

The Freethinker

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Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Fivepence

I RECENTLY MANAGED to get a copy of our contemporary, *Catholic Worker*, the organ of "leftist" Catholics in the U.S.A. There used to be a similar *Catholic Worker* published here, but I have not seen it recently and I do not know whether it still appears. Unlike its similarly-named and deadly rival, the American Communist Party organ, *The Daily Worker*, which has just ceased publication, the *Catholic Worker* still seems to be going strong as a monthly publication. Its political outlook is "Left" to all appearances, very "Left," though apparently not so "Left" that it has so far got left behind by the Ecclesiastical authorities of the great Conservative organisation over which the Vatican presides.

Potatoes and Transubstantiation

In view of the generally conservative and bitterly anti-communist role played in modern politics by the Roman Catholic Church, the title of *The Catholic Worker* may at first sight, cause some surprise; one has come to regard the Vatican so much as the incarnation of Ecclesiastical Fascism, as equally of current political reaction that one sometimes fails to realise the full extent of its elasticity in the social sphere. Rome, however, long ago grasped the import of the Gospel axiom about not letting one's left hand know what one's right hand is doing. In Anglo-Saxon countries in particular, Catholicism has always worn a pink, if not exactly red, tie, and its politics have tended in a leftist direction. This fact stems back to the Irish emigration into North America, England and Australia since "The Hungry Forties" of last century. This emigration stemmed from the terrible Irish potato famine of that grim era. It is actually the humble potato rather than the over-estimated efforts of Cardinal Newman and the Oxford Movement which has made the fortune of modern Irish-imported Catholicism in the Anglo-Saxon world; to borrow the technical phraseology of Catholic theology itself, the potato has undergone a process of "Transubstantiation" into a powerful and growing Catholic movement in formerly almost exclusively Protestant lands. The potato has been a good friend of the Catholic Church. It also dictated the "leftist" political outlook of the Irish emigrants who fled from the misrule of their exploiters, the Protestant Tory landlords.

Catholic Anarchism?

The above facts are familiar to most students of the political evolution of modern Catholicism. But Rome is an elastic—one might almost add, double-jointed—institution, particularly where politics are concerned. And this recent issue of the (American) *Catholic Worker* provides startling proof of this obvious fact, for apparently not only are there American Catholic socialists, but there is, it appears, even a Catholic Anarchist movement. What has the Committee for Un-American Activities got to say about *that*? It is true that nowadays one does not hear so much about the bomb-throwing activities in which Anarchists were at one time supposed to indulge. I believe the Anarchists them-

selves claim that bombs are now a State monopoly. But surely the philosophy of Anarchism represents the very negation by definition, of authority—all and any authority of which Rome is the supreme champion, the oldest and most complete totalitarian despotism exercised on both sides of the grave.

The Identity of Opposites

However, this is not the opinion of the American Catholic Anarchists. Writing in the *Catholic Worker*, Mr. Ammon Hennacy devotes a long and certainly ingenious article to prove that no such incompatibility exists between the tenets of the most authoritarian of

the Christian Churches and those of the most anti-authoritarian of all social creeds. The writer's sincerity appears to be beyond question, even though one imagines his specific arguments will hardly carry much conviction to Anarchists themselves. In Spain, where Catholicism and Anarchism have been deadly enemies for so long—and where Anarchists know the Catholic Church at first hand—one doubts if Mr. Hennacy's arguments will carry much conviction.

"Render unto Caesar"

In brief, the Catholic Anarchist tries to justify his position by a free adaptation of the Gospel axiom, "Render unto Caesar..." In so far as the Catholic Church endorses war, economic exploitation, the political authority of the State, he feels free to disagree; it is only in spiritual matters that the Catholic Church can claim legitimate authority in general, and in particular the individual assent of the Catholic Anarchist. He makes this distinction quite lucidly:

"I accept what the Holy Father says about Heaven, Hell, Purgatory and the Faith, but I do not need to accept his opinions on Franco, war, capitalism, etc., etc. When asked if I believe in the Infallibility of the Pope, I answer that I do when he is infallible." Elsewhere he denounces the State—any State—"as essentially exploitative with its denial of the Sermon on the Mount, in the return of evil for evil in courts, prisons and war."

No doubt if pressed, Mr. Ammon Hennacy could and would quote the text of the famous Decree of Papal Infallibility which limits Papal Infallibility expressly to "Faith and Morals." Since its official promulgation in 1870, the above has been an Article of Faith, a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church.

What are "Faith and Morals"?

On paper, the Anarchist-cum-Catholic appears to have an arguable case. For in theory, Rome professes to be non-political; her infallibility does not officially extend to politics and economics. But in practice, we don't envy Mr. Hennacy having to defend such a position. For "Faith and Morals" in Catholic theology cover a multitude of sins and meanings. One could quote Papal declarations which profess to treat of "Faith and Morals" and which are, accordingly, put out as Infallible in the technical sense of the Vatican, which justify war as a Divine Institution;

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Catholic Anarchism

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

define private property also as such and explicitly proclaim the State as a Divine Institution specifically ordained by God. We would, if only as a matter of curiosity, very much like to know how Mr. Hennacy, who is obviously both intelligent and sincere, shapes up to the apparently insoluble contradictions in his peculiar form of "co-existence."

However, Rome is a wordly-wise institution; she has known how to accommodate herself to a whole succession of social developments from chattel slavery to monopoly capitalism. Perhaps Communism will be the next? Karl

Marx may still become a saint of the Catholic Church and if, as is possible in the course of human mutations, a phase of Libertarian Socialism eventually supersedes the present phase of authoritarian Communism, no doubt Rome, too, will know how to hoist the red and black flag of Anarchy. St. Michael Bakunin may join his old rival, St. Karl Marx, in the first International in the incongruous surroundings of the Catholic heaven. Who knows? Mr. Ammon Hennacy may himself end up as a canonised saint who correctly anticipated the future teachings of his Infallible Church!

Organised Religion and Freedom

By ANDREW PEARSE

A CURIOUS PICTURE is presented by the state of organised religion in modern England. On the one hand, there has been an increasing drift from the Churches. In Victorian England, there was the growing revolt of the intellectuals and the growth of a modern rationalism. This has been followed by a wholesale desertion of the Churches by the masses until numbers and observations taken by Gallup Poll methods tell their own story. On the other hand, the established Church still has immense resources and organised religion exercises a very considerable social power out of all proportion to its numbers and active supporters. Questions of far-reaching social morality are affected in their solution by the attitude taken up by prominent ecclesiastics. Although the press in general does not pay much heed to sermons and their contents, papers such as *The Times* or the *Daily Telegraph* have a regular column which expounds some point of Christian devotion from the standpoint of the most unflinching traditional orthodoxy. For the humanist or the unbeliever, the picture presents a problem. The views which he maintains are probably supported, if somewhat incoherently, by the majority of the population. Yet, a vast pressure prevents their complete articulation within social life.

One point of view concerning this problem may be sketched out. When the actual contents of the popular religion are examined, they are found to contain some strange contradictions. For example, the reputed teaching of Jesus clearly condemns the possession of riches and sees material possession as a danger within life. It would be difficult to find one upholder of conventional Christianity who would set forth this position as a fundamental tenet of his religion. Taking refuge in figurative language, he would seek to explain away the starkness of the parable of Dives and Lazarus. During war, it would be difficult to find one such upholder who would demand the love of one's enemies or the feeding of the enemy when he is hungry. On the contrary, figurative language would again be employed to explain away the clear meaning of the New Testament passages and the taking refuge by Churchmen in popular patriotism.

In short, there is a wide gap between the upholder of the conventional Christian orthodoxy and the morality of the New Testament. The point becomes more significant when it is recalled that social morality has evolved under the pressure of social environment and has had little to do historically with the actual religious rites of the prevailing society. When the two have come together, it has usually meant that the religious rites have been attuned to become symbolic bastions of the prevailing social order. This is exactly the position which has evolved in modern Eng-

land. The religious rites, derived from the background of the Græco-Roman world and adapted to suit the governing classes of today, have become attuned to the prevailing levels of social morality acceptable to those classes. Hence, a firm belief in the doctrines of the historic creeds can go hand in hand with an equally firm belief in material possession, modern warfare, or industrial competition.

As a result, organised religion has become a powerful element in the maintenance of the prevailing social background. Its place is essentially one of maintaining and strengthening this particular order. For example, the Churches have been very articulate about the godless state of Russia and the denunciation of Communism. They have had much to say about the necessity of religious teachings in the schools as a counterblast. But the same people have said nothing about the secular background of the American schools. Still less have they called attention to the fact that napalm bombs in Korea or H-bombs as a means of warfare would far outstrip Herod in his attack upon the Innocents! Large resources are used for the preaching of a gospel which is intended to maintain social quiet and acquiescence. For this reason, even those most negligent of worship among the governing classes will still find it advisable to support the Church as a social organism.

It is exactly this point which faces the modern freethinker or humanist. He may prove his point about the relationship of the Christ and Krishna stories again and again. His attack upon the Bible as a revelation to mankind may be unanswerable. But he will find that the actual battleground still remains as it was. The ecclesiastical reply will still be a refusal to debate the issues and to exercise a social pressure to maintain its own positions within common life. The only answer must lie along the lines of an active demand for a society in which freedom of thought and of conscience is something socially operative and where morality is something openly recognised as springing from the background of social need. Freedom of thought both in religion and elsewhere has become a social issue to the fullest extent. A great deal may be done by the dissemination of information but the stranglehold of ecclesiastical domination will only be broken down finally when it is faced as a social issue and when a society which refuses its pressure has come about.

—NEXT WEEK—

AN ATHEIST BENEFACTOR

By G. H. TAYLOR

To My Fellow Secularists

ARTHUR B. HEWSON (Editor, *American Rationalist*)

LET ME ASK SOME QUESTIONS. Are we dynamic or static? Are we an integral part of society or are we just a wart on the surface. What are we doing about society's ills?

There is a growing concern throughout the Western world over the decaying ethical and moral standards of our time and over their natural and inevitable consequence the steady rise of increasingly serious juvenile delinquency. What are we, of all people, who consider ourselves the "illuminati"—the sons of light—doing to check this social disintegration?

It is well that people should be concerned about this deplorable condition, but concern alone is not enough. It calls for *action*. We Secularists should be spurring people to that action to reverse the dangerous trend which threatens the little civilisation we so far have achieved. It really isn't much, for still "Man's inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn."

Some, analysing the causes of our decadence, advance the idea that this menace to our social well-being is something new arising out of the social abnormalities incident to the war period. However, they are by no means new. They are only so rated because the public has been so late in recognising the symptoms of decadence which have been developing in our society for many years.

No doubt the disruption of the normal patterns of family living plus the abnormal emotional strains and hysterias inherent in the war situation itself stimulated these developments immeasurably. Nevertheless, the root of the trouble lies first in the failure of the traditional Churches to adjust themselves to the age in which we live, and second, in Secularists' failure to provide adult and youth education for intelligent living in the modern world.

In the days when failure to hold membership in a Church made one virtually a social outcast, social discipline was comparatively simple. The Church wielded absolute authority based upon its claim to "divine" sponsorship. It was able to implement this authority through various forms of church discipline and through many church-sanctioned taboos. Through them, it was able to control the unruly in their everyday lives through Fear.

In our day, with our widened horizons of human understanding, the majority of our population has rejected this form of social control entirely because the basis of its supposed authority now appears fantastic and unreal to most thinking people.

Most of the minority of our people who are still nominal Church adherents, render lip service only to the system as did the Greeks in the days of Socrates when belief in the Olympian gods was on the wane. The spell of fear no longer holds them in bondage.

The traditional Church, therefore, stands indicted for its stubborn clinging to an outmoded and indefensible scheme of things which has largely been repudiated—if not actively at least passively.

Orthodox Christianity commits a crime against humanity by continuing to proclaim the doctrine of the vicarious atonement. No so-called "Christ" can serve as our scapegoat and save us from the personal consequences of our wrong-doing. Such a doctrine puts a premium upon our irresponsibility. Each must bear the consequences of his own act. Another crime against humanity chargeable to the traditional Church is its continued insistence on our

dependence on their primitive concept of "God." Individually and collectively we have within ourselves all the capacities and potentialities necessary to the solution of our problems, personal and otherwise. One of the greatest drags upon human progress is the Churches' insistence on our praying for that which we already have in full measure. They would have us wait upon their "God" for accomplishment of those things which only we can achieve and which never will be achieved except by ourselves alone.

Of course, it has become increasingly obvious that this whole scheme of things was set up to strengthen the power of the Church as the arbiter of the fate of its adherents and to establish a permanent sovereignty over them.

There is no threat to what we call "civilisation" in Protestantism for it confines itself to methods of not too aggressive persuasion which are increasingly ineffective. Little by little as we move into the future, Protestantism will be forced by Man's progressively increasing understanding to shed its supernaturalism and shift gradually toward the Humanist pattern of philosophy. It is that or extinction. Already, many of its ministers and large numbers of its laymen no longer wholly accept the primitive concepts upon which its various sects originally based their existence. It is the early dawn of the Secular Era for them.

Of course, as long as Protestants obscure the fact that we are on our own in our world and that we have all the powers we will ever have to make our world what it can be, they are a drag upon humanity. However, they influence less and less people, especially the working people. They function almost exclusively on the middle and upper class level. Take note of the effort among the Methodists to divorce their Social Action group from official recognition. I also know of a Presbyterian minister who, when trying to induce two friends of mine to join his church, offered the argument that "not a single member of his church worked with his hands"!

It is a different thing when we consider the Roman Church. It is a direct threat to our democratic way of life. Up until nearly the 1900's the Roman Church never included in its dogmas any thought of social action designed to correct the economic injustices in our social system. Up until then the sinner's "immortal soul" was the thing and his preparation for the "hereafter" their primary consideration. This "vale of tears" and its trials, however onerous, were things to be accepted as part of this preparatory process and as an expression of "God's will."

In the late 1800's and early 1900's, the Roman Church saw a strong renewal of anti-clericalism in Europe which they had succeeded in checking after the French Revolution. It saw the wiping out of the Papal States and the establishment of the Kingdom of Italy by Garibaldi's anti-clerical bayonets. The Vatican was forced by the trend of events to recognise that the centuries-long alliances with the feudal lords of Europe with whom they had shared power, would no longer enable them to keep control of the masses of their people.

A new policy, therefore, was enunciated with Leo XII's encyclical, "Rerum Novarum," which set forth a programme for social justice as between worker and employer. This was elaborated upon further by a later encyclical "Quadragesimo Anno."

(To be concluded)

This Believing World

The Archbishop of Canterbury—rightly—protests against religious "intolerance" in Malta—but it is at least noteworthy that in the past there were rarely any protests from the Churches when Freethinkers were fined or imprisoned or both on the archaic charge of "blasphemy." This was religious intolerance at its worst, for all that this kind of blasphemy meant was that the "blasphemer" did not believe in the religion of the Churches and said so. How many of our archbishops and bishops protested at the impudent "intolerance" of the Roman Catholic judge in England, Judge North, sentencing G. W. Foote to twelve months' vile imprisonment for what is now known as an imaginary crime—poking a little fun at some of the old Bible myths? He did not even get a remission for "good conduct"—as real criminals get these days.

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Private Claude Perfect in Malaya, though born a staunch Roman Catholic, has in Malaya joined the Sikh religion, with beard and turban complete. Alas, his mother is tarred with the brush of religious intolerance. "Just wait till I get him home," she is reported to have said, "I'll give him Sikh. He has made us the laughing stock of the neighbourhood for he was brought up as a Roman Catholic." No doubt Private Perfect will be reckoned as one of the R.C.'s failures—for he will never be shown as a fine representative of the old Jesuit adage—"Give us a child under seven and you can have him afterwards."

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In spite of over 100 years of missionary endeavour, the prospect of Africa going all Christian is positively bleak according to an All-Africa Christian Conference held in Nigeria. Islam is making its appeal with far more success as a religion for black people than Christianity—in fact, it is progressing ten times faster; while the "secularisation" of the more educated Africans is another cause of despair. But the Christian Churches are banking on the 4,000,000 dollar fund established by John D. Rockefeller and eight American Mission Boards for a Christian Theological Education and Ministry both in Asia and Africa. Christians still hope!

★

According to the General Secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the year 1958 is going to be "a critical year in Bible Society work." The demand for Bibles is still enormous—so it is claimed—but the cost of printing Bibles has gone up by at least 50%, and what with the cost of translations and paper and binding, to say nothing of salaries, rates, lighting, and heating, the once well-filled purse held by the Society appears to be emptying very quickly, and "Bible hunger" looks like spreading far and wide.

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Of course, "Bible hunger" is a term spread by the Society, the truth being that while it is quite true that the Bible has a huge *circulation*, at no time in its history has it been read so little as now. The Minor Prophets of the Old Testament are sealed books to almost all Christians, and only very rarely can we find a Christian who knows the Epistles of Paul and tell us what that more or less angry gentleman was driving at. His "theology" is almost as dead as that of Habakkuk.

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Except in their own journals Methodism appears to be rarely referred to these days in our national papers, but there is no doubt that they are suffering from the wave of universal unbelief as much as the other religions. The *Methodist Recorder* some time ago had a flaming headline,

"Battle is now joined with Atheism," a very significant admission that the once despised "Atheism" now has to be met if Methodism is to survive. Methodists are even glad to be associated with real live bishops—as in Wakefield recently, when the Bishop of Wakefield opened a revivalist Crusade and admitted he "was glad to be there." There was a time when Methodists and Anglicans were not exactly "brothers in Christ." Now things are so bad that they just have to help each other if Christianity is to survive.

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We still get piteous appeals from old diehards to "get back to the Bible," for nothing upsets them more than "the lamentable ignorance" of the Bible everywhere, as Alderman Sir Harold Jackson of Sheffield was obliged very sadly to admit a short while ago there. Bible reading was one of the joys of the reign of Elizabeth I, he said, but it "has died out in the reign of Elizabeth II." Sir Harold wanted more time to be spent looking after "the spirit" rather than "burnishing up our machinery"—whatever that means—and we earnestly hope he gets his wish. It won't make any difference whatever to the indifference which most people nowadays have for the Bible.

An Unusual Book

Loud Music Far Off, by John O'Hare. I.L.P. Literature Department, 6 Endsleigh Street, London, W.C.1. 2s. 10d. post free.

Loud Music Far Off is an unusual book written by an unusual man. It consists of 20 essays full of meat and humour, but not a book that will find many readers amongst Puritans of any shade.

The author is a word painter, and the majority of the characters he portrays would not be considered even respectable amongst the hide-bound members of the community. Mr. O'Hare seems quite indifferent to the characters of the acquaintances of whom he writes so vividly. His main concerns are that they shall be interesting and that they have a story to tell. The majority of his subjects seem to be found in pubs and the author is obviously quite at home amongst the publicans and sinners whom he meets on level terms on his marathons around the unusual and usual parts of London.

This can easily be understood if one has no religious or other prejudices about entering pubs. The English pub is one of the bastions of real democracy. Let us hope it will never be supplanted by these huge soulless palaces of vulgarity. Let us leave these modern monsters to their creators, the Americans, and keep our pubs for what they are, "the poor man's clubs."

A. P. Herbert once wrote a poem of a mother bewailing the effect of Hollywood pictures upon her son, and each verse ended with the line—"I want my boy to be British, so tyke him with you to the pub."

The great difference between the pub and the substitutes provided by the temperance people is that the pub is godless and cheerful; the other is godly and cheerless. However, this book is not all cap and bells; there are some stories of the real serious side of life, and several with the unexpected ending that made O. Henry's stories so unusual.

From the rich and varied experiences of an adventurous life O'Hare has seen much and observed much, and whether the reader enjoys his humour or not, he will have to admit that he has two great assets—he is not a bore, and his opinions are his own and expressed with a vigour all his own. This is a welcome change from many men who have gained a cheap reputation by saying nothing—just mouthing platitudes.

F. A. HORNIBROOK

THE FREETHINKER

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

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

Lecture Notices, Etc.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, March 2nd, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

Central London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, 5 minutes Edgware Road Tube).—Sunday, March 2nd, 7.15 p.m.: L. EBURY, "Is Determinism Outdated?"

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 4th, 7.15 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, B.A., "Angry Young Men."

Edinburgh Humanist Group (St. Mark's Unitarian Church, Castle Terrace).—Friday, March 7th, 7.45 p.m.: Public Discussion between MRS. MARGARET KNIGHT and the REV. KENNETH MACKENZIE, "Humanism or Christianity?" Chairman, the Rev. J. L. BROOM, M.A.

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 2nd, 6.30 p.m.: 77th Anniversary. Guest speaker: F. J. Corina.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, March 2nd, 2.30 p.m.: W. WARBEY, M.P., "Does Britain Count Today?"

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, March 2nd, 11 a.m.: D. G. MACRAE, M.A., "Religion and its Modern Substitutes."

OUTDOOR

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

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: L. EBURY

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and CORSAIR. Sunday, 8 p.m.

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

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

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

N.S.S. EXECUTIVE MEETING

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 19TH, 1958.—Present: Messrs. Ridley (Chair), Alexander, Arthur, Barker, Ebury, Gordon, Hornibrook, Johnson, Shepherd, Taylor, Warner, Mrs. Trask, Mrs. Venton, the Treasurer (Mr. Griffiths) and the Secretary. New members were admitted to Birmingham, Bradford, Dagenham, Edinburgh, Manchester, Merseyside, North London, Nottingham, Portsmouth and Wales and Western Branches, which with individual members totalled 29. Mr. F. A. Bond, new Secretary of Bradford, was announced. Branch matters from Manchester, North London, Nottingham, Portsmouth and Worthing were dealt with, speakers being arranged in the cases of Nottingham and Portsmouth. A motion was passed: "We understand that Mrs. Ridley will soon be returning home again from hospital, and we thank Mr. Ridley for doing his best in difficult circumstances and hope that he will soon be able to carry on as usual with speech as well as pen." The willingness of Brussels University to accommodate the 1959 Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, and of the Rector to join the Committee of Honour was noted with satisfaction. Mr. Swinger's speech at the Annual Dinner, it was agreed, had been excellent. The new Marble Arch plan was viewed with apprehension as likely to interfere with speaking and literature selling. Further details would be sought. Possibility of further social activities was deferred until the next meeting. This was fixed for Wednesday, March 19th, 1958.

Notes and News

CANON R. MCKAY, head of the BBC Religious Broadcasting Department, thinks that too much televising of acts of public worship "might do a disservice to the churches and religion generally." If people were not interested in worship in churches and chapels, they should not be interested in seeing it on the screen, he said at an Educational Association conference in London at New Year. He also gave audience figures for religious programmes, as follows: Sunday morning service in all regions, 1,300,000; People's service, 4,250,000; Sunday half-hour, 3,500,000; Meeting point, 2,500,000; and Lift up Your Hearts, 3,500,000. We think Canon McKay's remarks will come as a shock to his BBC colleague, Mr. R. J. E. Silvey (Head of BBC Audience Research), who argued—in the BBC publication, *Religion on the Air*—"that religious broadcasting is a means whereby the influence of Christian teaching and Christian worship is brought to bear in some degree upon half the people who are outside the churches." However, we have a suggestion to the BBC: televise Freethought programmes instead of religious services and see if they do a "disservice" to Freethought.

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"SCIENCE is making headway in our schools" headlined the *Catholic Herald* proudly (31/1/58). The findings of its reporter had proved "more hopeful than might have been imagined," and Dominican scientist Fr. Lawrence Bright pooh-poohed any idea that "science can be dangerous." He pointed out that there was a flourishing Catholic society at Harwell and that a number of Roman Catholics had been engaged on Zeta. Nevertheless, he saw a need for "wholesome Catholic influence in the new sciences." How often do we hear of the vocation of the scientist or technologist? he asked. And answered: "For that, we have to go to the Pope: his addresses to scientists over many years preserve an admirable balance in the matter." This is sheer rubbish and we suspect that Fr. Bright knows it. If he doesn't, he ought to read the far more balanced statements on science of men like Bertrand Russell, Dr. Bronowski and Professor Blackett—three non-Christians who spring instantly to mind.

ADRIAN BRUNEL: A TRIBUTE

THE ENTERTAINMENT WORLD, here and abroad, can ill afford to lose its good men. Through the death of Adrian Brunel at the age of 65, the film medium is much the poorer. Both as man and artist Brunel made a notable contribution to the British screen, especially in the 20s, and fought a doughty battle at a time when it was indeed courageous to stick one's neck out—in Wardour Street especially, but at Elstree and Denham as well. In recent years poor health had made his contribution to British films slight, but always and indeed right up to the very end of his life, he displayed a keen interest in the fate of the film industry (a letter from him, setting out with admirable clarity, a remedy for the present film crises, was printed in *The Observer* only a few days before he died) as well as that of the world around him.

An authority on Thomas Paine, he was quite naturally a radical in politics, as well as being a staunch Humanist. Not only his wife and son, both of whom shared his beliefs and were his good and loving companions, will mourn his passing; a large army of many types and varied creeds will feel the loss of a personal friend. Adrian Brunel was an artist of sense and sensibility, the possessor of a personality of infinite charm and gracious repose. He was a fighting spirit but a gentle man in the truest sense of the word.

PETER COTES.

A Chronology of Secularism

A Chronology of British Secularism, by G. H. Taylor. National Secular Society. 1957. Price 1s. Postage 2d.

SOME OF US are apt to forget that the late John M. Robertson's monumental *History of Freethought* in four volumes stops at the end of the nineteenth century, though it is true that he deals very briefly with some of its aspects a little later. As far as British Freethought is concerned, he dealt very fully with many of our great propagandists—but, curiously enough, his account of the rise of Secularism during the latter part of the nineteenth century is rather sketchily done.

It is, of course, from 1851, when George Jacob Holyoake invented the word "Secularism," that the movement caught on with what we may call the more intelligent working-classes. It was they who began to form various Secular Societies up and down the country and who subscribed to the *Reasoners*, *Secular Reviews*, *Agnostic Journals*, etc., which began the "popular" propaganda of Freethought as against what was known as the more "cultured" Agnosticism of Huxley, Leslie Stephen, and Herbert Spencer. And it was they who bore the brunt of the senseless prosecutions for "blasphemy" which, when examined, as it was by G. W. Foote in one of his brilliant speeches in court defending himself, was not one whit worse than the many anti-Christian passages scattered in such profusion in well-known "classics."

Actually, the history of Secularism and Freethought in general during the past hundred years makes exciting reading—and, so far, no historian has done full justice to it. As Mr. Taylor points out in his Introduction, an American, Mr. J. E. McGee, published his *History of the British Secular Movement* in 1948—and surprisingly informative it was; but a much fuller account of our work during the past 60 years was very much needed. Robertson told us very little about Foote; and the work of Chapman Cohen and Joseph McCabe did not come within the scope of his great *History*.

Mr. Taylor's pamphlet is not, however, a history—but a chronology, and as such, is bound to prove most invaluable for a future historian of the movement. Point by point he notes what happened in each year from 1840 to 1957, beginning with young George Jacob Holyoake, who must always be considered the "father" of British Secularism. That a good many of his followers parted from him on some points where they felt he was a little too embracing—he was willing to admit that even Christians could be good Secularists—is a matter of history; just as he eventually preferred to call himself an "Agnostic" in later life. But he started a great Movement which from 1866 has had a profound influence on all anti-religious thinking.

It was in 1866 that Charles Bradlaugh made a determined effort to bring into one fold, so to speak, as many of the scattered Secular Societies as possible, our own National Secular Society being the result. He was its first President, and even his heavy parliamentary duties never interfered with the work and enthusiasm he put into the N.S.S. until he became too ill to carry on. His successor—and the only one who could then compete with the reputation Bradlaugh had made—was G. W. Foote, who as an orator and writer, and particularly as the Editor of THE FREETHINKER, was, next to Bradlaugh, the one man to fit the post. And it was not an easy one.

All this, and very much more, is duly noted by Mr. Taylor year by year—and it would not be surprising if some of his readers wished he could have given many of the events he so graphically notes much more in detail.

Both Bradlaugh and Foote made their names household ones, they were nearly always "news" for readers of our national daily journals and Secularism duly flourished.

There are two valuable Appendices—one, a list of the places in which the N.S.S. Annual Conferences took place, and the other a list of very nearly all the contributors to THE FREETHINKER, with the number of their contributions, to the end of 1957. The bibliographically-minded reader will also be interested to learn the real names of some of the anonymous contributors. For example, during his lifetime, "Mimnermus's" name was a closely-guarded secret. He comes after Foote and Cohen in the number of his articles, and perhaps next to them in popularity also. Had his readers known that he was just plain "John Smith," would he have really been so popular?

There are three excellently produced portraits of Bradlaugh, Foote, and Cohen, and altogether I can only hope that no reader of this journal will fail to send for a copy. As a constant work of reference for names, places, events, in the history of Secularism, it is quite unique.

H. CUTNER.

Review

To-morrow we'll all be Geniuses, by Gordon Caulfeild. Pageant Press of New York. 1957. \$2. 58 pages.

THE AUTHOR'S POSITION is as follows: "All men are equal. And potential geniuses."

He defines genius, after Carrel, as the possession of "rare and marvellous powers." One must therefore note the logical inconsistency. What is rare is not possessed by everyone; powers held in common cannot therefore be those of genius. Therefore we cannot all become geniuses.

However, *no* definition of genius has any scientific validity whatever. The work done by such as Sir F. Galton, Havelock Ellis and A. M. Ludovici on "genius" turns out, in retrospect, to have been no more than a study of special talents. Later psychologists, and particularly Spearman, reduced these researches to more scientific language, though a good deal remains to be done. Mr. Caulfeild grasps the point that "genius" (so called) is relative and not a special mark of some unreachable height separated by an unbridgable gap from the common run of humanity. He shows no awareness, however, of the fragility of the word itself.

The word "genius" is purely a literary expression. There is no known boundary line between "genius" and ordinary cleverness. We say a person is a genius when we mean he has a flair for some special line of activity. It has become a linguistic convenience to say he has, or is, a "genius." But science recognises no such animal as a genius. In the language of psychology, there is no point along the quotient of the Spearman S Factor at which cleverness abruptly ends and the word "genius" becomes suddenly enfranchised.

If there *were* such a point, science could investigate the physiological conditions and cerebral concomitants.

The same objections apply if we consider "genius" to be associated with the Spearman G Factor. (G is for General, as against S for Special, ability.) Nor can we say that at an I.Q. of 142 cleverness ends and at 143 genius begins. Any attempt to plot the incidence of "genius" on the I.Q. scale, or on any Special scale, is entirely unscientific.

Mr. Caulfeild is safe in saying that high ability does not constitute a special order of being. He is less happy in calling it genius and he does not go to proper authorities

at all but only to one or two of his favourite authors of the Thinkers' Library. He undertakes to "prove" what he says, but quotations from Carrel, etc., are no substitute for proof.

In baldly asserting that all people, men and women, are equal, he simply flies in the face of contemporary research. It is quite impressive to rebel against authority. It is even more impressive when the rebel is *aware* of what he is doing. He then makes some attempt to criticise the existing position. For if our author is right in his contention that all men are equal, then the whole of the modern psychology of learning is falsely constructed. The whole of our educational methods are undermined. The streaming of schoolchildren into classes in which the work attempted will be in accordance with their native capacities, and the publication of millions of textbooks designed to meet particular levels of understanding, is all a gross waste of time and an iniquitous misuse of the taxpayers' money.

Fortunately for our peace of mind, Mr. Caulfeild does not prove his point, but happily goes on quoting blithe passages from Mr. Carrel.

The child of, say, an Intelligence Quotient 110 can no more stretch himself to the 117—121 region required for passing the Common Entrance examination than a man can stretch himself from four feet six to six feet in height.

All that education can do for the child is to make sure his accomplishments are in line with his intelligence; that is, to ensure that he will be able to deal with his environment at the level of his capabilities.

Education must fill the jug to the brim so that there is no waste. But if it is a pint jug, a quart will not go in it.

Evolution's lesson is not equality but *inequality*; this is, indeed, backed by common observation. G. H. TAYLOR.

The 52nd Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society

THOSE WHO UNDERESTIMATE the National Secular Society (founded by Charles Bradlaugh as far back as 1866) should have been present at the Mecca Restaurant on February 15th last. Guests numbered over 100 and there was no doubt how thoroughly they enjoyed the dinner, the speeches, and the chance of meeting many old friends and making new ones. No society in this country has more devoted and loyal members than the N.S.S., bound as they are by the common cause of truth, their hatred of all attacks on liberty of thought and speech, and their determination to oppose all forms of supernaturalism.

As usual, the President, Mr. F. A. Ridley, who was in the chair, began with a warm welcome to the guests of the evening, Mr. Stephen T. Swingler, M.P., and Mrs. Swingler, and expressed his regret that Mr. O. C. Drewitt was unable to be present. He was pleased to see many familiar faces—Mr. F. A. Hornibrook (one of the veterans of our movement), Mr. Avro Manhattan (whose books against the Roman Church are so widely known) and many others, members and friends of the Society. His special plea was for the separation of Church and State; and this also was the principal theme of Mr. Swingler, whose speech was the highlight of the evening. Mr. Swingler began by telling us that he was the grandson of an archbishop and the son of a parson, but he felt that religion was a private matter for the individual, and the State should not interfere. He was all in favour of "pressure groups," and therefore in favour of the N.S.S., whose Aims and Objects he had read with great interest. Although progress had been made, we had still a long way to go; it came in bits and

pieces, but he wished we could get a straight vote in Parliament on the separation of Church and State.

Mr. Swingler read out a remarkable note from the American General Omar Bradley, which ended by declaring that in the ultimate the greatest sign of human progress was the march of human Reason. It was all the more remarkable because of its unexpected source. Mr. Swingler was loudly applauded, and his toast to the N.S.S. was drunk with enthusiasm.

Mr. J. L. Shepherd responded with a reference to the many devoted workers in our movement—the sellers of our journals, the Branch Secretaries who make up our lecture lists, the speakers, and others, who have made the N.S.S. a veritable "miracle." He declared that Superstition was our greatest enemy and our task was to eliminate it.

Mr. W. Miller then proposed the toast to "Our Guests," and caused much laughter with his humorous "after dinner" stories. And, referring to Mr. Swingler's "pressure groups," he pointed out that the Roman Catholic Church was just such a pressure group. Again the toast was acclaimed, and Mr. Bayard Simmons, deputising for Mr. Drewitt, felt that as a writer and not a speaker, it would be difficult to take Mr. Drewitt's place. He closed with the hope that Mr. Drewitt as a writer would take the place of the late Joseph McCabe.

The President then rounded off the speeches with a few last words. It would be a big step forward, he said, if Church and State could be separated. Until then, Great Britain still had a medieval constitution.

This concluded the speeches, and the hall was made ready for dancing which, under the lively strains of Mr. Bill Shipman's band, was soon under way. All who took part in it obviously enjoyed themselves, the others—perhaps older and more staid—were content to sit and talk and reminisce.

We were pleased to note the many visitors from the provinces.

A word must be said for the "producers." A great deal of work takes place behind the scenes to make our dinners a success. The General Secretary, Colin McCall, Mrs. Ruby Seibert, and Mr. C. H. Harniman all worked hard; while, as usual, Mr. W. Griffiths as M.C., was also responsible for the very successful dancing arrangements. To them all, our thanks are due. H.C.

CORRESPONDENCE

A REPLY TO MR. MEULEN

I am grateful to Mr. Henry Meulen for his friendly and penetrating criticisms of my article on the problem of perception. As he says, the whole question hinges on the meaning of "existence." Berkeley *did* hold that objects apprehended in sensation "really exist," but to him this meant that they are dependent on the mind of God; that is, they are wholly mental in nature. There are, however, as I tried to point out, the gravest objections to this view, and it leads logically to the belief that nothing exists save our own mental states. If I understand him correctly, Mr. Meulen does not go to this extreme, although he holds that we cannot be *certain* of the existence of objects when we do not directly sense them. But does he really believe that it is even possible that when, say, a table is completely covered by a cloth the table forthwith ceases to exist and that the cloth is then suspended in mid-air until removed? Philosophic scepticism, I feel, can at times go too far, and degenerate into absurdity.

Regarding the distinction between a perception and the act of perceiving, I would have thought that though there are difficulties involved here, such a distinction is absolutely fundamental if we are to admit the possibility of knowledge at all. As Russell puts it in his *Problems of Philosophy*: "The question of the distinction between act and object in our apprehending of things is vitally important, since our whole power of acquiring knowledge is bound up with it. The faculty of being acquainted with things other than itself is the main characteristic of a mind. Acquaintance with objects, essentially consists in a relation between the mind and

something other than the mind; it is this that constitutes the mind's power of knowing things." Even the solipsist must believe that his mental states are in some sense distinct from his act of sensing them, otherwise he would not be able to make any statement, philosophic or not, about anything since every statement implies by its very nature that there is a difference between the knower and the known. (Rev.) JOHN L. BROOM.

THE GOD OF ATHEISM

Under the title of "The God of Atheism," Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann has made some extraordinary statements, and many cutting remarks about Mr. Cutner, whom I do not intend to defend, as no doubt he can adequately take care of himself.

Every atheist knows that the title of the article is a contradiction of terms; there cannot be a god of atheism, for the atheists have never postulated any kind of god, they merely say that the theists have never produced any evidence that their fairy tales about gods are true.

This is not a question of two sides about a postulation, there is only one side, i.e., the religious side, whether Christian or any other religion. They put up propositions about something they call god. Atheists refuse to accept these uncorroborated statements until the theists produce some tangible evidence.

A skilful writer like Mr. Du Cann can easily work up an absurd story to make it look very real to uncritical people. For such writers it is very easy to put up some word, especially if the readers have already been well drilled in the word, add a large number of adjectives, and attributes, until the word becomes although very unreal, a reality in the reader's mind.

Despite what Mr. Du Cann may say, the atheist is a true freethinker because his mind is not trammelled by any kind of beliefs or doubts, nor is his mind cluttered up with spurious nonsense about what non-existent gods commanded.

He says: "People can only believe what they can, or wish to believe." The last part sounds noble, but we are drilled into believing fantasies, which without outside intervention become firmly rooted, and cause the persons concerned to bear spiteful malice against those who differ. P. TURNER.

MILLIONS OF ANIMALS

Millions of animals pass through the markets and slaughterhouses of the world every year in scenes of terror and misery, also great numbers of fur animals are trapped and die horrible deaths, but the fur trade still goes on. A great deal of this suffering is no doubt caused by the mistaken idea that animals were made for man's use and therefore don't matter. Until this idea is exploded and mankind learns that all men are part of the great animal kingdom, and that a nation which allows its members to cause needless suffering to animal life cannot be called civilised, mass cruelty will continue. L. STARLEY.

SOCIAL CREDIT

What Miss Anne Exly (January 3rd) seems not to understand is that the people of the world can have the "moon" stuff and the other things that she—and I—consider more vital to our everyday lives on this planet at one and the same time. It is only finance that decrees that the people can only have one thing or the other but never the two together. Hitler's Germany also proclaimed the famous "Guns or Butter" policy when, in fact, they could have had guns and butter together.

One cause of the creation of arms and armaments is that these non-consumable goods (as far as the individual is concerned) give additional purchasing-power to the people who produce them and thus help to make up the inevitable gap between incomes and prices related to final consumable goods. I cannot here go deeper into the question but merely hint that Miss Exly will find the answer in a study of Social Credit.

I, too, thank you for publishing "articles that reflect... a world-spirit." As an Esperantist I fully appreciate that aspect of your work. J. W. LESLIE.

A CRITICISM

Like Mr. J. Thurston (January 17th), I find Mr. G. S. Brown's articles in very bad taste. His ridicule is on a very low and crude level and is not likely to gain THE FREETHINKER any new subscribers. The Christian religion can be made to look silly without descending to ridicule on that plane. S. C. MERRIFIELD.

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OBITUARY

DR. M. GOMPERTZ, B.A.

In the death of Dr. Gompertz, Freethought has lost one of its oldest and staunchest supporters—a link with Bradlaugh, Foote, and Chapman Cohen. He was born in South Shields in 1868, and made teaching his career. In this he was very successful, obtaining his B.A. degree in 1891. After holding other appointments, he became Head of Leyton Boys' County High School, and obtained his Ph.D. in Science. Retiring in 1929, Dr. Gompertz was appointed by the Essex Education Committee as their chief Examiner for Junior Scholarships, and later became Chairman of the Scholarship Board; and he was annually co-opted for other important posts.

His publications include *Corn in Egypt* (1927), *The Master Craftsmen* (1932), and he edited with valuable notes Goldsmith's *Traveller* and Gray's *Elegy and Ode on Spring*. Dr. Gompertz was a great traveller, and went to Canada and the U.S.A. in 1927 and 1931, and made many visits all over Europe before then. But in 1949 he made a world tour, including Australia and New Zealand. In particular, he made a special point of visiting not only Canada, but such famous places as Salt Lake City and the Grand Canyon.

It should be added that Dr. Gompertz was greatly influenced from his early youth by the work of Bradlaugh and Foote and John M. Robertson, whom he heard often, and for over forty years he was a great friend of Chapman Cohen's.

He died on February 7th in Eastbourne and was cremated on February 13th at Downs Crematorium, Brighton. Among those present were representatives of the various Humanist Societies, Mr. Bayard Simmons representing the N.S.S.

Dr. Gompertz's wife died after 53 years of happy wedded life and in 1950 he married Miss Sarah Cook, a former colleague. To her and to his family we extend our deepest sympathies. H.C.

WILLIAM EDWARD EVERETT

"As I have lived, so I want to die—a militant Freethinker," wrote William Edward Everett of Norwich, when he learned from a specialist that what he thought was sciatica was, in fact, incurable cancer. And so he did die on Thursday, February 13th, at the age of 73. At his request the General Secretary of the National Secular Society conducted a secular service at St. Faith Crematorium, Norwich, on the following Tuesday, and, despite a driving snowstorm, a large number of his friends and trade union colleagues joined his family in final tribute. William Everett had been a reader of this paper for nearly 50 years, and we send our deepest sympathy to Mrs. Everett and her son.

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