

# The Freethinker

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THE DEATH OF POPE PIUS XII has focussed the attention of the Press and the general public upon the Vatican and, more generally, upon the Roman Catholic Church, to a degree probably unprecedented in this country since the Protestant Reformation. This is certainly a very remarkable sociological, as well as religious fact, and it emphasises in a striking manner the significant revival of Catholic influence even in a traditionally Protestant country such as this one. Readers of *Barnaby Rudge* may remember that there was a time, and one not so very long ago, when

the mere mention of a Roman Catholic revival in Britain brought the London mob out on the streets in defence of their Protestant heritage. It must, incidentally, be added that the present world-wide "counter-Reformation" of the Roman Catholic Church owes no small debt to the late Eugenio Pacelli—that artful "career-diplomat" who so aptly steered the ship of Peter through the troubled waters of the mid-20th century. In any case, the present preoccupation of even the secular Press of this still technically Protestant land with what it was once the fashion to describe as "The Antichrist of Rome," would appear to prove the contention so often urged in these columns, that Rome has now definitely succeeded the Protestant Fundamentalism of Victorian days as the new and more dangerous enemy of International Freethought.

## How Popes are Made

At present, not only the attention of the Roman Catholic Church, but that of the "civilised" world, is now fixed on the forthcoming election of a new Pope by the College of Cardinals—still officially designated as "sacred," despite the peculiar record of so many of its past members, including, indeed, not a few records which can only be described as criminal. This, according to the present rules in force, must take place within eighteen days of the Pope's death, and is conducted in secrecy by ballot under very stringent regulations gradually evolved over the centuries. One of these rules, rigidly enforced, sheds a strange light on some past Papal elections. A candidate, under pain of disqualification, is forbidden to vote for himself! This rule, which has been in force since the 16th century, was invoked after the most infamous of all Popes, Alexander VI, had secured his own election in this manner—backed up by wholesale bribery! Nowadays, the successful candidate must have a two-thirds majority *excluding* his own vote. Theoretically, any baptised Catholic is eligible, excluding only women, lunatics and physically deformed persons. The Cardinals have possessed the exclusive right of electing the Bishop of Rome since the middle of the 11th century, and in practice no one but a Cardinal has been elected for centuries. Formerly, several Catholic monarchs had a power of veto over the election of a Pope; but this has now been abolished, though it was actually used as recently as 1903 by the Austrian Kaiser. The successful candidate then formally accepts—he is under no canonical obligation to do so—announces his Papal title and is subsequently crowned

with the traditional formula: "Accept the Triple Crown and know that thou art the Vicar of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Kings and Princes..." Undoubtedly, the Pope, and in particular, a capable man like Leo XIII or Pacelli, exercises immense power, perhaps more real power than any current secular ruler. In theory, at least, there are practically no limits to the power of this modern successor of the Roman Caesars.

## Some Past Elections

According to the official chronology, the late Pope was the 262nd successor of Peter. During the nineteen centuries since Peter went—if he ever did go—to Rome, the long line of Popes has included a great variety of individuals, ranging from the sublime to the ridiculous. A few were really great men, at least when

## —VIEWS and OPINIONS—

# Accept the Triple Crown

By F. A. RIDLEY

judged by their contemporary standards. Perhaps the greatest was the redoubtable Gregory VII, the only one of the Popes still a big enough personality to be known under his own name—Hildebrand. Quite a number were, as even candid modern Catholic historians have admitted, monsters in human form. The famous Catholic historian, Cardinal Baronius, who himself was once nearly elected Pope, described one period of Papal history during the Dark Ages, as "the age of the whores." The legend of the woman Pope Joan, appears to have some historical basis in the Papal orgies of this period, when Papal concubines used to sit on the throne adorned with the Pope's crown! There was, of course, never any actual Pope Joan. At the time of the Crusades, the Popes were the military dictators of Europe in its wars against the Muslim East. In the 14th century there were several Popes simultaneously; while during the Renaissance the Popes were about equally famous as patrons of art and monsters of debauchery. One Pope is believed to have died of poison intended for a recalcitrant Cardinal; another, according to a shocked contemporary, produced quite a scientific demonstration that no such person as Jesus Christ ever existed. (If so, he preceded Lord Bolingbroke as the first *bona fide* "mythicist.") In modern times, a more sober public opinion has compelled the election of less picturesque Popes; and recent occupants of the Vatican appear very humdrum successors of the colourful Borgia and Medici Popes of an earlier age. However, it has always been a constant feature of the Roman See that the Papacy is more important than the individual Popes, good or bad. Throughout its nineteen centuries' duration, the power of the Papacy has been steadily growing in relation both to the Catholic Church and to the world outside. This process may be said to have culminated in the Decree of Papal Infallibility of 1870, under which the Pope, as an individual, was proclaimed as personally infallible; since when the Vatican has housed the earliest, most universal and most totalitarian Fascist dictatorship of modern times. Modern secular Fascist regimes, *all*, incidentally, founded by Catholics or ex-Catholics—Hitler, Goebbels, Mussolini, Franco, Salazar—

may be accurately described as the pupils as well as the allies of the Vatican.

### Who will be the Next Pope?

This column does not indulge in necromancy; hence it is obviously impossible to designate any particular individual as next occupant of the Papal throne. According to an ancient prophecy supposed to have been announced by an Irish saint, Malachy, the 263rd successor of Peter to be elected at this Conclave will be *Pastor et Nauta* (Shepherd and Sailor)—*e.g.*, he will come from across the sea. Present circumstances may make this a lucky guess. No doubt a consoling anticipation for, say, the American Cardinal Spellman of New York, who is supposed to cherish Papal ambitions. (Personally, I think he is due for a setback, but prediction is really impossible; the Vatican, like the Holy Spirit who is supposed to direct it, moves in mysterious

ways.) According to the same prophetic authority, the end of the world is due sometime about the end of the present century, which may perhaps please our nuclear alarmists and to judge from a recent interview on TV, might derive some support from Bertrand Russell. Eschewing prophecy, it does rather look as if the post-Reformation Italian monopoly of the Papacy is due to be ended shortly. Perhaps even at *this* Conclave? The Jesuits have never had this monopoly; and there were many non-Italian Popes prior to 1523, when the last one died. From the standpoint of world affairs, political, no less than religious, the currently immense power of the Vatican will certainly constitute this Election as a notable event. Meanwhile, Freethinkers the world over have been given ocular proof by the present tremendous publicity, where their major danger lies in the mid-20th century.

## A Different Message from Lourdes

WE are indebted to our irreverent French contemporary, *La Calotte (The Skull Cap)*, edited by M. André Lorulot, for the following item published in the Jesuit organ, *La Croix*, of August 30th, 1958.

"Warning to Lourdes Pilgrims.

"Numerous observations made on the spot both by persons on the look-out, as well as by young girls, have established that at Lourdes, as in all towns where there is a large floating population, attempts are made to ensnare isolated and inexperienced young girls.

"Since the opening of the pilgrimage season, many regrettable incidents have taken place, of which they have been the victims.

"It is evident that those who come from a distance are quite unaware of this state of affairs, so the Society for the Protection of the Young Girl, in collaboration with General Feminine Catholic Action, believes that it is necessary to bring this point to the attention of those responsible for pilgrimages.

"With the authorisation and approbation of His Excellency Mgr. Théas [Bishop of Tarbes and Lourdes], these two movements have prepared a tract which will be distributed to young girls to put them on their guard."

Such goings on in the town so singularly favoured by Our Lady, Queen of Virgins, will not surprise anyone with any insight into the true character of the emotions manifested in mass religious enthusiasm. The grand old religious revivals in these islands were invariably followed by a sharp increase in the illegitimate birth rate.

This state of affairs is, of course, not new. Around the turn of the century, the famous and devout Catholic author, Huysmans, visited Lourdes, and described the emotions of nausea which the experience aroused in him. In his book, *The Crowds of Lourdes*, he mentions the addiction of the local people to greed of gold and the sins of the flesh. Their morals were pure when they were poor, but became depraved when they grew rich, and the immense crowds of pilgrims provided a perfect cloak for liaisons which would have been impossible in small towns where everyone watched everyone else.

M. André Lorulot, in his brochure on Lourdes (1933) quotes Prof. A. Chide as having shown that prostitution flourished there, and that every evening, after the torch-light procession, "ignoble acts" took place. Chide also accuses visiting priests of contributing largely to the disorders.

It was revealed more recently during the trial of the Abbé Guy Desnoyers, murderer of his mistress and her

unborn child, that he had made a practice of taking his various mistresses on pilgrimage to Lourdes.

We must conclude that the scandals of this year have been worthy of the centenary, since they have forced the Church authorities to speak out, even at the risk of giving comfort to God's enemies.

However, the method taken to fight the evil seems tainted with the rampant materialism of this Godless age. Surely this is an occasion to call for the powerful intercession of Our Blessed Lady, and if that is not enough, why not invoke the patronage of her Most Chaste Spouse, St. Joseph, who, in his litany, is hailed as Glory of Family Life, Terror of Demons and Guardian of Virgins?

Could it be that they have no more trust in the power of these phantoms than we have?

D. JOSEPH

### A Protest

THE FOLLOWING LETTER was addressed to the Director-General of the BBC:

Dear Sir,

We want to protest most strongly against your Corporation's continuous and uncritical eulogy of Pope Pius XII.

His title, "Prince of Peace," seems to be singularly undeserved in view of his open support of the illegal rising of General Franco and his Fascist and military supporters in Spain. Indeed, Franco probably owed his success as much to Pius as to Hitler and Mussolini—surely not good company for a Prince of Peace to keep.

Moreover, a Pope endowed with infallibility could have given the world some constructive moral teaching on the question of life and death represented by the threat of nuclear war. But no such teaching emerged from the Vatican during the late Pope's long pontificate.

There have been times during the last few days when one might have been justified in concluding that this was an officially Roman Catholic country. So far as we know, Great Britain is still committed to the Protestant faith, which Her Majesty the Queen took a solemn oath to defend.—Yours faithfully,

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

(Signed) F. A. RIDLEY, *President.*

(Signed) COLIN MCCALL, *Secretary.*

—NEXT WEEK—

THE JESUS OF SCHWEITZER

By G. I. BENNETT

# Atheist and Agnostic

By DR. J. V. DUHIG

DIRECTING RECENTLY a long needed revival of interest towards Dr. David Forsyth's masterpiece, *Psychology and Religion*, which I read in 1936, G. H. Taylor says, "Speaking of those who halt at Agnosticism, he (Dr. Forsyth) asks, 'Does not the new evidence require them to hold back no longer from the position of atheism?'"

Now, apparently, there seems to be a dilemma for the agnostic when, in fact, there is no alternative for him but Atheism. The spurious distinction arose out of the intellectual climate of the time when T. H. Huxley coined the word in 1869. By that time, he had fully realised that the Christian cosmology had gone for ever and that the Christian myth was not true and, as such, just as much a source of future evil as it had demonstrably been in unbridled practice in the past. But, though Huxley was a man of courage, learning and resource, of singularly sharp debating power and in the full enjoyment of high prestige, the predominantly Christian tone and flavour of contemporary thought made revolt à outrance not only socially perilous but possibly catastrophic. The cruel and completely ruthless savagery of Christianity through 2,000 years was still a chilling inhibition on Atheism, then a word with criminal overtones. The sworn enemy of Truth, Science and Learning would not scruple to ruin an enemy however powerful, however honest, just and good. So that Huxley could carry the torch of freedom to think things through to their logical truth only to the relay post of Agnosticism.

Today this attitude, once courageous, has so declined that it can be summed up in the phrase commonly quoted to me, especially by women—"There might be something in it." To which the equally simple reply is categorically—"There is nothing in it, for which, at least, there is the remotest shred of evidence.

The truth is that once a person has an intellectual conviction of the falsity of Christianity or any other supernatural religion, there is just no possible alternative to Atheism; for the wobbler the transition in the end is as simple as that.

In Philosophy and Science, the onus of proof of a proposition is on the person who makes it. Christians (as well as Jews and Mohammedans) say there is a god, presumably not in the old cheery pagan sense, which or whom they call God, but they have produced absolutely no respectable proof of the existence of such a person, force or thing. So that to a person with no *a priori* belief the proposition remains unproved; it has never even been shown to have any prior probability; in fact, the subject or matter of the proposition does not exist. And, in addition, there is no obligation on an opponent to disprove the proposition, since one does not waste time in disproving something which does not exist.

I am a Scientist with a fairly creditable record of research and medical authorship and of professorial teaching. For over 30 years, since I was convinced of the fraud of Catholicism and other supernatural piffle, I have searched every possible source for the proof of the existence of God, without success; such proof does not exist.

The only statement which now seems to theists to be worth much is the *Quinque Viae* of Thomas Aquinas. Before examining his alleged evidence it would be well to make it clear that Aquinas did not attempt to establish a metaphysical system of Philosophy, so that to speak of Thomist Philosophy is erroneous. Fr. Copleston, S.J., in his "Pelican" life of Aquinas, makes it clear that what St. Thomas did was not philosophical but theological (all the

difference between knowledge and moonshine): he simply fitted *ad hoc* arguments to Catholic doctrine. His work, says G. Stuart Watts in the *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, May 1957, page 30, "is the high-water mark of the attempt made by Christian thinkers in the West to adapt Greek philosophy to the requirements of theological dogma." Watts goes on to refute in detail completely and finally each and every one of the "five ways" to the proof of the existence of God. He does a more thorough job even than Bertrand Russell in his *History of Western Philosophy* and in his debate with Fr. Copleston on the Third Programme.

Theists have had thousands of years to produce these proofs; they have failed. A writer in a recent FREETHINKER says they are two a penny; I am willing to quote them at thrippence a dozen if I can get any takers and happy to get it.

No, Agnosticism may have once been a necessary stage, like reverent Rationalism; today both are superfluous and illogical and, to me, not quite intellectually respectable. Only Atheism is logically true. Besides, who wants anything to do with a monster who inflicts paralytic poliomyelitis on defenceless children?

## A Miracle for the Monarch

By NAN FLANAGAN

OSWELL BLAKESTON, in his *Portuguese Panorama*, mentions that in the window of the Tourist Bureau in Lisbon a photo of Cintra in Snow caught his eye as being a suitable illustration for his book. Next day, he called to buy it and was told it had never existed as snow never fell in Portugal.

When Elizabeth II of England came to visit us, she and her two hundred attendants were housed in the ancient Royal Palace of Queluz, outside Lisbon. But luckily, before she arrived it was discovered with horror that if she stretched her dainty neck out of one of the great windows, she could see in the distance some miserable hovels housing starving, ragged people. The ground in front of the offending window was hurriedly dug up and tall trees planted to blot out the ugly sight. Unfortunately, the weather was very dry and the tops of the trees began to wither. But our good government had a remedy for all, and rushed men, at 4s. per day and a plate of watery soup, to spray the tops of the trees with green paint.

When the English Queen's visit was due the Metro was in construction and ugly holes and great stones disfigured the lovely Avenida da Liberdade, reputed to be the most beautiful avenue in Europe. Were our authorities daunted? Not they! They had the holes filled in, sprouting trees shoved into them, and flowers planted. There, too, it was expedient that men continually sprayed the trees with green paint. The natives looked on with cynical grins. The riddle going round was: "Who was the greatest miracle worker, St. Elizabeth of Portugal, whose husband had forbidden her to give bread to the poor and one day when he caught her flagrantly disobeying him, had grabbed her apron, expecting to find it full of bread, and found instead masses of sweet-smelling roses; or Queen Elizabeth II of England, who turned all the holes in the Avenida da Liberdade into flower-beds? The honour went to Elizabeth of England.

## This Believing World

Every detail connected with the late Pope's death was as far as possible radioed by the BBC, including boring extracts from the many services held in Italy, together with translations into English. The death of a Pope is, of course, world news, but we cannot help wondering whether the death of the Archbishop of Canterbury would have been as meticulously recorded for the benefit of Roman Catholics in Italy or France? Would the many millions of Roman Catholics all over the world have been grateful for a day-by-day broadcast, including the lying-in-state of a Protestant Archbishop? The question almost answers itself. The Roman Church would have moved heaven and earth to prevent such broadcasts to the faithful.

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Before the Pope died millions of prayers all over the world were wafted aloft begging for him to be spared from death, and if any proof were needed to expose the hopeless futility of praying, no better example could be given than this particular orgy of silly, emotional outbursts. The 400 millions of people who follow the Pope never ceased praying—and the Pope died. They are all now praying for his "soul"—whatever that is. It is not an unfair question to ask—is the Pope in Purgatory or has he been "translated" direct to Heaven—wherever that is?

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In making these comments we are not in any way criticising the Pope as a man, or his death, a fate we all have to endure one day. But what heaven-sent publicity it has all been for the Roman Church, which had at its service the combined broadcasting all over the world and entire pages in all newspapers and in all languages for—exactly nothing. Any Protestant protest would have been literally stifled by the radio and by the newspapers. One can understand Catholic countries splashing all the publicity at its disposal—but why should Protestant countries more than follow suit?

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The religious director of ITV, shrewdly guessing that in an unscripted discussion any "Humanist" would get the better of any Christian, put on the other week a programme dealing with "the portrait of Christ"; and for sheer primitive Fundamentalism, it would take a lot of beating. Everything Jesus said in the Gospels is absolutely authentic—every miracle he performed was literally true, and every portrait painted by Renaissance artists was exactly as he was in real life. The TV screen was accompanied by various people reading extracts from the four Gospels in that dreadful "parsonic" voice now recognised by everybody as utterly necessary to give a "reverent" air to everything said, and all good Christians must have been overjoyed at the presentation.

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This programme was no doubt viewed by millions of people, and it is this kind of publicity these days Free-thought has to face—all over the world. If any heresy whatever is admitted, even in its mildest form, TV and the radio will always follow it up with the kind of ignorant nonsense given us by the producer of this "Portrait" of Jesus. And he can do it because Christianity has at last captured the most wonderful publicity medium in its career. The "people" might be apathetic but the Churches are the masters as they always have been.

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The "Daily Express" has just found out that "a Vicar writes a Bible thriller"—the Vicar being Prebendary J. B. Phillips. And the thriller? It is the New Testament which, "by the Phillips treatment gets tremendous pace, the Acts

read like an adventure story and many passages in the Epistles become crystal clear." Well, if anybody can make the Epistles "crystal clear" he deserves a gold medal.

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The truth is that no amount of translation can now save the New Testament, which is a collection of more or less Oriental ethics mixed with nonsense based on myths, legends, sun and star lore and phallic worship. Christians actually take literally the stories of Jesus' encounters with Devils, and the stories of his "miracles," to say nothing of the "resurrection" of a crowd of dead Jewish saints. As for passages in the Epistles being "crystal clear" and "thrilling," this is just fantastic rubbish. Can even our bishops expound Paul's out-of-date theology with understanding?

## Science Front

WHAT IS DEATH? In the mind of primitive man death occurs when breath, that is the soul, ceases. The modern scientist finds it much more difficult to determine what is meant by death. Hearts have been mended and even resuscitated and the "dead" restored to life. At what precise point, therefore, is it legitimate to say life has finished? The biologist who today would try to define such a point would be liable to have his ideas upset in a very short time by further experimentation.

The most recent authoritative definition comes from Dr. A. S. Parkes, F.R.S., who in his presidential address to the Zoology section of the British Association (1958) said "Death is the state from which resuscitation of the body as a whole is impossible by any currently known means, and as knowledge increases the means of resuscitation will extend, so that what constitutes death today will not necessarily constitute death tomorrow."

He instanced the case of a golden hamster, which could be brought back undamaged after super-cooling to minus 5 degrees C. by freezing to the extent of crystallising 50% of its body water. "At 0 degrees C. the artificially cooled mammal has every appearance of being dead and by all clinical criteria is dead, yet under appropriate conditions it can be revived."

The possible long-term preservation of cells opens up the most remarkable possibilities, and one begins to think in terms of a race of Methuselahs. Our present "allotted span" is certainly a niggardly allowance in respect of the time which a normal human being, in health, could utilise without boredom. And as always, one looks to science, not to religion, to put things right!

As is well known these days, some mammals such as rats, mice and dogs can be revived after cooling to freezing point, even though respiration and heart-beat may have been arrested for over an hour.

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In an article in THE FREETHINKER in the issue of February 14th I wrote: "The efficient production of synthetic steroids seems well on the way and could be an established fact before the present year is out." This has now come about. This birth control pill has now been perfected by U.S. scientists from compounds called progestines. One was used with Puerto Rican women (one pill for 20 days each month) with complete success among those who adhered to the regimen. One of the brands, *Enovid*, will be commercially available in five years. Presumably sales would then be privately done over the pharmacy counter. Presumably also, there will be the usual religious outcry.

G. H. TAYLOR.

# THE FREETHINKER

41 GRAY'S INN ROAD, LONDON, W.C.1.  
TELEPHONE: HOLBORN 2601.

Hon. Managing Editor: W. GRIFFITHS.

Hon. Editorial Committee:

F. A. HORNIBROOK, COLIN MCCALL and G. H. TAYLOR.

All articles and correspondence should be addressed to THE EDITOR at the above address and not to individuals.

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

F. S. HOUGHTON.—Our impression is that your Deist correspondent who is a teacher is not a teacher of logic.

G. H. HEY.—McCabe's *Rationalist Encyclopædia* was published by Watts and Co. in 1948 at 21s. Perhaps you could bully your local library into getting you a copy through the Central Lending Library.

JOSEPH DAVIS.—Thanks for interesting reminiscence re Army church parades.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

London (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday from 5 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER and C. E. WOOD.

London (Tower Hill).—Thursday, 12-2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

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

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday, 1 p.m.; every Sunday, 7.30 p.m.: Various speakers.

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. Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, October 26th, 7 p.m.: J. BINNS, "The Dead Walked Again."

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute, Paradise Street).—Sunday, October 26th, 7 p.m.: Prof. P. SARGANT FLORENCE, "Religion as an Obstacle to High Standards of Living in Backward Countries."

Central London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place (Edgware Road, W.1)).—Sunday, October 26th, 7.15 p.m.: A. ALBON, "Social Significance of Agriculture."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, October 28th, 7.15 p.m.: J. HUTTON HYND, "Reason and Emotion in Discussion."

Glasgow Secular Society (Central Halls, Bath Street).—Sunday, October 26th, 3 p.m.: GUY ALDRED, "Humanity's Hope for the Future."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, October 26th, 6.30 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "Damnation and Darwin."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Hall, Upper Parliament Street).—Sunday, October 26th, 2.30 p.m.: Hon. J. E. SILKIN, M.A., "The Social Basis of Law."

Oxford Humanist Group (Taylor Institute).—Wednesday, October 26th, 8.15 p.m.: Rev. O. K. DE BERRY (Rector of St. Aldate's, Oxford), "The Bankruptcy of Humanism."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, October 26th, 11 a.m.: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "Ethics and Arithmetic."

Wales and Western Branch N.S.S. (Bute Town Community Centre).—Tuesday, October 28th, 7.30 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "The Menace of the H-Bomb."

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £365 16s. 6d.; G. Swan, 5s.; Mrs. B. Allbon, 2s. 6d.; H. G. Bluett, 4s.; A. H. Briancourt, 10s.; H. Fitton, 10s.; A. Faiers, 5s.; O.A.P., 2s. 6d.; Miss I. Barnes, 10s.; R. Brownlee, 5s.; H. G. Mills, 2s. 6d.; E.C.R., 10s.; W. Mawhinney, 4s.; "Hypatius," 10s.—Total to date, October 17th, 1958, £369 17s.

## Notes and News

THE Glasgow Secular Society begins its indoor lecture season at the Central Halls, Bath Street, on Sunday next, October 26th, at 3 p.m., when the redoubtable Guy Aldred speaks on "Humanity's Hope for the Future." Mr. Aldred needs no introduction from us in the city he has for so long made his home, and we hope Freethinkers will attend his lecture in force. Details of subsequent lectures and of the Glasgow Secular Society may be obtained from the Honorary Secretary, Mr. J. Barrowman, 53 Rampart Avenue, Glasgow, W.3. Meanwhile the members of the Edinburgh Branch, National Secular Society, will continue their meetings at the Mound, where they report very enlarged audiences. The Edinburgh Secretary is Mr. William Cronan, 52 Sloan Street, Edinburgh, 7.

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At least one paper, the *Manchester Guardian* (14/10/58), drew attention to the contrast between the "great pomp and splendour" of the funeral of Pope Pius XII ("it was said to be among the most magnificent in the Church's history") and the words of his last will and testament. "Sufficient it is"—he had said—"that my poor mortal remains should be simply laid in a sacred place, the more obscure the better." You may think that those words have about as much true humility as Uriah Heap's, but they were written; and they were ignored. What is a last will and testament compared with two hours' television publicity! The Church of Rome would hardly miss an opportunity of that magnitude.

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ANOTHER recent will of a member of the Roman Catholic hierarchy—that of Cardinal Stritch, formerly of Chicago—puzzles us. The Cardinal left \$33,000, most of it to the Church. But he set aside \$1,000 as offerings for Masses for his soul. He must otherwise have anticipated an extra long spell in Purgatory.

★

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now! Due to the serious shortage of vocations in the United States, 1,500,000 Roman Catholics never see a priest or a religious, reported the 1958 Institute on Religious and Sacerdotal Vocations at Fordham University. Whether they were any the worse is a matter on which opinions might well differ.

### PUBLIC MEETING

Thursday, October 30th, 7.30 p.m. at

CAXTON HALL

(YORK HALL), VICTORIA STREET, S.W.1

Subject:

"PIUS XII — Man of Peace or Ally of Dictators?"

Speakers will include

F. A. RIDLEY AVRO MANHATTAN

HECTOR HAWTON and ADRIAN PIGOTT

ADMISSION FREE

# The Conway Discussions

By G. H. TAYLOR

OVER A HUNDRED PEOPLE, mainly drawn from the three societies represented in the discussion, attended the Conway Hall Library on Tuesday, October 14th. To the question, "Should Sunday as a Sabbath be abolished?" Mr. Colin McCall, as General Secretary of the National Secular Society answered Yes; Mr. H. J. W. Legerton, the Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society, answered No; Mr. J. Hutton Hynd, Secretary of the South Place Ethical Society, answered Yes and No. The chair was taken by Mr. F. H. Amphlett Micklewright.

Each speaker had fifteen minutes to open and five minutes to close, the intervening time being devoted to questions and discussion. Fifteen minutes is an allowance which demands rigorous selection of matter, and Mr. McCall confined himself to three main points. First, by quoting the Bible, he showed that if such was the source of the authority claimed by the Sabbatarians, then the seventh day was the real Sabbath, and not the first. According to the Bible, then, the Jews were right and the Christians wrong. Next, the desirability of a day of rest was not in dispute, whether one a week or more than one. He was, in fact, in favour of as many holidays as the workers could reasonably obtain, but this had nothing to do with any religious Sabbath. Holidays preceded the Biblical commandment. He distinguished holidays from Holy Days, putting human beings before religion. Finally, he challenged the right of Mr. Legerton and his Lord's Day Observance Society to try to prevent other people from spending their Rest Days as they wished. Secularists had no objection to Sabbatarians getting on their knees every Sunday or being as miserable as they liked, provided they did not try to impose their habits on others. Mr. McCall then instanced some ways in which the L.D.O.S. has successfully intervened recently in the free use of Sunday. He liked Mr. Legerton personally and found him sincere in his beliefs, but professionally he was doing a social mischief.

Mr. H. J. W. Legerton followed, and said "Sabbath" meant "cessation." Men in charge of industry had testified to the benefits of keeping Sunday as a "day of rest and quiet and meditation." Factories worked the better for it, and its special value was that it was tied up with the work of Our Lord, who ordained it. Why Sunday rather than any other day? Because it had centuries of special tradition behind it: this meant it had been well tested and found good. There was thus no point in changing it. To say that Sunday was the first day and not the seventh was to quibble on an arbitrary chronological order, and he quoted from Mr. H. Cutner's *What is the Sabbath Day?* as follows:

How do we know which is the *seventh* day? Of course, it is easy to answer Saturday but who says that Saturday is the seventh day? The only way in which we can fix Saturday as the seventh day is if we know for certain which is the *first* day—the first day of creation, the day before which there were no days. Do we know this?

There is no answer whatever to this chronological difficulty. And the fact that time is different in different parts of the world only makes it more difficult.

Sunday, or indeed any other day, was a *seventh* of the week, said Mr. Legerton; his opponent was therefore basing his case on a trivial technicality in *our* order of the days and this was to miss the true spirit of the meaning of the Sabbath. In any case, he added, the question under discussion was Sunday as *a* Sabbath Day, not *the* Sabbath Day.

As for using it as a holiday, said the speaker, this was not what God said. He said we should "keep it holy." He did not wish to *compel* people to keep it holy, but, by showing them the intentions of God, to make them *compel themselves*.

Mr. J. Hutton Hynd told of his own sabbatarian upbringing as a boy. While the actual Christian doctrines were outgrown, he nevertheless recalled with gratitude the unifying influence on his family life which these Sundays held. Let us therefore keep the Sabbath but turn it to good ethical use. It was said that ethics were "caught, not taught." Cleanse, therefore, the traditional Sabbath of its fake doctrine, but retain the best of its atmosphere so that it could become a pause for physical, mental and spiritual regeneration. As to whether it should be the actual seventh day, he agreed with Mr. Legerton that this was irrelevant.

All the questions that followed were, with one exception, to Mr. Legerton. It seemed that the L.D.O.S. contingent were leaving it to him to handle the Sabbatarian case, but when discussion time came they found voice and one after another "testified" to the power of Jesus in their hearts and to the value of keeping the Sabbath Day holy.

Asked whether the words, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," made Christ an anti-Sabbatarian, Mr. Legerton said the words proved exactly the opposite. They proved that Christ believed in the Sabbath, which, properly observed, was for man's benefit. "made for man." Challenged to deny that the majority of people were against the L.D.O.S., Mr. Legerton said that was no reason for giving up, but on the contrary he challenged anyone to prove that "in their hearts" people were mostly against the L.D.O.S. One speaker suggested that the Victorian Sunday had been made as miserable as possible in order to make the workers almost thankful to get back to work on the Monday. Another drew attention to the "observance" of the Sabbath by the rival Christian armies in time of war, and asked what the L.D.O.S. had done about it. Mr. Hutton Hynd's supporters repeatedly dwelt on the benefits of a day set aside from work, and so in his brief summing up Mr. McCall found it again necessary to amplify the distinction between holy days and holidays. As for the order of the days, Mr. Legerton had himself referred to Sunday as the first day. The fact that the L.D.O.S. had an obsolete law behind them did not prove anything except that in this case the law was "an ass." He again accused the L.D.O.S. of trying to dictate the behaviour of others.

Mr. Legerton, warmly applauded by his supporters, restated his argument based on Holy Writ. Replying to the charge of wanting to spread misery, he appeared, for the first time, somewhat to lose his composure, and this led him to make the silliest remark of the evening "I am the happiest man in the world, and there are others who are just as happy."

Mr. Hutton Hynd said he had found a lot of the exchanges irrelevant. The great point was to safeguard the Good that had been found in the idea of Cessation, and to carry this on.

★

I end with a few general impressions:

(i) It is quite remarkable how people will get the ideas of a religious holy day and a secular holiday hopelessly tied up, even after repeated explanations. The way people wish to spend their leisure time will differ from one to

another. Some of us do not believe that Sunday has the power to turn the harmless recreation of a weekday into a form of moral corruption. Things that are supposed to weaken our moral fibre on Sundays would be certain to have the same effect on Mondays. The Sabbatarians evidently believe that Sunday turns good into evil!

(ii) The contributions by the Ethicists demonstrated once again what a wide divergence of outlook exists between them and the Secularists.

(iii) The conflict between the Sabbatarian and the Free-thinker really goes much deeper than the question of Sunday observance, because the Sabbatarian can always retire on his premises. *If* there is a God, and *if* he inspired the Bible, and *if* we accept it, *then* certain things follow, including Sunday observance. Thus, while our speakers can expose the absurdities that arise from such beliefs, e.g., Sabbatarianism, it would need another few discussions to demolish the premises on which they are founded. Mr. Legerton's argument ultimately boiled down to: "God orders it." The terms of the discussion did not require him to say what he meant by "God."

(iv) It was a pity Mr. Legerton only quoted one passage from Mr. Cutner's little booklet on the Sabbath. If he had read out the whole booklet the evening would have been better spent.

## Civil Disobedience

By LEON SPAIN

MANY SELF-PROFESSED FREETHINKERS have at various times deplored what they have considered undue militancy and aggressiveness on the part of their colleagues. The old homespun expression that such Secularists are "flogging a dead horse" has been frequently invoked against them, and perhaps justifiably in some instances. However, to a close observer of the long struggle between naturalism on the one side and the hosts of the supernatural and revelation on the other, the battle rages as intensely as ever but in a manner consonant with the day and age. Despite the adaptations and compromises that the various religions have been compelled to make when they found the advance of knowledge irresistible, the subtleties and subterfuges which theologians have resorted to in the past are still in effect, particularly where they face the prospect of being reduced to a laughing stock in defending literally their theology based on Sacred Writ. Despite the positions which they assume in compromising with the march of Secularism, glimmerings of their basic attitude are apparent in their underlying contempt and disdain for the findings and the conclusions of science.

Let no acknowledged sceptic or opponent of religious pretensions think for one moment that he is "tilting at windmills," for where the adherents of obscurantism, mysticism, and supernaturalism are in a position to impose their dogmas, they will do so when the moment is opportune. An instance in this regard was recently revealed by a newspaper account of an address published in the Monday, September 22nd, issue of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. The features of this item should bring home with compelling force that, basically, Christianity is still to a great degree committed to the authoritarian attitude it exercised during the days when it was well-nigh foolhardy to challenge its claims.

Churches "must teach civil disobedience to laws which infringe on Christian faith" is reported to have been stated by Prof. Harold Berman, of Harvard Law School, in an address which he delivered to 200 lawyers, judges, students and clergymen at a Protestant Conference on Christianity

and the law, which met in Chicago. He continued: "The Church must seek reform of oppressive laws, and must attempt to strengthen the Christian will and conscience of all who influence legal development," and the world today is "ruled by people for the most part avowedly non-Christian, and in many cases anti-Christian." Religious News Service also reported Prof. Berman's address.

If any individual or political organisation in present day America were to advocate organised disobedience, civil or political, they would with little delay be subjected to a rigorous investigation by official agencies. It may be safely said, however, that the civil disobedience advocated by Prof. Berman will hardly cause the authorities even a moment's concern, since in present day America Christianity is under no legal disability and is not placed under any social disadvantage, as it placed other beliefs and religions when its sway was accepted uncritically and unquestioningly in bygone days.

While Prof. Berman clearly states that he advocates "civil disobedience to all laws which infringe on Christian faith," he evidently sees no injustice involved where certain laws of the land perhaps infringe upon the faiths of non-Christians and the opinions of those who do not subscribe to a belief in a deity. This attitude squares with what Christianity has done since its official establishment and Paganism was overthrown. Christianity ever since its inception has found it difficult to operate on an equal basis with other religions, and has sought to abolish, when and where it could, competing religious bodies. If unable to abolish them it has sought a privileged or established position for itself. To have advocated civil disobedience to laws in a society where Christianity was either privileged or institutionalised would have been regarded as a crime deserving the most extreme penalties.

Those who have maintained that Christian teachings are "the most sublime of doctrines" and are consistent with the spirit that should prevail in a modern democracy, have never carried their reasoning on this subject to its ultimate, and most logical, conclusion. For inherent in Christianity is the very apex of human vanity, conceit and contempt for the religious and non-religious beliefs of others. And it has taken centuries of long drawn-out strife on the part of Secularism and civil authority to curb its authoritarian propensities, which assert themselves wherever the situation permits. Crusades, religious wars, inquisitions, heresy hunts, and blasphemy laws are logical offshoots and ramifications of the premises upon which Christian theology is predicated.

Just what is "the infringement on Christian faith"? The Articles, at least as regards the numerous Christian sects which existed from the foundation of Christianity down to the present, and the differences in the articles of faith which exist among the diverse sects today which speak in the name of Christianity, present a problem. Moreover, are the lawyers and, particularly, judges, to take seriously the encouragement of a Harvard law professor to civil disobedience to laws which infringe upon what Christian beliefs they may privately profess? It seems anomalous that to those who are officially elected or appointed to interpret the laws of the state regardless of what private religious beliefs they may entertain, encouragement is given by a law instructor to "civilly disobey" those laws inconsistent with their faith.

## IS IT WORTH IT?

PEOPLE who successfully apply for free coal to the trustees of the Charles Davis charity at Maidenhead will have to attend a church service or they will not get any coal. That is one of the conditions of the will made by Davis in 1716.—*The Star* (6/10/58).

## Annual General Meetings

ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 5TH, the Leicester Secular Society held its A.G.M., which was attended by about 30 members. It was noted that the newly formed Leicester Secular Youth Club was now well established, and Mr. C. T. Powell was complimented on his useful work for the Society. Permission was also granted to extend the activities of the club to Sunday afternoons. Our Burton-on-Trent member, Mr. D. Griffiths, for so long a lone wolf in his area, told the meeting that he had contacted six other people by advertising in the newspapers, and that a branch was likely to be formed in Burton in the near future. Readers who may be able to help Mr. Griffiths should note that his address is 4 Kent Road, Stapenhill, Burton-on-Trent, Staffs.

Members were joined at tea (which was provided by the ladies) by friends from the Birmingham Branch of the National Secular Society, and in the evening the meeting swelled to over a hundred for the showing of "Jan Hus," a truly magnificent film in colour covering the period so admirably described by Mr. F. A. Ridley in the pages of THE FREETHINKER, 3/10/58. C.H.H.

THE Esperantist Humanist Group, Brita Esperanto-Humanistaro, also held its Annual Meeting in London on October 5th. The Secretary, Mr. G. L. Dickinson, 21 Gribble Road, Liverpool, 10, reports that the group now has 30 members and will be represented at the British Esperanto Congress in London in 1959.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### MORALITY WITHOUT RELIGION

What an outcry there was when Mrs. Margaret Knight broadcast her talk! But let her critics be condemned out of their own Bible!

The 13th Chapter of 1st Corinthians deals with love—human love, towards our fellow men. In the whole chapter there is not one reference to God, Christ, the Holy Ghost or the Virgin Mary!

It deals solely with morality and ethics—pure paganism, if you like. It deals with that human love and friendship that has bound the human race together since the beginning of the race and is common to all races of all religions and of none.

One wonders if it was written by Paul, who never missed the chance of preaching "Christ and him crucified."

Perhaps it was slipped in by some ancient and free-thinking scribe who had detached himself from the superstitions that surrounded him on every side, and it sounded so well that it was applauded on every hand!

With what pulpit unction do the parsons roll this chapter out, little realising that it is "Morality without Religion"! W.D.K.

I would like to express appreciation of the article "Religion: What good is it?" by Dr. J. V. Duhig. In my view it is notable for a concise statement of definition of the word "religion" and the following comment: "It is hard to see why free democratic peoples tolerate this system of disreputable superstition. Religion... is a menace to peace, order and good government; without it the world could seriously start to be a happy, tolerant place..."

In speaking of "peoples" instead of one people, I suggest he takes an unbiological view of the human race by accepting the present haphazard division of the world into the various social groups as a "natural" division of mankind into many distinct "races" or "peoples."

I think that the "establishment" of religions in different parts of the world is an important factor in keeping the people of the world socially divided into armed and hostile groups (i.e. nations). For this reason I am opposed to the establishment of Christianity in Britain and I cannot think that anybody who is properly convinced of the urgent need for a truly scientific approach to human affairs can support it either. If I may take the liberty of rewording Dr. Duhig's statement—"It is hard to see why free democratic people tolerate this system of disreputable superstition..."

Why, for instance, does a man like Dr. J. Bronowski, who is writing on Education in one of the Sunday papers at the moment, manage to urge a much more scientific education in Britain, with-

out a word of condemnation of the 1944 Education Act, which (with Labour and Tory and Liberal concurrence) shackled education in Britain with a religious service every day and special teachers and periods for Bible study in every school each week?

What certain persons need, I think, is a realisation that the shackles of the 1944 Education Act must be broken before we can even pretend to be giving a scientific approach to life in the schools of Britain. E. G. MACFARLANE.

### DEMOCRACY?

Your contributor, Mr. Bayard Simmons, in his review of *The Portrait of Milton* written by Mr. E. H. Visiak, refers to the Third Centenary of Oliver Cromwell. This is a good time to compare our state with 300 years ago. As far back as the year 1650 the House of Commons voted that the House of Lords "is useless, dangerous, and ought to be abolished." The House of Commons also at that time resolved that government by a king or single person "is unnecessary, burdensome, dangerous and ought to be abolished."

How far our country has retrogressed since those days of 300 years ago is shown by our still continuing the House of Lords, and even by appointing more and more peers; in fact, there is still an overpowering assemblage of a queen and her court, princes, princesses, dukes, barons, carls, knights, etc. How long will it be before we stop adding to these titles, and bring into being a democratic form of government.

I would remind your readers that our movement favours the complete secularisation of the state, and we should try to reverse the engines with the exercise of common sense and the upholding of democracy. ALFRED D. CORRICK.

### LEICESTER YOUTH CLUB

Through the picture of Leicester Secular Youth Fellowship appearing in the press one boy has had a holiday social call from his dear headmaster. "You cannot get along without Christ," said he, urging him not to associate with us. "You must learn the Christian way."

I quote this to point out the opposition that the Secularists will meet. Although I am only an associate for the cause, I can say some of the best people I have met have been Atheists. I shall fight any effort to destroy our secular youth fellowship and the boys are with me all the way. C. T. POWELL.

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