

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

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IN THE YEAR 1947 there ended one of the strangest governmental experiments in recorded history: the two-century Raj of England's Indian Empire. During the past decade India has become first a Dominion, then, later, a federated Republic within the British Commonwealth. The present Indian régime is based upon the general assumptions of liberal democracy and majority-rule as such institutions are understood in the West. In one respect, however, and that

of particular interest to this journal, the Indian constitution differs sharply from that of Great Britain: whilst the overwhelming majority of the citizens of the vast Indian Republic are Hindus by religious persuasion, yet India has no official religious denomination. By the

terms of its fundamental constitution India remains a secular state in which religion, as such, has no official association with the State. Indeed, Mr. Nehru, the present all-powerful Prime Minister of India, who is reported to be an Agnostic in his personal approach to religious convictions, has publicly placed it on record that whilst he remains at the head of affairs, India will never become a Hindu Theocracy.

Christianity in India

During the 200 years of English rule in India, Christianity as well as the proverbial trade followed the flag. As the religion of the ruling race, Christianity, though never officially established in India by the British rulers, naturally derived a certain prestige from its close association with the English King-Emperor and his officials. When English rule ended in 1947 there was already a Christian Indian population of several millions. Though the departure of the "white sahibs" may be said to have deprived Indian Christianity of the governmental prestige formerly associated with it, in several respects the change proved beneficial to Christianity. For the "native" Christians could no longer incur political suspicion as actual or potential agents of foreign rule; moreover, the secular character of the new State opens to Christian missions Hindu territories, in particular the former "native states," the former rulers of which often excluded Christian missions from their territories. According to the most recent figures in the 1956 edition of the *Statesman's Year Book*, there are now rather more than eight million professing Christians in the Republic of India. These are divided amongst Catholic and Protestant Churches, in addition to a very ancient Syrian Church in Southern India, traditionally dating from apostolic times and certainly older by several centuries than the forms of Christianity directly imported from Europe. This Christian minority appears to be increasing and both Catholic and Protestant missions are pursuing an aggressive strategy for the conversion of India, particularly among the more primitive peoples of the vast sub-continent. In 1955 the foreign personnel engaged in missionary work in India was nearly 5,000.

A Commission of Enquiry

From the point of view of the Indian Republic and of its

Federated States, this aggressive minority constitutes quite a problem. This was indicated when the Central Indian Federated State of Madhya Pradesh — the former United Provinces — set up a Committee of Enquiry to investigate the extent, methods, and ambitions of Christian missions within its boundaries and throughout India. The Report of this Committee, published by the Government at Nagpur, is a mine of information, besides advancing considerations which are of universal, and not only of Indian, interest. It is certainly "required reading" for all students of Christian missions.

Christianity in India

Historically, Christianity reached India in three successive waves. The oldest,

which claims apostolic foundation, is represented by the Syrian Church in Malabar which, perhaps, dates from Roman times, and has become largely assimilated to the Indian way of life, even to the point of adopting the ubiquitous Hindu caste-system. The remaining two waves came directly from Europe, along with the white conquerors. The Portuguese introduced Catholicism into Goa, which they still hold as the only foreign enclave still left on Indian soil. Both the Jesuits and the Holy Inquisition played a prominent part in its introduction. The great St. Francis Xavier made many converts amongst the depressed castes; and an Italian Jesuit, Robert Da Nobili, continued to ingratiate himself — and Catholicism — among the high-caste Brahmins by passing off Christianity as a new Hindu sect! Protestant missions did not arrive until the end of the 18th century, and were at first very unfavourably received by the exclusively commercial East India Company, then the ruler of British India. The British Government, which took over the administration after the (so-called) Indian Mutiny — here described as the "Indian War of Liberation" — never officially identified itself with Christian missions, and the Native Princes were often hostile. Nonetheless, Christianity succeeded in establishing itself with considerable success under British rule.

Christianity Through Indian Eyes

The Committee (we nearly slipped into writing "for Un-Indian Activities"!) was presided over by a former judge, Dr. M. B. Niyogi, and approached its subject from a self-consciously nationalist point of view. It evidently held that Indian Christianity was not just another religious cult in a land where religious cults have evolved in profusion. Dr. Niyogi and his colleagues viewed Christianity through Indian eyes as an exotic foreign plant, closely associated with foreign imperialism in the past, and which may still constitute a menace to the integrity of the Indian Republic. We must not forget how large the Hindu versus Muslim question looms in Indian history. Pakistan, constituted as its name implies, on a directly religious basis, stands as a permanent warning to Indian statesmen who, as the findings of this Committee demonstrate, evidently fear the future creation of a Christian minority question and perhaps, in time, even a Christian "Pakistan." It is in the light of this assumption that the Committee views past and, in

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Christian Missions in India

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

particular, present missionary activities. The post-war strategy of the Christian Churches is closely examined and two interesting facts are noted: the close connection between both Catholic and Protestant missions and the current American anti-Communist drive. Readers of Mr. Manhattan's enlightening book, *The Dollar and the Vatican*, may note with interest this reference to the subject in the Committee's report:

"In short the situation seems to be that the Papacy, representing the Catholic Church, and the American Democracy are united in their frantic drive for gathering proselytes to Christianity to combat Communism: the former to extend its religious empire and the latter to obtain world leadership." (Page 60.)

The often questionable methods by which such proselytes are "won for Christ" are minutely analysed.

Church and State

An important chapter analyses the relations of Church and State in the contemporary world and a sharp distinction is noted between the totalitarian religions, Rome and Islam, which entirely deny religious liberty, and more liberal cults like Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and some forms of Protestantism. Lutheranism is here revealed as much the most powerful of the Protestant Churches, with nearly

seventy million adherents, but also as nearly as totalitarian as Rome. (Christian figures quoted give between 600 and 700 millions for the Catholic and Protestant, but not "Orthodox" Churches. This seems much too high.)

Excerpts are given of Catholic, in Spain and Italy, and of Muslim, intolerance in Afghanistan and Arabia, where heretics have been stoned to death in recent years. Christianity, with its dogma of exclusive salvation, is denounced as the historic enemy of the liberal religious tradition which the Committee associates with Indian religions. The presence and growth of Christian missions is regarded as a danger to both national unity and to freedom of thought.

A Revealing Report

The Government of Madhya Pradesh, and its Committee, which modestly describes itself as merely "a fact-finding Committee," are to be congratulated on this masterly document. It will, we are sure, prove invaluable to future Indian administrators faced with the same problem. It is equally invaluable for students of Christian missions and of comparative religion.

[*Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee, Madhya Pradesh, 1956, Volume 1, is obtainable from India House, London, price 4s. 3d.*]

New Zealand Calling

By ARTHUR O'HALLORAN

The Roman Catholic Church has been staging a big offensive, with the object of gaining State aid for its schools. Some time ago it appealed (through the Holy Name Society) to the Government, asking that a Select Committee should be set up to go into the whole matter of State aid for private and denominational schools.

The Government agreed and a Parliamentary Select Committee, drawn from both sides of the House, was set up. Shortly before this Committee sat to hear evidence a great deal of literature was circulated by the Holy Name Society and the daily paper carried big Catholic advertisements to "Here (*sic*) the case."

However, the reaction was emphatic and nationwide. The challenge was accepted and taken up by Protestants, Rationalists (Freethinkers), educationalists and various different non-Catholic groups. The final result was a Parliamentary resolution, in reply to the Catholic claims, that "no action be taken."

A last despairing effort by a (presumably Catholic) member to get the report referred back for further inquiries failed to find a seconder. Thus ended — at least during the time of the present Parliament — a determined effort by the Catholic Church to use Parliament in New Zealand for the purpose of advancing the cause, and particularly the finances, of the "One True Church."

Special chartered planes have, for several weeks past, been bringing to New Zealand groups of Hungarian refugees. A large proportion are Roman Catholics and arrangements were made (per special buses transport) for their early attendance at High Mass at the local Roman Catholic Cathedral.

Mr. Strange, a retired farmer in New Zealand, certainly left a strange will, a will, I should say, unique. He left the Anglican Cathedral at Christchurch £1,000 and the Roman Catholic Cathedral in the same city £1,000. Other Anglican trusts and Roman Catholic trusts in Christchurch are to share equally. There must surely be some dubious ethereal head-shakings about it all in Heaven — or would it be purgatory?

League Against Cruel Sports and the Queen

AT ITS MEETING in London on March 26th, the League Against Cruel Sports condemned royal patronage of blood sports and resolved to protest, if possible, to the Queen herself. The League's annual report contained the passage:

"Your executive committee again emphasise that it is only the patronage which the Queen gives to this debased and spurious form of sport which keeps hunting within the law in Britain today. But for the embarrassment which the Queen's patronage of hunting causes to the heads of the Established Church, the whole of this beastly form of amusement and the foul cruelties inseparable from it would have been condemned by the Church of England. There can be no other explanation of the unworthy evasion of this issue of wanton cruelty by the Archbishop of Canterbury."

Notable support came from two ladies, who were well received by the members present.

"It is time we attacked the enemy in high places," said Miss Georgina Horsfall. "Why should royalty be allowed to chase a poor animal for five hours until its lungs burst and blood pours from its mouth?"

"Let's face it," added Mrs. Dudley-Ward. "It is the unwerving allegiance of the Queen to this bloody business that is the bedrock foundation of hunting. Surely she could not countenance recent events involving the Devon and Somerset Staghounds. A deputation to Buckingham Palace would at least give her a chance to make it clear that she disapproves."

Then the Secretary of the League, Mr. J. C. Sharp, regretted that the Queen had taken the royal children to fox hunts. These were degrading events for any children to see. He had been appalled at last week's meet of the Devon and Somerset Staghounds to watch spectators holding out bloody handkerchiefs to receive chunks of the meat after the red deer had been caught and gutted. He added: "It is not only the cruelty to the animals that we should deplore; it is the degrading effect of the spectacle on those who watch."

The National Secular Society has sent a letter of congratulation to the League, and pledged whatever help it can give it in its admirable aims.

'The Dollar and the Vatican'

WHY IS THE PRESS AFRAID OF IT?

By AVRO MANHATTAN

A VISITOR from Mars, on observing the striking variety of weeklies and newspapers at a British stand, would pardonably assume the British Press to be the freest in the world. The assumption is cheerfully entertained by the average man in the street, a creature happily skidding upon the thin ice of perpetual flattery from the great mass-media, but whose intellectual accomplishments usually spell zero.

It takes individuals dealing with the hard facts of political, economic and religious prejudices hidden behind the glossy surface of the press, however, to discover how far the irresistible strangling of intellectual liberty has already gone. The strangling is carried out simultaneously in many fields, but, for the sake of brevity, we shall confine ourselves to that concerned with the successful suppression of controversial books.

When dealing with activities of this nature, the Roman Catholic pressure group will be found to be the most vigorous. Catholic main weapons can be summarised thus: denunciation, distortion, intimidation and silence, used either singly or collectively. Concerning the works of the present writer, some years ago the Catholic Press of Great Britain used the first two. The interesting result was that many Catholics not only read the denounced books, but even frankly agreed with their contents. Since the success of *The Catholic Church Against the Twentieth Century*, whose twenty-four editions surpassed 140,000 copies, Catholic storm-troopers adopted subtler tactics: the use of the last two, i.e. intimidation and silence.

The author would be the last to complain about it, persuaded that a sectarian press has the right to be as sectarian as it likes to be. When, however, Catholic pressure trespasses into the lay field, and, by subtle chicanery or in conjunction with sympathetic allies, organises a curtain of silence against a non-Catholic work and upon a non-Catholic public, then it is another matter.

The pressure is carried out (a) via Catholic penetration of the lay press, and (b) via the systematic organisation of fear.

Catholics are efficient boycotters of news and of books critical of their Church. Cases where books, sent to papers for review, were never seen by the literary editors employing Catholic staff are more frequent than editors themselves care to admit. The more effective method, however, is fear. Catholic displeasure is feared because it can, and actually does, affect circulation figures. Liberal and even pink weeklies bend to it. *The New Statesman and Nation*, for instance, always ready to charge Quixotically against intellectual windmills (provided they are safe), when presented with Manhattan's latest book, shrank like a spineless Annelida, for "fear to offend Catholic readers and even some of its pro-Catholic reviewers." Its contemporary, *The Spectator*, shivers with equal energy when handling anti-Catholic works, as does *Time and Tide*, in a constant controversial low tide.

Of course, sundry other factors are also responsible for the boycott in the lay press. Political bias; or, again, fear; not only to offend religious, but also monetary omnipotence. The writer's latest book, *The Dollar and the Vatican*, for instance, having attacked both, created an unusual amount of pusillanimity everywhere the book was sent. Result? A nation-wide curtain of silence on it, on the part of the national dailies. Thus, while the *Daily Tele-*

graph could not offend the Dollar, the *News Chronicle* could not antagonise the High Churches, and the *Daily Herald* the plutocratic U.S.A. Trade Unionism. As for the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Express*, those two champion magnificators of trivia, the book was not trivial enough. To the gutter press, the specialists of cretinous pornography, the work, though full of "vital statistics," was sexless and hence uninteresting. *The Times* remained inscrutably mute. *The Times Literary Supplement* ignores works it dislikes, and *The Dollar and the Vatican* happened to be one of them. As for the *Manchester Guardian*, its literary fairness nowadays is nothing but a myth, preferring as it has done of late pro-Catholic or Catholic works. Of the two serious dominical papers, whereas the *Sunday Times* abhors miscreants, the *Observer* refuses to observe anything not tuned to its pontificating leaders.

In the face of such a general boycott, one would have expected Protestant journals to come to the fore. But, no. They, too, either ignored the book or felt shy about its contents. More than one editor averred that, if they disliked the Vatican, they loved the Dollar.

As for the rationalistic press (THE FREETHINKER excepted), its recent emasculation having replaced its traditional healthy combativity, it has turned to unearth innocuous little worms, war on the big dragons being considered a thing of the past by our contemporary rationalist knights.

There remained the bookshops. Alas, they, too, proved obdurate. The book department of a big store near London charged one of its intellectual teddy boys to "censure" the book, which was eventually anathematised as "impossible." Many bookshops rejected the work forthwith, others after briefly perusing it. Several, although sympathetic towards it, admitted that they did not dare to stock it, "for fear of losing their Catholic customers." A member of the Church of England confessed that he was scared of the inevitable boycott that his Roman Catholic customers would organise against all his other books. "I cannot afford to take risks. A sorry state of affairs. But that's what the situation is today."

At this point the genteel reader might be asking himself whether the author is not exaggerating the importance of his work. Writers, like mothers, are known to consider their offspring masterpieces to be admired by all and sundry. Such doubts are often justified. In this case, however, they are not, in the sense that the book, for all its merits and demerits, roused an immediate interest among the most serious-minded section of the British reading public. A boast? Not at all. A concrete fact. Why? Because when a heavily documented book, over 300 pages, costing 21s., sells out its entire first edition of 2,000 copies in less than two months, it cannot be anything else. Nowadays, this is a remarkable publishing feat. The whole accomplished, please note, with not one single advertisement or review in the national press. If so many serious readers in Great Britain, in spite of the total curtain of silence erected against the book, proved their eagerness to read it, why did the British press fail to bring it to their notice? Is it not the proud boast of the press that it keeps its readers informed about works dealing with paramount contemporary problems? Does it not owe to them at least

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

In "The Sunday Times," the Rev. Dr. W. E. Sangster, who is the General Secretary of the Methodist Home Mission, dismisses almost with impatience the proofs of survival so thoroughly believed in by all Spiritualists. The only proof for genuine immortality comes from "revelation." No Christian, merely by searching, can find God, he insists; in his goodness, "God revealed Himself to men through his incarnate Son, Jesus Christ." And that proves "immortality" to the hilt.

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Moreover, Heaven is not "a place of endless Church services with a choir doing most of the work." In actual fact, Heaven is "a place of bliss." The Bible and Dr. Sangster plainly say so. As for Hell, the reverend gentleman appears to deny that it contains "literal flames," so possibly the Hell to which Jesus so graciously assigned the Pharisees may not be as bad as it has been painted so often by Christian artists. The "resurrection of the body" means "the survival of personality in a recognisable form." Finally, the absolute proof of immortality lies in the fact that if you do not accept Christ as your Saviour now, you "will meet him later as your Judge." This leaves us completely breathless!

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While it would be a terrible sin for a mere male to keep his hat on in church, it is a terrible sin for a woman to go hatless to church. Paul said so, and he is now stoutly backed up by the Rev. G. Girling of Enfield. "We should be," he moans, "reverent about the matter" — and what can be more irreverent than a woman's crowning glory, her beautiful hair? It might well give ideas in church to men when they should be thinking only of Christ Jesus and getting saved. Funny how priests and parsons have always been scared stiff over a woman's hair!

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One would find it hard to beat Mr. Arabinda Basu, who is the Spalding Lecturer in India Philosophy and Religion in Durham University, at putting words and words together. He is another champion of "Immortality" in the *Sunday Times*, but from the point of view of Hinduism; and it appears that a man must first "purify" himself according to "scriptural instructions," then "renounce all desire for worldly values." He is then capable of "knowing the true nature of Self." The rest is easy, for he then "passes beyond the nature of karma" and thus attains *amritattva* — that is, Immortality. Could anything be more simple or more certain?

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But there is much more than this. You must practise "synthetic yoga" which perfects the "four terms of man's being and nature," thus making it impossible for the body "to disintegrate" here, and you will get a "life-force"; your mind "will be purified of ignorance," and your Soul "will realise God." Thus, every man can "achieve integral immortality on this earth," that is, "the Life Divine." That there are people who can read this kind of gibberish without laughing we admit. But surely not all the 400 millions in India?

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Laughter unlimited must also explode when seeing a live Bishop "exorcising" a ghost. The Bishop of Jarrow was called in recently to get rid of one and, with the aid of his mitre and gold robes, plenty of sprinkling with "Holy Water," and the Lord's Prayer reverently recited, the unwelcome spook was shooed out. All the same, we wonder why the Bishop didn't sport the usual "bell, book,

and candle" which — probably wrongly — we always thought was the infallible method of dealing with spooks? In these materialistic days it looks as if none of them can stand even a Bishop whining the Lord's Prayer.

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It is not always the Roman Church which goes out to "get 'em young." The Rev. C. Blount, a Methodist parson, is in full agreement — he said so recently in *Reynolds' News* — but, in addition, you have to have a "gimmick." Well, it now appears catching 'em young and lots of gimmicks are not enough to bring young people to Christ. The services are too long, there's no opportunity to ask questions, some ministers don't make you laugh enough, and so on.

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One teenager admitted that he didn't "believe in God" but he believed in "a Supreme Being of some description." And some of the young — and old — people giving reasons why they do or don't go to church are equally intelligent. None of them ever questions the truth of Christianity, they all take it for granted. They all feel that they ought to go to church, that it's the right thing to do, and God help 'em if they don't — and many of them eventually do. But they never question the truth of the Bible, which comes straight from God. And this, 150 years after the publication of the *Age of Reason!*

'THE DOLLAR AND THE VATICAN'

(Concluded from page 107)

a mention of controversial books, whether is disapproval of them or not? Then, why such a general miscarriage of one of its primary duties?

The explanation is that the British press has succumbed (a) to the bacilli of collective editorial pusillanimity, (b) to the splendiferous fact that both editors and owners care only for one thing: the figures of their circulation managers, and (c) to the unsavoury phenomenon that British readership prefers to settle in cloud-like millions on the garbage of social snobbery, trivia, scandals and pornography. Of the three, (b) is, perhaps, the most important. Circulation managers are brave men. But they fear their rivals, boycott, silence and commercial blackmail. Certain powerful interests are masters in effectively handling all four. Hence the great curtain of silence on important news and books. The case of *The Dollar and the Vatican* has been brought to light, not so much for its own sake, but as a concrete, alarming proof that the once proud British press is nowadays nothing but a ghost of its former self. Indeed, that it has succumbed to the intolerance of pressure groups, one of the most unscrupulous of which is undoubtedly the Catholic.

Pressure groups have already badly paralysed the British press, whose lack of honest independence and fearless thinking of recent years has become so conspicuous. Suppression of ideas precedes tyranny. Not only in the realm of thought, but also in the economic and political arenas.

Is the growing decay of the press heralding the hidden decay of the society it is serving?

If so, will British intellectual freedom survive the additional irresistible strictures to come?

The omens are sombrous.

—NEXT WEEK—

THE LORD'S LABOURERS

By ANDREW PEARSE

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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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.

L. STEIN.—On the committee for drafting Sudan's constitution the Christians were "represented" by a Catholic priest.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Messrs. DAY, NEWTON, and SHEPPARD.
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

- Friday Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, April 12th, 7.30 p.m.: R. E. PRENTICE, B.S.C., "Is a National Wage Policy Practical?"
Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, April 7th, 6.30 p.m.: P. VICTOR MORRIS, "Propaganda on the Air."
Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Liverpool).—Sunday, April 7th: H. EDEN, J.P., "The Problem of World Peace."
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, April 7th, 11 a.m.: Prof. T. H. PEAR, M.A., "Social Presence in Belief and Behaviour."

Edouard Herriot

THE WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS has lost a loyal supporter in Edouard Herriot, who died on March 26th, aged 84. He was the President of Honour of the Union's congresses from 1925 to 1952, and as a young man had been an active militant member of the French Federation. His very full life as Maire of Lyons for 52 years, as Président du Conseil, as Président de l'Assemblée Nationale, President of the Radical Party, as well as three times Prime Minister of France, showed it was possible for a man of character to attain the highest national and civic positions without abating a jot of his Freethought. He was a great orator; he was a great man. In Lyons he was affectionately known as Dou-dou (Teddy); and he will long be remembered with affection. C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £206 5s. 8d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; P. Kay, £1 1s.; A. Ineson, 2s. 6d.; "Hypatius," 6s. 6d.; A. Rosen (U.S.A.), 3s.; In memory of J. Watson (Chester), 5s.—Total to date, March 29th, 1957, £208 4s. 8d.

Notes and News

WE should like to direct readers' attention to the grave matter raised in the article by Mr. Avro Manhattan in this issue, which reports but one of many cases which are constantly occurring. When will the national press begin to show some sense of public responsibility in the matter? Incidentally, the second edition of *The Dollar and the Vatican* is now ready. It has been revised and brought up to date. We hope readers are continuing their pressure to get it into their libraries.

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SYRIAN newspaper *Al-Boath* reports that three years ago an American foundation wrote to a Syrian university offering financial help to expand the activities and asked for a list of what was most needed. The Syrians submitted a list which mostly consisted of requests for equipment for physics and chemistry laboratories and apparatus for the Colleges of Medicine and Engineering. Instead, the foundation suggested the establishment of a college to study subjects such as *theology*, literature, etc., and offered financial help for this. If this is refused and Russian help accepted, should we be surprised?

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A BUDDHIST monk in Ceylon has written a "scurrilous pamphlet" which heaps "gross insults" on Our Blessed Lady, according to a *Catholic Guardian* writer. The Church has demanded that the predominantly Buddhist Bandaranaike Government take action against the irreverent monk, but, sad to relate, nothing has been done. In the meantime, a Day of Adoration has been held as an act of reparation to the vilified but virtuous Virgin.

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IN Northern Ireland approximately 900 schools have not been transferred to local education authorities, some of these being controlled by denominational managers. Refuting a suggestion of discrimination against R.C. schools, the Minister of Education stated in the Stormont recently that no distinction was made between denominations in granting financial support from public funds. "The law in regard to grants and allowances," he said, "applies to all voluntary schools. The total amount paid from public funds to non-transferred schools in respect of building costs, teachers' salaries, free books, scholarships and so on is not less than 94 or 95%." Even the Northern Ireland Government, which will cease to exist if R.C.s gain a majority in the country, subsidises Catholic education.

★
WE are now able to comment on a matter that was brought to our notice at the time, but remained *sub judice* until March 25th. When about to be sworn in to give evidence in a High Court action in which he was involved, Mr. William Bunting, of Thorne, Yorkshire, stated that he wished to affirm. Asked why, he replied: "I am an Atheist." The judge, Mr. Justice Hallett, made the most improper and prejudicial remark, "And no morals either." Ordering a re-hearing, three Appeal Judges criticised Mr. Justice Hallett's intervention in the case. "His words outran his discretion," said Lord Justice Denning; "as soon as a thought came to him it at once found voice." The Lord Justice's statement, "We are a Christian country, and while a denial of God is no commendation in a witness, it is not to be taken against him," may not be completely impartial but, at least, it has a certain negative value.

The Two Contemporaries—4

By H. CUTNER

THE LONG APPRENTICESHIP which Chapman Cohen served writing for THE FREETHINKER while G. W. Foote was alive made him inevitably Foote's successor. We were in the terrible World War I, and that meant death to many journals — especially specialised ones with more or less small circulations. Only those who know the immense difficulties to be faced in carrying on such a journal as ours in normal times can appreciate the courage and energy with which the new Editor set about the task of keeping THE FREETHINKER alive. He did more than that, for he brought a new spirit into the National Secular Society as well, while, as usual, his own lectures were always enthusiastically received. Between 1915 and 1939, few Freethinkers were better known the world over than Chapman Cohen. He was the leader of the "fighting" Freethinkers, and he never compromised, preferring to be known as an Atheist and Freethinker first and foremost. Not for him indeed was a "reverent" Rationalism which was almost afraid to tell the truth about Christianity.

McCabe, too, was all the time writing and lecturing and, unlike Chapman Cohen, who remained in Britain, his activities took him round the world. He lectured before huge audiences in Australia and America, and held many hectic debates. It is a pity that so few verbatim reports of these have been published. During the early 'twenties, McCabe met the late Sir A. Conan Doyle in a memorable debate, and gave that famous Spiritualist the "thrashing" of his life. This is the only charitable way of putting it. Doyle, who was a great story teller, who made Sherlock Holmes a world-wide figure, and who could write so superbly such books as *The White Company*, *The Lost Continent*, and many other thrillers, was bamboozled right and left by mediums, and actually believed that there were fairies at the bottom of other people's gardens. He wasted his genius and his money in trying to convince people of the reality of spirits, of survival, and of a hazy place called Summerland to which we would all go after dying on this earth of ours. Doyle must have died literally astonished that his great fame as a writer hardly helped him in his strident campaign for Spiritualism except that it became a little more popular.

McCabe threw himself into the discussion with tremendous energy, and wrote a number of books against the absurd claims of Spiritualists which even now, over thirty years later, appear to me some of the best ever written. Had McCabe not been such an uncompromising Freethinker, these books could have easily been almost "best sellers." But the Roman Church saw to that. Its faithful henchmen threatened to boycott every bookshop in the country if anything by this ex-priest was displayed. The Church preferred the "heresy" of Spiritualism rather than any publicity for a "renegade."

Month after month, McCabe's articles and reviews appeared in *The Literary Guide*, and the R.P.A. continued publishing his books, all of which, it may as well be said, sold out soon after publication. It is quite impossible to name all of them, and those he wrote for Haldeman-Julius for the American market. Outstanding are his *History of the Popes* and the *History of the Roman Catholic Church* — both works demanding, not only a prodigious amount of original research, but a thorough knowledge of ancient Latin and Greek. Or take one of the best of all his later books, *The Testament of Christian Civilisation* — it is perhaps the bitterest of all his attacks on Christianity, very

fully documented, mostly from Christian sources; and I regard it as an indispensable reference book for Freethinkers.

In his *Rationalist Encyclopedia* will be found many of his considered judgments on all sorts of topics, and it is interesting to note that he devotes over nine columns to the article on "God" alone. Like Chapman Cohen, McCabe was an Atheist, and his little book, *The Existence of God*, formulates his position very clearly. He did not, however, lecture much on Atheism or Theism as did Cohen, who liked nothing better than to give one of his careful analyses of the belief, though he always couched his argument in his typical humorous way. No speaker the Freethought movement ever had was more contemptuous of theistic arguments or more irreverent than Cohen, and few were more thorough in exposing theistic fallacies. In fact, it was against the God idea and against the claims of Christianity in general that Chapman Cohen achieved his greatest triumphs.

McCabe preferred the scientific approach, with factual discoveries in the scientific world projected through lantern slides where possible. His books on Evolution are small masterpieces of compression, and for the beginner none better can be found to give him the salient facts. From Cohen one might well get the general principles of Evolution; but McCabe gives us the details and discoveries upon which the science is founded. Unless some of these are mastered, the general principles would not be of much use in meeting an anti-Evolutionist — and there are still plenty about.

Although Chapman Cohen published few books in comparison with McCabe, those he did had qualities of their own which made them in their particular field a lucid exposition of the subject they dealt with. He made the problem of "Design," or the question of Christianity and Slavery, or the relationship of "God" and man, or "survival," or the problem of Determinism easy to understand. Like McCabe, in fact, he had little use for theological speculation, and his many books on these and kindred subjects are models of clear thinking. On the platform his amused contempt for solemn subjects, and the ease with which he would "annihilate" theological arguments, always brought him a packed and a happy audience. Rarely was he bitter or rancorous. He preferred to see his audience laughing rather than full of hate.

Yet it is only fair to examine his writings not on the subject of Atheism but on a kindred one — on Materialism. It is not without significance that he wrote *Materialism Restated*. As a convinced Atheist, was he also a Materialist?

The difficulty here is to find a definition of Materialism which is fair to that much discussed problem, for it is a fact that quite a number of eminent Atheists have disowned the term. And the interesting point to note is that if words have any meaning at all they were certainly Materialists. Buchner's *Force and Matter* is actually called the "Bible" of Materialism, yet Buchner himself repudiated the title. So did Huxley and Tyndall, though the latter actually insisted that he discerned "in matter the promise and potency of all terrestrial life." This is from his famous *Belfast Address*. In his *Fragments of Science*, he says: "If Materialism is confounded, science is rendered dumb." Why Tyndall and Huxley should therefore repudiate Materialism — like Bertrand Russell these days — is not at all

clear except for the reason that it has connotations which appear to rouse the greatest anger. Even Bradlaugh preferred to call himself a Monist, though he was as "blatant" a Materialist as Ingersoll.

The prime difficulty is in defining "Matter." What is it? In his first debate, Chapman Cohen said outright that he was *not* a Materialist and, in actual fact, he never was one, in spite of his book *Materialism Restated*. Here he had to define his terms and what he meant by "matter," and it must be admitted that this little work starts out splendidly. At the outset he writes, "The thoroughness of the Mate-

rialistic challenge was such that it has never admitted of anything in the nature of compromise." And he adds, "The essence of Materialism lies in the simple statement that every phenomenon in the universe is the consequence of a composition of natural forces. It is this that the anti-Materialist has to disprove. If he can do this, he will have destroyed Materialism. . . . From the point of view of science it is a case of Materialism or chaos," which is practically what Tyndall said.

How Materialism can be "restated" even by Chapman Cohen should prove worth examining.

A Historical Analogy

IN VIEW of some readers' criticism of the N.S.S. decision to condemn the Anglo-French intervention in Suez last October — implying that Secularism and politics should remain completely divorced — a look at an earlier intervention into Egypt may not be unprofitable.

After Great Britain had bought a sizeable portion of the Suez Canal shares in 1875, British interest in Egypt grew. British commissioners shared the administration of Egyptian finances in order to assure that the extravagant Khedive (King) paid his debts. In 1881 an Egyptian colonel named Arabi staged a coup d'état against his former ruler, leading a nationalist movement which became increasingly anti-foreign in attitude. In June, 1882, nationalist riots broke out in Alexandria and fifty Europeans were killed, including the British consul. The nationalists began to fortify the city and thus threatened the British and French naval squadrons which had been sent to the scene.

The French chose to withdraw, but the Gladstone ministry then in office decided to intervene. Alexandria was shelled and its guns were silenced in a day. A few weeks later, a British army was sent into Egypt and Arabi's army was defeated. Egypt became, for all practical purposes, a British protectorate. Charles Bradlaugh, then in the midst of his constitutional struggle, as well as his usual anti-theological work, protested immediately against "our disgraceful and dishonourable use of superior force against the Egyptians. . . . Without any declaration of war we have bombarded the forts and ruined the town. Fire, murder, pillage, and starvation are the first shameful results of our assertion of England's prestige." A few weeks later he protested again. "It is all nonsense to talk of danger to the Suez Canal. Until we bombarded Alexandria there had never been even a menace against the free passage of the Canal. If we speak of Christians killed in the Alexandria riots, and urge that these riots justified interference, I ask have we interfered in Germany or Russia when the Jews were slaughtered or robbed wholesale?"

While the Archbishop of York was giving thanks that "through God's great goodness the struggle of a few hours has scattered the rebels," Mrs. Besant, at that time Bradlaugh's faithful co-worker, was similarly writing in opposition to the intervention. Not only did they write articles, but both Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant gave lectures in many parts of the country, in spite of the fact that a large majority in both major parties approved the actions of the Gladstone Cabinet. "Atheists seem to be left almost alone," Mrs. Besant observed, "in their protests against the most unrighteous war in Egypt." Nor does our evidence on this subject come solely from the Secularists themselves. The London *Echo* also observed to its surprise that "there is scarcely a secular hall in England, or working-men's club committee room, in which the invasion of Egypt is not . . . condemned. . . . The unbelieving and the atheistic, almost to a man, condemned a war which cost so much treasure and blood."

Whatever our opinion today as to the appropriateness of the attitude then taken by the leaders of the N.S.S., it is obvious that they did not hesitate forcefully to express their judgment on the matter. Nor is there any evidence that such expressions of opinion had any disadvantageous effects upon the size of the N.S.S. membership. JUSTIN.

From Czechoslovakia

INQUIRIES made by Mr. Shipper at the Embassy of the Czechoslovak Republic about the position of Freethought in that country elicited a reply from the Public Relations Officer which contained the following information:

"Up to the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic (in 1918) the Freethinker movement among the Czechs and Slovaks (then under Austrian rule) was primarily anti-clerical in inspiration. After 1918, when clericalism was no longer a powerful force, the movement began to fall into decay. That section of it which formed the Union of Proletarian Disbelievers for the most part joined the Communist Party and the Union of Proletarian Disbelievers was dissolved. Other sections also ceased to exist on an organised basis.

"At the present time there are no organisations specifically concerned with combating religious ideas. There is, however, the Society for the Propagation of Political and Scientific Knowledge, which has as part of its activity the propagation of Atheism."

CORRESPONDENCE

JOHN M. ROBERTSON

I will only trouble to refute one statement in Mr. Cutner's diatribe in your issue of March 22nd. I repeat that John M. Robertson was editor of *The New Age* BEFORE that paper was taken over by Orage and Holbrook Jackson. Some of my early writings appeared in *The New Age* when under Robertson's editorship.

The rest of Mr. Cutner's article reveals a confused state of mind, from which one can only gather that he does not like my writings (for which, naturally, I am sorry), that he is not a free or any other kind of thinker, and that he is not so well acquainted with John M. Robertson's writings, opinions, and public activities as he would have your readers believe.

I leave the matter there, as my writings and views on the subject of Freethought or Freethinking are quite irrelevant to the point under discussion. I would only suggest to Mr. Cutner not to accuse others of being "fuddled" when his own contribution is such a sad example of that condition of mind. C. H. NORMAN.

[Mr. Cutner writes: Robertson was never the Editor of *The New Age*. My authorities are the Biographical Introduction and Bibliography in *The History of Freethought* and the Biography of Orage.]

ITA AND RELIGION

I was wrong in thinking that Mrs. Margaret Knight was the unnamed Agnostic in Mr. Redington's letter (*THE FREETHINKER*, March 22nd) who had the discussion with "many disillusioned young people." Mrs. Knight tells me that her only appearance on commercial television was in Granada's "Youth is Asking" series last Autumn, when she was questioned by eight sixth-formers, "all ardent Christians." The identity of the Agnostic in question thus remains a mystery. COLIN MCCALL.

TOO Highbrow?

For many years I have been a staunch supporter of THE FREETHINKER and a great admirer of its noble cause, but I feel that a little criticism is now called for.

In your issue of March 8th you publish a "Quiz," and I consider the questions are taking up valuable space that could well be used to gain new supporters to our movement. I will mention only the first one, "What is Hedonism?" Does anyone really think that these questions will gain new subscribers? These questions are far and away over the heads of the type of people we want to capture.

I consider some of the articles in THE FREETHINKER could also be classed as too highbrow to interest the masses of people. The Catholic Church goes out of its way to recruit even the most ignorant and badly educated people, hence its enormous following. Our membership will never be increased until we get down to earth and make every copy of THE FREETHINKER more likely to attract new supporters. The highbrows might find this boring, but we should always remember that our duty is not to pander to the few, but to come down to the masses.

I have had very many letters in New Zealand newspapers during the seven years I was out there, and I always found that a simple way of expressing myself created far more interest than using phraseology that the average man does not understand.

We badly want the support of the masses and so we should endeavour to attract them by explaining Freethought to them in a more simple way.

F. H. EASTMAN.

JESUS ON DIVORCE

"This Believing World" (March 15th) states, on page 84, that "Jesus said in effect that divorce was forbidden except for adultery." (St. Matthew VI, 32.) He did not! He said, "Saving for the cause of fornication"; or, according to Moffat, "Except for unchastity." Granting that Jesus actually said this, what He meant depends entirely upon what "fornication" or "adultery" meant at the time. The Jewish contemporaries of Jesus were a people whose women had—save in very special circumstances—no rights to divorce at all, *pace* St. Mark X, 11; a people who were not polygamists—but polygynists and who continued to practise *legal* polygyny until the 11th century A.D.

Just what is the meaning of "adultery" or "fornication" to polygynists? Why, in the whole of the New Testament, is the subject of polygyny ignored? G.E.P.

N.S.S. AND POLITICS

Since the Secretary has himself broached the subject, allow me to say that of course it was wrong for a secular society to champion the cause of the Hungarian rebels, or even appear to do so. It may be true, as our press has repeatedly declared, that these people were fighting against overwhelming odds for what they regard as right. But that certainly was not Secularism. Indeed, their first action was to free from prison an R.C. Cardinal to lead them! Do N.S.S. members approve the expenditure of their money in this way?

In order to become powerful, the N.S.S. must become popular. It was the Secularists who championed Sunday excursions in the late 19th century, and Sunday cinemas in this. Most of the "Immediate Practical Objects" should therefore be jettisoned at once. They have nothing to do with Secularism, and they all make the Society unpopular in some quarter or other. If this were done, all Secularists could flock to its banners, whether they believed in arbitration or big battalions; whether or not they hunted; whether or not they believe in punishment for crime, etc., etc. Individual Secularists who have strong views on these subjects could voice them elsewhere; provided they did not use the N.S.S. to propagate them, thereby scaring away other Secularists with dissimilar views.

The enemy of Secularism is the Supernaturalism of the Churches. The Churches are very powerful now, but they have feet of clay. The N.S.S. should clear its decks for action and engage. It should be non-political except where Secularism is directly concerned. It is of no consequence to Secularism who controls the Suez Canal, or who rules in Hungary. But it could not remain inactive on the question of the religious "education" of children, for that is much more important.

So, too, is the question of youth clubs and similar organisations. They should be wrested from the hands of the clergy, and taken over by Secularists. Let those who can form Scout troops; those with musical talent, lay choirs and bands; gymnasts open gymnasias, etc., etc. The Churches will never disappear as long as they control the youth organisations.

If the N.S.S. and its Secretary would devote their energies to matters such as these, and not dabble in international politics when Secularism is not directly involved, the movement would go from strength to strength.

W. E. HUXLEY.

I heartily endorse Mr. McCall's vigorous rejoinder to W. E. Huxley. Indeed, I should have thought that Mr. Huxley, whatever his political bias, would readily support the N.S.S. in striving to save children from Hungarian tyranny and British bombs, as well as from the clutches of the clergy.

S. A. SUTTON.

I would like to say that I am in complete agreement with the statements Mr. McCall published on Suez and Hungary, the latter being one of the most sensible I have read on the subject. Religion and politics are so closely bound up that the N.S.S. must express its views on important political questions. On this occasion you have shown how to do it.

L. HANGER.

I have read with interest the two letters of Mr. W. E. Huxley and Mr. McCall's rejoinders. Where I consider the latter's analogy fails is that the Russians have committed unspeakable atrocities against the Hungarian nation, who merely asked for freedom from foreign domination and the liberty to choose their own destiny. In Egypt, on the contrary, England, France and Israel, with great foresight, tried to settle swiftly a would-be dictator, Nasser, who by his actions in the Canal, Gaza, etc., threatened, and is threatening now more than ever, the peace of the world. And they would have succeeded had not the Labour Party in England, collaborating for political reasons with Communist Russia, compelled the above powers to call a halt to their police enterprise.

As for the Americans, they are realising now more and more, especially the last week, that their attitude was a great mistake which will be dearly paid for, as events soon will show.

MAURICE BYRN.

Mr. McCall gives his case away by admitting he has been "volleyed and thundered" from Right and Left over the political issues which divide the parties. The remedy is obviously for the N.S.S. only to touch politics at points where Secularism itself is involved. We are encumbered with too many irrelevant Immediate Practical Objects, and so long as they exist the Secretary is forced to attend to them. But there is a danger of members cutting down their subscriptions rather than see their monetary contributions used for purposes with which they are not in sympathy.

N. FIELD.

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