

# The Freethinker

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IN THE YEAR 1814, after the first abdication of Napoleon, the three major Continental powers responsible for his ultimate downfall—Russia, Austria and Prussia—formed a “Holy Alliance,” the immediate objective of which was to prevent any recurrence of revolutionary outbreaks on the model of the French Revolution; and with the more general policy of combating the phenomenon then generally described as “Liberalism” in both Church and State. This meant any extension of the democratic and freethinking ideologies ultimately derived from the French Revolution, the ideas of '89.

This Holy Alliance continued as the dominating military and political power in Europe until 1848—“the year of Revolutions.”

Throughout, it was openly supported by the Papacy, and was sympathetically regarded by English Tories such as Lord Castlereagh and the Duke of Wellington. The Holy Alliance represented the form taken by the European counter-revolution in the first half of the 19th century.

## The Holy Alliance of the 20th Century

History, while not repeating details exactly, has a habit of repeating itself, at any rate in broad strategic outlines. For if the Holy Alliance of the 19th century represented the effective counter-revolution of the first half of last century, the more recent and more short-lived Catholic-Fascist Alliance, formulated in the first half — or more precisely, the second quarter — of the present century, represented the effective counter-revolution of our own times. That recent, and ghastly, era may be said to have begun with Mussolini's march on Rome in 1922, and ended (except in the Iberian Peninsula, where it still subsists on a local scale) in 1945, with the end of the Second World War and the resulting debacle of the Fascist Empires — Germany, Italy and Japan. Throughout this historically brief but terrible era, the Fascist powers represented the effective counter-revolution of the 20th century; one this time directed at the Russian Revolution and its resultant Communism in the first instance, and more generally at the whole ideology, liberal, socialist and freethinking, which Europe has evolved since the earlier French Revolution. As in the earlier case of the Holy Alliance, the Fascist States received much support, direct and indirect, from such more ancient reactionary forces as the Vatican at Rome and the Tory Party in England, during the era of “appeasement” that preceded the outbreak of the Second World War . . . a war resulting from the continued aggression of the Fascist States in their ever more open march towards world domination.

## The Papacy and Fascism

The political intrigues of the Roman Catholic Church throughout this era, and in particular the pro-Fascist attitude taken up by Popes Pius XI and XII, have been the subject of much historical inquiry, notably by Mr. Avro Manhattan in this country. More recently, a French author, M. Edmond Paris, has produced a general survey of the whole period of Catholic-Fascist collaboration under the

comprehensive title of *Le Vatican Contre L'Europe*, (“The Vatican against Europe”) still untranslated. In this well-documented book, M. Paris, following here in the track of Avro Manhattan's *magnum opus*, *The Catholic Church Against the 20th Century*, so to speak, catalogues the various spheres of collaboration between the Vatican and the Fascist Dictators, who shot up like mushrooms after rain all over Europe. High water marks in this cosmopolitan alliance were, of course, represented by the Lateran Treaty between Mussolini and the Vatican (1929), the Franco rebellion in Spain (1936-39) — energetically supported both in Spain and abroad, by the Church — which overthrew the former Liberal Republic; and the

little-known, but truly appalling Fascist regime of Pavelitch, in what is now Yugoslavia, which resulted in atrocities rivaling those of the Inquisition. All these and many other chapters in the cosmopolitan story of Catholic-Fascist collaboration, are related in great detail by the author who, broadly, does for his French public what Mr. Manhattan has already done for the English one in even greater detail. The facts — some of them pretty ghastly — which both authors relate, appear to be indisputable, though — at least in the opinion of this writer — some of the inferences drawn by the French historian appears to be rather too sweeping, ignoring certain other equally relevant facts that have since transpired. For instance, if the fact that the Catholic Church under Pacelli “co-existed” happily and successfully with Fascism (as it undoubtedly did) proved that Catholicism is essentially Fascist, the equally obvious fact that the self-same Church under Pacelli's present successor “co-exists” equally happily and successfully with American and European Democracy, could surely also be adduced to prove that the Vatican is really a Democratic institution. Actually, I do not consider that either contention is entirely true. As an old and worldly-wise political institution, the Vatican *never* puts all its eggs in any one basket, Fascist, Democratic or any other, as authors of M. Paris's school at times appear to suggest.

## Rome and Germany

Undoubtedly, the pivot of the entire era of Catholic-Fascist collaboration centred around Hitler's Germany; for the simple and brutal fact that only Germany possessed armaments to — as it seemed at the time — conquer Russia and annihilate the left-wing Parties and Ideologies, which was the basic purpose of the entire era of Vatican-Fascist collaboration. But while it is indisputable, as M. Paris demonstrates with appropriate detail, that the Nazi movement started in the Catholic South (actually it originated in the ultra Catholic Munich) and that Hitler, Goebbels (an ex-pupil of the Jesuits) etc., were mostly Catholic in origin, there was also in the Nazi Party a strong vein of racist Teutonic Paganism, violently anti-Catholic (cf. Alfred Rosenberg's *Myth of the 20th Century* — and Rosenberg remained to the end the acknowledged ideologist of the Nazi Party). This anti-Catholic trend, derived ulti-

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## The Holy Alliance: 20th Century Style

By F. A. RIDLEY

mately from Pagan sources, was admirably analysed a few years ago in these columns by my esteemed friend, Arthur Wilde; and it appears to be entirely ignored by authors of the M. Paris school. Insofar as Hitler stood for the elimination of Communism — nowadays Vatican public enemy number one—Rome was undoubtedly 100 per cent. behind him. But there were many aspects of the Hitler Reich not mentioned in this book, particularly in the fields of genetics and sex relationships, that were repugnant to Rome. (The Nazi human stud farms and abolition of illegitimacy, represent conspicuous examples.) Again, I would say that the Vatican is far more powerful today in the Democratic Germany of that devout son of Holy Church, Dr. Adenauer, than it ever was under the totalitarian rule of the half-Pagan Party of Hitler and Rosenberg.

It is probably true that Rome prefers politically authoritarian regimes to Democratic ones, though as the post-

war period eloquently demonstrates, the Vatican can be as Democratic with a big "D" as anyone, where necessary. But, in the Catholic ideal of an authoritarian regime, the last word lies with Rome rather than with any secular *Fuhrer*. The present Pope, unlike his predecessor, appears to belong to the Democratic wing of the Church, and even to view Franco and his *Opus Dei* dictatorial regime with some disfavour. In any case, since we are now living in 1959, in an era where Fascism is now of merely local interest, the Vatican's relations with Democracy are really of greater interest and importance than are its past relations with Fascism. May we hope that M. Paris will write another book analysing these more recent relations between the Rome of John XXIII and the present political post-Fascist set-up with the same wealth of detail to be found in *Le Vatican Contre L'Europe*? For the Vatican, whether Fascist or Democratic, is still "against Europe."

## Having It Both Ways

By LESLIE HANGER

FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS, Syria has played an important part in the history of the world. It is likely to continue to do so in the immediate future. A concise and lucid account of this country from primitive to modern times, is given by Phillip K. Hitti, of Princeton University, in *Syria, a Short History*. Apart from the light it throws on the position of the Arabs in world politics today, Freethinkers will find this book particularly interesting, since Palestine is a Syrian province and its history covers the origin of Judaism and the birth of Christianity. In his opening sentences, Hitti gives the Syrians full credit for this: "Its people were the first to insist that man is created in the image of God and that each is the brother of every other man under God's fatherhood. This doctrine supplied the basis of the democratic way of life."

On reading further, however, we do not find that the Syrians had any conception of democracy and the brotherhood of man until after they had been conquered by Alexander the Great. When the superiority of Greek culture became generally recognised, all educated Syrians became Hellenized. Stoicism with "its stress on brotherhood and a world state, virtue and ethical living," actually receives the credit for introducing these virtues into Syria, and Hitti states "this philosophy was in a sense a precursor of Christianity." So, after lip-service has been paid to a convention, it is made clear that it is not Syria, Judaism or Christianity that was the cradle of those great ideals for which the world is still striving. The seeds were sown by the pagan philosophers of classic Greece. Not only the Stoics, but the Sceptics and Epicureans pointed the way to the freedom of thought and action.

In a chapter dealing with the prehistoric eras and the first dawn of religion, we learn that, "Pastoral people were presumably devotees of the moon god who, in a warm country like Syria, seemed more kindly disposed than did the sun." Later, the ancient Semites had as their chief god, Hadad, the thunderer or storm god, who sent the life-giving rain, and had for his consort, Atargastic a mother goddess. Following these were an assorted pantheon, including the moon god. Then Hitti first mentions the Israelites as a tribe lingering in the wilderness of Sinai after the Exodus from Egypt, which he accepts as historical. Then he states: "Their leader, Moses, married the daughter of a priest who worshipped Yahwah (Jehovah), a North Arabian desert deity originally a moon god, whose abode was a tent, and whose ritual comprised feasts and sacrifices."

Where does monotheism come into all this? We are not shown; instead, a picture is conjured up of a minor

deity jostling among a whole host of similar deities; a poverty-stricken, barbaric deity, as would be imagined by poverty-stricken barbarians. The fact is, monotheism was a political idea evolved as a necessary adjunct of a centralised State by the Romans in order to bolster up their decaying empire. It is in Roman, not Syrian history, that the human invention of monotheism first played its part. Over the course of centuries, the attributes of whole pantheons of gods have gradually become attributed to a single deity. So diverse are the conceptions of this deity that a pagan visitor from the ancient world, examining the various Christian sects in England alone would assume that polytheism was still practised.

One of the most interesting events in Syrian history is dealt with quite briefly. Hitti states: "With the details of the life and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, a son of a Jewish carpenter, who, according to Tacitus, 'had undergone the death penalty in the reign of Tiberius' this history cannot properly concern itself." Here is "Hamlet without the Prince." It would be interesting to see a history of France that does not concern itself with Napoleon.

Still, "No extraordinary event reported of Jesus' life — virgin birth, astral associations, miracle performance, crucifixion, descent to the underworld, reappearance, exaltation to heaven — lacks its parallel in earlier Near Eastern religious mythology. Hardly a teaching of his was not anticipated by Hebrew prophets or other early semitic teachers. Even his emphasis on love of God and of man and on the relation between faith and ethical living were not unprecedented, though no precursor expressed himself so memorably or so wholeheartedly practised what he taught."

So, Christianity is plainly shown to have grown out of the diverse religions of Syria, Egypt, and Babylon, overlaid by a veneer of Hellenistic culture. Political necessity called for an exclusive faith and, if the cult of Mithra instead of Jesus had prevailed it would have made little difference.

Of course, Hitti insisted that Jesus was, nevertheless, the greatest figure in history, but this is only an example of the gentle art of eating one's cake and having it, too. He may have found difficulty in finding a publisher for his work had he not done so, which would have been a pity, for it is well worth reading.

— NEXT WEEK —

IN PRAISE OF IMPERTINENCE

By Dr. JEANNE VANDERVELDE

# Where Biology and Physics Converge

By COLIN McCALL

IT USED TO BE FASHIONABLE, especially between the wars, for Vitalists to argue that Materialism had failed because "life" couldn't be explained in terms of physics — with chemistry sometimes thrown in, too, for good measure. It was a poor argument at best (what is meant by "explained"?) and it revealed the static outlook of those who used it. Because we can't do such and such a thing now, doesn't necessarily mean that we never shall. We must, of course, temper our predictions and not indulge in mere fantasies, but it is a legitimate — and surely desirable — function of philosophy to look ahead from a scientific position. And it is significant that the Vitalist argument is rarely heard today.

In 1932, the late Professor T. H. Morgan (who became the *bête noire* of Dialectical Materialist Lysenko, as he had formerly been of the Vitalists), expressed the classic Materialist conception of biology in *The Scientific Basis of Evolution*. "Modern biology, then," he wrote, "rests its case on the assumption, sometimes amounting to a conviction as the result of wide experience, that the properties of living things are the outcome of their chemical and physical composition and configuration."

Subsequent developments support this Materialist or — as Morgan called it — Mechanistic, view. As the Scientific Correspondent of *The Guardian* wrote in a recent article ("A Biological Transformer," 22/9/59), "the physical and the biological sciences are now being knit closely together by the trend of new discovery." As different as chalk and cheese, we say — as different as the mineral and the biological. But are they so different? What about the living cell and the metal, germanium? In the last few years, says *The Guardian* correspondent: —

it has turned out that some of the structures of living biology owe their functional success to a system of molecular organisation which confers on biological material some of the properties of metals — at least those metals, like germanium, which are known as "semi-conductors" and which are used in the manufacture of transistors on this account. Indeed, the tasks performed by these metal-like molecular structures are some of the most important of biological processes . . .

They enable plant cells to turn the energy of sunlight into the chemical energy of materials needed for growth; animal cells to utilise the energy of carbohydrates in the construction of more complex molecules, which may be incorporated into tissues or used to make movement possible; for the retinas of animal eyes to convert the energy of visible light into electrical energy which can be conducted along nerve fibres to the brain.

The modern electron microscope has enabled us to learn a great deal about the character of biological structures, among them, "mitochondria," rod-shaped particles which it is now thought are responsible in animal cells for converting chemicals like the oxygen we breathe and the glucose in our food, into other forms of chemicals like ATP (adenosine triphosphate) which is "essential for the synthesis from simpler compounds of complicated protein structures . . . as well as for the contraction of muscle fibres and the like."

Inside the mitochondria of animal cells are a number of small pieces of membrane, seemingly identical with the outside wall of the particle, and these membranes have the same detailed structure. They have been called "molecular sandwiches," with an inner layer of fatty material, bound chemically to phosphate, while the outer layers consist of protein molecules.

This sandwich or "layered organisation" on a molecular

scale is being increasingly noted through the electron microscope. It is found, for example, in the myelin in the nerve cells, which turns sensations "felt" into electrical signals to be conducted by the nerves to the central nervous system. The coloured pigment in retina cells, which fulfil a similar purpose for sensations "seen," is built up in a similar way. And it has been shown that mitochondria membranes extract and isolate "packets of energy" from a complicated chain of chemical reactions concerned with oxidation. This process results in the addition of phosphate to ADP (adenosine diphosphate) to form ATP. The membranes, in short, act as catalysts or enzymes for the process of "phosphorylation" — the addition of phosphates. The membranes have even been broken down into small pieces (by the use of ultra-sonic waves) and the pieces have been found capable of phosphorylation.

At present, not much is known about the inner layer of the "sandwich," but the protein coverings on both sides have a molecular structure similar to that of enzymes like haemoglobin. Now,

The individual enzymes in layers of protein all carry out their function by means of the transfer of electrons . . . However, the transfer of electrons must always take place between a particular enzyme molecule and another biological molecule of considerable [sic, but I suggest "considerable" is a misprint for "comparable"] size. It is extremely unlikely that a particular enzyme molecule, immobilised on the protein layer of a mitochondrial particle, would be able within a reasonable length of time to lose an electron to a molecule of the appropriate kind which happened to lie within a suitable distance, and then be able to make good this deficiency by the chance arrival in its neighbourhood of another molecule provided with an electron which could easily be given up.

It is thought, then, that the giving up of an electron by one enzyme molecule is offset by the acceptance of an electron by a similar molecule situated at some other part of the layer. This would entail the electron that is picked up travelling physically to the place where there is a deficiency. And this is where "the metallurgists prick up their ears" for, "this is just the kind of process that physicists know as conduction."

So has emerged the conviction that the essential property of the organisation of the enzymes of phosphorylation into sheets of regularly repeating units is that these sheets can conduct electrons.

I hope I have said enough to indicate that Professor Morgan's conviction that "the properties of living things are the outcome of their chemical and physical composition and configuration" is more and more being demonstrated. The Materialist view is being vindicated. Perhaps I have also shown something else: that, while a great deal of emphasis is being put (particularly by non-scientists) on increasing specialisation in the sciences, there is another side to the coin: increasing interrelation.

Finally, and regretfully, I must make a criticism of *The Guardian* Science Correspondent. His article is marred by occasional lapses into unscientific language, viz: "In its design for living it is plain that Nature has neglected nothing"; and, "everybody is impressed with the way in which Nature turns out to have borrowed heavily from the physics of the solid state. That it should have chosen to do so . . ." etc. This personification of Nature, "neglecting not" "borrowing" and "choosing," is completely out of place in an enormously interesting and informative article on which I have obviously leant heavily. It can't be justified on grounds of popularisation, for the article makes intellectual demands on the reader which would rule out the person who wants such stupid sops.

## This Believing World

Although the Bible is, as we are always told by Christians, the world's best seller, it is astonishing how little most people know of its contents. Has anyone, for example, ever met a Christian, or even a parson, who has read Obadiah or Nahum? When we are told that the Sacred Word has been translated into 800 languages — or some such figure — we wonder how the lesser-known languages managed, not so much to translate as to convey the Precious Message to an illiterate "native" reader. Of course, everywhere, we are often told, the Bible is received with terrific enthusiasm though here in England it is a fact fewer and fewer people ever read it.

However, the Far Eastern representative of the British and Foreign Bible Society assured a meeting in Hampstead recently that "the Bible is so popular in Japan" that it was actually voted the book of the year in 1955. In spite of this dazzling success, the speaker had pathetically to admit that out of the 90 million people in Japan, only 500,000 were Christians — and he did not make it clear whether they were genuine Christians believing every word say, in Ezekial, Habukkuk and Hebrews, or whether they were, as in England, just apathetic. We cannot help wondering also whether a Jap could swallow the story of a Hebrew-speaking Serpent, a Virgin Mother, and a God flying about with a Devil as thoroughly as any British Bible Fundamentalist?

Reverting once again to that holy and blessed word "Unity," we are not surprised that some proposed talks between the Roman Church and the Protestant and Orthodox Churches "are now unlikely to take place." They were to have taken place at Assisi in Italy, but the meeting "has been postponed indefinitely," mostly because "Rome must first of all show that she is ready to talk as 'equal to equal,'" which, of course, Rome won't do. Why should she? The Roman Church holds *all* the cards, trumps, aces, or whatever is necessary for a winning hand. Rome is represented in almost every country in the world — and feared. But she is scoring all along the line against the other Churches. Rome is feared by other Christians — but in turn, she fears Freethought. For Freethought, in the ultimate, must and will win all its battles against all the Churches.

In what is, humorously no doubt, called a God-fearing "Bible belt" in North Carolina, a delightful story is reported by the *Daily Express* about a Baptist pastor being blackmailed by a fellow Baptist and his wife. When the pastor called, the wife undressed and forced the pastor into her bedroom, while the husband took some snapshots of the piquant scene, ultimately forcing him to pay up 650 dollars. To add to the thrill, the venue is where the Rev. Billy Graham lives, and it should prove a wonderful example for that evangelist to relate of the power and glory of God's beautiful Message to erring Man.

Anybody who has doubts about the "dictatorship" of the Roman Church should explain the way it (or she) has suppressed Mr. Donleavy's play *The Ginger Man* after three days in Dublin. Naturally, no Dublin newspaper dare go against the Church in Eire, and so we were bound to get one of them calling the play "an insult to religion and an outrage to moral feelings." Although the Archbishop of Dublin never saw or even read the play, it was he who ordered a whole scene to be cut out, and "frightened" the manager and owner of the Gaiety Theatre.

They were, we are told, "frightened of the power of the Church." Yet there are some people who want Protestant Ulster to put itself completely under that power!

In an address for the Rationalist Press Association in York, Mr. Richie Calder, well known as a popular and scientific journalist, told his audience that no scientist "as a scientist" could say "There is no god." Why not? If Mr. Calder uses a word, "god," which he does not and cannot define, why cannot a scientist as a scientist "deny" it? He says an agnostic, however, can say, "I do not know whether there is a god" — that is the "god" Mr. Calder cannot define as a scientist.

We wonder whether Mr. Calder ever took the trouble to find out what Huxley meant when he defined the word "Agnostic"? He said that the word "Agnostic" came to his mind as a fit "antithesis" to "Gnostic" — the Gnostics "being those ancient heretics who professed to know most about the very things of which I am quite sure I know nothing." And "it was never more needed" than now "when the ghost of the 'Absolute' slain by Hume, Kant and Hamilton, is making its appearance in broad daylight." The "god" of those who talk like Mr. Calder's Agnostic is simply the "ghost of the Absolute."

## Look—No Petrol!

"HOW DAFT CAN THEY GET?" That is one's reaction on reading the latest issue of *Power and Freedom*, a fundamentalist journal edited by the Rev. A. Wenda Ough, of Gravesend, Kent. To say that it is just another farrago of "repent and be saved" nonsense is the understatement of the year! There is, of course, the usual quota of warnings about the wrath to come and exhortations to be washed in the blood, but compared with *Power and Freedom*, even the Victory Tract Club's publications are positively intellectual.

The Rev. Ough writes many of the articles herself, but the gems are usually supplied by her correspondents — most of them anonymous and apparently of no fixed abode. Here is a typical example from the latest issue, headed "Priceless Petrol": —

A man, his wife, and a friend had just come out of a special campaign meeting. On looking at the petrol gauge, they noticed that there was very little petrol left. They drove on thinking that they would come to a petrol station. However, in the middle of the moors the car stopped dead. No petrol. The friend told us that he did not want to stay on the moors all night. The driver said: "Well, Lord, you see our predicament, and you've got to get us out of it, Lord." In faith he started up the car and drove 40 miles home with no petrol in the tank. "But wilt thou know, O vain man that faith without works is dead"? (James V. v.20). J. G.

The Rev. Ough's more worldly contemporaries in Fleet Street will be green with envy that *Power and Freedom* should scoop such a story! While they were writing about such trifles as the Lunik, a car was being driven along an English road by faith! The oil monopolists must be trembling.

I recently discussed this story with the Rev. Ough, and she assured me that every word of it is true. Her colleagues also accepted it without question for, "with God all things are possible." It is only fair to add, though, that a number of Christian friends regard the person who told it as a liar, probably neurotic.

Nevertheless, thousands of people will believe this, and other rubbish which appears in such publications as *Power and Freedom*, and Freethinkers have a vital role to play in helping to combat it.

WILLIAM MCILROY.

# THE FREETHINKER

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

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## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

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

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 week-day, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, CORSAIR, SMITH, etc. Sunday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK, MILLS, SMITH, etc.

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Meetings every Sunday, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD and D. TRIBE.

### INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics Institute) Lectures every Sunday, 7 p.m.

Central London Branch N.S.S. ("The City of Hereford" Blandford Place, W.1.) Sunday, November 15th, 7.15 p.m.: G. PLUME, "The Catholic Church and the Future of Europe."

Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Tuesday, November 17th, 7.15 p.m.: MICHAEL LINES "A Policy for Disarmament—A Way to Permanent Peace?"

Leicester Secular Society (75 Humberstone Gate,) Sunday, November, 15th 6.30 p.m.: T. S. STALLABRASS, "Euthanasia."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street) Sunday, November 15th, 2.30 p.m.: R. G. WALTON, "The Roll of Trade Associations."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.) Sunday, November 15th, 11 a.m.: MRS. D. PICKLES, M.A., "The New France—How New.?"

## Notes and News

MR. D. FYFE, of Glasgow, recounts a speech by one of Mexico's labour leaders to a great crowd of Mexican Indians in Yucatan. "In the name of God, who is called love, you have been beaten, kicked, wounded and killed. In the name of Jesus the humble, you have been oppressed, enslaved and robbed of your houses and your lands. In the name of Mary the Mother of God, your wives have been dishonoured, your sisters and your daughters ravished. But now, in the name of the Devil (the revolution) you have your honour, your lands and your families." As one man, says Mr. Fyfe, the people forgot the catechism and shouted "Viva el diablo! Viva el diablo" — "Hurrah for the Devil" — not a surprising cry when one considers how the Roman Catholic Church has exploited the Mexican people for centuries.

★

AMONG THE VISITORS to the parish church of Brixworth, Northants, there are some who "behave like apemen," said the vicar, the Rev. J. W. Burford (*The Star*, 13/10/59). He said he found cigarette ash in his pulpit and messages

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

PREVIOUSLY acknowledged, £291 18s. 2d.; H.W.G., 15s.; D. Dambe, 5s.; H. G. Blewett, 5s.; S. Ward, 5s.; Another O.A.P., 5s.; Total to date, November 6th, 1959. £293 13s. 2d.

like "I love John" scrawled across important church notices. The thought that the words reflected Jesus's feelings towards his favourite disciple doesn't seem to have occurred to Mr. Burford. Instead he classed it among "the unmistakable footprints of 20th century apemen" — not a very appropriate metaphor, surely!

★

LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY PRESS has just published a study of *The Religious Problem in English Education: The Crucial Experiment*, by James Murphy (35s.). We have not yet seen the book, but have read a review in the *New Statesman* (24/10/59). A quotation from *The Times* deplored a Liberal effort in the 1830's to set up a joint Roman Catholic-Protestant committee, hoping to provide religious instruction that could be attended by Anglicans, Dissenters and Catholics. *The Times* urged that public meetings be "called *instanter* in every town and city to protest against this anti-national and anti-Protestant measure." Children of Protestants, it said, should not be herded with "the leprous brood of Papists, Socinians, Free-thinkers, and fanatics about to be forced upon them by the Whigs." There is obviously some stimulating stuff in Dr. Murphy's book.

★

AN UNMARKED BUT RECENT CUTTING we have received, reports Bertrand Russell's speech when he launched his new book, *Wisdom of the West* (MacDonald, 63s.). Earl Russell didn't mince his words about Christianity. "I can't agree that it's been a civilising force down the ages," he said. "The whole ancient world morally deteriorated when it adopted Christianity." "Moral values are far more pronounced among freethinkers," he went on. And if you want mental comfort "you will do far less harm to yourself and the world if you get it from gin." There were, says the cutting, "dissenting murmurs."

★

ALL PRAISE TO THE National Council of Women and to *The Star* (23/10/59) for agreeing with the Council's resolution calling for legislation making it no longer a criminal offence for a doctor to terminate — with the victim's consent — a pregnancy caused by rape or other criminal assault. The resolution — it goes without saying — was opposed by Roman Catholics. And, as *The Star* reminded us, "persuading our legislators to move may be a long job." Instead of taking the lead, it said, "Governments wait nervously for public opinion to back them up." Alas, too, Governments are more likely than the National Council of Women to be frightened of the Church of Rome.

★

THE *Queensland Newsletter* (17/10/59) records the presentation of a Papal medal (believed to be the only one of its kind in Australia) to the Premier, the Hon. G. F. R. Nicklin, on the occasion of the centenary of the "Sunshine State." The presentation was made on Pope John XXIII's behalf by the Papal Legate, Cardinal Agagianian.

★

AN AYRSHIRE CORRESPONDENT writes: "At the Reformation in 1560, the Pope and his authority were drummed out of Scotland. But today his 'writ runs' there all right. Midday 'meals on wheels' for old folks provide on Friday, fish — for the Protestants as well as Papists!"

# Madame Blavatsky

By H. CUTNER

**Madame Blavatsky, Medium and Magician**, by John Symonds. Odhams Press Ltd. 254 pages. 21/- net.

IT IS RATHER AN ASTONISHING THING that books regularly appear about Mme. Blavatsky, while very few indeed appear about Annie Besant who is described by Mr. Symonds as the Theosophical Movement's "greatest leader." Whether this is what she really was is, of course, a matter of opinion among Theosophists themselves as readers of the pamphlets written by Alice Leighton Cleather abundantly prove — pamphlets which Mr. Symonds appears to have missed. He might have learnt a great deal more about the redoubtable H.P.B. (as her friends called her) had he done so.

Mr. Symonds's book, however, gives an excellent resumé of what we know of Mme. Blavatsky in general terms, culled mostly from Col. H. S. Olcott's *Old Diary Leaves*; in fact, the book might well have been entitled *Olcott and Blavatsky*. What happened to the lady before they met in 1874 is very much in the dark, though she was far too clever to leave it at that. Tibet was supposed to be in her day — H.P.B. was born in 1831 and died in 1891 — the "mysterious" land, a land of strange happenings, of occultism, and rare magic, with monasteries and libraries going back thousands of years. It was the land of the Masters, great Initiates, and Mahatmas, who could "waft" their messages across to the more ignorant Europeans thousands of years before our puny age of wireless and television. And when Mme. Blavatsky first met Olcott she had little difficulty in persuading him of the vast extent of her knowledge of the occult gained from Tibet, which she had personally visited. They met in the dining room of two very eminent mediums of the day — the Eddy brothers, both of whom subsequently were accused of huge fraud. They specialised in "materialisation," accounts of which the Colonel wrote up for the *New York Daily Graphic*. Naturally, he was almost, or a thorough, believer in the reality of these phenomena.

Mme. Blavatsky was a Russian of aristocratic descent, and was married at 17. She soon ran away, but what followed in her life is mostly conjecture. H.P.B. was ready to assent to all sorts of stories of incredible adventures in Asia and elsewhere, and readers can choose what to believe or not. One fact does stand out, however, — she was a fine linguist, and certainly knew, besides Russian, French, English, and perhaps some Sanscrit.

Mme. Blavatsky eventually found herself in New York in 1873 or so, and in the thick of the Spiritualist Movement there. But was she herself a "medium" as Mr. Symonds calls her, or even a "magician" in the usually accepted meaning of the words?

And here I must quote the reply she made to G. W. Foote after he wrote the pamphlet, *Mrs. Besant's Theosophy* — a reply not of course noticed by Mr. Symonds or by H.P.B.'s American biographer, Mrs. G. M. Williams. It is entitled *The Thersites of Freethought*, and in it she does her best to refute the charge made by Foote that she was "practising as a spiritualist 'mejum' in America." Foote later apologised "for the inadvertancy." Instead of writing "practising" he should have said "operating."

Anyway, to the charge that she was a medium, Mme. Blavatsky replied: —

You speak a deliberate falsehood . . . I defy the whole world to bring one respectable eye-witness to the fact that I have ever practised as a spiritist medium, at any time of my life, or ever given *seances* . . . I for one am not a "Spiritist" nor am I a modern Spiritualist.

It would be interesting to learn what Mr. Symonds has to

say to that denial that she was a "mejum."

It would also prove interesting to learn where he got the information that "Lord Adare, and two other sober gentlemen, had witnessed in 1868 the celebrated medium and levitationist, Daniel Dunglas Home, float out of a third-story window at Ashley Place, London, and in at another . . ." This story has been going the rounds ever since Lord Adare and his friends met Home, and it will be going the rounds for, no doubt, centuries yet. There is not a scrap of truth in it. Lord Adare himself absolutely *denied* that (his own words) "we saw Mr. Home wafted from one window to the other." (*Weekly Dispatch*, March 21, 1920.)

As for Mme. Blavatsky being a "Magician" — she certainly bamboozled some of her friends with simple conjuring tricks, and they fully deserved to be bamboozled if they really believed she was doing them with some form of "occultism." The "damning" Report made by the Society for Psychical Research (1885-6) after investigating some alleged "phenomena" when Mme. Blavatsky was living at Adyar in India, did her and the Theosophical Movement a great deal of harm.

The investigator was Richard Hodgson, who later became the Society's secretary, and he made mincemeat of the stories that, at Mme. Blavatsky's headquarters, apparitions, astral bodies and magical occurrences regularly occurred. The Report should be read in its entirety; but for myself I cannot help feeling that Hodgson might not have been so successful if it had not been for the two people H.P.B. had left in charge at Adyar, and who certainly "double-crossed" her. Later, Hodgson "fell" for many mediums, including Mrs. Piper, and became a convinced and credulous Spiritualist himself. If I were asked who showed more credulity, the people who believed that Mme. Blavatsky was in touch with "Mahatmas" in Tibet, or Mr. Hodgson who believed that dead people were alive in "Summerland," I should plump for Mr. Hodgson.

In any case, H.P.B. left India, never to return; and with the help of influential friends made quite a name for herself and the Theosophical Society. Physically she was a big woman, but she had the knack of making people talk about her and her occultism. In this, she was totally unlike Mrs. Besant. The one was boisterous, unpredictable, lashing out at fools — some of these, incidentally, were her own followers — an untamed woman, picturesque to the limit; the other was always placid, always ready to talk interminably — and just as ready to believe in anything "occult"; a far cry from the Annie Besant who lectured on Freethought for nearly 15 years and, apart from Bradlaugh, was probably the most popular lecturer then on the Secular platform. That after reading Mme. Blavatsky's *Secret Doctrine*, she could be so completely bowled over by this hotch-potch of occultism, is one of the most amazing events in our chequered history.

And here it is a pity that Mr. Symonds did not tell us a little more of the three works which made the reputation of their author, and are still selling all over the world — *Isis Unveiled*, *The Secret Doctrine*, and *The Key to Theosophy*. Did he take the trouble to read them?

*Isis Unveiled* was written in America while the Theosophical Society was in its infancy and, apart altogether from any belief in its "teachings," it is an extraordinary work for a Russian woman to write in English at the age of 46 or thereabouts. One newspaper review pointed out that in it, "References to and quotations from the most un-

known and obscure writers in all languages abound, interposed with allusions to writers of the highest repute, which have evidently been more than skimmed through." Other journals were even more enthusiastic in their criticism. Of course, Mme. Blavatsky did her utmost to mystify her friends while she was writing it, claiming help from "Initiates" and "Adepts," presumably from Tibet. But W. E. Coleman in his "Sources of Mme. Blavatsky's writings" given as an Appendix to Solovyoff's *A Modern Priestess of Isis* claims that he discovered in it "some 2,000 passages copied from other books . . ." Lots of the passages were "second hand" references — and so on. Occultists generally knew these sources, but reviewers on daily journals were most unlikely to have read them. One might say the same for *The Secret Doctrine*, and Mr. Symonds should at least have told us a little more of both books. If, as G. W. Foote believed, Mme. Blavatsky was just a common charlatan, we are still left with the mystery of these books — and Mr. Symonds adds no solution of his own.

It is a pity also we get so little about Mrs. Besant — how could such a gifted lady swallow the mass of Occultism sponsored by H.P.B. and her devoted followers? How could any Freethinker who had as a leader the same views as Charles Bradlaugh, believe in Mahatmas and Adepts and "Masters"?

Mr. Symonds might usefully have dealt with Edmund Garrett's *Isis Very Much Unveiled* — the most devastating exposure ever written of the naive credulity, not only of Mrs. Besant, but of the other Theosophical stalwarts — Olcott, Judge, Mead, and many others.

However, for those who know little of the origins of the Theosophical Society, and of perhaps the most picturesque figure the occult ever attracted, Mme. Blavatsky, this book will give a very good idea.

Perhaps if another edition is called for, Mr. Symonds will add an index and a Bibliography. For books of this kind they are both indispensable.

## Leukaemia

*The Guardian* ON OCTOBER 26TH, reported an article in *The Lancet*. Death rates from leukaemia have risen more than 50 per cent. in Cumberland, Westmorland, Caernarvon, Montgomery and Monmouth during two successive four-year periods and, in the first four of these counties the rates were all above the average for England and Wales in 1959. The incidence is increasing everywhere, but these four counties are all poor, rural communities, whereas, ordinarily, prosperous areas suffer more from leukaemia. Dr. Alun Philips, Medical Officer of Health for Caernarvonshire, points out the topographical similarity of the counties. "All are mountainous areas of high rainfall on or near the western coast," and they have high levels of radioactive strontium from nuclear tests. For instance, the soil near the Cardiganshire-Montgomery border at a height of 1,200 ft. contains three times as much radio-strontium as soil in Cambridgeshire, and the figures for Borrowdale in Cumberland are even higher. "Moreover, milk from one area in Cardiganshire, in a test performed last year, contained 28.4 strontium units, and that from Cumberland 21.1 units, compared with a countrywide average of 6.97."

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## Days of Mourning

THE *Los Angeles Times* of September 12th, announced that a "mourning Mass" would be celebrated the following Saturday, the day Mr. Krushchev was due to arrive in the city. It intended to emphasise "American horror at Communist brutalities and America's firm stand for freedom for all peoples," said Stephen Nowakowski, President of the Polish American Congress. And, on September 18th, the same paper reported the arrival in Los Angeles of four former Hungarian leaders to "remind Southern Californians of Krushchev's role in the Hungarian revolution." One of them was Monsignor Bela Varga, speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, and canon of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Veszprem, Hungary.

The Mass duly took place at Our Lady of Bright Mount Catholic Church, but there was no sermon or speech. They were "keeping quiet to stir no emotions," just "praying for all who were lost in the conquest" of the Balkan countries — all "good" Catholics, no doubt. But Roman Catholic church bells tolled funeral knells in Memphis and Little Rock during Mr. Krushchev's visit, and a Hungarian church in New York City was hung, inside and out, with black; while readers already know (THE FREETHINKER, 16/10/59), that Cardinals Spellman and Cushing, and Bishop John Wright openly attacked the Russian leader. "Saboteurs now arrive in our shores in jet airliners rather than in rubber boats," said the first-named in a lecture to the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in Connecticut, "some saboteurs are greeted with honours and civic receptions although their briefcases may bulge with propaganda more lethal than explosives. In the last analysis it will be the faith of America which shall determine the fate of America" continued Cardinal Spellman: "either the faith of the Communists or the faith of our fathers." He did not, presumably, mean the Pilgrim Fathers!

I do not deny the tragedy of Hungary, and the killing of thousands by the Russian troops; but their conduct was not entirely without precedent. The Roman Catholic Church, which so thoughtfully provided the "mourning Mass," has in its time, murdered, burned at the stake and imprisoned more victims than has Russia. That Church claims to know the will of God and to be acting in accordance with it. It even pretends to preach love and peace. Yet its victims were people who did not accept the views sponsored by Rome: they were not generally guilty of any other crime.

The world should go into mourning for these killings throughout the ages — deep mourning. And the ringing of the church bells should be a reminder to us all of the crimes that have been committed by the Roman Church.

As for freedom: you will be pleased to know that Mrs. Jean Kerr McCarthy was one of the speakers at a rally in Carnegie Hall, New York, who protested against Mr. Krushchev's visit. Mrs. McCarthy, if you haven't yet guessed, is the widow of Senator Joseph McCarthy, whose services to the cause of freedom are well known.

N. E. S. WEST (U.S.A.)

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## CORRESPONDENCE

## NATURALISATION AND THE N.S.S.

Re. the note appended to my letter in No. 43 on the National Secular Society.

Lawyers rarely pronounce a legal opinion unless it be specifically demanded, when they can claim a fee. I know of one case, and surmise there are others. Since all such pronouncements are based on the same data, a substantial agreement among the legal fraternity is almost certain. But do we Freethinkers need to be told by *anybody* that it is dishonourable to campaign against an institution after swearing allegiance to it?

W. E. HUXLEY.

[Mr. Huxley asked: "Is Mr. Bennett aware that lawyers warn naturalised Britishers that membership is incompatible with their oath of allegiance?" This was certainly misleading and probably untrue. He knows of one case where a lawyer gave an opinion on the matter when consulted; that is all. "Substantial agreement" cannot be inferred from that.—Ed.]

## ETHICAL POSITIVISM

Mr. W. E. Huxley describes me and my kind as "pseudo-secularists"; but, as I think I have pointed out before, he treats this word secularist as a synonym for atheist. It isn't. If he cares to read my article "The Work of Secularism Today" (THE FREETHINKER, 2/5/58) again, I think he will see there is a world of difference between the ethical positivism I uphold and the atheist negativism for which he apparently stands. But lest there be doubt in the matter, let me assure Mr. Huxley that I have no more belief in God than he has.

He counsels the N.S.S. to "disavow all politics." If he means party politics, I could not agree with him more. But if (as I think) he does not, then to me his proposition has an air of cloistered unrealism about it. It is in a sense as difficult mentally to divorce the affairs of life from the fact of politics as it is mentally to separate a beautiful woman from the fact of sex. Roman Catholic monks probably still attempt the latter separation. Are we to take it that our monk of atheism, Mr. Huxley, attempts the former?

Two more points. First, the fact that — among other things — "British monarchs no longer rule" makes the whole monarchist institution contemptible to me. I am and always have been a utilitarian in these things! Second, in my view, apathy to religion cannot be turned into "strong antipathy." Indifferentists are not heretics. The never have been, and I cannot imagine them in that role.

G. I. BENNETT.

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

I would like to comment on Mr. Huxley's suggestion that "We (i.e., atheists who are not members of the N.S.S.) are kept outside by politicians like Mr. Bennett."

I am an atheist who has not seen fit to join the N.S.S. but it is not the work of men like Mr. Bennett. What I object to is the inclusion of the word "National" in the name "National Secular Society." If the society were to be called simply "The Secular Society," I would join it without hesitation — and of course it is my wish for a secular world government (or at least a world government which is not specifically tied to any particular creed or belief in a god or God) which has determined by action here.

So far as Mr. Huxley's allegation, of "politics" being the cause of the smallness of the movement is concerned, may I just say this. In my view, we cannot possibly adopt any fundamental change of attitude to life in general without this change issuing in the form of political proposals and aims.

For instance, I would say that it is inevitable that anyone who really believes in the democratic principle, which is based in turn on respect for the individual person who can be regarded as "a responsible person," must reject the principle of monarchical succession. It is simply fantastic to try to reconcile support for the monarchy with support for democracy. They are irreconcilable principles. But if Mr. Huxley tells us if he actually supports monarchy and democracy simultaneously I would be obliged if he will tell me how he does it.

On the bigger question of reorientating the minds of the people of the world towards a free democratic world community, I cannot see any alternative to making our stand quite definitely a supra-national one (even if it does give British-minded lawyers a real excuse for telling naturalised Britishers that membership of our movement is "incompatible with their oath of allegiance"). After all, as Jung said in his TV broadcast recently: "The main danger to the human race is human beings" (or words to that effect). I would have qualified this by adding that it is especially the local nationalistic outlook of the majority of the human race which constitutes the chief danger to us all. It is *only National Groups* which can make an atomic war. No other group has the powers and resources required for it. This is why I think the proper basis for true progress in making a world community must

insist upon the rejection of national allegiances of all kinds and of symbols like monarchs and flags such as inspire local nationalists all over the world.

The positive basis from which this rejection derives is undoubtedly the aim of making a world organised so that every individual will have the legal right to think freely and to combine politically for particular conceptions of the highest good of the human race.

E. G. MACFARLANE.

(Organising Secretary, The World Parliament Party.)

## THE MONARCHY

Mr. Huxley confuses the monarchy with the lady monarch, who we agree, it would be "ungallant" to attack. But it is a weak argument that, because the monarch does not rule, the monarchy should be ignored. The same might be said of the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. They are both subject to Parliament.

Being a small minority does not make the N.S.S. of no account. Religions, of course, are old, well established, yet they are losing ground. We may be a minority of mostly elderly people, but where is there a more active minority?

JACQUES LEROI.

A better system for choosing the monarch would be to leave the appointment to Parliament, who could choose the king or queen much as they do now the Speaker of the House of Commons. The flummery and ecclesiastical rigmarole which is gone through whenever a change takes place in the monarchy is quite unnecessary.

How is the National Secular Society affected by all this? Our Society advocates the abolition of all hereditary and racial distinctions and privileges, and we should, therefore, support the principle of the open and public appointment of our unpolitical and neutral monarch whenever a vacancy occurs.

ALFRED D. CORRICK.

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