

# The Freethinker

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A GERMAN AUTHOR, Mr. E. Fueleop-Muller, writing in the thirties, produced a bulky volume on the development through the past four centuries of the most powerful and publicised of all religious orders, The Company of Jesus; the multifarious ramifications on a world-wide scale of the sons of Ignatius Loyola. To this comprehensive summary Mr. Fueleop-Muller attached the title of *The Power and Secret of the Jesuits*; commenting upon which, a Catholic M.P., Mr. Christopher Hollis, once stated in my hearing that the title of the non-Catholic author struck him as far-fetched and inaccurate, since the real "secret" of the Jesuits was that they never (*sic*) had any power. Whilst this witicism of the Catholic politician had a certain smartness, it was scarcely profound, and it was most certainly far from accurate. Even an ex-student of a Jesuit College, as Mr. Hollis informed his hearers that he was, ought to have known that there have been several periods during recent centuries (most notably between 1550 and 1650) when the Jesuit company had a great deal of power, so much so that there was nothing whatever "secret" about it.

## Loyola and the Spiritual Exercises

In a recent article I drew attention to the scholarly publications issued by the *Ernest Renan Circle* in Paris, and in their latest publication (issued for the first quarter of the current year) Monsieur Rodriguez Grahit returns to the much disputed question of Jesuit origins. In particular the author demonstrates by actual quotations and supports his contention by extensive biographical references, that Loyola's *magnum opus*, *The Spiritual Exercises*, was far from being an original composition of the Founder of the famous Order. It was in fact largely, if not entirely, drawn from earlier Catholic, chiefly monastic sources. Loyola, who was illiterate, as were most feudal Knights in the Ages of Faith, derived the idea which underlies *The Spiritual Exercises* in the course of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem after quitting the Spanish Army. But he did not write the *Exercises* until, as a student at the Sorbonne, he acquired the rudiments of literature and theology. However it is common knowledge that the basic idea of *The Spiritual Exercises* is also the basic idea of the later Company of Jesus, and every Jesuit has to read it periodically throughout his career.

## The Origins of the Jesuits

The Jesuit Order represents an outstanding example of a highly organised and dynamic movement, founded originally with only one fundamental purpose in view, but which, due to unforeseen circumstances, has actually developed in quite a different direction from that for which it was intended. When the ex-Spanish cavalier, Ignatius of Loyola, was "translated" (by the impact of a French cannon-ball which permanently disabled him from further military service) from the service of King Charles of Spain to that of Jesus Christ, he at first appears to have had only

one aim—the recovery of the Holy Land—Palestine, Jerusalem, the Sepulchre of Christ—by a new crusade, led presumably by his Order. First he went to Jerusalem, then in Turkish hands, where he nearly got himself and all the other Christian pilgrims, massacred as a result of the intemperate zeal with which he denounced the Muslim "Infidels" still in possession of the Holy Land. When hurriedly sent back to Spain by the Franciscan head of the Christian community in Jerusalem, Loyola had one consuming desire—to return to Jerusalem with a crusading army which would succeed where so many previous crusades had failed—in freeing Jerusalem from the yoke of Muhammed. It appears to be quite certain

that Loyola founded his Company (an exclusively military term) solely as the nucleus of such a further crusading army. It was not Loyola's fault that historical development eventually drove the Jesuit would-be Crusaders into "fresh woods and pastures new."

## The Two Standards

As our French contemporary notes: the central and fundamental thesis of *The Spiritual Exercises*—"The Drill Book of the Company of Jesus," as it has been aptly termed—lies in Loyola's famous Meditation on *The Two Standards*, that is, the rival standards of Christ the Christian, and of Lucifer, the Infidel leader. This idea can be traced back to St. Augustine's *City of God*, which centres upon the concept of human history as an age-long warfare between God and Satan—originally a non-Christian idea which St. Augustine had derived from his former Manichean co-religionists, and translated into Christian terminology. However, as M. Grahit demonstrates, long before Loyola, this idea had been given a Spanish setting and context by religious writers. For we must always remember that the period when St. Ignatius flourished, 1490-1556, was Spain's "golden century," her great crusading era. In the very year of Loyola's birth, the Catholic King of a recently united Spain, finally finished off the Eight Hundred Years' War against Muhammedan Moors by capturing their last stronghold in Granada. (The Moors had originally invaded and conquered Spain in 711-12 A.D.) Throughout the 16th century the colossal Spanish Empire—the original Empire "on which the sun never set"—was built up by a whole series of what the Spanish conquerors regarded as crusades against the North American Indians, whom they subdued in the name of Christ, as well as that of Spain, with a courage and cruelty about equally incredible. Loyola's family played a leading part in this conquest. In 1572 Tupac Amaru, the last of the Incas of Peru, who had remained unconquered, was captured by a band of Spaniards led by Captain Garcia of Loyola, nephew of St. Ignatius. In Europe, simultaneously Spanish Armadas sailed impartially against English "heretics" and Turkish "Infidels." Loyola and his early Jesuits grew up in this crusading atmosphere, and their ideas were moulded by it. It was

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

## The Power and Secret of the Jesuits

By F. A. RIDLEY

not an accident that Loyola's "two standards," with their attendant rival armies, were located specifically in Jerusalem and Babylon. There was nothing in any way mystical about Loyola, and it is well known how inimical the Jesuit influence has always been to mystical manifestations in the Catholic Church. Whatever their faults, the Jesuits have both feet firmly planted in *this* world. It is not really open to question that Loyola, however or wherever he derived the two standards concept, took it literally. (The Founder of the Jesuits had an essentially literal mind!) And, in his own estimation, as in that of his later Order, planned an actual campaign (he had, after all, been a professional soldier) against the Muslim power in

the region between Jerusalem and Babylon. What the author of *The Spiritual Exercises* aimed at was a final and finally successful crusade which would break the power of Lucifer-Muhammed and recover the Holy Land for Christianity. This basic idea he later embodied in the Jesuit Order, in the original draft of which every recruit took an oath to go to Palestine. Circumstances alter cases, and they effectively altered the history of the Jesuits who actually have been to most places *except* Palestine! None the less, it remains a fact that the power of the Jesuits was ultimately derived from the (now open) secret that they were formed to conduct a crusade which actually never came off!

## Strontium 90 in Wales

By G. H. TAYLOR

*Strontium 90 in Wales.* Reprinted and published by *The Western Mail and Echo Ltd.*, Cardiff, from their series of articles by Dr. G. O. Phillips.

ATOMIC ENERGY RESEARCHER and scientific advisor to the British delegation at the Geneva Conference, Dr. Glyn Phillips, of Cardiff, puts forward statistical evidence of the effects of Strontium 90, probably the most harmful of the radioactive substances released in nuclear experiments. Investigations reached an alarming point when a correlation was found with bone cancer in the sheep of the Welsh uplands. Certain farm products, mainly milk and vegetables, are also bearing traces.

The principle that what goes up must come down (except Russian satellites) entails that "fall-out" sooner or later affects practically the whole world. Much of it is carried by the wind and brought down faster by rainfall; it is estimated that an explosion in Nevada affected Wales in five days (observation points are Harwell and Milford Haven).

Once Sr 90 enters the body it holds its lodgment for a very long time, and there is a good deal more to find such a habitat as the years go on, irrespective of whether there are any more nuclear tests or not. The deposit is certainly increasing in Britain. By the end of 1956 it was estimated at 17 millicuries per square mile but this was from only a very few bombs compared with today's tally—doubtless dozens. Nor is our climate likely to minimise the fall: the year 1958 was not exactly rainless. The spread is far from being uniform, however. At Milford Haven in 1951, according to Dr. Phillips, there were 240 mc. in *one* day.

Some localities in Wales have been subjected to intense study and their results compared with the country's average and with selected normal areas of sheep farming. It would appear that a high average of rainfall plus inferior soil are the extra inviting factors for Sr 90. The author gives statistics for victim-areas, of which Cwmystwyth is the biggest sufferer. An American suggestion for covering the farming land with lime is impracticable in that each farmer would need something like 1,000 tons. The effects of Sr 90 in milk could in time become exceedingly serious for infants in the bone-forming stage of life.

There are one or two mitigating features in Dr. Phillips' reports, but against the background of the prospect of future accumulations of radio-strontium they may be almost negligible. Less than a quarter of the Sr 90 in our bodies goes to the bone—where it can start cancer. Meanwhile, we are subject to other radioactive effects: radioactivity has been a normal behaviour of the planet ever since it was formed. The top two or three inches of soil contains more radium than Sr 90 and we have evolved sufficient immunity, evidently, to go on living. But that is no reason for adding to the dangers, and in the kind of

nuclear tests that are going on mankind is courting disaster. It may be argued that atomic research workers are getting radioactive effects continually, but here they can be checked up at any time and presumably any worker getting over a certain amount would be taken off the job as he approached the danger limit. It is impossible to test the whole populace, however, and Sr 90 is not evenly distributed.

*Western Mail* is to be congratulated in publishing these facts and comments. As to whether the situation is being generally played down, or, alternatively, exaggerated, one sees factors working both ways. On the one hand, peace propaganda might demand that the impending danger be "writ large"; on the other hand, consideration for the unfortunate farmers in bad areas might work the other way. Meanwhile, it would seem that everyone has by now trapped some Sr 90 but that at present the amount is generally under what would be fatal. Against this, however, Sr 90 only loses half its strength in 28 years and there is still more in slow process of dispersal.

### DE RERUM NATURA

All things bright and beautiful,  
All creatures great and small,  
All things dread and terrible,  
Did Lord God make them all?

The tape worm and the serpent,  
The polio germ and 'flu,  
Paralysis and liver fluke,  
They have their places too.

The bitter cold that freezes,  
The lightning's flash that kills,  
The molten red hot lava  
That thunders down the hills.

The tidal wave, the whirlwind,  
The landslide's crushing weight;  
The pain, the grief, the terror  
Of those thus caught by fate.

Ah! We have eyes to see them  
And ears that we may hear,  
Oh, where the tender mercies?  
The love that casts out fear?

All things bright and beautiful,  
Why, yes, we see them too.  
Alas! What pain and horror  
Complete the picture true!

DAPHNE GRAY.

# Catholic Gazetteers

By COLIN McCALL

I TRY, from time to time, to give FREETHINKER readers some idea of the many varied religious periodicals that come my way. It is, I think, both useful and interesting to know what these are like and what they are saying, though all too frequently this is little of any moment. The latest, the February issue of the *Catholic Gazette* (6d. monthly, published by the Catholic Missionary Society, London) is rather better than average in content as well as format.

The Editor, the Rev. Michael O'Dwyer, for instance, in commenting on Mr. Mikoyan's recent visit to the United States, appreciates that "Russia is frightened at the prospect of her neighbour [Germany] united, free and armed to the teeth," and hopes that Mr. Eisenhower "will be more alive to German facts and history" as he begins "to look at the German problem afresh." Whatever one's own views, it is clear that the Rev. O'Dwyer is far removed from the "destroy Russia at any cost" school of Catholics; he can obviously see some things in perspective. Even on the Reformation, he is *relatively* reasonable. It was a "tragedy," of course, but "it was a Catholic people who staged the revolt"; the "glory of martyrs" should not "allow us to forget the venality of others," and there must be "a deliberate sympathy in thinking about a situation so full of tender spots." "The cruder kinds of bigotry," he says, "have gone out of fashion."

This is, I suggest, a significant remark. It is fatal to underestimate the enemy and Freethinkers should, of all people, beware of falling behind the times. The bigoted Catholic is still with us; is still, indeed, in a majority. The aim of the Church of Rome is still world domination with, here at home, the conversion of England. Should that domination ever come to pass, then life for Freethinkers would be intolerable, even if it were possible. These are, assuredly, things we should always bear in mind. But despite its motto, the Roman Church changes too. The recent change of Popes has already produced a certain liberalisation of policy, and to some extent this would seem to be reflected in the periodical before me. I don't want to exaggerate the development, but I think we ignore it at our cost. Whatever Roncalli's faults, he is not a Fascist like Pacelli; and Pacelli is dead. True, there is a legacy but, like most legacies, it diminishes with time.

If we concentrate too much on that legacy, we run the risk of following Father O'Dwyer in one of his errors (for it would be too much to expect a Catholic priest to remain reasonable for too long), namely, emphasis on the dead rather than the living. The most important thing a man can do—he says—"is to die"; which is quite ridiculous, it being one of the two things that *every* man cannot avoid "doing" (the other is being born). One should "go often to funerals," says the Father, because funerals "nourish the mind." And, anyway, if you are "faithful to funerals" (whatever that may mean) you may yourself "get a great send-off"; truly something to aim at, and, incidentally, an example of the low morality that is never far removed from Catholic thinking.

But as it is impossible to expect any one Catholic priest to remain sensible for very long (so absurd are the bases of his religion) so it is impossible to expect a Catholic magazine to have only common sense articles. Skipping a typically unenlightening contribution, "The Crucial Point," by the Abbot of Downside, which aims for the "heart of the matter in our present mission to England," but never gets within striking distance and never makes any crucial point

in 2,500 words; and an equally typical example of the "boldly outspoken" school of criticism of the "lukewarm Christian," "Those who make Christ Sick," by M. Daniel-Rops; skipping these and the usual Question Box where one may learn anything from the origin of the biretta to the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost ("Are they virtues in some way specially planted in the soul by God?"—"Not quite!"), we come to a subject really worthy of our attention: "Place, Size and the Eucharist," by Charles Davis.

The Eucharist affords, I suggest, the supreme example of Christian inanity, though I admit there are others that run it close. But it does seem to me that, if a Roman Catholic is open to reason at all, this may very likely prove his weak spot. The fact that clerics seem continually compelled to justify and "explain" the Eucharist, would seem to confirm my view. Catholicism is basically insecure, especially so in an enlightened age, and this insecurity is felt by the priests. An example of this, to hand, is in the book, *Father Vincent McNabb*, by Father Valentine, O.P. (Burns and Oates), where we are candidly told that Father McNabb wore his habit in public because "he felt spiritually insecure"; that it was "a protection against the temptations of the world." This insecurity also lies behind Catholic censorship, hatred of mixed marriages, and insistence on constant prayers and recitatives.

But in the February *Catholic Gazette* it is best exemplified in the article on the Eucharist. Father Davis (I take it he is a "Father") admits that the way in which Christ is present in the Eucharist is "beyond our grasp." Yet he takes such presence for granted, and must think that if he rambles on long enough about things "beyond our grasp," he will eventually bring them within reach. No doubt the Father believes he is leading us somewhere, apart from the obvious place—up the garden path.

He *may* be, of course. It is just possible that it is my deficiency of understanding, not his, that turns his article into nonsense. But I am vain enough to think not. Indeed, I am prepared to assert dogmatically that it *is* nonsense to write: "The presence of Christ is a sacramental presence. It is the presence of what is signified to its sign, the presence of the reality symbolised to its symbol." And so on. There is a great danger of thinking of the mysterious presence "in the wrong way," warns Father Davis with justification, but alas his article does absolutely nothing to ward off that danger. Given the fundamental absurdity that Christ is present in the bread in the first place, I suppose it isn't impossible to swallow (!) the notion that he remains whole, no matter how often the bread is broken; that he remains "entire in undiminished presence under every fragment." Not impossible, but damn near it!

Some theologians have fallen into contradiction, says Father Davis, because they "have tried to meet the difficulties of the Eucharistic presence by depriving Christ's body in the Eucharist of its actual dimensions." Well, I can sympathise with them and, were I forced to choose between them and Father Davis, I think I should choose them. For "contradiction" is an understatement of the Davis mess. Consider this (typical) part of his argument: "The presence of Christ is not a presence that brings the dimensions of Christ into contact with the dimensions of the bread. But hasn't the body of Christ in the Eucharist its proper size and shape? Yes; . . . like all material things, the body of Christ has a certain magnitude . . . has the

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

How beautifully the world-famed Design Argument works was shown in the *Sunday Pictorial* the other week. It gave particulars of a few little children—"Suffer them to come to me"—one of them a mite called Helen, who was born *without eyes and ears*, and she is one of six similar children. Or there is a "sturdy" boy of twelve born totally blind and deaf, one of similar children all over the country. It is true that there are a number of devoted men and women doing their utmost for these helpless examples of the beautiful Design Argument. But will it be believed—it is claimed that they are doing "God's work"! One wonders how far credulity can go.

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In the London "Star" the other week, Mr. C. G. L. Du Cann gave a most interesting account of an almost forgotten trial for libel. The libellist was the saintly Cardinal Newman (not then a Cardinal though) and he made a scurrilous attack on a Dr. Achilli, who had left the Roman Church and had become a Protestant lecturer. Whether Achilli deserved the "libel" or not need not here be discussed. The jury found Newman guilty, and he was fined £100 with £14,000 costs—all of which was paid by his admirers. Mr. Du Cann will *not* be thanked by the Church of Rome for resurrecting this most interesting case.

★

A lay preacher and Chief Education Officer for Norfolk, Dr. F. L. Ralphs, claims that "suspicion between denominations was responsible for the limited way in which religion could be taught in schools." But surely it is much more than "suspicion"? The various denominations within the Christian Church mostly despise or hate each other. Each is quite certain that all the other "denominations" are utterly wrong and the only true religion of Christ Jesus is its own. However, there is one consolation in this angry turmoil of creeds. By the time they are all agreed which is Christ's *true* religion there won't be a religion to talk about.

★

**Hallelujah!** The Christian Church has just had one of its most spectacular successes. A whole tribe of Red Indians, the Wai Wais, on the border of Brazil and British Guiana, has been converted to Christianity, all through the Unevangelical Fields Mission headed by the Rev. L. Harris. The Wai Wais were being baptised wholesale, and trained in Bible schools. The astonishing thing is, of course, to people like Mr. Harris that Red Indians can become whole-hearted Fundamentalists in a trice, so to speak, while European whites, who have been brought up on the Church and the Bible are, if not downright unbelievers, at least quite apathetic to the wondrous beauties of Christianity. Still, even a Red Indian convert is better than none at all.

★

Some seven thousand laymen are going through the process of spreading the Christian Gospel in Chicago by a door-to-door bell-ringing campaign. This kind of evangelism is not at all easy, as one speaker at a mass meeting, the Rev. D. Anderson, admitted when relating his own successes. "It took ten people in our parish last year to win one new man to Jesus Christ," he pathetically said. But this is still a little better than the experience of the Society for Converting Jews to Christianity. Before World War I they once spent £40,000, for which sum they produced *two* converts—and even then they were not quite sure that these had really been converted!

With a live Bishop in the place of honour, TV's religious "Meeting Point" should have been devastating for our unlucky infidels. The Bishop of Bradford gave us a picture of Jesus in the New Testament, and did his utmost to prove it was true. Alas, he seemed to have stepped out of the pages of dear old Paley writing over 160 years ago. His "exposition" was as Fundamentalist as that of the most ignorant lady the Salvation Army specialises in. There was not the slightest evidence in his talk that he had ever read even a nineteenth century criticism of the New Testament let alone anything of this century. As for the questions from "non-believers" in his audience, they appeared to be also the kind of questions asked in the eighteenth century. How frightened everybody there was of any genuine criticism of our washed-out Christianity!

### CATHOLIC GAZETTEERS

(Concluded from page 83)

dimensions and figure suitable for the perfect human body that it is. It is this body with all that belongs to it that is made present in the Eucharist . . . and that means with its proper dimensions." But "There is no dimensional contact between His body and the host or the surrounding bodies. . . Nevertheless, what is directly present in the sacrament is His body and blood. . ." In all seriousness I ask, Can anybody possibly be any clearer in his mind after reading that?

"Our imagination . . . can mislead us," says Father Davis in a moment of truth.

### Lecture Report

THE 78TH ANNIVERSARY of the opening of the Leicester Secular Hall was held on Sunday, March 1st, 1959, when a large audience, including members of the Leicester Secular Youth Fellowship, was addressed by Mr. J. M. Alexander, of Central London Branch N.S.S., and Mr. Tom Mosley, of Nottingham.

Mr. Alexander passed on heartiest greetings from the Central London Branch and distributed prizes to winners of the youth essay competition. First prize of £1, won by R. Billington, was given by Central London; other prizes by the L.S.S. committee and Mr. C. T. Powell. A reporter of the *Leicester Evening Mail* was present and took pictures of the boys receiving their prizes.

Mr. T. M. Mosley, our guest speaker, afterwards gave us an interesting talk on his experiences during fifty years in the Free-thought field. He quoted "Ten Commandments" which were taught in a Secular Sunday school, which he attended as a young man, amongst which were: Love your schoolfellows; Love learning; Make everyday useful and be useful to all; Bow down to no one; Speak no evil; Stand up for your rights; Observe and think; Do not believe contrary to reason.

These precepts cannot be bettered, and are superior to many of the so-called inspired teachings of the Bible. C.H.H.

Please reserve your Ticket

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# THE FREETHINKER

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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.

## 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).—Every 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.

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

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Midland Institute Cinema, Paradise Street).—Sunday, March 15th, 6.45 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "Current Problems of World Freethought."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, March 15th, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 17th, 7.15 p.m.: MAURICE CRANSTON, "Mill's *Essay on Liberty*—a Review, One Hundred Years Later."

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, March 15th, 6.30 p.m.: Mrs. D. PURCELL, "Confessions and Impressions."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-op Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, March 15th, 2.30 p.m.: HAROLD DAVIS, M.P. for Leek, "America in Asia and the Pacific."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, March 15th, 11 a.m.: JOHN LEWIS, PH.D., "Science, Faith and Scepticism."

Study Circle.—Friday, March 13th, at 7.30 p.m., N.S.S. Offices, 41 Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1.: P. F. MOORE, "The Byzantine Empire." Full discussion.

## Notes and News

WE breathed a sigh of relief for the people of Usk, Monmouthshire when we opened the *South Wales Argus* for March 2nd. The "earthbound spirit" of a girl, we read, had been "sent on its way," thanks to the operations of a spirit doctor. Her point of departure was the local Cross Keys Inn, which she had been haunting for several months; her destination, alas, was not indicated, though the spirit doctor assured the audience at a seance that she had "gone for ever." It's a shame to carp when the doctor (and the medium, Mr. Llewellyn Williams, whose trance brought him into existence) had achieved so remarkable an expulsion, but we do think he should have known the date of his own death. It took place—he said, through the medium—in "1927 or 1928." What a pity, too, that he was not clear "about the earthbound spirit's" name! At first "he thought it sounded French, something like Claire or Clara

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £132 4s. 11d.; G. C. Russell, £4 (In memory of Charles Blee); M. Howard, 5s.; M. Bryn, 10s. 6d.; A.I., 10s.; A. Shannon, 5s.; I. Barnes, £1; M. Beesley, £1; Anon, £3 13s.; M. Lechner, £1 15s.; K. B. Kough, £2 10s.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d.; A. Allman, 2s. 6d.; C. J. Cleary, 5s.; R. Hudon, 14s. 6d.—Total to date, March 6th, 1959, £148 17s. 10d.

AGAIN it is our pleasant task to say a few words of thanks to the contributors towards THE FREETHINKER Sustentation Fund. And pride of place should go, we think to the Old Age Pensioners who give generously of their meagre income, yet apologise for the comparative smallness of the amount. "Sorry it is small"—one said, speaking for them all—"but I will try and send another contribution later."

"I noted your appeal some weeks ago," added another, "but I have been waiting until I got a few more pence in my money box." The support of men and women like this is a wonderful encouragement to us. And among them we note an old friend of Miss Edith Vance, a former Secretary of the National Secular Society.

Then there are the "regulars," to whom we are especially indebted. One new reader, for example, sends a postal order every week. And the National Secular Society branches of Kingston and North London and the Leicester Secular Society have all been generous with gifts, while three Leicester S.S. members combined in a separate contribution which we gratefully acknowledge.

To all, in fact, whether they write or not, whether they say "I enjoy your unique and important little paper even more now than when I started taking it three years ago," or "I do not want any public acknowledgment, it is nobody's business except yours and mine"; whether they are at home or abroad; whether they send shillings or pounds. To all we say, thank you.

Bernhardt, but there was a doubt about this (and about the spelling)." We have a suggestion to make. Maybe it was Sarah Bernhardt, still acting a role! Comedy this time.

★

A MACABRE (undated) newspaper cutting reached us the other day. A 40-year-old French priest, it informed us, had been found murdered in a wood near Amiens, "with four bullet holes in his body in the sign of a cross." The holes were, it went on to say, in the head, the stomach, and either side of the chest. But, Mr. Newspaperman, please tell us why that forms a cross rather than a diamond. And M. Murderer, please make your symbol perfectly clear next time. If you intend a sign of the cross, add a fifth hole, dead centre.

★

A SOUTH AFRICAN reader, of Scottish descent, tells us that he is taking a holiday soon in Port Elizabeth. It will remind me of my very early days, he writes, when I was an earnest member of the Presbyterian Church in that town. It is the oldest such church in South Africa, he continues, and "there is an enlarged portrait of me still hanging in the vestry." He earned this honour when, as a youth of 16, he acted as a personal relations officer "beckoning into the fold" the young Scotsmen who arrived in large numbers to fill vacancies in the commercial houses. Having beckoned others in with all sincerity, he himself left. But his portrait remains. The memory of a misspent youth?

—NEXT WEEK—

GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

By DR. VITALI NEGRI

# Freedom and the Will

By NICHOLAS TOON

IT HAS RECENTLY BEEN MAINTAINED that the age-old conundrum of "free will" or determinism is illusory, and that in fact there is no incompatibility between the two since the problem arose solely out of semantic confusion, and is accordingly soluble merely by linguistic clarification. This view I believe to be wrong. The problem is as real as ever. Undoubtedly there has been confusion, and to clear this up must be the first need, but it will not solve the problem.

This confusion has arisen primarily, in my view, out of an erroneous dichotomy—an attempt to create an impossible "freedom": namely, a freedom from the laws of Nature. The law of causality is the basis of science: every event is determined necessarily by its antecedents. On this view, then, every event is *potentially* or *hypothetically predictable*; independently of any observer, the processes inherent in Nature go on in a determinate manner of *their own accord*. Nobody is free to break the laws of Nature, because these apply universally, not just to arbitrarily demarcated segments of it. There cannot be a freedom from Nature; the greatest possible degree of freedom must still be in accord with the laws of Nature. We may say that the greatest degree of freedom is congruent with *understanding* the operations of Nature, as embodied in scientific laws brought into the forefront of our consciousness—laws which must represent and relate directly to the internal constitution of things. Thus the difficulty has arisen out of a false antithesis, not between "free will" and determinism, but between "man" and "Nature" (whereas man is part and parcel of Nature); if we abstract in thought the rest of Nature, they are one and the same thing. We are "at one" with Nature.

Clearly the whole controversy devolves around our concept of a *voluntary* action (a volition), and the respects in which it is distinguished from an *involuntary* action, such as, for example, a reflex action. Now we know that just as the latter is governed by the autonomic nervous system, equally the former is governed by the appropriate part of the cerebral cortex, the outer portion of the brain. The electro-chemical processes associated with cerebration must needs be as deterministic as the less complex processes of the autonomic nervous system, with which they stand in an intimate relationship (from which, indeed, they in a sense developed); and thus *prima facie* it is not very likely that there is a clear-cut distinction between the two. It is clear that "voluntary" actions pass by insensible gradations into "involuntary" actions, and the difference is one of degree, not of kind.

The greatest possible freedom, in the philosophical sense, is attained by acting and thinking most in accord with the dictates of reason (if self-consciousness endows a higher degree of "freedom" than does mere consciousness). But clearly in an absolute sense, "freedom" (as absolute spontaneity) is impossible; we are of necessity constrained by the inviolable laws of Nature operating autonomously within and without ourselves, and which nothing and nobody is free to break. In other words, "freedom" is always relative. When we describe an action as "voluntary" we make a *comparative* judgment, not an absolute judgment. We are free within the limits of our will, but we are not free to determine those limits. In Schopenhauer's words: "I can do what I will, but I cannot will what I will." Hence, ultimately, man is not free; he is free only in a restricted sense. In the final analysis, then, all freedom is seen to be only *apparent*. No doubt our volun-

tary actions appear to be free to us because we are not (simultaneously) aware of their causation. But this is as "free" as we can wish to be—since *necessity* reigns supreme throughout the all-embracing domain of Nature.

We may now consider the relevance of this view to the vexed question of "moral responsibility." Determinism, as interpreted above, is perfectly consistent with *moral training*, and thus is not opposed to the concept of moral responsibility, although it does necessitate a modification of our views regarding the latter, and, more specifically, the complete substitution of reformative for retributive methods of corrective training. As regards the "rightness" of *praise* and *blame*: praise is largely superfluous, and the vindication of *blame* lies in its pragmatic utility (*i.e.* its potentially deterrent or reformative effects). Thus "common-sense" is partially vindicated. We must note, too, that the world is not altered, whatever interpretation we put on it; our interpretation does not affect the facts themselves. The fact is that morality has a naturalistic base, which psychologists may one day disclose; it is not validated by a supernatural agent. Except in a human context and relative to human emotions, ethical value-judgments in Nature have neither application nor meaning; there is no sin discoverable, as Hume said, except as "a sentiment of disapprobation in the breast of the observing subject."

Finally, determinism as a hypothesis is greatly strengthened by consideration of the only possible alternative, namely, that there is a sphere of Nature somehow in connection with and yet wholly different from the insensate forces which regulate the rest of Nature, concentrated by special dispensation in the privileged brain of man. Nonsense! Conceit does not answer facts, and the surface attractiveness of this proposition ought not to deceive anybody into a lazy acceptance of the so-called "common-sense" viewpoint, upheld from private motives by the vested interests of the representatives of institutional religion. A man has got nothing that a cat or a dog hasn't got except a superior brain, and a brain is a material thing. "Spirits" and "souls" miraculously divorced from corresponding brains are unthinkable.

## Leicester Log

At the moment the Sunday freedom question is very much in the headlines at Leicester. It started when the local branch of the Guide Dogs Association (for supplying dogs to blind persons) arranged for a charity football match to be played on Sunday, February 8th, with the "Showbiz" XI in action. The Lord's Day Observance Society, of course, tried to stop it. The organisers therefore took legal advice and were told, among other tips, not to charge for admission. It was touch and go whether the match would be played, but on the Saturday the *Leicester Mercury* carried bold headlines: "Match goes on despite Lord's Day Society."

The game was played, but the organising secretary, Mr. A. G. Smith, declared that about £1,000 more would have been paid had he been allowed to charge for admission. A courageous man, he decided to try to form some organised opposition to the L.D.O.S. "I want people to form a Sunday Freedom Association," he said; "I want to oppose the L.D.O.S. The laws are out of date, and Britain will never be a free country while we have these out-of-date laws about Sunday observance."

Help and support came quickly, and the Leicester Secular Society secretary, Mr. C. H. Hammersley, wrote, as reported in the *Evening Mail*, offering him the use of the Secular Hall for meetings, and said: "I think it is shocking that these busybodies should be allowed to sabotage genuine humanitarian work and be aided and abetted by the law."

Both Leicester newspapers came out strongly against the L.D.O.S. Under the heading, "What use are these Laws?" the *Mercury* described them as "out-of-date and irrational. . . . Instead of justice they may even cause injustice." "No Government yet has had the courage to face up to this prickly subject," but one day these laws "will have to be sorted out, the sooner the better." The *Evening Mail* spoke of "that illogical, archaic and puritanical piece of legislation, the Sunday Observance Act." It appealed strongly for support for Mr. Smith, for "the repeal of these legal stupidities is long overdue. The House of Commons has persistently by-passed this thorny problem. The remedy lies with the public and the best way people can help Mr. Smith is by pestering their M.P.s until they get some action. . . . Mr. Smith's major opponent will be the L.D.O.S., which so often pokes its long thin nose into these matters and prods the law into unwilling motion. Members of this cranky kill-joy organisation have every right to hold the views they do and are at liberty to spend their Sundays as they wish. Equally, however, they have no right to seek to impose on their fellow citizens a view of Sunday totally at variance with that of the vast majority."

The Leicester Parliamentary Debating Society arranged a debate between Mr. Smith and an L.D.O.S. representative.

★

A Writers Club has been started in Leicester, consisting of people whose letters frequently appear in the local press. Mr. Hammersley became a founder member and offered a room at the Hall, where they were interviewed for the *Illustrated Chronicle*, in which a full-page feature, with individual photographs, appeared on February 21st. As a result they were approached by the BBC, who made a recording at the Hall for broadcasting in the Midland Home on February 24th (at too short notice for us to give readers advance news) in a programme called "Signpost." They had about five minutes on the air.

★

Mr. Hammersley has put out a *Leicester Secular News Letter*, which will make its appearance at intervals, and which functions as a bulletin for the Society and Hall activities. The February issue announces, among other interesting items, that the Polish contacts made by N.S.S. members have resulted in the Polish freethought paper, *Fakty i Mysli*, mentioning the names of Mrs. H. M. Rogals, Dave Shipper and C. H. Hammersley, as well as publishing a picture of the Secular Hall.

FOSSE.

## For The Good Of Their Souls

"Oh!" said Mrs. Sistagatist, "If it were not for the churches & chapels I should not have lived so long. There was I, up in a morning at four o'clock, when I was a girl. I would run like the dickens till I was all in a heat. I would stand till I was ready to sink into the earth. Ah! Mr. Huffcap would kick the bottom of the pulpit out with Passion—would tear off the sleeve of his Gown & set his wig on fire & throw it at the people. He'd cry & stamp & kick & sweat, and all for the good of their souls."

Blake, *An Island In The Moon*.

## Burns and Religion

By E. G. MACFARLANE

IN A RECENT LETTER by Martin McCalpin he asserts: "It is obvious to all who read Burns' verse that Burns was a freethinker, and not addicted to the religious superstition so rampant in his period."

I cannot agree with this as it stands. Whilst it is true that Burns sometimes said things which were contradictory and thus has spoken as anti-Churchman as well as Churchman, we have to try to watch whether he is expressing his own views or those of others, whose opinions he is shouldering for poetical reasons. An obvious instance of his pro-religious outlook is contained in his *Epistle to a Young Friend*, which we can safely regard as an expression of his own views, since he signs it as a letter. The ninth stanza reads as follows:

"The great Creator to revere  
Must sure become the creature,  
But still the preaching cant forbear  
And ev'n the rigid feature.  
Yet ne'er with Wits profane to range,  
Complaisance be extended,  
An Atheist-laugh's a poor exchange  
For deity offended."

Here, surely, we have an endorsement by Burns of the general belief in a God which is basic to the very existence of all the Churches. And insofar as we are atheists who reserve the right to laugh or not as we like at all kinds of deism and theism, Burns can hardly qualify as a prophet of our point of view.

Of course, it is not necessary to find doctrinal perfection in Burns (from our point of view) in order to admire him. A man can be judged according to his day and circumstances—and in this light Burns is a very extraordinary person. He was a bold thinker and a courageous self-expresser at a time when the representatives of the Churches were a great deal more self-assertive and brashly interfering than they are nowadays. I have no doubt that we have much owing to Burns for his spirit and attitude in changing these things to our advantage. But, fundamentally, I still say that Burns was a captive of the theism of his times.

Another example which bears this out is his note in verse to the Rev. John McCath, who had written asking for a copy of *Holy Willie's Prayer*. After explaining that he has had fears of acts of vengeance from the people he had been criticising, he continues:

"All hail religion! maid divine!  
Pardon a muse sac mean as mine  
Who in her rough imperfect line  
Thus dares to name thee,  
To stigmatise false friends of thine  
Can ne'er defame thee.  
Tho' blotch't and foul wi' mony a stain  
And far unworthy of thy train,  
With trembling voice I tune my strain  
To join with those  
Who boldly dare thy cause maintain,  
In spite of foes."

Later he writes:

"Oh! Ayr, my dear, my native ground,  
Within thy presbyterial bound  
A candid liberal band is found  
Of public teachers,  
As men, as Christians too, renown'd  
An' manly preachers."

Taken as a whole, I think this poem, as an obvious expression of Burns' own views, shows that he was not concerned, as most of us are, with countering belief in God as an urgent public danger. No, all he was concerned with was in bringing some light and manliness into a Church which was largely sunk in hypocrisy and back-biting. Had he lived now I doubt if he would have taken the view that

it is possible to harmonise belief in God and prayer and all the rubbish which goes with these things with manliness of any kind. I think he would have now seen religion for what it is—a miserable harking-back to the mental props and attitudes of ignorant primitive cave-dwellers and aborigines. Given this vision Burns' astonishing gifts with words and facility of invective might have given issue to a poem which would have stimulated people all over the world to rouse themselves from their thoughtless and feeble acquiescence in the continued placing of responsibility for human affairs upon God and thus inspire men to take the responsibility upon themselves. Anyway, I have no doubt that it is a stupid and hollow appearance of conformity with belief in God which is largely responsible for holding mankind back from an intelligent and positive attitude to rectifying human affairs. We see the dynamic believer in human responsibility carefully excluded from the public eye by the conformers who control the most of the press and radio services. A decadent general public could do with a Burns effusion to boost them out of their contentment with this dangerous state of affairs.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### WORLD POPULATION

"The Increasing World Population," by G. F. Bond (in THE FREETHINKER, 20/2/59) reveals the author much more than his subject. His attack on Malthus' essay, *On the Principle of Population*, calls for a little analysis. When the *Essay* appeared in 1798 the Industrial Revolution was having an impact which (with the demand for workers and an expanding profitable overseas trade) led eventually to a somewhat abnormal rise in the population, coupled with what could then be described as a higher standard of living. This situation continued long enough to discredit Malthus' prediction on the population theory, but time has shown that Malthus was right and that the ebb and flow of time have in the last resort no eventual influence on evolution.

To say that the *Essay* inspired Spencer, Darwin, Place, Galton, Bradlaugh and Annie Besant to write articles chiefly advocating "birth control" and to follow with "Most of these people disagreed outright with the horrible Malthusian predictions," is both untrue and a contradiction in terms. The cheap sneer about "a Church of England parson" (whose honest doubts were subversive and contrary to Church discipline) scarcely deserves an answer. Mr. Bond asserts, "It is scientifically well established that, given proper husbandry, there are ample raw material resources for our requirements for as far forward as it is reasonable to make predictions." He uses the obsolete argument re "a pair of hands," and makes the amazing statement that "To argue that overpopulation is an inexorable threat to the future happiness of mankind would be tantamount to insisting that diseases such as smallpox or malaria would *always* have been a source of serious affliction." These assertions are all quite baseless and illogical. A reference to a notable scientist on Malthus says that in certain details (the principle of moral restraint, etc.) the *Essay* can be criticised, but the broad principles of it can only be doubted by those who do not understand the question.

Sir Julian Huxley, the first Director-General of U.N.E.S.C.O., a Fellow the Eugenics Society, who has a special interest in the problems of population, said in a recent article: "People often maintain that the discovery of how to release atomic energy has brought us to the brink of a new epoch, overshadowing every other modern development. However, I am certain that it is in the field of human biology, and in particular, human numbers, that

man is facing his greatest challenge. The assumption that anything that makes it possible to keep more human beings alive must be good and right is at once seen to be fallacious. What we need above all is a world population policy, enabling us to reverse the present disastrous trend." If Mr. Bond would like to understand the question properly he ought to read Julian Huxley.

THOS. SHORROCK.

### A SECULAR OR RELIGIOUS FUNERAL?

In your issue of February 6th you report the obituary of a well-loved member of the N.S.S.—for many years—whose relatives ignored his wishes (presumably) that he should have a secular funeral service—and arranged a religious one.

This is yet another of the many similar cases—where the relatives attend to "pay their respects" to the dead—whilst disregarding the dead person's wishes—thereby showing *disrespect*.

Such incidents are an insult to the dead—and a boost for the religious bodies.

As one who has made a will to ensure a secular funeral—by appointing a solicitor—I suggest that others do likewise.

Maybe some of my Christian friends will attend my funeral—or will they?—if they know beforehand the arrangements made.

"SECULARIST."

[We approve our correspondent's suggestion, though we should point out that it cannot actually *ensure* a secular funeral; the final decision rests with the next of kin. We might add that it is often helpful to give the name and address of the National Secular Society, as this may not be known to the relatives.—ED.]

### THIS FAITHLESS WORLD

When they fix lightning conductors on to church steeples doesn't it show a strange lack of faith in God Almighty? As they were erected entirely to give him pleasure, wouldn't it be rather a dirty trick if he blasted them on to the heads of his faithful worshippers? But most church steeples have lightning conductors.

MAY A. WATSON.

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