articles for THE FREETHINKER in his own original way. He tried to interest his readers in Herbert Spencer and always acknowledged his deep debt to George Henry Lewes. Both Lewes's *History of Philosophy* and *Problems of Life and Mind* he studied with great intensity, and tried to popularise the ideas of both writers in the innumerable articles he poured out. They were lucid to a degree and made him devoted readers all over the world. There is no doubt that many of them were read not only by his own humble followers but by many professors of logic and philosophy among the "higher-ups." Chapman Cohen had tremendous facility in clarifying difficult problems due to his intense study of thinkers like Berkeley and Hume.

It may be said here at once that though he used the word "Materialism" and, in his own way, defended it with such a closely reasoned work as *Materialism Restated*, his Materialism was not that of either Buchner or d'Holbach. I am quite sure he had read neither of these writers as he had read Spencer or Lewes. He simply had not the patience. He once told me that he was astonished that they had ever secured such a high place in the writings of Materialists. I could never get him to write a refutation of their Materialism — which he might have tried to do as a much younger man.

In the meantime, however, he was lecturing all over the country and making a great reputation as a witty speaker. He rarely took Christianity seriously. Not for him were wordy disquisitions on points of theology or dogmas. Contemptuous of all religions, he rarely tackled Christianity except with humorous tolerance. Only those who heard him week after week can have any idea of the amused disdain with which he assailed creeds and dogmas held reverently as true by people who looked intelligent and talked intelligently on all subjects except Christianity. For people like the late Winnington Ingram who, for some reason Cohen could never fathom, became Bishop of London, was reserved if possible more than mere amused contempt. But that was all it amounted to. He could never take Ingram really seriously.

Side by side with his very popular lectures were the many debates he had with various clergymen, including Canon Storr and the Rev. A. J. Waldron.

Waldron at the height of his career was a very slick speaker and a worthy follower of the Rev. Brewin Grant, the Victorian parson who loved to tilt with Bradlaugh, Holyoake and other Freethinkers of the period. Grant had a most unenviable practice of being as rude as he could to his opponents in the hope of — to use a colloquialism — "getting them riled." In this he often succeeded, but at the same time he fell foul of his own Dissenting followers to such a degree that he was obliged to leave them, joined the Church of England, and finally lapsed into obscurity. He had a keen eye for what he felt were absurdities in contemporary Freethought journals, and relished nothing better than to quote them with venomous glee and comments of his own. This was often Waldron's own little way

too, and he used it with great effect against the casual Secularist he met when speaking on the platform of the Christian Evidence Society.

He did not find Chapman Cohen quite so easy. Being heckled in Victoria and Hyde Parks from earnest and angry Christians had taught Cohen a great deal, and he was quite ready to meet Waldron and dozens of others like him on their own ground. In fact, Waldron found how devastating wit and humour could be when directed against the absurdities the Christian minister had to defend.

Chapman Cohen's first debate was with the Rev. W. Hetherington in 1892, and in it he was described as "the popular Secular lecturer." It gives a vivid impression of his power at 24 years of age. Hetherington quoted Gibbon and, of course, Lecky — the latter's well-known passages on Jesus from *The History of Morals*, which so often did duty then in many debates and lectures on Christianity, and would do so now if only one could get Christian ministers these days plucky enough to debate with an out-and-out Freethinker. Hetherington was by no means easy meat — he was well read, but a good deal of what he said I am sure came from the ineffable Mr. Woffington who had debated with G. W. Foote in 1879 and printed a "verbatim report" so full of his own comments and other additions that Foote scornfully rejected it. One thing will be found in the speeches of Chapman Cohen, and that is his declaration "not to be bound by the opinions of any man." That was a cardinal rule all his life. And it will interest those who have read *Materialism Restated* that it is in this debate that he said that Mrs. Besant left the National Secular Society because Materialism was identified with Secularism, and Mrs. Besant was not a Materialist. And, added Cohen, "I am not a Materialist." In truth, he refused then and always to identify himself with the Materialism of Buchner and d'Holbach and their followers.

The progress made by Joseph McCabe towards Rationalism was on quite different lines. He did not go into the parks to speak. He was not too keen to be associated with what he thought was the aggressive attitude of Secularism, though he became the Secretary of the Leicester Secular Society. His bent was towards history and two of his early works, *St. Augustine and His Age* and *Peter Abelard*, still live as containing some of his best attempts at writing and interpreting history. They combine in an especial degree his power of making such subjects eminently readable, and it can be said that few writers at any time could beat him in this respect.

In addition to writing on history and biography, he was not afraid to tackle the translation from the German of Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*. He had to learn the language as he went on, though his knowledge of Latin helped him considerably. The *Riddle* achieved the huge circulation it fully deserved, due quite as much to the readability of McCabe's translation as to its author's immense scientific knowledge.

One point is worth recalling. In his contemptuous dismissal of Christianity and the Bible, Haeckel quoted Saladin's *God and His Book*, for which he was most bitterly and shamelessly attacked by a number of Fundamentalist German theologians. Saladin had not, in their eyes, the status of one of themselves, but was a mere ignorant unbeliever.

McCabe got Haeckel's permission to tone down the

quotations from Saladin, admitting that he was not recognised as a "theologian," even in this country — which was quite true. But all the same, Saladin was right, and Haeckel was right in quoting him. One cannot poke too much fun at such a solemn religion as Christianity—as even McCabe

later found out. But in those early days, McCabe was far too earnest even to laugh at religious absurdities. Only the most rigid scientific, historical, and philosophical arguments would demolish religion, and a bit of fun or sarcasm was quite out of place.

REVIEW

The Search for Purpose

By G. H. TAYLOR

[*Search for Purpose*, by Arthur E. Morgan. 1957. C. A. Watts and Co., Ltd. 15s. 197 pp.]

IN READING THIS BOOK I wondered at times whether I was reading an autobiography lifted to a higher level by being extroverted to the consideration of social problems, or whether his attempt to state a philosophy of existence had been unfortunately personalised by being wrapped up in the doings of one expert American engineer.

Though the terms Humanist and Humanism nowhere occur in the actual text, the author is obviously right in line with orthodox Humanism as advocated by the Ethical societies. He explicitly rejects not only Christian doctrines but also the Christian claims to offer solutions to human problems, and regards as a weakness man's tendency to lean on religious authority. In 1894, he tells us, he declared for "free inquiry," which keeps the mind awake, as against the blind acceptance of authority, which puts it to sleep.

I recall having read at least three other books with more or less the same title, *Search for Purpose*, and in these cases the authors have begun by assuming the existence of "Purpose" and have set out, in Sherlock Holmes fashion, to detect it. In the case under review, however, the author makes no such assumption. His search is not for what already has cosmic existence; on the contrary, it is for man himself to infuse purpose into existence. The search is for the best goals to aim at. Any scheme of a cosmic teleology does not win his belief. Tennyson's

One far-off divine Event

Towards which the whole creation moves

he writes off as "a typical statement of the conventional Christian view. Both that and the Marxian 'inevitable Socialism' seem to be unconscious carry-overs from the old theology."

Man may be a purposeless cosmic accident, he allows, but, having come, he can create purpose and so give direction to events, even to the extent of directing his own evolution. Purpose, that is, emerges as a result of man's activities.

Apparently even God cannot escape the category of materiality, for our author explains that "If there is a God then perhaps he is emerging and growing too, and man may share with him in the making of the future."

Nor will the author give credence to Schweitzer's mystical "will to live," preferring to regard it as no more than the outcome of natural selection, in the way that animals evolve colours imitative of their surroundings, as a protective agency or to disguise their predatory intent.

The author's outlook is therefore one of naturalism as against supernaturalism, but Secularists will not accept his changes in the meaning of certain words such as "God," "religion" and "spiritual." His God can only be described as a Sort-of-a-Something-on-the-way-but-not-yet-fully-grown. This preposterous Deity was first proposed by Samuel Alexander about thirty years ago; it represents a conscienceless twisting of terminology to serve a preconceived idea, and no one can blame the Christian Fundamentalist if he immediately turns the term back again to denote the Jehovah of the Bible sternly gazing through the clouds. It is the same with other terms borrowed from the religion which our author regards as discredited. "By my

religion I mean those aspirations, convictions, disciplines, beliefs and motives that actually give direction and character to my life," and seeking such a religion has "been my first interest through the years." By a "spiritual body" he means the attributes and loyalties common to a society (like the N.S.S. Principles and Objects). Such charming experiments with words and meanings will hardly commend themselves to the Secularist, one of whose loyalties is to the correct use of words.

There is also some confusion on the word Value (in the philosophical sense). He writes in italics: "*Value is experience which those who have it feel that it is better to have than not to have, and anything which conduces to such experience.*" He modestly adds, "The technical philosopher will object to the latter part of this definition," a statement which surprisingly implies that the first part is acceptable. Now if the experience of growing cabbages is preferable to that of growing weeds, shall that fact promote cabbages to the realm of value? Remember that our author is not talking about economic value, and fails to recognise that "Value" to the philosopher has not the significance of "value" to the economist. The essence of Values, in the philosophical sense, is that they are not utilitarian.

Our author has a firm confidence in man's ability to overcome his problems. To do this, man must proceed with his mastery over natural forces, improve his cultural standards and become free from religious myths. Support for eugenic control over propagation comes to the fore several times in the book.

In this connection he uses an apt analogy. The antlers of a bull moose help it to fight off other bulls in the struggle for a mate. Good antlers are thus of survival value for propagation in the next generation. But if all bulls were without antlers there would be less energy used up fighting and they would *all* have a better chance of survival. Similarly there are human qualities eminently fitted for immediate propagation but harmful to the race on a long-term view; contrarily, traits which are of long-term advantage to the species are often lost because the bearer has no offspring. The author regards eugenics as an important factor in the strategy for human survival.

Even atomic weapons do little to damp our author's enthusiasm for the future of man. If 100 million were killed, he argues, we should still only be back to about the year 1875; the methods and findings of science would not be lost, thousands of libraries would be left and the world might recover in a century. A far more serious calamity, he says, would be the deterioration of personal character, which might bring a human decline as long-lasting as in ancient Egypt.

I wish I could say the book has an appealing style, but some of the points made scarcely justify the number of words used in making them. Some truths are trite and need no heralding, but the author is apt to go into mountainous labour for the production of a meek mouse, or to sink into humourless ruminations as the portentous preamble to a paltry pip.

To say that the work is published by Watts is to say the physical production is first class.

CHRISTMAS ISLAND TESTS

THE following letter was sent to Mr. Harold Macmillan, over the signatures of the President and Secretary, and on the instructions of the Executive Committee of the National Secular Society.

Dear Prime Minister,—The National Secular Society wishes to register its strong protest against the projected series of nuclear explosions on Christmas Island.

We are in agreement with Bertrand Russell, O.M., when he writes (in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian*, March 21st, 1957) that: "The political disadvantages of carrying out the test far outweigh, on any sane computation, the technical advantages of the knowledge to be gained."

We think, too, that it would add enormously to our moral prestige if Britain were to take the initial step towards outlawing atomic weapons which jeopardise the future of mankind. Publicly to announce the abandonment of the Christmas Island tests would represent that first, and all-important step, and might well herald the peaceful world for which our Society has always contended.

CORRESPONDENCE

A REPLY TO MR. ARNSTEIN

Had Mindszenty been the poor, wronged lamb Mr. Arnstein seems to see in him, Nagy as the agreed exponent of liberation, would have authorised him to be released and rehabilitated. The unauthorised release by the political underworld of Herr Pehm, alias Mindszenty, who, together with Monsignor Tiso and Cardinal Stepinac, has been one of the shadiest obscurantists in the Black International, marks the turning point in the Budapest uprising which, until then had been a liberation movement.

As a rule political fighters do not flee their home country, whether or not this be involved with the exhibition of "considerable courage"; they rather go underground and continue the struggle, unless they are unable to do so (cf. the Jews under Nazi rule); and even then they try to stay as near as possible to the border to be at hand when their day dawns. I understand that Mr. Arnstein is a U.S. citizen; therefore I quote from U.S. papers:

"The Mindszenty who stood in the courtroom did not seem to be drugged or tortured. . . . No drug known to Western science could account for his repeated confessions."—(*Time* magazine, February 1948.)

"... Though many (refugees) are genuine victims, some seem to have uprooted themselves and gone prospecting for rosier futures than their homeland offered. Genuine or not, the refugees have fallen into the hands of press agents who use them for an emotional pitch for a political line. . . . Prominent among the homeless . . . are the Jews. . . . Rabbi Pozner, who toured refugee camps for British Jewish relief organisations, reported that "the majority of Jews who left Hungary did so for fear of the Hungarians and not the Russians. . . . The behaviour of rebel refugees in the camps bore out the atrocity reports. . . . Jewish refugees had to be segregated for their own protection."—(*National Guardian*, January 28th, 1957.)

It is all right to say anti-Semites exist everywhere; however, if they are permitted to run wild and become a mass movement, then they are a hallmark of Fascism. Note the kind of people who entertained and feted the non-Jewish arrivals from Hungary. Whoever may have forgotten the treatment meted out to anti-Nazi refugees or members of the International Brigades (who fought Franco) ought to read Arthur Koestler's *Scum of the Earth*. P. G. Roy.

ROYALISM IN BRITAIN

I differ from Mr. Corrick in thinking that monarchs are preferable to presidents, but I have no love for either type of ruler. The system operating in the Republic of Uruguay in South America, where there is neither monarch nor president, seems to me the best type of government so far evolved.

One great disadvantage deriving from the monarchical system of the past is the landowning aristocracy, as past kings and queens gave away lands to their cronies (including the Church) in a wholesale manner, setting up a thoroughly useless class, which has had to be supported ever since by the enormous ground and other rents paid by the citizens. With all the statistical information that is supplied today, there is great reticence on the subject of how much of the income of the people is spent in rent, and who are the receivers of the rents. C. H. NORMAN.

GHANA

I wonder what kind of freedom the people of Ghana are getting. The push for new missionaries and Christian teachers, plus Royal

visitors, all seems part of a scheme which I should not think would give freedom. If ever a nation needed teachers of Free-thought, Ghana does. Why don't we leave them to their own religion? One is just as much good as another. It would be better to be honest and help them to get rid of their superstitions instead of replacing theirs with ours. KATHLEEN TACCHI-MORRIS.

N.S.S. Executive Meeting

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20TH.—Present: Messrs. F. A. Ridley (Chairman), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Ebury, Gordon, Hornibrook, Johnson, Pustan, Shepherd, Taylor, Warner, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. Apology from Mr. Cleaver. New members were admitted to Central London, Dagenham, Glasgow, Kingston, Manchester, Nottingham, and Parent Branches (16 in all). It was urged that all N.S.S. members write to their local councils, without delay, opposing rate relief for clergymen's dwellings. Requests for speakers from Birmingham and Wales and Western Branches were approved; Fyzabad Branch's meeting to be addressed by Dr. H. B. Wright and the possible formation of a branch in San Juan (Trinidad) were noted with satisfaction. A chair at the Thomas Paine Center, Philadelphia, had been named after Charles Bradlaugh; a donation had been sent to the newly reorganised Austrian Freethinkers. A protest against the H-bomb tests on Christmas Island was agreed to (it is reproduced on this page). A Conference sub-committee was formed. The next meeting was fixed for Wednesday, April 17th, 1957.

CHAPMAN COHEN — JOSEPH McCABE ANNIVERSARY MEETING

(Organised by Central London Branch N.S.S.)

"PERSONAL LIBERTY"

Speakers: W. GRIFFITHS, M.P., F. HASKELL, HECTOR HAWTON,
F. A. RIDLEY and J. M. ALEXANDER. Chairman: S. L. SALTER

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Debate.—Socialism (S.P.G.B.) v. Religion (Catholic Evidence Guild): Sunday, March 31st, 7.30 p.m., 52 Clapham High Street (near Clapham Common Station). Admission free.