

The Freethinker

Volume LXXXIV—No. 20

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

PUBLIC ATTENTION, not only in Germany where the actual trial is proceeding, but in the world at large, has been focussed upon the belated, but grim and spectacular war trial at Frankfurt-on-Main in the West German Federal Republic. This trial, though held 18 years later, may be ranked in due succession to the Nuremburg trials held at the end of the last war. There are however, two important differences between the 1945 trial and this one.

Firstly, the judges as well as the defendants in the dock are German; and secondly—as was aptly noted by Cassandra in the *Daily Mirror*—whereas the defendants at Nuremburg were top-ranking Nazis responsible (under Hitler) for the broad lines of policy during the Third Reich, the present defendants in this all-German court are the executives in the death camps. The crimes with which they are charged are the actual mass-murder, frequently with hideously sadistic cruelty, of several million people representing “the lesser breeds without the law” to the Nazi Aryan “chosen race”: Jews in particular, but also Poles, Gypsies, etc., besides the German political opponents of the Nazi Reich such as Communists and other radical elements.

There is also this further distinction in the present-day German Federal Republic: capital punishment has been abolished, so presumably, if the accused are found guilty, the sentences imposed will not involve the collective hangings which followed the Nuremburg trials. The principal defendant, Richard Baer, the last governor of the dreaded Polish death camp, died in prison before the beginning of the trial. Otherwise, with few exceptions, most of them now believed to be still at large in Spain or South America (e.g. Bormann, Hitler's deputy and the chief camp doctor at Auschwitz, a former theological student) the German police appear to have made a pretty comprehensive sweep of the major killers of the Gestapo who, under orders, accomplished the fearful task of collective extermination, described in Nazi diplomatic gibberish as “the total solution of the Jewish question”.

The Gestapo and The Inquisition
Disregarding the outcome of this present Frankfurt trial, enough evidence has accumulated at both the Nuremburg Trials and at the more recent Jerusalem trial of Adolf Eichmann, to signalise the war-crimes committed by the Gestapo as amongst the most frightful in recorded human history. Indeed, perhaps only the medieval massacres perpetrated by Tartar khans and Turkish sultans equalled them in the actual numbers of victims involved; whilst only the Holy Inquisition, Roman and Spanish, rivalled them in sadistic ingenuity. In which precise connection, one may comment that the horrors of the Nazi death camps were far more efficient than the discriminate holocausts of Mongolian barbarians, and acted without even the pretence of legality that characterised the written code of the Inquisition. In the historic list of crimes (and not merely of war crimes) Hitler's Aryan butchers must stand

very near the top—or bottom

A Critique of War Trials

In approaching the larger and more permanent problems that are raised by past and present war trials, it would seem to be primarily necessary to distinguish between the problem of guilt and the parallel problems of procedure and “terms of reference”. No one for example can doubt that, even ignoring for the moment the current Frankfurt

trial as still *sub judice*, the defendants at Nuremburg (Goering, Rosenberg *et al*) were thoroughly guilty and deserved the most severe sentences. If capital punishment were ever justifiable, it was so in their case.

Indeed on the question of guilt, the only permissible criticism which in my opinion at least was a valid one, was that there were far too few defendants in the Nuremburg dock, since it was common knowledge—at least in Germany itself—that whilst the best-known surviving Nazi leaders felt the full rigour of the law, many perhaps equally guilty “back room boys” who aided, abetted and actually financed the Nazi gangs, often escaped with light, or even sometimes with derisory sentences. Von Papen, who originally put Hitler into power, and Krupp and Schroeder who financed the Nazi party in its early critical days, thus making possible its eventual accession to power and subsequent enormities, represent leading examples. However, whilst the Allied Tribunal which sentenced the Nazi war criminals had an unanswerable case in fact, yet their composition, procedure and above all, jurisdiction, left much to be desired. I may relevantly add that I stated such a critique in substance in a leftist political paper at the time of the Nuremburg Trials themselves and restated it more recently at the time of the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem.

Vae Victis

The first and most obvious criticism to be levelled against both the trials mentioned above (but not against the present Frankfurt trial by an all German court) is that they at least appear to proceed according to the cynical old Roman aphorism *vae vistic* (“woe to the vanquished!”) For both at Nuremburg and at the contemporary Japanese war trials, it was exclusively the *conquerors* who sat in trial on the *conquered*. In the later case of Eichmann, it was his victims—or at least their survivors and their friends and relatives—who themselves sat in judgment upon their persecutor. Surely the old legal adage nowadays universally accepted by jurists that “justice must not only be done but must be seen to be done” was flagrantly violated in both these trials!

No doubt an international court composed of neutral judges coming from nations not involved in the war (say Ireland and Sweden) would have similarly found the defendants equally guilty. On the evidence before them they could hardly have found differently, but—a big but—how much better it would have looked! Justice would then surely not only have been done, but would have been seen done. Similarly, with regard to the Eichmann

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

War Trials

By F. A. RIDLEY

trial, no other verdict was possible, but it would have looked much better had the former Gestapo colonel and executioner-in-chief been tried by either a German or a neutral court and not by the relatives of his own victims.

Would a Jewish judge and jury at the Old Bailey be allowed to try, say, the English Fascist and anti-Semitic leader, Colin Jordan, on similar charges? I doubt it very much. Another hardly less obvious criticism of the post-war trials is surely that, not only were they conducted exclusively by the victors in an unprecedentedly savage conflict, but that the terms of reference of the courts which conducted them were apparently limited exclusively to the war crimes of the vanquished—of the defeated Fascist empires. But were there no war crimes also upon the side of the victors? Were not the atomic bombings of the civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki war crimes: flagrant breaches of all and any currently recognised international law? And yet the victorious war criminals went scot free. Similarly, quite a few of our raids which led to the destruction of undefended German cities were

at least border-line cases; e.g. Dresden (February 1945) where more civilians perished than in the atomic raids over Japan, mostly civilian refugees flying before the advancing Russians (I have been in Dresden since the War and have personally heard the accounts of survivors). Such a one-sided operation of "justice" must surely impair the moral weight attached to such war trials.

The Last Judgment

The spectacular trial now proceeding at Frankfurt, is free from most of the weaknesses cited above, for it is Germans who here sit in judgment upon their own war criminals. Nevertheless, we hope sincerely that justice having been done, the matter will be allowed to drop and that this will be the last judgment—in the legal and not the theological sense. For, even apart from the futility of mere vengeance indefinitely prolonged, war is a barbarous business at all times and it is in any case difficult, perhaps impossible, for a serving soldier under military orders to say what is, or what is not legally justified. In any case, in the event of a future atomic war, will it even be feasible to hold war trials after it?

Religion and the Young Teacher

By F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT

IN THE CONTROVERSIES surrounding religious education as they have become defined by the 1944 Education Act, the problem of the young teacher is too often overlooked. It may well be that he goes into a primary or secondary modern school. His own religious views may be somewhat ill-defined. He is possibly agnostic, not desiring to teach religion, but having no very strong views concerning a militant secularism. He is appointed to his first school and finds that he is expected to attend with his class at an act of worship with which the school day starts. Very possibly, he will find that his time-table includes the regular statutory period of religious instruction which he is expected to teach following an "agreed syllabus." At once, he is in a quandary as to what he shall do, and he may realise that opposition can imperil his whole chances of promotion in his chosen profession. Certainly, any dissent will rank him with a minority and will place him in a position where he is forced to tread warily.

But supposing he decides that, without being a hypocrite or a humbug, he cannot take part in the morning assembly; that his bare attendance seems to give an assent to beliefs which he does not accept or think to be factually and objectively true. The same sort of objection applies to his teaching of religious knowledge in class. He decides that he will contract-out, an act which has no validity unless he does it in writing. In theory, he is well within his rights. The Act permits him so to do and does not permit a probing of the sincerity of his dissenting views. It lays down a machinery which safeguards him and protects him by law from victimisation or from exploitation.

Unfortunately, many teachers do not know the law, much less the methods of valid interpretation. They are quite unaware of such legal maxims as that exclusion betokens prohibition. Their ideas are of the vaguest on such processes as contracting-out. They will probably meet with varied types of opposition. A story has gone the rounds that one headmaster, when faced with a case of contracting-out, informed the person so doing that he would attend assembly whether he liked it or not although he might stand with lips sealed and take no part in it.

It is not unknown for some religious bigot to imagine that contracting-out could be stopped by shouting loudly enough against it at a staff meeting! A specious plea may be put forward that the disciplining of the school demands the presence of the whole staff. The more zealous Christians will show their characteristic badges of intolerance and of petty spite. Above all, one of the most impertinent suggestions to come to light was that the contractors-out should be visited with penalising duties by the headmaster, which should be laid on them to be performed at the time of the assembly. An examination of a few stories which have come to light show that there are no lengths to which Christian impertinence and spite will not go, and it does not seem that there is anything to choose between Papist and Anglican in this regard.

Of course, such conduct as has been outlined is flagrantly illegal. It is illegal to make anybody who has contracted-out attend the act of worship. If any attempt is so made, complaint should at once be lodged with the Local Education Authority. It is also well worth recalling that the person so behaving lays himself open to legal action by the aggrieved party. It would only take a matter of hours to seek an injunction against him and to have it served by the court. The same remark would equally apply to the high illegality of seeking to impose any sort of alternative duty upon the contractor-out. It is unfortunate that most teachers do not know enough about the law as to be aware of the means by which it may be put into force without fear or favour. The person who made his dissenting staff attend a religious assembly whilst graciously giving them permission to abstain from singing or praying had laid himself open to an action in the courts which could be taken personally against himself. It is a great pity that this course was not immediately followed.

With regard to discipline, it is well to remember that whilst it matters very much what the law says, the private opinions of any member of the staff as to whether or not unbelievers should be allowed to contract-out is of no account whatsoever. It may well be that, if enough

(Concluded on page 156)

Pursuit of Folly

By COLIN McCALL

ISTVAN RATH-VEGH, Hungarian author of *From the History of Human Folly* (Collet's, 1964, 18s. 6d.), was born in 1870 and died in 1959. In his pursuit of folly, he wanders — as the blurb puts it — “through countries and centuries” and relates his findings “with wide historical knowledge and the ease and humour of a popular story-teller.” I am tempted to add that his wanderings take him a little too far — in time, at least — and that his relation is a little too popular. But I confirm the blurb's claim that he is clearly and resolutely against all kinds of deception.

It is precisely because Ráth-Végh is so rational that I regret his minor faults. On water-divining, for instance, he designates three present-day attitudes, and then confines himself to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The new era “in which the use of the divining rod was studied scientifically” is, he says, “outside the scope of the present volume.” This, after referring to a “small, but all the more vociferous” group of “scholars, geologists and soil specialists, more notable for their decisiveness than their manners,” who “condemn the whole idea of water divining as utter nonsense and humbug.” Ráth-Végh purports not to side with any of the three groups, but his language betrays him. The group he obviously favours consists of those who “silently and unobtrusively continue their research into the connection between the divining rod and certain magnetic radiations.” It is a pity that he couldn't extend his scope to tell us something about these mysterious magnetic forces.

Instead he makes the extraordinary statement that it would be “a mistake to dismiss with a scornful shrug of the shoulders an ancient custom which has survived for over a thousand years. There must be something to it, since traditions are always found to conceal a grain of truth.” Must there, then, be “something in,” say, astrology or witchcraft, which the author himself exposes at length?

I am sorry, too, that so many misprints have crept into the text. Allowances have to be made when an English translation is printed abroad, but pains have been taken to make the book neat and attractive in format, and a little more care might have been paid to literals. It may be amusing to read that, “from the girls' confused shooting it emerged that Grandier had enchanted and bewitched them,” but other mistakes are less funny.

My complaints over, it must be said that the book is both interesting and useful, not least because it often draws on Continental works and documents not well known here. From an undated German work by Franz Helbing, Ráth-Végh gives us an eighteenth-century executioner's official rates for building the fire, supplying ladder and stake, ropes and cords, dispersing ashes, etc., and including the price per blow when flogging, and the price per nip with red-hot tongs. But it is to an English monarch that Ráth-Végh has to turn for an answer to the question, “Why do those assembled at the Witches' Sabbath kiss the devil's behind?” It was — James I informed us — “Because Moses, too, beheld the Lord only from behind.”

Ráth-Végh rightly remembers some of the early opponents of witchcraft, like Jan Weyer-Wierus, court physician of Düsseldorf, with his *De praestigiis daemonum*, published in Basle in 1563, and the Protestant clergyman,

Balthasar Bekker, whose *De betoverde weereld* (The Enchanted World) was written in Louvain in 1691. (Thomas Hobbes might also have been mentioned in this connection.) We are reminded, too, that a mixture of clear-sightedness and prejudice can be found in the same person: a man may be an expert in one sphere and a fool in another — sometimes a dangerous fool at that. This, alas, is still true today.

Life at court has no doubt changed in some ways since the 17th and 18th centuries, when sumptuous palaces lacked hygienic amenities and employed bug-destroyers; when Scarron advised in French:

Distinguished ladies, remember, please,
Each month take only one fresh chemise;
Snow-white linen being carefully reserved
That finery, frippery may well be served.

Prince Philip might not, I suspect, suffer the fate of Philip III of Spain, who was badly burned as he sat in front of the fire because the only grandee invested with the privilege of moving the king's armchair was hard to find. There is probably not so much kneeling before the second Elizabeth as before the first, but the present monarch is still surrounded by far too much absurd etiquette.

And there are certainly many believers in the curse of Tutankhamen and the Hope blue diamond. It is, as Ráth-Végh says, worth subjecting the stories to critical analysis. “What supernatural power could,” he asks, “have enabled Egyptian priests to devise a curse that would remain effective through the ages?” And, “how is it possible that a piece of lifeless crystal could have such a decisive influence on so many thoughtful, sentient individuals . . . ?” Indeed, why, out of all the crude diamonds so far mined, was it “this particular blue diamond which was invested with such supernatural powers”? There is, he adds, “not a word of truth in the whole story of the baleful Hope diamond.”

As for Tutankhamen, the only curse involved is the “curse of stupidity.” For it was “not very clever” to wait until after the tomb had been desecrated before taking vengeance. The mosquito responsible for the death of Lord Carnarvon (already a sick man) should have been persuaded to mobilise his battalions in 1906 (seventeen years earlier) when the excavation of the Theban Necropolis began. There is, of course, no inscribed curse — contrary to popular belief — and Howard Carter and other Egyptologists have stated that Egyptian burial rites contain no curse on the living but only a request that they should wish the dead well.

These are some of the topics touched on by István Ráth-Végh. And, while regretting his self-imposed limitations and differing from him occasionally, I have found him a genial guide in pursuit of human folly.

RELIGION IN THE SCHOOLS

THE National Secular Society is setting up a working party to consider the whole question of religion in the schools. Matters to be discussed in a series of meetings are: (a) the imposition of collective worship in state schools; (b) the Christian bias in so-called “undenominational” religious instruction; (c) the absence of any ethical teaching unrelated to religious belief; (d) denominational schools; and (e) public schools and compulsory chapel attendance. Further details may be obtained from 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

This Believing World

Whether "unity" in Churches means unity only between the Roman and the English Churches is a moot point, but, though desperate efforts have been made and are still being made to join Anglicans and Methodists in Christian harmony, we know that many on both sides oppose it. The *Daily Express* (April 30th) has an article headed, "Stop Merger Plea by Clergymen", reporting as one instance by a Methodist, the Rev. B. J. Coggle of Cardiff, saying "We regard the present scheme as dangerous to the true cause of Christian unity". In fact, the proposed merger "may lead to a loss of the fellowship which now exists between our two bodies".

★

And things do not seem much better in Jewish circles. The Chief Rabbi Dr. Brodie, refuses to have anything to do with Dr. Jacobs, another Rabbi, who is strongly disposed to allow a little of modern scholarship to filter into his Judaism. We gather that Dr. Jacobs simply will not accept some of the traditional stories in the Bible, unacceptable to the modern mind; while Dr. Brodie appears to swallow anything so long as it is guaranteed by "tradition". The net result is that Dr. Jacobs looks like starting a new sect, still called Judaism, but only a pale, pink version of the original. It is quite heartbreaking.

★

Within ten years, says Peter Fairley in the "Daily Sketch" (April 29th), we shall know the "secret of life". Whether this prophecy will be fulfilled we can't say, but we do note that he adds "Life needed no divine force to set it going—it could have evolved of its own accord from lifeless chemicals". It needed no "inspired" force to write this either, for it has been a commonplace in freethought literature for well over a century. After all, Darwinian "Evolution" said as much, as is admitted by Mr. Fairley, and for saying so, Darwin "was ridiculed". "Ridiculed" is putting it mildly, in fact. But the idea is that within ten years or so, according to Dr. Orr, "We shall create a cell which has the power to reproduce itself". And he is optimistic that "the path of chemical evolution will be outlined in the laboratory . . .". We cannot help wondering whether this will make a better job of it than old Mother Nature?

★

To boost their wares, Jehovah's Witnesses are now bringing children of eight to convert you on your doorstep. They repeat Bible texts with the same earnestness as they recite "Mary had a little lamb", and along with mum (who brings them) appear quite astonished if one is not converted on the spot. No doubt Jesus would have suffered—and how!—these little brats quoting scripture to him, but some of us might react like the average parson who, in the *Sunday Express* (April 26th), is quite angry. Yet, after all, is there that much difference between the drivel of a Jehovah's Witness recited by a little girl, and some of the Evangelical "truths" spread by orthodox tracts and sermons?

★

That relic of Evangelical truths, "A Saturday Reflection" in the London *Evening News* carries on, utterly disdainful textual criticism, and on April 28th, plumped for Mark being written by about 65 A.D. There is no evidence whatever for this. On the contrary indeed—Mark is not mentioned anywhere before about 180 A.D., though few Christians will accept this. The date 65 AD comes from the Catholic Church chronology.

The Quest for Happiness

By R. SMITH

"MAN DOES NOT STRIVE after happiness, only the Englishman does that." Nietzsche ridiculed the utilitarian slogan of the "greatest happiness of the greatest number," which he believed led to decadence. "The man who has won his freedom," said Nietzsche "tramples ruthlessly upon that contemptible kind of comfort which tea-grocers, Christians, cows, women, Englishmen and other democrats worship in their dreams".

Like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche believed that suffering was the true destiny of man, but unlike Schopenhauer he was not pessimistic about it. But I don't think that one could accept Nietzsche's views regarding suffering and remain a rationalist, although one could very well see that there is a great deal of truth in what he says regarding "the seekers after happiness". Most men desire happiness in one form or another. People believe in God with the idea of attaining happiness; other people believe in Socialism or some other "ism" with the idea of happiness in mind.

The Christian aim is love and to serve God and to be happy with Him in this world and forever in the next. The Marxist aim is to work for the establishment of a socialist society in which mankind will achieve emancipation and true happiness. The Humanists want their happiness here and now, and some of them proclaim formulas for a happy life through good conduct according to the humanist code, plus refined cultural interests. But it is very questionable if any of them ever attain the happiness they so desire. We may like happy endings, but happy endings are found in books, not in real life.

RELIGION AND THE YOUNG TEACHER:

(Concluded from page 154)

teachers contracted-out on grounds of unbelief. The assembly would break down into chaos. But this is not the concern of the unbelievers. It is the responsibility of the Christians who forced this piece of outworn superstition upon the educational system. If they want the children to behave during their service, it is up to them to impose the discipline. They cannot expect to conscript help from unbelievers in this regard. The claims which are frequently made in staff rooms by Christians along these lines are nothing but a piece of gratuitous impertinence. Nor do they say much for the civilising effects of the religion which they have imposed by law.

One important step should be demanded immediately of the Ministry of Education. It should be made compulsory to exhibit a large notice in every staff room of every school within the state educational system. The notice should reprint the paragraph from the Education Act, 1944, regarding contracting-out. As footnotes, two points should be made absolutely clear. The one would be that it is illegal to seek to prevent any person from contracting-out who is qualified under the Act to do so. The other would be that it is illegal to impose any alternative duties on any person taking advantage of the power to withdraw. In addition, a similar notice should be displayed outside the headmaster's study in full view of visiting parents but this time making clear the rights of parents to withdraw their children from all religious teaching and practices in the school. Perhaps the time has now arrived when Secularists should make these demands.

THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1

TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.25, half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1.

Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Inquiries regarding Bequests and Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound)—Sunday afternoon and evening: MESSRS. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.

London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: MESSRS L. EBURY, J. W. BARKEE, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. A. MILLAR.

(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: MESSRS. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.

Manchester Branch NSS (Car Park, Victoria Street,) Sunday Evenings

Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.: Sundays, 7.30 p.m.

North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch NSS (Midland Institute, Paradise Street), Sunday, May 17th, 6.45 p.m.: Speaker, Mr. C. BLYTH, Subject to be announced.

Leicester Secular Hall (75 Humberstone Gate) National Secular Society, Executive Committee Reception for members and friends, Saturday, May 16th, at 7 p.m. Annual Conference (for members only) Sunday, May 17th, Morning 10 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., Afternoon 2 p.m. to 4.30 p.m.

London Alliance Hall, (Palmer Street, S.W.1.) Tuesday, May 19th, 7.45 p.m.: JOAN MILLER, RICHARD AINLEY, DAVID TRIBE, KATHLEEN EWART and ANNA SLOANE, "Freethought and Humanism in Shakespeare". Lecture, Readings and Music. Tickets 2/6d. from the National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Telephone: HOP 2717.

Notes and News

THE CATHOLIC birth-control debate is, as Norman St. John-Stevas said in *The Observer* (3/5/64), "not merely of domestic interest to Catholics: the whole world is concerned in its outcome". But the main problem is domestic, as far as the Church is concerned. "Every parish priest knows that a sizeable part of his flock, especially young married couples, are unable to come to the sacraments because they are using contraceptive methods condemned by the Church". And Mr. St. John-Stevas referred to a recent poll carried out among American Catholics which showed a majority in favour of a change in their Church's attitude to birth control. Some progressive theologians would like the subject of birth control raised at the Vatican Council in September, but Mr. St. John-Stevas thought this might well be premature. "Theological opinion needs time before it can crystallise", he said. But it didn't take long for Archbishop Heenan's "opinion" to crystallise!

★
WHAT characteristics are there in a creative person that set him apart from his non-creative or less creative colleagues? This was the question considered at a meeting of the Chicago Association of Commerce and Industry on March 26th and reported in the *American Advertising Age* (6/4/64). The main speaker, William D. Buel, staff psychologist of the Vernon Psychological Laboratory,

described the creative person as interested among other things—in science and theoretical problems, and able to see things objectively. But, "the more religious he is, the less creative he probably will be", Mr. Buel added.

★
ATTICUS'S article on unbelievers in public life (referred to last week) prompted a number of interesting letters (*The Sunday Times*, 3/5/64). "Why does Atticus hold that non-belief is 'so fraught with bad taste?' Either you believe or you don't. I don't," wrote Larry Adler. Like Freud, Mr. Adler regarded religion as an illusion, and he reminded Atticus that there are many other religions besides Christianity to disbelieve in. "It seems incredible," Mr. Adler continued, "that there should be such weaseling about belief or lack of it, and this in the country of Bradlaugh and Mill." So far so good. Mr. Adler's conclusion seemed a little puzzling though. His own position was, he said, "neither atheistic nor agnostic" but simply, "Where's the evidence?"

★
PROFESSOR E. R. Dodds, President of the Classical Association and holder of the Regius Chair of Greek, thought that A. J. P. Taylor (whom Atticus quoted) had exaggerated the extent of religious intolerance at Oxford. Though he had a few early clashes with authority, Professor Dodds couldn't complain that his religious unorthodoxy had affected his career at any point. (Politics, he said, "are another matter"). His predecessor in the Regius Chair of Greek, Gilbert Murray, had also been a professed agnostic, "though he ended up in Westminster Abbey through no fault of his own". Professor Dodds also recalled that the late G. D. H. Cole was "always punctually late for Hall dinner as he did not care to be present when grace was said".

★
THE Rev. Charles E. M. Roderick, Vicar of St. Michael's, London, S.W.1., thanked Atticus for "the excellent service that you did". The article was an "outstanding revelation", said Mr. Roderick. "especially in the case of those who lacked the courage of their convictions". If MPs deliberately deceived their people with a show of religious belief it was to the vicar's mind, "nothing short of shocking and fully indicative of the present malaise we suffer in this country". If hypocrisy was the malaise to which Mr. Roderick was referring, we can agree with him, and echo Mr. Adler's remark on "weaseling". But we suspect that Mr. Roderick—in his typically vague parsonic way—wants us to infer more without his actually saying it.

★
"DO YOU want to go down in history as the man who was responsible for splitting Anglo-Jewry from top to bottom?" Mr. H. A. Leon, a member of the deposed board of management of the New West End Synagogue, addressed this rhetorical question to the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Israel Brodie, at the meeting which decided to set up the New London Synagogue "under the spiritual leadership" of Dr. Louis Jacobs (*The Guardian*, 4/5/64). Had he been present at the Kensington meeting, Dr. Brodie might well have answered, "No, but what alternative had I as the leader of orthodox Jewry?"

★
A CHURCH OF ENGLAND "expert on ghosts", the Rev. Harry Cheales, has decided not to exorcise at the Langstone Arms Hotel, Kingham, Oxfordshire, because the ghost is "friendly and good natured", and because "you can get into a nasty mess if you attempt to exorcise a friendly ghost" (*Daily Herald*, 7/5/64). Mr. Cheales found this out a few years ago when, as he said, a ghost "got its own back by throwing me out of bed". Occupational hazard!

Marie Curie

By ADRIAN PIGOTT

MARIE CURIE had an idyllic married life with a brilliant scientist who collaborated with her in discovering radium — for which they shared a Nobel Prize. She was the first woman to attain this honour and she followed it up some years later by winning another Nobel Prize for Chemistry. Her elder daughter also won a Nobel Prize for Science, and her younger daughter was a fine pianist and writer. Marie Curie's other honours included the freedom of 15 large cities and the membership of 129 scientific societies all over the world. In a temple in faraway China her picture was placed with those of an exclusive trio (Buddha, Confucius and Newton), as being an outstanding benefactress to mankind.

Yet, in spite of all her triumphs, she led a simple modest life, working hard until a month before she died in 1934 aged 67, struck down by a disease caused by her 36 years' contact with radium. The heroine, whose discovery saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of cancer sufferers, died from the dangerous effects from her discovery.

In addition to her splendid services to science (in physics, chemistry and X-rays) she excelled in such varying subjects as languages, skating, swimming and sewing. And she is of particular interest to Freethinkers because — although she was brought up as a nominal Roman Catholic — she soon saw through the follies of this religion.

Maria Sklodovska was born in Warsaw on November 7th, 1867, the youngest of five children of a remarkable family. Her father (a Freethinker) was a professor of physics and her mother was the headmistress of a successful girls' school which she had established. When Manya (as she was called) was eight her mother died, so the family was cared for by the father, a man of splendid character who spoke seven languages and who was deeply versed in foreign classics. When she was seventeen Manya and her elder sister Bronya joined a band of young intellectuals called "Positivists" (i.e. persons who recognise only positive and observable facts). One of their ambitions was to improve the education of the Polish working classes, who were then deplorably illiterate. Even at seventeen Manya was an enthusiast for reform and was exhibiting unselfishness which is rare to find in one so young. She used to read aloud to girl illiterates as they worked away in a dressmaker's shop in Warsaw.

When she left school, she was described as being "remarkably gifted," but under the ridiculous anti-feminist regulations then existing, neither she nor Bronya was allowed to enter the University at Warsaw. They had ambitions of being a doctor and a scientist, by qualifying in Paris and returning to work in Poland. But the whole family was poor and Bronya's medical dream (entailing 5 years' study in Paris) seemed out of the question. However, Manya solved the difficulty by volunteering to work as a governess at £40 a year, half of which she sent to Bronya.

On January 1st, 1886, she took a train journey of 3 hours from Warsaw, followed by 4 hours in a sledge to an isolated house in the forest. Her employers had four young children at home, so there was plenty of work for the new governess. But after her day's work — unless she was required to play cards with her employers — she retired to her room and worked away at physics and her mathematical studies. She also started

a class for illiterate peasant children, buying pens, pencils and copybooks from her meagre £20 a year — all that remained after she had sent half her salary to Bronya in Paris. Her employers allowed her a vacant room in the big house, and eventually the pupils numbered eighteen. Sometimes the uneducated peasant parents sat at the back of the room watching the pretty young lady who was telling their children about reading and writing — items which had never entered into their own limited lives. Nobody ever realised how deeply the young teacher inwardly yearned that she herself could one day become a pupil — in Paris.

In the course of time Casimir, the eldest son, came home for his holidays from Warsaw University. He soon discovered that his sisters' governess was a charming and talented companion who danced and skated to perfection. They agreed to marry, and there seemed to be no obstacle — because her employers regarded her with affection and admiration.

Casimir confidently broke the news to his parents and was surprised to find that they strongly objected. They agreed that the girl was of a good family, was brilliant, cultured and showed irreproachable behaviour. However, they were emphatic on one point, viz. "One does not marry a governess!" Such was the social outlook in Poland in 1887.

It was an awkward position for Manya, but she had to accept it because Bronya, studying in Paris, was to some extent dependent upon her. She stayed on until 1889, after 3 years in which she had had plenty of work, no holiday and a disappointment in love. Then she took another position in Warsaw (in order to be near her old father who had retired) and soon received an invitation to Paris from Bronya. The latter had married a Polish doctor in Paris and was now in a position to repay Manya's kindness. However, she felt that she ought to stay longer with her father and deferred her departure until October, 1891.

The Professor saw his youngest daughter off at Warsaw station, and soon Manya was going westward on her great adventure. The fourth class carriages of those days were as bare as goods wagons, but with a basket of food for 3 days and a quilt to wrap around her, Manya was happy with her thoughts of going to the Paris University and hopes of returning to teach in Poland when qualified in physics.

She certainly was going to Paris, but this impoverished pretty student was, in reality, going on a very much greater journey — the journey to immortality.

On November 3rd, 1891, Maria Sklodovska registered at the Science Department of the University of Paris, which had been founded in 1253. For the first time she spelt her name as Marie. It had been intended that she should live at the flat of Bronya and her doctor husband; however, the latter was a fine pianist which resulted in so many noisy parties that Marie soon gave up this idea, and she found a quiet garret near the Sorbonne where she existed on the equivalent of 3s. a day for nearly 4 years. Her garret had a skylight and was ideally quiet for studying; but it had no light, heat, water or service. Every bit of food and lamp oil had to be carried by her up six flights of stairs. Two sacks of coal lasted her through a winter and she carried the fuel upstairs, bucket by bucket.

After her daily lectures, she used to work in the warm public library until closing time at 10 p.m., thus saving lamp oil. Then she would wearily climb the stairs to her garret and work till 2 a.m. or later. In winter time she piled her clothes on top of the bedding while ice formed in the water jug.

In addition to studying in physics and mathematics, she set herself to learn the French language properly, because the highly technical lectures were given in French. She did her own laundry and cooked on a spirit stove, eating little else than bread and butter, fruit and tea — and an occasional egg. In July, 1893, the results showed that she had passed top of her class and thus she achieved her degree in physics. For the next course she registered for mathematics.

During the next autumn term she had a pleasant surprise in the form of a scholarship grant of £60 from Warsaw. A Polish lady, living in Paris, had become so certain that Marie had great possibilities that she persuaded the Warsaw Minister of Education to award this practical assistance. This £60 was enough to enable Marie to live in Paris for another 15 months. It is characteristic of her noble nature that several years later — after she had earned some money from her writing — she returned the £60 to Warsaw, insisting that it should be devoted to helping some other impecunious student.

In her enthusiasm for science she had ruled out all ideas of marriage in her life programme. Thus, at 26, this attractive blonde student lived alone in Paris, ignoring all the young men whom she encountered in laboratories or in classes. One day, however, she met Professor Pierre Curie, aged 35, an Alsatian physicist with a brilliant record. They had many ideas in common, such as devotion to science and a love of the simple life. Like her, he was a Freethinker, and he, also, had had a previous unhappy love affair. They were married at the City Hall at Sceaux, near Paris, where Pierre's parents lived in a street which was later re-named "Rue Pierre Curie." His father was a doctor (also a Freethinker) who had featured in the revolution of 1848 with credit.

One of the wedding presents was a cheque from a relative in Poland. Marie bought two bicycles with this, and the couple went off on a cycling honeymoon. Even when fame and wealth came to them they never altered their simplicity of living, but during their later cycling tours they had to register under false names at hotels. No traveller walking down a country lane would have realised that the tall ungainly man and the simply-dressed woman with him (both pushing their cycles up the hill) were distinguished scientists who had won the Nobel Prize. Madame Curie never gave up her habit of travelling by trams in Paris, and she was frequently asked "Surely you are Madame Curie?" To which she would smilingly reply, "I fear you are mistaken." Their early married life was very austere, as their sole support was Pierre's salary at the School of Physics, amounting to only £21 a month. They had no servant.

Marie had obtained her degree in mathematics in 1894, and was now studying for a diploma, which she obtained, again passing first. But in 1897 her studies had to be curtailed owing to approaching motherhood. On September 12th her elder daughter Irene (the future Nobel Prize Winner) was born. Soon afterwards, old Mme. Curie died and the widower came to live with the Pierre Curie family. This appearance of old Dr. Curie eased their finances, and they were able to afford a servant, thus releasing them from household chores; but both of the indefatigable pair took on further items of work. The Professor took on an extra job as tutor

at the Polytechnic School, and Mme. Curie became a lecturer in physics at a girls' school at Sevres.

Her next ambition was to obtain a doctor's degree, for which it was necessary to write an original scientific thesis. She had become interested in a paper written by the French scientist Henri Becquerel, who had been examining the salts of uranium, which were extracted from the rock called pitchblende. He was puzzled by some mysterious rays which they were emitting. She became fascinated, and decided that radio-activity, as she called it, should form the theme for her essay. Professor Curie was also interested. He abandoned his researches on crystals and joined her in pursuing the new venture of finding out the secret of these mysterious rays. From May, 1898, onwards they worked together with double powers.

Madame Curie started by treating the pitchblende with electricity, and she discovered that pitchblende was four times as radio-active as pure uranium. From this she deduced her vitally important conclusion, that within the rock there must be some undiscovered element with tremendous powers. Later, it transpired that radium was 2 million times more powerful than uranium.

In December, 1898, the Curies published a paper for the Academy of Science in which they reported their prophetic ideas: "We believe that pitchblende contains a new element to which we propose to give the name Radium. Its radio-activity must be enormous." They also knew that radium could exist in only very small quantities in the pitchblende — because this rock had been examined by other scientists who must have overlooked the presence of the new element. The percentage was actually one millionth of one per cent; to find radium was like looking for a needle in a haystack.

For the next four years they spent their spare time in separating the elusive fragment from several tons of rock. They had no help, and they worked together as physicists, chemists, engineers and manual labourers in conditions which only dedicated persons like themselves could have overcome. At long last, in September, 1902, they isolated from the three tons of rock half a saltspoon of radium chloride — pure radium was not isolated until several years later.

They worked continuously during weekends, but only intermittently on weekdays, as the Professor had to prepare and give his daily lectures, and Madame Curie had to attend to her maternal and domestic duties as well as continuing with her studies. Old Dr. Curie proved to be an excellent baby-sitter for Irene, thus enabling her parents to visit more easily their place of work. This was an ancient shed with a leaky roof standing in a little yard. Here they made their calculations and chopped the rock to pieces suitable for their experiments: the residue then had to be trundled by wheelbarrow to a dump.

Madame Curie was not a person who was given to complaining about her hardships, but — in later life — she did write a letter to a friend of which the following is an illuminating extract: "It has been said that my student days were the heroic years of my life. I say, without hesitation, that the years 1898-1902 were — for my husband and myself — the heroic period of our common existence. It was in that miserable old shed that our best and happiest years were spent — entirely consecrated to work. I sometimes passed the whole day stirring a boiling mass of pitchblende with an iron rod nearly as big as myself. In the evenings I was broken with fatigue."

(To be Concluded)

CORRESPONDENCE

MILITANCY AND TOLERANCE

Mr. Cutner, I fear, protests his tolerance a bit to much. And when will he write an article without bringing in the problem of Jesus, with his Dupuis, Robert Taylor, *et al*? When indeed will he really answer a critic instead of galloping off on his own hobbyhorse?

It is nice to know, of course, that Mrs. Mout has a "right to criticise any attitude she does not like"; what I should have liked was a reply to her criticisms, which seemed to me to have at least some validity.

W. R. EASTBURY.

CATHOLIC TEACHERS

May I say at once that I share with Mrs. McIlroy her opposition to denominational schools and would wish to see them excluded from the educational system. But the point of my article was to deal with the state of affairs as it exists under the present law. One wishes to see teachers free from tests and to avoid anything which makes against freedom of thought. But one is also faced with a specialised position in the case of Roman Catholic teachers. Where several are together upon a staff, they will form a pressure group. Every means will be used to secure advantages for their religion. Moments of school time will be turned to account to inculcate in Roman Catholic boys religious practices which lie outside the school. They may even divide in policy over the morning assembly, some attending and some not. Apart from anything else, the attenders will use their position as a vantage post to make things difficult as possible for secularist and agnostic teachers.

It is possible to justify such charges as these from actual examples of happenings in state schools. In the end, the matter does not become one of discrimination so much as of asking how far Roman Catholic teachers fit into a non-Catholic society or how far, when they are admitted to such a society, they set out to disrupt it in their own interests. An adoption of this policy, often at clerical behest, suggests that appointing bodies might ask themselves the question whether the dual loyalty which Roman Catholics claim does not render them difficult appointees to a society with other values and other loyalties. One might cite both Dean Inge and Dr. Coulton as urging that members of this religion would seem to have other standards of honesty and truthfulness than those habitually accepted by non-Catholics,

whether they be Protestants or Secularists. It is a consideration of these points which leads me to differ from Mrs McIlroy's particular conclusion in this matter.

F. H. AMPHLETT-MICKLEWRIGHT.

WITCHCRAFT

I enjoyed reading *The Devil in Massachusetts* by Marion Starkey. It serves again to remind us that the persecution, torture and slaughter due to charges of being witches was due to the Old and New Testament statements. And the teachings of the Christian Churches—both Protestant and Catholic.

This witch hunting was typical of the cruel and heinous practices of the Christian Churches (as directed by the priests and preachers) less than 300 years ago.

This book also causes us to remember that religions have sponsored and promoted other cruel and diabolical concepts beside witchcraft—such as the sacrifice of the first born.

Such concepts were conceived, promoted and imposed on the people by the ministers, priests and rabbis—for they know the Will of God—so they said.

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

The Crimes of the Popes (A chapter from *The Crimes of Christianity* by G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler) Price 6d. postage 3d.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY ANNUAL CONFERENCE

to be held in the Secular Hall, 75 Humberstone Gate,
Leicester (by kind permission of the
Leicester Secular Society)

The NSS Executive Committee invites delegates
and friends to

RECEPTION AND SOCIAL
in the Secular Hall on Saturday,
May 16th, at 7 p.m.

THE CONFERENCE
(for Members only)

will be held on Sunday, May 17th
at 10 a.m.—12.30 p.m. and 2 p.m.—4.30 p.m.

to be followed by an
OPEN AIR MEETING

NEW PAPERBACKS

Penguins

- The Penguin Science Survey, 1964 A
Edited by Arthur Garrett 7s. 6d.
- The Penguin Science Survey, 1964 B
Edited by S. A. Barnett and Anne McLaren 7s. 6d.
- Physical Fitness 5BX and 6BX Exercise Plans 2s. 6d.
- Arabian Sands by Wilfred Thesiger 6s.
- Children of Sanchez by Oscar Lewis 8s. 6d.
- The Trial of Roger Casement by H. Montgomery Hyde 3s. 6d.
- The Rise of the South African Reich by Brian Bunting 4s. 6d.
- Which Way Africa? The Search for a New Society
by Basil Davidson 4s.
- Traffic in Towns—The Buchanan Report 10s. 6d.
- The Police by Ben Whitaker 3s. 6d.
- What's Wrong with Hospitals by Gerda Cohen 3s. 6d.
- Classic
- Voltaire: Zadig and L'Ingenu 3s. 6d.

Pelicans

- The Church of England by Paul Ferris 4s. 6d.
- The Greeks Overseas by John Boardman 6s.
- Introducing Mathematics Vol. 1, by W. W. Sawyer 5s.
- Inventing the Future by Dennis Gabor 4s.

Peregrines

- The Diaries of Franz Kafka 1910-1923,
Edited by Max Brod 18s. 6d.
- The Englishness of English Art by Nikolaus Pevsner 10s. 6d.
- The Habsburg Monarchy by A. J. P. Taylor 10s. 6d.
- Nineteenth-Century Studies: Coleridge to Matthew Arnold
by Basil Willey 12s. 6d.
- God, Sex and War, Professor MacKinnon and others 3s. 6d.
- The Hindu Art of Love (Burton Translation) and the
Symposium of Plato 6s.
- The Kama Sutra and the Phaedrus of Plato 3s. 6d.

Plus postage from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop

TWO DATES FOR FREETHINKERS

Tuesday, May 19th, 7.45 p.m.

FREETHOUGHT AND HUMANISM IN SHAKESPEARE

Lecture: DAVID TRIBE : : Readings: JOAN MILLER

Songs: KATHLEEN EWART

Accompanist: ANNA SLOAN

Introduced by RICHARD AINLEY

ALLIANCE HALL, PALMER STREET, S.W.1
(next to Caxton Hall, two minutes St. James's Park
underground station.)
Tickets 2s. 6d.

Sunday, June 7th, 2.30 p.m.

UNVEILING OF THOMAS PAINE STATUE AT THETFORD

Coach leaves Central London 9.45 a.m.

Return Fare and Tea, £1 1s.

Book immediately for both events through—
THE SECRETARY,

National Secular Society, 103 Borough High Street,
London, S.E.1, or telephone HOP 2717