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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Witch-Hunting

THERE is little essential variation in the religious sport of witch-hunting. Between the naked savage "smelling" out a witch or wizard and 17th century searching out the mark that betrays commerce with Satan the idea in both cases is identical. The only difference is that the savage witch-doctor appears to be guided by the desire to protect the tribe from evil. The Christian witch-hunter is following the plainest orders of his God. But for the Christian the record is unbroken from Genesis to Revelations. The gentle Jesus smells out an evil spirit that has taken possession of a human being with all the skill that the celebrated Mathew Hopkins discovered the witch's mark in the time of the Commonwealth or a savage medicine man hunts down his prey.

Confining ourselves to the British Isles, we may note that it was not always the poor and the demented that fell under the charge of witchcraft. There was, for instance, Dowager Queen Joan who was punished for working magic against Henry V. A similar charge was brought against the Duchess of Gloucester. In Scotland there were many in high places accused of witchcraft, and the Earl of Mar, towards the end of the 15th century, was bled to death for magical works against his brother. Twelve witches and four wizards were burnt in Edinburgh for the same offence. This was what a Red Indian would call "mighty magic." The modern savages had a more elaborate description for it.

In England, Henry VIII. and Queen Elizabeth were firm believers in the activity of witches, and there was a very rapid development in witchcraft in the closing years of the 16th century. To the same date belongs the case in which a whole family—father, mother and daughter—were executed for killing Lady Cromwell by witchcraft.

This series of notes is in reply to a question: "What is Christianity?" There are so many forms of Christianity we declined the task of answering. But Christianity is an historic religion based upon the Bible. The clergy are crying: "Back to the Bible." We take them at their word, and give the essentials of Christianity as presented in the Bible.

Sir Samuel Cromwell bequeathed an annual sum of £40 for the preaching of a solemn discourse against witchcraft. The Rev. M. Summers says, in "History of Witchcraft and Demonology," that this sermon was preached in the early part of the last century, but it is not clear when it fell into disuse. In the 17th century a number of professional witch-finders were appointed, the best known of these being the famous Mathew Hopkins. He was paid a stated sum per head, travelled as far afield as Lancashire, a county which became notorious for the large number of witches that were executed. Hopkins received 20s. per head for witches—and with the result one might expect. The discovery of so many witches was clear evidence of God's approval; good Christians rejoiced that the other God (the devil) lost so many of his followers.

One of Hopkins' methods was by pricking—driving a long pin into the naked body of a woman until a spot was found that did not feel pain. That was sure evidence of commerce with the God of the nether world. But his favourite test was to tie the right hand of the suspected witch to her left foot and the left hand to the right foot. Stripped naked, she was then thrown into a river or pool. If she floated she was a witch; if she sank and was drowned she was innocent.

There is a story that the numerous witches Hopkins discovered roused suspicion. It was not the genuineness of his cases that were doubted; the charge was that he was also in the service of the Devil and so knew all the witches there were. As a result, Hopkins was seized, subjected to the water test—and floated. So runs the story; but, regretfully, there are doubts, for the Rev. Montague Summers, who has written largely on sorcery—and, like a good Roman Catholic, believes in it—says that Hopkins retired on his earnings, died comfortably in his bed, much respected by the people around him. Why not? God had said, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"—and Hopkins was a good Christian.

The Bible in America

When the English Pilgrims went to America they took with them all the superstitions to which they were accustomed. It is simple nonsense to accept the stereotyped story that they went to America because they loved liberty and independence. They went because in England they were being persecuted by other Christians; and so soon as they were settled, for the most part, they were quite as intolerant as the Christians in England with whom they disagreed. They had no objection to religious bigotry as such; they objected to what they considered the right kind of bigotry being suppressed. Those who wish to see how devoted the new settlers were to the duty of wiping out witches and wizards may consult "Remarkable Providences," by Increase Mather (London, 1855), and the "Wonders of the Invisible World," by his son, Cotton Mather (London, 1862). Both the Mathers were

very able men. Of the two, the son has the finer face, reminding one of another great man, Jonathan Swift. It is obviously a picture of a man with a high sense of duty and nothing that would indicate brutality. Yet many scores of people were either tortured to death or made to live in fear and trembling as a consequence of the religious beliefs and fervour of the Mathers. The son, referring to his father's book, says, "There was a certain disbeliever in witchcraft who wrote against this book, but the man is dead; his book died before him." Probably an act of God,—for in Mather's time gods had to earn their living.

One of the cases belonging to Salem recalls an incident already noted. A sailor on board ship making for land stabbed a woman because he believed she had by witchcraft raised a storm. He was delivered over to the civil courts for judgment. The verdict was that he had acted in self-defence and was discharged.

Readers will find many reports of cases in A. B. Hart's valuable source books, "American History told by Contemporaries." Of course, they follow the lines of English cases; naturally, they are derived from the same type of mind. He also cites the case of Samuel Sewall, a very eminent judge. He had taken an active part in some witch trials. Some years after he issued a public statement expressing regret for the part he had played in these condemnations. That is worth noting because of its unusual character. In this country the clergy very seldom make public acknowledgment of their having given the people lies for truth. They remain silent lest they should open the eyes of other people. In any case, their chief function appears to be that of substituting a new absurdity for an old one.

The last famous trial for witchcraft took place in the last quarter of the 17th century before a very famous English judge, Mathew Hale, at Bury St. Edmunds in 1662. Two women were charged with bewitching seven persons. The usual evidence was given, and it is quite evident that Sir Mathew Hale had taken pains to see that accused had what was considered a fair trial. In directing the jury he said:—

"That there were such creatures (as witches) he made no doubt at all. For, first, the Scriptures affirmed as much. Secondly, the wisdom of all nations had provided laws against such persons, which is an argument of their confidence of such a crime. . . . (He) desired them strictly to observe their evidence and desired the great God in Heaven to direct their hearts in this weighty thing they had in hand; for to condemn the innocent and let the guilty go free were both an abomination before the Lord."

The jury returned a verdict of Guilty and the two witches were hanged a fortnight later—for the glory of God and the confusion of the other Christian God who ruled in hell.

This trial became famous because of the trouble Hale took to deal justly with the accused women and because of the testimony given by one of the famous literary men of his day, Sir Thomas Browne. Asked his opinion as to the reality of witchcraft, he was clearly of opinion that the persons were bewitched. He had no doubt "that the devil in such cases did work upon the bodies of men and women as on a natural foundation . . . whereby he did in an extraordinary manner afflict them with such dis-

tempers as their bodies were most subject to, as appeared in these children."

We have not the slightest doubt that if it had been possible to bring Jesus Christ into court he would have given exactly the same answer, for if commerce with Satan is not possible much that Jesus is reported to have said is obvious nonsense.

But this was not the end either of trials or belief in witchcraft. There were many other trials before the death penalty for witchcraft was repealed. There were three women in Exeter burnt for witchcraft in 1682, and others in Northampton in 1705 and 1722. The Act making the practice of witchcraft a capital offence was not abolished until 1736. Curiously enough, there seems to have been less witchcraft in Ireland than in England, although the Roman Catholic religion is saturated with the belief in good and evil spirits. Curiously, also, while witch laws fell into disuse earlier than in England, they were not removed from the Statute Books until 1826. But the removal of witchcraft from the criminal code was not brought about by any effort on the part of the Churches. They clung to it as long as they could. The Roman Church still holds to it.

Many prominent Christians openly denounced setting aside one of the plainest, the least disputable commands of God. Strong opposition to the rejection of witchcraft was given by John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, who said, 32 years after the Act was repealed:—

"It is true that the English in general, and indeed most men of learning in Europe, have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions as mere old wives' fables. I am sorry for it and willingly take this opportunity of entering my solemn protest against this violent compliment which so many who believe in the Bible do not pay to those who do not believe in it. I owe them no such service. I take that these are at the bottom of the outcry which has been raised, and with such insolence spread through the land, in direct opposition not only to the Bible, but to the suffrage of the wisest and best men of all ages and nations. They well know (whether Christians know it or not) that the giving up of witchcraft is in effect giving up the Bible."

That is at least honest Christianity, however absurd the belief in witches. We may note the Rev. Dr. Rice, who writes in the 19th century in a "People's Dictionary of the Bible," under article "Devils":—

"As frequent accounts are given in the Old Testament, and in the New, of the devil and his demons entering into persons, there is no reason to doubt they do it now."

That also is good evidence that there may be some Christian leaders in existence who, when they say they believe in the Bible, mean what they say. Better houses and bigger wages, better clothing and more open spaces are all that the archbishops say they are, although they may be very late in the day in making the discovery. But they should remember that God did not say witches did not exist. He accepted their existence. He did not say, "Do not believe that such things as witches do not exist"; he said, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live"—and he left his followers to do the killing as a sign of their sincerity. In 1773 the Scotch Associated Presbytery passed a resolution declaring its belief in witchcraft and deplored unbelief concerning it.

Still, let us be merciful to God. For he made so many things, and made them in such a hurry, that when people began to deal with witches he may have been confused as to whether he made them or not—and the days of memorandum note books had not yet come.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued)

JAMES AND JESUS

THE Jesus referred to in the title of this article is the Jesus of the Bible, junior partner in the old-established family trust of God, Son and Company, Incorporated, the crusading combine that has paid good dividends in the Dope Market for nearly 2,000 years.

But the James mentioned in the title is not the James whose name appeared on the list of original shareholders, and who, being the reputed brother of Jesus, became the director of the firm's head office at Jerusalem.

No, sir. The James has no official connection with the old firm. He is connected with some new crusaders, only 50 years old. He is none other than James Maxton, high-light of the I.L.P., which recently celebrated its Jubilee at Bradford, the place of its birth in darkest industrial England during the darkest industrial era of half a century ago.

Now, as James Maxton has no special mission to sell the goods of the old firm, you are probably wondering why his name should be coupled with that of Jesus Christ; why this fighter for "Socialism in our time" should be mixed up with the Chief Apostle of "Something better in the next world." I cannot tell you why, but only that it happened.

The misfortunes of war produce some strange bedfellows at times, as we may see from the Communist-cum-Carlton Club compact, and I am inclined to think that it was the misfortune of war that caused Mr. Maxton to seek the help of Christ.

As we all know, Christ's firm has been engaged for 2,000 years in bolstering up and financing crusades of all kinds, from organised murder and slavery to organised pacifism; and it is perhaps natural that in times of depression and unpopularity leaders of newer and less experienced crusades should turn to the Manager of the Master Crusade for guidance and support.

Rightly or wrongly (it doesn't matter which for the present purpose) the I.L.P. is opposed to the war, and movements opposed to the war have rather a low stock at the present time. Appealing to reason to win support for minority viewpoints is a slow and discouraging business, as active Freethinkers must know, and one can understand the temptation to introduce an emotional note.

In a weak moment James Maxton succumbed to that temptation, at the I.L.P. Jubilee demonstration, thus linking the personalities of Maxton and Jesus in what seemed to me to be a grotesque alliance, and perpetrating a fantastic doctrinal mixture of "Here and Now" with "Hereafter."

Granted that Mr. Maxton declared the I.L.P. had done more good in 50 years than the institution of the Archbishops had done in 2,000 years. I agree. Had he left it at that all would have been well, for this statement received a big round of applause from a big crowd in a big hall. But, as though seeking some anchorage for the anti-war policy of the I.L.P., he went on to sentimentalise about Christ's personal attitude as a pacifist.

"It was not what the Church said," Mr. Maxton remarked. "It was what Christ did. He said to his enemies: 'You can do what you will. You can even kill me. But my spirit will remain and conquer.'"

Now Mr. Maxton made three errors. In the first case, there is no record which stamps Jesus with the dignity of a courageous pacifist. Nothing that he said or did indicated that he possessed the moral fibre which stamps other men who have suffered or died for their convictions. He did not even use the challenging words which Mr. Maxton attributed to him; but at the Crucifixion he had so far lost faith in his cause that he cried out, "Oh! God. Oh! God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The most courageous of the statements credited to him was, "Father, forgive them. They know not what they do." During Christ's trial and execution there was no mention at all of the intellectual soundness, or the moral soundness, of his case, such as might be made by a real pacifist in facing a tribunal. Therefore, in comparing Christ with sincere pacifists, Mr. Maxton made a serious factual error.

His second error was in assuming that this sort of propaganda cuts ice in these days. When thousands of families are suffering the immediate loss of relatives near and dear to them, through the various life-destroying channels of modern warfare, the death of Christ 2,000 years ago is a very unimportant and far-off event in the eyes of most decent people. The mythical nobility of Christ's troubles is poor satisfaction in a war-time bereavement, and poor philosophy for those who would mend the world to-day. Moreover, we all know that Christ was making no sacrifice at all, because the Boss had guaranteed his resurrection. Mr. Maxton should have remembered that, because it was Easter Sunday evening when he spoke, and Christ had "come up" again by then.

But there is no resurrection for the lads and lasses facing to-day's sacrifices. The only thing their Boss guarantees them, if they are lucky enough to come back alive, is their old jobs back at their old wages—"provided always," as the lawyers would say.

Nor is there any resurrection for the modern pacifist. The only thing he has guaranteed for him is a rough passage in life for many years to come at the hands of those whom he seeks to help by his philosophy.

Mr. Maxton's third mistake was to adopt the line described at a Yorkshire conference—especially a Bradford conference—because they don't applaud if they disagree in Yorkshire. Fifty years ago, when Keir Hardie and his stalwarts were pioneering this movement in Bradford, the Jesus stuff might have gone down fairly well. But during the same half-century that the I.L.P. has been at work, Freethought movements have also been at work, and many in the I.L.P., especially in the industrial West Riding, now realise that they owe nothing they have gained to the character of Christ, nothing to the creed of Christianity, but everything to the courage and character of themselves and their predecessors. The cold reception of Mr. Maxton's example from "the old firm" may have convinced him of this. Less than a dozen people in a huge audience applauded this part of his speech.

I was sorry that Mr. Maxton should be so discouraged, because I like him—everybody likes him—but the lack of applause was illuminating, for it shows how low is the present stock of God, Son and Company, Incorporated. When the arch-bamboozler, Jesus, can no longer bamboozle, even when manipulated by the skilful and appealing James Maxton, it proves that the Secular policy of non-political iconoclasm is the correct policy.

Outside of the I.L.P., outside of all parties, Secularists have helped to remove many obstacles that stood in the way of clear and scientific notions concerning man's duty to man, sweeping up religions to make room for realities.

It is a testimony to the success of Secularism that Jimmy's Jesus was such a flop.

F. J. CORINA.

ACID DROPS

THERE is a ceremony in the English Church, and we believe it also exists with Roman Catholics, known as "Churching." It is the ceremony of a woman, after giving birth to a child, going to church to return thanks for her recovery. That is, of course, the popular belief. But, like most current religious beliefs, is not understood by religious folk, and it is not intended that they should understand it. To understand religion is to no longer believe in it, and it is to avoid this understanding that the Churches—all of them—wish to have children under their special care and so prevent them knowing the truth. As we have so often said, you can believe religion or you can understand it, but you simply cannot understand religion and believe in it.

Here is an example. The "Catholic Herald" for April 30 replies to a question as to the meaning of "Churching" that it is "a popular and entirely innocent word for the ceremony (of Churching), and implies nothing in the nature of purification or forgiveness." Now, that is simply not true, and it never was true. In the Church of England Prayer Book, in the sixteenth century, the ceremony was given the plain title "The Purification of Women After Childbirth," then it was altered to "Churching," and the original reason was hidden. But the essence was the purification of women, and we expect that was the original meaning of the Roman service.

At any rate, the "Purification of Women," following the birth of a child, takes us to the primitive days when mankind had not yet discovered the part played by the man in the birth of a baby. There is a large literature dealing with the belief that birth was due to the incarnation of a tribal spirit, and the cleansing ceremony was necessary, not for the benefit of the female but for the protection of the male from the supernatural influence radiated by the mother of the newly-born child. Hence the purification. The present explanation that the mother is "Churched" to return thanks for her recovery is one more of the numerous "rationalisations" that hide the real meaning of Christian doctrines from its followers. That meaning also lies at the root of the miraculous growth of the New Testament Jesus.

The Financial Secretary to the War Office has announced in Parliament that war-time chaplains are to receive 8s. 2d. per day as fourth-class chaplains. Presumably there will be, in addition, the usual family allowances. But why should these men receive the rank of a captain? Why not just "Chaplain"? Perhaps this is to give them authority, and so prevent the ordinary soldier answering back to their spiritual guides. We do know that some of these chaplains have very uncomfortable half-hours from some of the unbelieving officers, but these things never leak out in reports or on the wireless. There, in every conversation broadcast, the "Padre" gets the best of it. That is not to be surprised at, as many of these radio questions are written by the priests themselves.

We are sorry to learn that the Manchester City Council is finding itself hopeless and helpless in the face of its duties and the demands of the City. At least that is what we conclude from the fact that the Council has decided that before all business meetings the members of the Council are to stand while the Lord Mayor's chaplain says prayers for the members present. The chaplain, as one who has a "pull" with God, is to point out that without God's help "no Council can stand," which is not very complimentary to the members or the judgment of the people who sent them to the Council Chamber. Up to the present the only person who has needed this clandestine heavenly help has been the Lord Mayor. He has a chaplain. The rank and file of the members have got along without one. Now, it seems, the Council members need supernatural help to carry out their duties. We don't believe it. There is no evidence, save the opinion of the Lord Mayor's chaplain, that Manchester councillors are so poor as to need supernatural help to do their job.

There is unconscious satire in the note to the order to pray that one of the prayers ordered was used in Manchester Cathedral until the building was bombed in 1940. But, in the name of all that is just beyond the border of insanity, if the prayer could not save the cathedral, how will it work the miracle of transforming a foolish Council into a wise one? We wonder if a member of the Council will have the courage and the common sense to put the question.

The Lord Mayor of Manchester (Alderman J. S. Hill) must be a curious kind of a character. He appears to mistake his chair in the Council for a pulpit, and to have so poor an opinion of his fellow citizens that he believes they will never behave themselves without the help of God Almighty. Thus, in the "Manchester Guardian" for April 30 there appears the following expression of opinion by him:—

"Never before in our history was there a time when the principles of Christian morality were more greatly needed to regulate the business of life than now."

Does he mean that people were never so bad as they are to-day? If he does mean that, then it is simply not true—even of Manchester? Taking them on the whole, the people of to-day are better than they were, and if they grumble more and ask for more, if there is what is called "unrest," that is something to be pleased with, not to lament. And we would like the Lord Mayor to realise that the improvement in life has been achieved in the face of constant opposition to our principal Christian leaders.

Next, we should like to see the Lord Mayor and others—he would not be worth bothering about if he stood alone—tell us what can be done in the shape of social reform with Christianity that cannot be done without it. Manchester has done some excellent work in the past, and if the Lord Mayor will cease courting the churches and chapels for a time and devote his attention to the study of reform—in Manchester—he will realise how much was done by men and women who set Christianity aside and devoted their energies to the task of shaking off the authority of Churches. Finally, we would remind the Lord Mayor that his job is a civic one, and it would be well if one who is concerned with morals should set an example to others of civic justice and civic honour.

But of all the muddle-headed mixture of empty phrases and cheap phrasing, commend us to a leading article in the Manchester "Daily Dispatch." It is full of empty flat-catching phrases such as "a trumpet call to Christians," the "testimony of men of eminence" who have signed an appeal to Manchester folk, "a reflection of the glory of the incorruptible God"—as though there were some gods that were decidedly corruptible—followed by an appeal for people to join together, "not merely with a view to international markets," ending with a saving clause for some of its readers: "We do not want to force our own particular creed upon others," etc., etc.

Now the "Daily Dispatch" must know that there are large numbers of Christians in Manchester who simply will not join together so far as religion is concerned. The Roman Catholics in Manchester will not, if they are true to their Church, marry outside their sect. If they do, the Church will not recognise the marriage, and there can be no real community where inter-marriage is not permitted. And the testimony of the eminent men who made the aforementioned appeal! Who are they? Are they experts in any of the sciences? They are mainly business men, and they have, if we mistake them not, a keen judgment of what may happen when this war comes to an end. The appeal to which the churches of Manchester are asking for response is a recognising of the fact that for the present there may be some prospects of men and women taking a saner view of life than they have done hitherto. We do not know whether God is incorruptible or not, but we do know that hitherto the majority of his mouthpieces have not been—it is against them that honest men and women must be on their guard.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. KINNEAR.—Our criticism of religion covers all forms of religion. Shall be pleased to hear from you again.

W. SMITH.—Thanks for your appreciation of “The Freethinker,” and for the correction of the Biblical reference. The edition of Paine’s “Age of Reason” is out of print, but we intend reprinting it as soon as possible.

W. C. HEMMINGS.—We are very diffident of suggesting a course of reading for people. So much depends upon the character of the person advised. Commending a single book is another question. But we have thought of writing a series of articles describing the books we like and why we like them. But that is another matter. Our general advice is: Read anything you come across on any and every subject. You will probably soon find that you will have discovered a course of reading for yourself.

M. E. MARSH.—Thanks for sending report. We are pleased that teachers are getting more active in making known their attitude with regard to the dual school system and the Church influence which will result in a lowering of the status of teachers and to the quality of the education given. Really the teachers could do much to set national education on a genuinely national basis.

R. ROSE.—Mr. Cohen is not likely to be invited by the B.B.C. to state the case for Freethought, and, emphatically, if he received such an invitation he would never dream of submitting it to censorship of the B.B.C. The fraud of discussing the value of Christianity with questions and answers supplied by the same (Christian) person will continue until a firmer stand is made by men of standing with the general public. Until that happens the B.B.C. will continue its work of bulldozing people where religion is concerned.

T. J. MOSLEY.—Glad to know you are resuming your outdoor meetings. There never was a better time than the present for so doing. The Christian Churches threaten to be one of the catastrophes of the war. These moves to form Christian groups of business men, youths, etc., should not trouble us. The suggestions come from the badly hit clergy and from those who are already staunch supporters of a worn-out religion and crowds, of which large numbers of church-goers are heartily ashamed.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

THE Bible Handbook has sold much more rapidly than expected, although a goodly number were bound. We are experiencing some difficulty in getting supplies from the binders owing to war conditions, but orders on hand will be executed as early as possible.

In the “Universe” for April 30, one of its paragraph writers, who has yet to distinguish between flippancy and wit, remarks that “Freethinkers who claim Montaigne as a blood brother have never read Montaigne. He was a sceptic in everything barring Catholic creed and dogma.” The first part of the statement is sheer impertinence, and if the writer of the paragraph can manage the reading, we invite her to read the chapter “On Cripples,” to say nothing of the very numerous allusions to religion elsewhere in his works, and to remember that Montaigne lived in the sixteenth century. The fact that Montaigne gave the title “On Cripples” to a chapter in which he discusses witches, and dismisses them, is enough to show his disdain for Roman Catholicism.

Consider also such sentences “I have never seen a greater miracle than myself,” or “All the abuses of the world are begotten by our ignorance,” or “How much more natural and likely do I find it that two men should lie than that one man in twelve hours should fly with the wind from East to West.” And who but a sceptic could have written “Our religion is made to extirpate vices; it protects, nourishes, and incites them.” Some kind of theism Montaigne might have held, but that he was a sceptic at a time when scepticism might mean torture and death is quite clear. And that the Church placed his writings on the Index is conclusive. That scepticism was carried on by his great disciple, whose book “On Wisdom,” in its 1670 English edition, lies before us while writing. One day we will give the readers a summary of this book. At present we merely wish to correct either an uninformed or untrustworthy commentator.

We read with pleasure some of the statements made by the President of the National Association of Schoolmasters. He said:—

“For a generation no voice from the Churches has been raised to call us to the high enterprise of establishing social justice and right relationships. I have found consistently a higher moral sense inside the schools. . . . The real suggestion by some is that we should cultivate our schools so that we can re-create the slave class, who would endure exploitation and injustice. . . .

“If the schools become subject to a fine balancing of sectarian prejudices in order to satisfy the susceptibilities of suspicious and biased Churchmen failure will ensue.”

It is a pity, but we suppose it was just a sop that Mr. Martin should follow up with “such a compromise cannot make for a Christian community.” But the plain cry to the clergy is “Hands off the schools,” which is good enough to get on with.

Mr. Martin’s plain statement is, however, much preferable to the self-interested cry of the Archbishop of Canterbury with a “Back to God” cry, that while we have done well in the war we have “declined rapidly in honesty.” That is simply a lie. The people of to-day are not more dishonest than they were. Dishonesty may have assumed stronger forms in certain directions, but that is not of necessity a proof of greater dishonesty. But the Archbishop, as one of the originals in the plot to capture the schools, is compelled to do something. His aim is to stampede those who can be frightened into giving the Churches a greater measure of control over the young generation, and a control that is not intended to develop the desire for a better state of society, but will give the clergy power over the rising generation. It is all part of the “Collar the Kids” campaign.

The Rev. John R. Gray is a chaplain in the Royal Navy. Writing in the “British Weekly,” he puts the question “Why is the Church at War?” Of course, the usual reply comes, “Because it is a just war.” Granted, but as the Church has more or less taken part in every war, and all wars are just wars to one side or the other, all the wars in which the Church has partaken are just wars. The reasoning is impeccable.

But the striking piece of news given by Chaplain Gray is that "to oppose anti-Christian idolatry by force is certainly foreign to the Church." And that is really staggering, for the one Church that has persistently and consistently used force to suppress "anti-Christian" opposition is the Christian Church. The war has, of course, differed in form, but the fact remains true. Even to-day, and in this country, although the enemy of the Churches is not imprisoned for his attacks on religion—unless he goes "too far"—force is still operative. In Christian England people have to pay the price for declared independence. Even in the House of Commons and the House of Lords there is hesitancy, timidity and dissimulation where Christianity is concerned. We should like to reverse the Chaplain's statement and make it read: "When and where has the established Christian belief *not* used force—material or otherwise—in order to protect itself and to annihilate its enemies?"

EVOLUTION AND ETHICS

II.

IN a recent series of articles in the "Literary Guide," Sir Arthur Keith, famous as an anatomist and Darwinist, undertakes to correct T. H. Huxley's conclusions on evolution and ethics. According to Sir Arthur Keith, Huxley erred in picturing the early human struggle as an individual contest of man against man. Against this, Sir Arthur sets Darwin's views that man has always been a social being living in communities, and that his evolution has been a struggle between tribes or nations. The "cosmic process" and "ethical process," therefore, argues Sir Arthur, are not in opposition, but in harmony.

I think we can concede this much without seriously damaging Huxley's main thesis. Huxley may or may not have believed in a primitive "war of all against all"; but his case in "Evolution and Ethics" does not rest upon it. Whatever the state of primitive humanity may have been, competition and co-operation are contradictories, and the extension of the sphere of co-operation can be described not unfairly as a combating of the cosmic by the ethical process, provided we bear in mind, as Huxley did, that the one gave rise to the other.

Sir Arthur gives more serious ground for criticism when he proceeds to his own interpretation of human evolution. Why, he goes on to ask, do human tribes refuse to amalgamate and so end competition and struggle? He answers his own question by contending that a tribe is a corporate body entrusted by Nature (Sir Arthur always spells this word with a big N!) with a unique assortment of genes. To fulfil Nature's purpose in doing so, the tribe must maintain its integrity. Free interbreeding with neighbouring tribes would frustrate Nature's purpose. To prevent this, Nature has endowed each tribe with a dual mentality—co-operative and kindly in relation to members of the tribe, hostile and ferocious in relation to its neighbours. Members of a tribe are emotionally bound to their native soil (how does this apply to nomads?) and feel a common kinship with one another, but they will amalgamate with no other tribe unless forced. Modern nations have arisen by the forcible amalgamation of tribes.

In a remarkable article Sir Arthur Keith applies this theory to modern Germany. Hitler, he contends, is a scientific evolutionist. By forcibly amalgamating the 25 German States, he has created a united and aggressive "tribe" of 80,000,000. He rightly, from an evolutionary point of view, insists on preserving the purity of German blood so that Nature's purpose in producing Germans (what was it?) may be fulfilled. He rightly stimulates the German birth-rate, relegates women to the kitchen and the nursery, isolates Germany from foreign contacts, suppresses and persecutes liberalism, internationalism and humanitarianism, and uses "brutal compulsion, bloody force and the concentration camp" to secure national unity. The only doubt Sir Arthur permits himself is whether unity obtained by such methods can

be relied on to endure. The methods are unethical; but "science is concerned wholly with Truth, not with Ethics."

Yet, Sir Arthur admits, "suppression and distortion of the truth is a deliberate part of Nazi policy." Tribal unity is attained by silencing every scientist, author, artist, preacher and editor in Germany who does not accept Nazi doctrine unreservedly. There appears to be a contradiction here between Sir Arthur Keith's glowing enthusiasm for Hitler as an evolutionist and his concern for scientific freedom.

Hitler's evolutionary principles, according to Sir Arthur, also explain his persecution of the Jews. The Jews, like the Germans, are a corporate body whose purpose is to breed true. Can two such corporate bodies live in one country? Hitler thinks not, and acts accordingly. Let us be thankful for small mercies: Sir Arthur Keith this time does not say that he is right.

If, then, Hitlerism is ethically unjustified, but from an evolutionary standpoint justified, what, according to Sir Arthur Keith, is the relation between evolution and ethics? It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that, except as a code of behaviour within a given "tribe," he regards ethics as out of place. "The ways of international evolution, both in the past and in the present, are cruel, brutal, ruthless and without mercy." And we must not seek to combat this "cosmic process" as Huxley advocated; for to do so is to frustrate the purposes of Nature. Sir Arthur has no doubt that Nature is "fundamentally purposive." Ours not to reason why; ours but to do *and die!* Success goes to the nation which manages to be the biggest pest in a fundamentally pestiferous universe.

It is with melancholy feelings that we must view the Fascist conclusions of so distinguished and amiable a man as Sir Arthur Keith.

I contend, in the first place, that Sir Arthur Keith's ascription of a purpose to evolution is fallacious.

In a passage quoted by Sir Arthur, Dr. Julian Huxley, the distinguished grandson of T. H. Huxley, argues that there is no purpose in evolution. Objecting to this, Sir Arthur urges that adaptation, as exemplified in the absorption and digestion of food, the reproduction of species, and physiological processes generally, proves that Nature is "fundamentally purposive." If purpose merely means adaptation, this is a tautology. If purpose means more than this, namely *conscious* adaptation (and that is what it usually does mean), the statement is incapable of proof. Adaptation is by no means always conscious. The movements of a sleep-walker *look* purposive, but are unconscious; and we usually regard it as improper to describe such actions as purposive. There is no ground for considering such physiological processes as digestion to be any more purposive than that. To ascribe them to a personified Nature (with a big N!) is just begging the question.

Since there is no good reason to think Nature a purposive, in the sense of a conscious being, I contend that Sir Arthur Keith's conception of Nature "entrusting" an assortment of genes to a tribe in order to work out some unspecified "effects" is anthropomorphic and, to put it plainly, superstitious. Evolution has occurred. We have no reason to think it has occurred with a purpose, or to feel any obligation to further such a purpose. As Dr. Julian Huxley says, "Purposes in life are made, not found."

Sir Arthur Keith bolsters his anthropomorphic view of evolution by positing in man's mental constitution an invincible enmity towards all not of his "tribe." Why, he asks, do "tribes" not amalgamate? The answer surely is that they do. On Sir Arthur's own showing, nations owe their existence to the amalgamation of tribes or other lesser groups; and such amalgamations have not always been compulsory. In 1707 the representatives of England and Scotland united those kingdoms into one, the kingdom of Great Britain. I might further cite the federal union of the Swiss cantons, the American States, or the Soviet Socialist Republics. Sir Arthur Keith's hypothesis of a perpetual

war between tribe and tribe is by no means accepted by all anthropologists: I need name only Elliot Smith and Perry. It is contradicted by the phenomena of language. Families of languages such as the Indo-European, the Semitic and the Ural-Altaic are common to a large variety of tribes and nations, and can have arisen only by mutual intercourse between tribes: The evidence of early trade routes and the diffusion of culture (if we admit it to be a fact) point to the same conclusion. The biologically pure tribe eternally averse to amalgamation, and breeding true in instinctive loyalty to the purpose of Nature, is a myth.*

Even if we were, in defiance of evidence and reason, to accept this picture as true of primitive society, the fact would remain that it had ceased to be true of the society we know. Sir Arthur Keith fallaciously uses "community," "tribe" and "nation" as convertible terms. A nation to him is just a big tribe. But that is to leave the most important part of the story untold. In point of fact, modern nations owe their existence not to the amalgamation of tribes so much as to the growth of industry, commerce and communication. To attribute the origin of the British, French or German nation solely to the prowess of this or that King, Kaiser or Führer, is bad history. England and France became nations because merchant capitalists, whether their tribal origins were Saxon, Danish, Norman, Frankish or Gallic, needed a strong central government to keep the feudal barons from robbing them, and were ready to vote money to the king for that object. Germany became a nation because her petty principalities with their frontiers and customs were nothing but a nuisance in a country with rapidly growing industries, and Prussian militarism at least served the purpose of sweeping them away. Sir Arthur's entire omission of the economic factor shows how far he is from even the beginnings of a scientific sociology.

To-day industry, commerce and communication have made the world one in a way that was impossible in any previous historic era. Mankind is economically interdependent. The sovereign nation-State has become as great an anachronism and nuisance as the robber baron in the later Middle Ages or the petty German princeling in the 19th century. Regardless of Sir Arthur Keith's "tribal mentality," the international solidarity of the peoples of the world is growing. It is showing itself even in the present war, in the effort of the United Nations and in the underground struggle against Nazi Fascism. The total victory of the peoples is the next step forward in social evolution.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

*The assertion that the Jews have "bred true" is particularly false. A study of the history of proselytism should have taught Sir Arthur better.

THE MEANING AND MISSION OF "RATIONALISM"

(Continued from page 168)

THE revelation of Science (the mirror of Nature) as to our planet and solar system, is that of a constellation moving in space round the sun; and other systems seemingly engaged in an endless procession through infinity. The means by which our world came into being with its multiform strata, mineral, vegetable and animal forms, and differentiations, is explained as due to a series of mutations classed as "Evolution." One phase, Geology, traces the development of inorganic variation, another, Biology, the growth of organic, that is, sentient Life. Out of this process, at some uncertain time, there has emerged the human species to which we have the distinction to belong. Far from a "fallen angel," he must have proved one of the most savage and cunning of variations to have survived the perils and agonies which compassed him about, and to have spread over the habitable globe. In the course of ages he has succeeded in

achieving a measure of invention and resource that affords a limited command over availing means of subsistence. In more recent centuries a proportion of the horde, through one cause or another, has attained to those qualities and characteristics which we define as "culture" and "civilisation." The primal nature remains beneath the surface, according to the degree in which those qualities have or have not become a habit, liable to break forth under stimulus into the exhibition of sadism and ruthless aggression now afflicting the world. For beyond his predation at large, man, as occasion served, has also preyed on his fellows.

So the mythus of the "Fall" and "Redemption" of man passes to the realm of speculation and fantasy by which an ignorant antiquity sought to interrogate the nature of things.* Yet the story as set forth in Genesis is ingenious as indicating questions which troubled its creators. The advent of man himself, the ills that continue to afflict his course, the presence of an evil power—Satan, the accuser, in conflict with *le bon Dieu*, who looked on his work and saw that it was good! . . .

Our view of phenomena is relative in its interpretation. The history of our planet from the period when the Earth's crust had been formed, divided between fluid and "solid" matter, presents extraordinary features, with numerous lacunæ in the physical record or evidence. What preceded this condition remains for hypothesis. Geology exhibits a series of epochs and strata rising from the basic Plutonic to the Tertiary, which brings us to our existing period. Forms of organic Life and inorganic compounds appear to undergo manifold changes in the course of ages, with corresponding differences of climate and distribution of land and water. Types of organism emerge to disappear; followed by others in another epoch, distinctive in structure, except for a certain anatomical design.

"On entering the Tertiary strata the palæontologist finds that organic nature has undergone a complete change—that every plant and animal with which he became acquainted

* Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. . . . (Romans 5, v. 12, *et seq.*)

(Continued on next page)

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3-30 p.m., Mr. L. Ebury.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park): Thursday, 7 p.m., Mr. E. C. SAPHIR. Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. G. F. WOOD and supporting speakers.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Sunday 11 a.m., Dr. R. H. THOULESS—"Hatred in War Time."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Glasgow): Sunday, 3 p.m., Annual General Meeting.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blyth (The Fountain): Monday, May 17, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway): Sunday, 6-30 p.m. (if wet, Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate), a Lecture.

Chester-le-Street (Bridge End): Saturday, May 15, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound): Sunday, 7-30 p.m., a Lecture.

Newcastle-on-Tyne (Bigg Market): Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

North Shields (Harbour View): Tuesday, May 18, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

THE MEANING AND MISSION OF "RATIONALISM"

(Continued from previous page.)

when studying the Secondary rocks has passed away, and that he has now entered on a wholly new stage of existence. Never before did so thorough and total a change take place in the flora and fauna of the globe. The flora is distinguished from that of the older epochs by the abundance of dicotyledonous trees (oaks, beeches, elms, etc.), of which a few leaves and fragments only have as yet been detected in the Cretaceous rocks, and even these are of wholly different species. The monocotyledons, especially palms, also become greatly more numerous; while the conifers, previously so abundant, no longer occupy a prominent place. . . . The fauna of the system is equally characteristic. It was pre-eminently the age of mammalia; for, though mammals, both marsupial and placental, are known to have existed in Secondary ages, only a few vestiges of either occur in formations lower down than the Eocene. . . . Altogether, upwards of 100 genera of mammals occur in the Tertiary rocks, and what is still more remarkable, all the existing orders of the class are represented, though unequally."

Evolution is a term which replaces the older notion of special Creation as a mode of explanation. It simply traces the sequence of phenomena and can yield no answer to such questions as to *why* they partake of a particular direction. Why, when "Life" emerges, it goes forward through a murderous struggle for existence where the "fittest" survive—to what end? What agency brought about the organic revolution indicated above? While the speculation is suggested as to whether similar factors are operative in other worlds of our system. The causes of the differentiation of mankind, as he spreads over the globe, from some primal stock into a variety of races and peoples and characteristics, remain obscure to ourselves.

The idea of special creation links with a purposive Power, and is native to the mind at a certain stage of development when it has reached to monotheism. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." . . . That is conclusive and has held its credence for centuries; and when wider vistas of natural history are opened up, the previous view is extended to imply Divine intervention over indefinite periods. Even after this becomes a tenuous proposition to investigators, in "teleological" concerns we get such phrasing as "Nature has seen to it," etc. . . . So difficult is it to think of unconscious, diffused "matter" resolving at length into an organised midge, or mastodon; into granite or diamonds; and also into a self-conscious animal who worries himself over it all!

Theistic beliefs in East or West have been associated with human attributes variously understood. When widened apprehension of the "immensities and eternities" makes this view no longer feasible, a more abstract metaphysic merges natively into the whole Enigma of Existence. The negation of traditional Theism (= *A-Theos*, without God) still leaves us with the problem minus a specious solution; and carrying the theme into Infinity, in view of all the antinomies involved in its consideration, we are led to the conclusion that it lies beyond human cognisance whatsoever. . . .

Full often when I gaze on thee (the moon),
Standing so still above these desert wastes
Whose far circumference borders on the sky,
Or, as my flock moves with me, following on,
By slow and silent steps, along the heavens;
Strange thoughts arise within me, and I say:
These myriad torches, why are they alight?
Unto what end that infinite of air,
Those infinite depths of azure sky serene?
What does this solitude so vast import,
And what am I?

Thou lone eternal pilgrim, thou,
Thus with myself I reason; questioning
Whereto this boundless glorious universe,
And living things innumerable there?
Then of the ceaseless toil I think, the mighty
powers
That move all things on earth, all things in
heaven,
Revolving without pause unceasingly,
To come back evermore to whence they
sprang. . . . †

Recognition of limitations is the beginning of wisdom. It remains to note its residual essence herein.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

(To be concluded)

† Leopardi: "Night Chant of a Nomad Asiatic Shepherd."

CATHOLIC EDUCATION

FOR the motive behind the banning of Edith Moore's "No Friend of Democracy" by the New Zealand Censorship Department we need not look far. The book indicts the Roman Catholic Church as a friend of Fascism, and adduces historical facts in support of that contention. Roman Catholic sources are quoted with such effect as to condemn the Church out of its own mouth. It is therefore rather interesting to conjecture, whether the bare recital of those Catholic sources, without any comment from the author, would have been censored. Actually, such a procedure might well be carried out, for the New Zealand Rationalist Association is putting up a spirited protest, including the launching of a public petition, and, if this is not effective, further measures are envisaged.

Meanwhile, Miss Moore has a leaflet (8 pp.) on the menace of the Catholic Education Campaign (International Publishing Company), showing how the Catholic Church is preparing to meet the widespread campaign against dual control (Church and State) of schools. Meetings of the Council for Educational Advance, for instance, have had noisy receptions from Catholics, and members of the Catholic Teachers' Guild are working inside the National Union of Teachers to undermine its adherence to that Council; and as for the despicable Labour Party, the history of its dealings with Catholics, in this and other matters, needs no comment here.

Catholics like to claim that, as taxpayers, they pay for Council Schools which they cannot use; but it has been calculated, to quote Miss Moore, that "from 92 to 96 per cent. of the total costs of Church Schools comes from the Government and local authorities." Obviously, if the segregation of children is admissible for Catholics, where should it stop; and what would be the educational effect? What other than division, rivalry, bigotry and an altogether pro-sect and anti-social outlook? It would result in the blindness and bigotry of the parent being thrust before the child at an age when the latter is unable to fathom it; and there are other school subjects, particularly history, which suffer as a by-product.

So the Church insists that Catholic parents should use their freedom to send their children to Roman Catholic schools. This is how the freedom should be used: "Any parents sending their children to a non-Catholic school, if there is a Catholic school in the district, and without permission, are guilty of a mortal sin. . . . Parents so offending, according to the law of the Church, shall be refused the Sacraments and may no longer call themselves Roman Catholics." ("Catholic Herald," July 16, 1932.)

G. H. TAYLOR.