

# The Freethinker

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ON CHRISTMAS DAY, 800 AD, the Pope crowned Charlemagne (Charles the Great), King of the Franks as Roman Emperor. For an almost exact millennium thereafter (800-1806), "The Holy Roman Empire of the German People" as it later came to be called, remained always in theory (if not anyways in practice), the leading European power, the official leader of Europe and the armed protector of the Papacy, the leader and protector of the medieval Christian Commonwealth. In the modern age of strong national states, the Holy Empire declined into a state of senility which eventually provoked Voltaire's celebrated *bon mot*, "The Holy Roman Empire is neither

Holy, Roman, nor an Empire". Otherwise, added the great satirist, the description is completely accurate! In 1806 another, more authentically Roman Emperor, to wit, Napoleon Bonaparte, abolished the by now, decrepit institution, probably with the ultimate intention of substituting his own more up-to-date French Empire as its permanent successor. However, things did not work out that way, and since 1806, Europe has known no "Universal", "Holy", or "Roman" Empire.

## The Vatican and the Common Market

Under the above heading, I recently sought to draw the attention of readers of this paper to the political and religious implications of the current Common Market to which (or so it would presently appear) several more European lands, including this one, will affiliate. Despite an almost complete newspaper boycott of this (surely important?) aspect of the subject, there does not seem to be much room for doubt that the Vatican is, in both its religious and its political aspects, solidly behind the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic "Market". In which precise connection, my previous statement that five of the present Common Market countries (i.e. West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and Luxemburg) were predominantly Roman Catholic, whilst the sixth, Holland, was about evenly balanced between Protestants and Catholics, drew a disclaimer from a Dutch reader that political Catholicism was predominant in the Dutch political scene also. Assuming that the man-on-the-spot is correct, this would imply that our traditionally nationalist and Protestant Tory regime is about to link up with six Catholic lands: in brief, that Britain is shortly to be enrolled in a Roman Catholic "United States of Western Europe".

## The Medieval and the Modern

Nothing comparable to this has been known in European history since the demise of the Holy Roman Empire. In political form, the modern economically-based Common Market is very different from the medieval Holy Empire, but is it really so very different in essential content? Particularly since in the political field the traditional clerical strategy of the Vatican excels in devious turning movements—if we may here adopt a convenient military metaphor.

The official designation of the medieval Roman Empire was the "Holy Roman Empire of the *German People*" (my italics): i.e. it was under such successive German Dynasties as the Hohenstaufens and the Hapsburgs that the medieval Empire exercised its (theologically) unique jurisdiction. The traditional seven Electors of the Empire, whom the medieval "Golden Bull" which constituted them as such, precisely compared with the seven candlesticks in the Apocalypse (a comparison quite certainly unforseen by the virulently anti-Roman author of Revelation) were all German princes. When viewed from a political perspective, the "Holy" Empire was a synonym for a German

hegemony over Europe—one sometimes actually achieved by the great German Kaisers of the Middle Ages. Political formulations, change along with the centuries! However, the present-day Common Market also represents a European polity largely dominated by Germany; and at that, by the predominantly Catholic-led Germany of Dr. Adenauer, which during the past twelve years, has translated the wilderness of rubble left by the Hitler regime, into "the land of the economic miracle"; into the richest and most powerful land in Europe; the undisputed leader of the Common Market.

## The Vatican's European Strategy

It is on record that, at the turn of the century, the aged Pope Leo XIII, the Machiavellian brain behind the modern Papacy, assured the Kaiser, William II, in the course of an interview at the Vatican, that they in Rome were hoping and praying for the eventual restoration of the Holy Roman Empire, the former Temporal Power behind its original creator, the Papacy. To which the (Protestant) Kaiser replied that this aspiration hardly seemed to be practical politics in the 20th century. As far as the forms of political strategy—including that of Europe's most experienced practitioner, the Vatican—are concerned, the Kaiser's objection was no doubt apt and accurate. The days of Kaisers, Electors, and the like are, however, over. But the fundamental aim of Vatican strategy remains constant and identical: the totalitarian domination of Europe and (eventually) of the world. The successive methods adopted at different times and in different lands, for the attainment of Rome's undeviating purpose, have changed in the past, and will, no doubt change again and again in the future. But the underlying purpose itself remains constant. Whether by the military agency of Hitler's predecessors, the medieval Teutonic Knights, or by the political agency of Dr. Konrad Adenauer and of his modern Party of Christian Democrats (which remains the largest party though it lost its absolute majority at the recent elections), the Vatican pushes through its elemental strategy in both medieval and modern times. Pope Leo crowned Charlemagne; Pope John blesses the Common Market.

Many years ago, I recall hearing a pious old Catholic lady declaring that the conversion of England (i.e. to the

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

## The Common Market and The Holy Roman Empire

By F. A. RIDLEY

"One True Church" of course!), would be the greatest miracle since the conversion of St. Paul! Much water has flowed under the bridges of both the Tiber and the Thames since that now far-off day, but if in the meanwhile, "the greatest miracle", etc., has not yet transpired, it is certainly appreciably nearer now that it was then. Since the early years of this century, Vatican influence in both the religious and political spheres has markedly increased in Britain. The proximate accession of a still predominantly Protestant Britain to the overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Common Market, cannot

fail to increase sharply this current Catholic trend, and probably not only in the current political sphere. Catholic and Common Market Germany is already dubbed in economic circles as "the land of the economic miracle". Will an also Catholic, as well as Common Market Britain soon be known as "the land of the greatest miracle since the conversion of St. Paul"? In, say, 2061 after a century of effective participation in the new Vatican Empire, will Britain still be a Protestant land? It seems to be at present a moot point. There is a growing volume of evidence that indicates a negative reply to this leading question.

## The Enigma of Thomas Henry Huxley

By WILLIAM KENT

I WAS MOST INTERESTED in Mr. Colin McCall's admirable article "Sir Julian Huxley and Religion" (22/9/61). It might have been entitled "A Chip of his Grandfather's Block". Let me explain. I will do so by quoting my autobiography, *The Testament of a Victorian Youth* (1938).

In 1902 the R.P.A. commenced to publish their cheap reprints, perhaps the greatest literary boons and blessings to men ever produced. I bought—for 4½d.—Huxley's *Essays*. I think I know why. I had heard a story—probably quite apocryphal—that at a public dinner he had sat next to Mr. Caine [W. S. Caine, MP, the lay pastor of our mission hall], and said he would give his right arm if he could believe as he did. On the night of September 11th, 1902, I sat up reading it. I have two records of the experience, my diary and my review of the book. The first reads: "Read Huxley's *Agnosticism*. Strange experience. Feel paralysed with fear. Great spiritual burglary. Arguments to me unanswerable. Feel upset—faithless". In fact—between 12 and 1—I suddenly shut the book, ran trembling into my bedroom, undressed with a rush, and pulled the clothes over my eyes. It was as though, in my mind, had come some conception of the funeral of God, such as Thomas Hardy envisaged in his poem.

Whence came it we were tempted to create one whom we can no longer keep alive? My review opens: "To think of this book even now makes me shudder inwardly, for it produced on me a great impression" . . . I had suffered the experience of many other youths, one aptly described by George Dawson of Birmingham, a popular preacher and lecturer of sixty years ago: "I untied the parcel of my faith to examine the contents, and I was never able to do it up with the same piece of string".

The story I said (in 1938) was "probably quite apocryphal", I now think was true. I will give my reasons.

In 1860 Huxley lost his three-year-old son, Noel. In a fine and famous letter to Charles Kingsley, he made some scathing remarks about the words of the burial service read by a clergyman over his son's coffin. Why was a parson present? Probably at that date there was no set secular service such as is available now, but surely Huxley could have compiled one or asked a friend to do so.

In 1870 there was another sop for religion. On becoming a member of the first London School Board, Huxley defended Bible teaching in elementary schools. He went to some length in giving his reasons. According to J. Allanson Picton, in his later years he regretted this step, which had put a weapon into the hands of Bibliolaters.

In 1932 when I was writing my little book *London for Heretics*, I made a visit to Marylebone Cemetery, Finchley, where (in 1895) Huxley was buried. I was surprised by the epitaph:

Be not afraid, ye waiting hearts that weep,  
For "God still giveth his beloved sleep",  
And if an endless sleep He wills so best.

So in death the great Agnostic figures as a theist! The lines are from a poem by his wife who survived him nineteen years. They were written in 1889 and applied to Browning's funeral. There is no doubt that Mr. and Mrs.

Huxley were a happy couple. Huxley wrote (in 1887):

"Dear wife, for more than thirty years have you and I hand clasped in hand"; whilst Mrs. Huxley wrote a poem "To my Husband" which starts "Dearest and best!" This does not preclude the possibility that she did not share her husband's agnosticism. It is remarkable that *The Times* in a leading article and a long obituary notice did not mention the word "Agnostic" or "Agnosticism", yet it is certain that to the average reader that was what Huxley stood for. It is equally remarkable that Huxley's son, Leonard, in his admirable *Life and Letters*, made a bare reference to his father's death and no mention of his funeral. The explanation is perhaps that he was diffident about disclosing the fact that there was an orthodox service. *The Times* said "The service in the chapel and at the grave was read by the Rev. John Llewelyn Davies, now Rector of Kirkby Lonsdale, an old friend, and during his tenure of the living of Christ Church, Marylebone, long the neighbour of Mr. Huxley". Probably the same Anglican burial service that aroused Huxley's wrath in 1860! Yet in 1880 Huxley refused to support Herbert Spencer in pressing the Dean of Westminster to give George Eliot burial in Westminster Abbey. He wrote: "One cannot eat one's cake and have it too. Those who elect to be free in thought and deed must not hanker after the rewards, if they are to be so called, which the world offers to those who put up with its fetters. How am I to tell the Dean that I think he ought to read over the body of a person who did not repent of what the Church considers mortal sin, a *service not one solitary proposition in which she would have accepted for truth while she was alive?*" (The italics are mine.) That same service must have been read over Huxley's grave! No doubt this was done with the acquiescence of Mrs. Huxley, but would this have been unless she had assured herself that her husband would have desired a religious service? This also applies to the epitaph.

I still admire Thomas Henry Huxley, but I regret that he should appear (like his grandson) something like Mr. Facing Both Ways. Both perhaps belong to the "reverent rationalists" who my old friend Cutner is so fond of aspersing. These people seem to ache for the adjective "religious" to be applied to them. Some of us disdain the title, agreeing with Colin McCall that religions have been a social handicap for many centuries now.

NEXT WEEK

A LETTER TO ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS

By EMMETT McLOUGHLIN (Ex-Franciscan)

# John Osborne's "Luther"

By COLIN McCALL

JOHN OSBORNE'S latest play, *Luther*, is attracting large crowds at the Phoenix Theatre, London, having previously done so at the Royal Court Theatre, and in Nottingham, Paris, Edinburgh, and elsewhere. I saw it in Edinburgh, during the Festival, having previously read it, and I consider it to be probably the finest play written in English during the last decade. Those who can see it should definitely do so: it is a stirring theatrical experience, and the staging and acting are impressive. Albert Finney deserves all the praise that has been lavished upon him: he gives a superb performance as the tormented Luther; but he is splendidly supported by Bill Owen, as his father, Peter Bull as Tetzal, salesman of indulgences, and indeed the whole cast. And a special word might be said for that fine veteran actor, Carleton Hobbs, as Staupitz, the Vicar General.

But there are many who will be unable to see *Luther*. For them, there is the printed version recently published by Faber and Faber, London (10s. 6d.), which makes far better reading than do most plays. The comparison that comes to mind is with Brecht's *Galileo*. Like *Galileo*, *Luther* is the study of a great man who might have been greater than he was. Like Brecht's *Galileo*, *Luther* represents the hopes of the future. Like *Galileo*, he betrays those hopes. And it is a tribute to Osborne's powerful writing that his play stands up to the comparison. Indeed, perhaps the only fault with *Luther* is that it contains one scene too many. Good arguments can be put for retaining Act 3, Scene 3, but I think better ones can be put against it. Let me make it clear, though, that it is no way boring.

In a note at the beginning of the play, Mr. Osborne tells us that: "At the opening of each act, the Knight appears. He grasps a banner and briefly barks the time and place of the scene following at the audience, and then retires". This is important. Not only does it put everything on the stage, making it unnecessary to look at the programme; it provides the basis for a brilliant dramatic effect. For, in Act 3, Scene 2, the Knight, formerly mere introducer of scenes, comes shattering into the play. He recalls Worms:

I tell you, you can't have ever known the kind of thrill that monk set off amongst that collection of all kinds of men gathered together there—those few years ago. We all felt it, every one of us, just without any exception, you couldn't help it, even if you didn't want to, and, believe me, most of those people didn't want to . . . I just felt quite sure, quite certain in my own mind nothing could ever be the same again . . . Nothing, indeed, could ever be the same again. But:

Anyway, it never worked out. Not the way the people ("those damned peasants", as Luther calls them later) expected anyway. Luther was their hope: he had defied the power of the Papacy; he would surely support them against the princes. But it didn't work out that way. "Did it, my friend?" the Knight asks a peasant's corpse. Luther supported the princes because:

There's no such thing as an orderly revolution. Anyway, Christians are called to suffer, not fight.

And:

When I see chaos, then I see the devil's organ and then I'm afraid . . . Luther's wedding follows, and the Knight smashes his banner and throws the pieces on the altar. Here, I suggest, is the logical end of the play, though it might be a little unfair to Luther. Instead, Mr. Osborne gives us a

glimpse of Luther in middle age. Never mind, it is all good, Luther, in a discussion with Staupitz, further defending his attitude to the peasants:

Father, the world can't be ruled with a rosary. They were a mob, a mob, and if they hadn't been held down and slaughtered, there'd have been a thousand more tyrants instead of half a dozen. It was a mob, and because it was a mob it was against Christ . . .

That, however, is the last scene. The contrast between Luther and his fellow monks is made in the first scene; between the absurd triviality of their confessions ("I confess I did leave my cell for the Night Office without the Scapular . . ."; "I confess I have three times made mistakes in the Oratory, in psalm singing and Antiphon"; "I did omit to have a candle ready at the Mass", etc.) and the typical soul-searching of Brother Martin, as he then is.

Passionate, mystical, tortured with constipation and theological problems, Luther is a magnificently convincing portrait; a fanatic, capable of changing the course of history. And Mr. Osborne has gone to the facts, even though he distorts them at times for (legitimate) dramatic effect. Luther was coarse, and Mr. Osborne doesn't flinch at making him so. He presents, too, the contrast with the refined Erasmus. The latter doesn't appear in the play, but he is referred to several times.

People like Erasmus get upset because I talk of pigs and Christ in the same breath, says Luther.

Well, you might be right. Erasmus is a fine scholar, but there are too many scholars who think they're better simply because they insinuate in Latin what you'll say in plain German . . . comments the devoted Staupitz.

There is no doubt in my mind that Erasmus was the finer man of the two (there was nothing of the persecutor, because nothing of the fanatic in him, as there was in Luther) but there is point in Staupitz's remarks. As G. W. Foote summed it up:

It required no great intellectual power to see through the tricks of Papal priestcraft, which had, indeed, been the jest of the educated and thoughtful for generations. But it required gigantic courage to become the spokesman of discontent, to attack an imposture which was supported by universal popular credulity, by a well-nigh omnipotent Church, and by the keen-edged, merciless swords of kings and emperors. Still more, it required an indisputable elevation of nature to attack the imposture where, as in the sale of indulgences, it threatened the very essence of personal and social morality.

Indulgences, both when Tetzal hawks them in the market place (a glorious scene this!) and when Luther scoffs at them, provide plenty of amusement, and it is hard to see how Mr. Osborne's version of the sermon against relics could be bettered. I hesitate to select a passage from it, but can't resist:

The deacons will have to link hands to hold you back while you struggle to gawp at four hairs from Our Lady's head, at the pieces of her girdle and her veil stained with her Son's blood. You'll sleep outside with the garbage in the streets all night so that you can stuff your eyes like roasting birds on a scrap of swaddling clothes, eleven pieces from the original crib, one whisp of straw from the manger and a gold piece specially minted by three wise men for the occasion. Your emptiness will be frothing over at the sight of a strand of Jesus' beard, at one of the nails driven into His hands, and at the remains of the loaf at the Last Supper. Shells for shells, empty

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

The Archbishop of Wales called alcohol a "Gift" from God" much to the complete and disgruntled disgust of all good Christians, especially Dr. Donald Soper. He angrily said that he "hated" the drink trade, thus throwing overboard the beautiful teaching of the Bible—"Love thy neighbour as yourself". The "drink trade" continued Dr. Soper, "is unscrupulous capitalist"—though he knows it is actively supported by both the "working classes" and the "boss class" alike. But Dr. Soper forgets his Bible. There, in the clearest story about Jesus, we are told that "our blessed Lord" changed water into wine at a wedding feast, and took good care it was the best—that is, with the most alcohol content—wine, in spite of the fact that the guests were "well drunk" at the time. Christian temperance leaders just hate this story.

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In the same way, Christian vegetarians hate the story of the "offerings" of Cain and Abel and the Lord. It was Cain who brought "the fruit of the ground", and it was contemptuously rejected. On the other hand, Abel offered "the firstlings of the flock", that is, some dear little innocent lambs and "the fat thereof" (by which is meant *cooking* them) and the Lord "had respect unto Abel and to his offering". This made the vegetarian Cain so jealous that he killed his brother. Christian vegetarians have never managed to sort out that story either.

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In this modern age, even Roman Catholics sometimes show a little independent thinking, though they are often suppressed, or make their "submission" later. The *Sunday Express* (September 3rd) gave particulars of two historians, father and daughter, both staunch Roman Catholics, Mr. E. L. Watkin and Mrs. Goffin, who challenged the Roman Catholic Bishop of Southwark, the Rt. Rev. C. Cowdery on the "authenticity" of "a collection of saints' relics" in St. Augustine's Church at Tunbridge Wells. They denounced the relics as "pious frauds". Perhaps these historians have been reading Calvin on the enormous number of pious frauds in his day—or they have discovered it for themselves.

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Needless to say, however, the Bishop wasn't having any. He and the parish priest, Fr. J. Stephenson, refused to consider Mrs. Goffin's plea that "their presence in the church casts doubt on the integrity of the priests there and the entire Church which commissioned them". And she added, "The relics are just too good to be true". There are 72 of them, "bodily remains of the 12 Apostles, parts of Paul's staff and Andrew's cross, the banner of St. George", and so on and on; and in rejecting them, Mr. Watkin and Mrs. Goffin are doing so in peril of their immortal souls. Both Fr. Stephenson and Bishop Cowdery are adamant on the absolute authenticity of the relics. Will the two "heretics" later humbly submit? The Church has nearly always won against Roman Catholic "unbelievers".

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Although all Christians boast that everybody is "one with Christ", what is called "discrimination" operates in Christian quarters here in England almost as fiercely as it does in South Africa. Only ten per cent Jews are admitted (according to the London *Evening Standard*, September 21st) to Highgate School, and the quota of "boys not of the Christian Faith" has been filled until 1970. And it is interesting to note that "not of the

Christian Faith" does not apply to the children of Atheists—so long as "the children attend the religious services and instruction". But what about the children of "Jewish" Atheists? Would they be admitted?

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The truth is that "all are one in Christ" is just a piece of typical Christian hypocrisy. And while "discrimination" goes on in this blatant way it tells heavily against Christian denunciation of Apartheid.

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The Rev. P. Bennett of St. Oswald's Church, Coventry, appears to be very angry that so many people, including non-practising Christians, are unable "to understand" the new Cathedral which will soon have its "consecration". It is of course of a revolutionary design, though Mr. Bennett claims this is not really due to the architect, Sir Basil Spence. In his view, "it was God, not a committee who had carried through the rebuilding scheme", and it was God "who gave strength to the workers" who built it. In fact, it was built "to the glory of God". And he warned people "that the Devil would try to use the Cathedral and the Chapel of Unity as a source of division and strife". Mr. Bennett seems to have been preaching in the year 61 AD not 1961 AD.

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The latest "proof" of the Resurrection was given by ITV's "About Religion" on October 1st, when a "Coroner" and "Jury" heard the evidence that Jesus was put to death, his tomb sealed, and later was found completely empty. Everybody was in modern dress, and the whole proceedings took place at it would do in a coroner's court today. If Jesus had really been put to death as the evidence showed, and his body disappeared, does this not prove he had "risen"? Of course. Q.E.D.—the story of the Resurrection *must* be true. This is the 8973rd time the story of the Risen Jesus has been "proven" on TV and yet there are obstinate fools who don't believe it! What can we do with them?

### JOHN OSBORNE'S "LUTHER"

(Concluded from page 323)

things for empty men . . .

Who'll speak out in rough German?

Brilliant, too, is the vulgar denunciation of the Pope by Luther, which has been preceded by a glimpse of the hunting Pope, and which ends in invocation and prayer. In the debate with Eck, on the other hand, we have Luther at his most moderate, though still unyielding:

Unless I am shown by the testimony of the Scriptures—for I don't believe in popes or councils—and ending with the famous:

Here I stand . . .

Mr. Osborne, then, has succeeded in adapting a great historical figure and "turning the accomplishment of many years", if not into an hour-glass, at least into a three hour-glass. His *Luther* is a momentous play about momentous times.

### WITHOUT COMMENT

Badminton has been played on Monday evenings in Trinity Church Hall, Exeter, for the past 12 years but, because bingo players in the room below have complained that they cannot hear the numbers being called, the badminton players have been given notice to quit.

The hall committee secretary has said that bingo is helping to raise £3,000 needed to renew the church heating system. The church received more from bingo than from letting the hall.

—The Guardian, 5/10/61.

# THE FREETHINKER

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Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Members and visitors are welcome during normal office hours. Inquiries regarding Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

- Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.
- London Branches (Marble Arch), Sundays, 12 noon: MESSRS. F. A. RIDLEY, D. H. TRIBE, C. H. CLEAVER and G. F. BOND.
- Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. P. MURACCIOLE and H. A. TIMMINS
- Tower Hill. Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S.. Thursday lunchtimes, THE FREETHINKER on sale, Piccadilly, near Queen Victoria Statue. (Platt Fields), Sundays, 3 p.m.: Messrs. G. H. MILLS and G. A. WOODCOCK.
- Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) — Every Sunday, noon: Messrs. L. EBURY and A. ARTHUR.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square, Nottingham).—Every Friday, 1 p.m., Every Sunday, 6.30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

### INDOOR

- Conway Discussions (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Tuesday, October 17th, 7.30 p.m.: NORMAN R. SMITH, B.Sc., "Moral Problems in a Space-Travel Age".
- Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate), Sunday, October 15th, 6.30 p.m.: RAY SEATON (*Leicester Evening Mail*), "The American Negro".
- Marble Arch Branch N.S.S. (Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1), Sunday, October 15th, 7.15 p.m.: F. A. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT, "The Power of Consistory Courts".
- North Staffordshire Humanist Group (The Guildhall, High Street, Newcastle-under-Lyme), Friday, October 13th, 7.15 p.m.: A Meeting.
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Co-operative Education Centre, Broad Street), Sunday, October 15th, 2.30 p.m.: R. E. BROOKS (*London Estate Agent*), "Stately Homes".
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1), Sunday, October 15th, 11 a.m.: D. G. MACRAE, M.A., "Culture and a Mass Society".

## Notes and News

THE UNVEILING of the London County Council plaque at 29 Turner Street, Stepney, E.1, to commemorate Charles Bradlaugh's residence there, will take place on Wednesday, November 8th (not October 13th, as originally announced) at 3 o'clock, and will be followed by a Humanist Council reception in the Members' Dining Room of the House of Commons at 4 p.m., by courtesy of Mr. R. T. Paget, present Member for Bradlaugh's constituency, Northampton. Mr. Anthony Wedgwood Benn, who has compared his own struggle with that of Bradlaugh, will unveil the plaque. A limited number of tickets at 5s. each are available from the Secretary, National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

"RED FRIDAY—then Tanks Came", was the title of an article in the series about Glasgow by William Lawson (*Reynolds News*, 24/9/61), and an illustration showed a number of socialists who were arrested at the time. Among

them were Emmanuel Shinwell and William Gallagher, who were imprisoned for inciting to riot. Davie Kirkwood, who was found not guilty, and George Ebury, who was released. The last named, a noted propagandist in the cause of socialism, was the father of the National Secular Society's Vice-President and foremost outdoor propagandist today, Len Ebury.

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A GRANADA REPORT on children's television viewing states (*The Times Educational Supplement*, 22/9/61) that on Sundays: "The child audience declines sharply from 6 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. during religious programmes but rises again for the main programmes from 7.30 p.m. to 9 p.m."

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THE MARBLE ARCH BRANCH of the National Secular Society will start its indoor lecture syllabus at the Carpenters' Arms, Seymour Place, London, W.1, this Sunday, when ex-Church of England clergyman, F. H. Amphlett Micklewright, will speak on "The Power of Consistory Courts". Professor H. Levy (on "The Conquest of Space"), NSS President F. A. Ridley and Vice-President L. Ebury are among the other speakers in what seems a most interesting and varied pre-Christmas programme. Further details may be obtained from the Marble Arch Branch Secretary, W. J. McIlroy, 140a Hornsey Lane, London, N.6.

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MENTION OF Consistory Courts reminds us that the Bishop of Southwark has been in the news again. This time Dr. Mervyn Stockwood has condemned a Masonic service as "heretical" and has said that Freemasons, instead of worshipping God, were "praying to 'The Great Architect'." They were "ignoring the great Christian truth of salvation through Christ alone" (*The People*, 1/10/61). Dr. Stockwood even went so far as to say that he couldn't understand how a Christian could reconcile membership of the Church with membership of a "secret society" (*Daily Express*, 2/10/61), and this provoked a reply from the Bishop of Carlisle, who has been a Mason for 30 years. What response would it have provoked had another Mason, Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, still been Archbishop of Canterbury?

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IN RESPONSE to many requests the Pioneer Press is reprinting Mr. Adrian Pigott's recent series of articles on Catholic Action in the form of a pamphlet. Readers will be informed when this is ready. Incidentally, plans are in hand for issuing translations of Mr. Pigott's *Freedom's Foe: The Vatican* in Ceylon in both the Sinhalese and Tamil languages.

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OUR ANARCHIST FRIENDS are this year celebrating the 75th anniversary of the founding, by Kropotkin, of Freedom Press. But, as they put it, "instead of holding a memorial meeting to the illustrious past, we are throwing a Ball to enjoy the present". Those who would like to attend "An Anarchistic Ball" should make a note of the date, Friday, October 20th, at 7.30 p.m.; the place, Fulham Town Hall; and the price, six shillings.

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85 PER CENT of Burma's 20 million people are Buddhist, and the recent constitutional amendment making Buddhism the state religion was the fulfilment of an election pledge by the Prime Minister, U. Nu, who three years ago took the vows of a Buddhist monk. "All non-Buddhists are guaranteed religious and political protection", said *Time* (15/9/61), "but Buddhism will be taught in state schools and teacher-training colleges". And the Buddhist monks are still not satisfied according to an *Observer* report (8/10/61).

# A Notable Pamphlet

By H. CUTNER

THE RECENT LUCID and admirable articles on philosophy by Dr. H. G. Farmer in these columns sent me to my collection of Freethought pamphlets to see if I still had his *Heresy in Art*, published as far back as 1918 by the Pioneer Press; and reading it again, I am sorry that it was ever allowed to get out of print.

Dr. Farmer took a number of our greatest artists and musicians and showed, with a wealth of detail from standard authorities, how many of them, though always lauded as "religious", were in point of fact heretics, even when it can be shown that much of their work is "religious"—that is, even when it dealt with religious themes.

Of course, most students of art—I do not mean actual working artists but critics and writers—must have known that many so-called religious painters were ready to accept almost any commission, religious or secular. Tackling the subject, whatever it was, to the best of his ability was the goal; and even money, however necessary it was to live, was often a secondary consideration. Thus, in the days when the Church could commission an artist to paint a reverent altar piece, there were always noblemen who preferred something a little more exciting; and most artists were just as ready to paint Jupiter and Leda as Mary and Jesus.

In any case, Dr. Farmer's list of heretical artists and composers is astonishing. Only the other day we had a TV account of St. Francis of Assisi with the famous paintings of Giotto reproduced; and naturally we were told of the artist's "reverent" approach to the devout saint. Yet Dr. Farmer has little difficulty in showing that Giotto "was by no means a faithful believer", quoting the art historian Muther. But, "the first artist of whom we have precise evidence that he was a Freethinker is Perugino (1446-1524)". On this, we have the testimony of Vasari (almost a contemporary) in his *Lives of the Painters*, the rich storehouse of the art of his time.

Some of Botticelli's favourite subjects were taken from mythology, and Dr. Farmer notes that "he narrowly escaped the stake".

Then there was Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), one of the world's greatest men, yet "a pronounced Freethinker". Dr. Farmer says *The Last Supper*,

perhaps the most famous picture in all the world reveals the significance of his art. What an immeasurable distance separates him from his predecessors who treated the subject! Here, no dumb, meaningless physiognomics are grouped around Christ, but real transcripts of humankind. Every face, figure, and attitude bespeaks an individual as much so as Christ. Vasari says of Leonardo that "he had taken up such heretical notions that he really belonged to no religion . . . that he laid more store by his quality as a philosopher than as a Christian".

But what about Michelangelo? Dr. Farmer here quotes Lecky—"scarcely any other great painter so completely eliminated the religious sentiment from art . . . by making the *Last Judgment* a study of naked figures, and by introducing into it Charon and his boat, he most effectually destroyed all sense of its reality".

As for that master of superb colour, Titian, it seems that he was as ready to paint Venus as to paint Mary; and Ruskin's sharp eye recognised "there is no religion in any work of Titian's"; while Tintoretto's *Last Judgment* has, says Vasari, "all the appearance of being painted in jest". Another critic thinks the subject degraded into "a scene of vulgar carousal". It is hard to believe that any sincerely religious man could paint in such a way.

Even that consummate artist, Paul Veronese, introduced into his great masterpiece, *The Marriage at Cana*, the Sultan of Turkey, "Bloody Mary" of England, the King of France, his artist friends, and himself "at a Venetian banquet".

Dr. Farmer adds Carravaggio, Salvator Rosa, Albrecht Durer, and of course Rubens to his list of heretics. Rubens's art in particular was "thoroughly pagan" and there was no room for "spirituality" in any of it.

Coming to some of the great Dutch artists, Jordaens, Teniers the Younger, Jan Steen (and there may well have been others), Dr. Farmer shows how they definitely had no religion. His quotations from eminent art critics in confirmation would astonish readers who have never read their damning admissions. And so with artists like the Frenchmen, J. L. David, Courbet, Delacroix, to say nothing of a genius like Daumier—they were all, in spite of their Catholic upbringing, unbelievers.

What about English artists? It is often the fashion in art criticism to deprecate English art, and I am sure that nobody, even now, would pay huge sums to own a Hogarth. I expect it is rank heresy to say so, but Hogarth is to my mind a far more considerable artist than Cezanne no matter what critics say; anyway, Hogarth was "certainly a Freethinker", says Dr. Farmer; Blake "was poles asunder from orthodoxy"; while Turner was, according to Hammerton, "a complete sceptic in religion". So were G. F. Watts, Ford Maddox Brown, Burne-Jones, and William Morris. Even those two great Pre-Raphaelites, Rossetti and Millais were unbelievers; and so were the two great Punch artists, Charles Keene and George Du Maurier. Even Kate Greenaway, a very great favourite among children towards the close of last century for her beautiful and unique drawings of children was a Freethinker. Dr. Farmer gives us a number more, but let us see what he has to say on some of the great composers.

On Handel, whose *Messiah* has always been "a pillar of the Church", Dr. Farmer quotes Edward Fitzgerald—Handel was "a good old Pagan at heart, till he had to yield to the fashionable piety of England". Gretry, one of the official musicians of the French Revolution, has his name in Marechal's *Dictionary of Atheists*. Beethoven was called an Atheist by Haydn, that other great composer of symphonies—though perhaps it would be safer to call him a Deist. Grove admits that "the Bible was not one of his favourite books". Schubert, according to W. H. Hadow, "appears to have possessed little or no religious beliefs". Schumann "was evidently a Freethinker"; while Hector Berlioz, "the mighty Berlioz", was certainly an Atheist. Rossini, whose *Barber of Seville* is still one of the most popular of operas, "was a sceptic in matters of religion". And Verdi? He was a complete Secularist, insisting that "priests should attend to their soul-saving business, and not meddle with secular affairs". Boito "was a candid Freethinker"; while Wagner, who was a "born rebel" was also at one period of his life, "an anti-Christian and an Atheist". Later, it is true, Wagner took up a kind of mystical Christianity but he was never "orthodox". Indeed, contends Dr. Farmer, "like Schopenhauer, Wagner never ceased to scoff at Jehovah, and to pour out his contempt upon the Churches".

Brahms "also belongs to Rationalism", so does Richard Strauss, who was a "fervent disciple of the anti-Christian Nietzsche". Dr. Farmer adds to his list Rubinstein, a

born Jew, but who was an Agnostic; "priests were a continual fund of both scorn and amusement to him". And in these days when Russian composers are so widely known, he also adds both Moussorgsky and Tchaikowsky to his list of Freethinkers. Dr. Farmer quotes Dr. Lee speaking of the *Pathetic Symphony* that it said in music, "There is no God!"

After this, it must not surprise us to learn that Grieg, Massenet, and Saint-Saens, were all also Freethinkers, as well as the Englishman, Granville Bantock, whose setting of *Omar Khayyam* "will live as one of the greatest creations in musical art". Dr. Farmer of course gives full authorities for all his statements—impossible for me to do in an article.

It is a great pity that such a valuable pamphlet was,

as I said at the beginning, allowed to go out of print. Since it was published, a new generation has grown up which knows far more about music and composers than was possible forty years ago. The radio and long playing records have revolutionised our knowledge of the work of the great masters of music, and there is no excuse—except for people without a "musical ear"—now for anybody to be ignorant of the glorious heritage they bequeathed to us.

Perhaps Dr. Farmer can be induced to extend his pamphlet to include the many newcomers into art and music since he wrote over forty years ago his illuminating and valuable exposition of the irreligion of so many great men. It is still, and would be so more, a striking contribution to Freethought.

## Two New Books on Islam

By H. GEORGE FARMER

THERE IS A FRENCH saying "Les extrêmes se touchent", and in my recent reading of two books in sequence reminds me of that observation that "extremes meet". The first of these, highly praised in the press, is *The Sword of Islam: The Story of Islam from Muhammad to the Present Time* by Robert Payne. It is but a twice told tale, although not, maybe, with Shakespeare's qualifying adjective. The author makes the drama interesting enough, but there is so much "sword" that one can only conclude that the writer had his "Bronco Bill" television public in his mind's eye. It must warm the hearts of those pious Christian souls when they read of the horrors committed by those infidel caliphs and their armies. Of course the sword being what it is, one cannot expect a bunch of lilies. It may be taken for granted that the author has a biased view of Islam, but would Robert Payne be prepared to write on *The Unholy Sword of Christianity: The Story of Christianity from Christ to the Present Time*? Would he dare retail the ruthless suppression of its opponents, including those who merely held doctrinal differences with that of Rome; the cruel persecution of the Jews; the enormities of these Crusading armies on their way through Europe to rescue Jerusalem—the Holy City—from the hands of the infidel Saracens; the wholesale murders of the Albigenses; and the ruthless treatment of the Moors and Moriscos of Spain by that vile Christian institution known as the Inquisition; to say nothing of the fines, imprisonments, tortures, burnings and hangings of thousands of those martyrs of free speech? I say quite frankly that Robert Payne would shrink from such a task because he knows that it would not pay. "Aye, There's the rub", as the Master—I mean *our* master Shakespeare—would say. It must be admitted—as the "blurb" on the cover of the book tells us—that he does stress "the amazing achievements of Arab philosophers, mathematicians and scientists" on the culture of Western Europe, so much so that the works of Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Avenpace, and others were translated by Christian clerics! Yet I suppose that for the mere mention of those benefits conferred by the infidels we ought to cry "May the Lord make us truly thankful!"

The second book on Islam is of a totally different character. This is entitled *Islam and the Integration of Society* by W. Montgomery Watt. The author—unlike the preceding writer—is a distinguished Arabic scholar, and this book is an attempt to deal with the embarrassing problem of the worldwide acceptance of Islam. It is cer-

tainly the best—so far—that has been published. It explains the rationale of Islam and the integration of society in a perfectly logical way by emphasising the social and economic factors which promoted its success. Just as Christianity owed much of its ascendancy to the adoption of the garments of decaying Rome, so was Islam forced to recognise some of the elements of paganism, even to animistic practices. True enough, the old idols were destroyed, but not the Black Stone of the Ka'bah at Mecca, and the seven-fold circumambulation. Muhammad dared not ignore the "sacred seven"—hoary with antiquity—since all nature proclaimed its sanctity. Early Islam was saturated with animistic practices which Muhammad could not set at naught, and present-day Islam—notably in West Africa—reveals that same paganism in every nook and corner.

To turn to the economic factors, so admirably sustained by Dr. Watt. We are told that "it is not possible to maintain that in every case the economic change connected with a religious change is a change in the means of production". That is almost an anti-Marxian statement. In any case the author supplies extremely weighty evidence that the rise of Islam was very closely a reflex—I do not say the outcome—of economic forces. Yet the author does emphasise the fact that the adoption of Islam—under compulsion—led to the abolition of the very powerful Zoroastrian clergy in Persia and adjoining lands, which had no counterpart in Islam. The chapter on "The Integration of Intellectual Life" is a brilliant exposition. His epilogue deserves quotation:

The material factors are fundamental, not in the sense that they determine the whole life of a society, but in the sense that they constitute the setting or framework with which the society has to live its life.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### "CATHOLIC ACTION"

I have been very interested in the series "Catholic Action—the Pope's propaganda machine". This is an eye-opener and I believe the majority of Roman Catholics, who are after all, quite decent people even if their Church is not, were to read this (and it would take some courage as well) they would leave the Church and probably tell the priest what to do with his penance.

This series, as well as other reports you print about the Roman Catholic Church are of special interest to me, as I am married to an Italian girl who was, up till quite recently, a devoted Catholic: Mass every Sunday and "days of obligation", no meat on Friday and all the other nonsense. As a matter of fact, we were married in a Roman Catholic church. However, my wife is not afraid of hearing the other point of view and after many

months of persuasion—after all it is not easy to change views held since babyhood—she is so disgusted with the Church that she does not consider herself a Catholic any more. She does believe in God and Jesus, but not as presented by the Churches. Believe it or not, she tells me that she sees more true Christianity in THE FREETHINKER than all the priests she has heard. Perhaps in time to come, she will see that such things as God and Jesus, etc., are just myths. At the moment, she is still a believer, but she is progressing in the right direction. T. R. McLACHLAN.

#### “THE AGE OF REASON”

I suffered a Church of England upbringing (7 years in the choir), then a period of army service, followed by three year's study of the Scriptures with the Christadelphians. The utter confusion, miserable heartsearching and self-recrimination of these experiences left me in considerable fear of that temperamental superman, the God of the Bible. Only this year I was loaned a copy of *The Age of Reason*. The utter logic of Thomas Paine's argument kept me up half a night, and it virtually unlocked a prison for me. D. SMITH.

#### THEATRE

##### SHAW DOUBLE-BILL AT THE MERMAID

SIR DESMOND MACCARTHY called *Androcles and the Lion* the most amusing of Bernard Shaw's religious plays. Whether Shaw really intended it for children, I can't say. There are certainly parts in it that children love, but he also claimed that it “contains matter for the most mature wisdom to ponder”. Perhaps his best description was “a religious harlequinade suitable for children of all ages”. That means for all of us.

Played as such (and very well played, despite what some critics have said) at the Mermaid Theatre, London, *Androcles* is as amusing as ever and, along with *The Shewing-Up of Blanco Posnet*, it provides a delightful evening's entertainment.

The latter, a rollicking wild west “sermon”, was at one time banned by the Lord Chamberlain as blasphemous, because of the converted horse-thief's description of God: “He's a sly one. He's a mean one. He lies low for you. He plays cat and mouse with you. He lets you run loose until you think you're shut of him; and then, when you least expect it, He's got you”. *Posnet* is first set against the sactimonious Elder Daniels who, as *Posnet* puts it, is “in the Lord's confidence”, and Shaw is not the man to miss such an opportunity for clever dialogue. Later comes the uproarious court scene, with the Sheriff declaring: “Don't you worry, you'll get justice here. It may be rough justice, but it's justice”.

There is no question, though, that *Androcles* is the better play, with its remarkable psychological studies of the would-be Christian martyrs, particularly the powerful but uncertain Ferrovius (“I know I am a fighter, but how can I be sure I am a Christian?”). “When I feel a sword in my hand”, he says, “I could as soon throw it away as the woman I love from my arms. Oh, what have I said? My God, what have I said?” The timid *Androcles* has our sympathy, but Lavinia is the most reasonable of the Christians, and she and the Roman Captain provide some of Shaw's best dialogue. The Captain fails to convince her that the “Christian fairy stories” are no truer than the ones about Jupiter and Diana, and when he asks her, “What is God?” she answers: “When we know that Captain, we shall be gods ourselves”. The one “god” we actually see, Caesar, is a minor masterpiece. And that is a fair description of the play itself. C.McC.

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#### OBITUARY

We record with regret the death of Thomas Benton of Farnworth, Lancs, who at 71, was in the autumn of life.

A widely travelled man, he was a member of the National Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association, a convinced Freethinker who by the use of reason and persuasion was a forthright exponent of “the Best of Causes”. He was a bachelor who was fond of the company of the younger generation and nephews and nieces will remember with pleasure the happy hours in his company on holidays and excursions.

To his relatives we extend our sympathy—we of the NSS mourn the passing of a soldier in the “Army of Human Liberation”.

His expressed wish for a Secular Service—“no parson, no hymns, no harps, no cross”—was duly observed at the committal service at Bolton Crematorium on September 29th.

W. COLLINS.

Eleanor Beatrice (Nellie) Hargreaves, who has died at the age of 86, had borne long years of suffering with courage and cheerfulness, fortified by her Freethinking beliefs and the devoted care of her brother-in-law and sister, Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Garley. In accordance with her wishes, a Secular service was conducted by the General Secretary of the National Secular Society at Morden Crematorium on October 4th.

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