

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

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Vol. LXV.—No. 10

Sunday, March 11, 1945

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Doctors and the Pope

It was reported recently that the Pope was ill and that medical advice had been called in. There was nothing in these happenings to cause surprise. Any one of us may be ill, and most of us have enough sense to seek medical aid. But the head of the Roman Church is beyond, or above such procedure—at least he ought to be. In the first place he is—theoretically—where he is because God induced the Cardinals to elect him, and while the Pope would say that whether he lives or dies he is in the hands of God, it does indicate a degree of doubt if a physician is called in to hold God at bay. An Atheist might well be excused for such an implied distrust of God's wisdom; but surely not his representative on earth. If Christian annals are to be trusted, many a man has got into serious trouble for trying to outwit God. Jonah is a case in point.

But there are special reasons why the head of the Catholic Church should be chary in casting even a shadow of doubt on the absolute efficiency of supernatural aid where disease or illness is concerned. About 400 B.C. the great Hippocrates laid down definitely that all disease arises from natural sources. That decision has marked medical science, and the oath of Hippocrates is one that every doctor repeats when taking his degree. But unfortunately for the world the Churches, following Jesus, decided that disease came from God or the devil, or from both. Our English Prayer Book takes the view that all disease is due to God's visitation. The Prayer Book stops at that, but the belief that disease is miraculously caused, and therefore may be miraculously cured still has a very large number of supporters in this country. It will be noted that when the King is ill very elaborate religious services are held, but the best medical men we have are called in to help God in his job. If the King is cured God is thanked. The doctor has to be satisfied with a substantial cheque—and perhaps a knighthood.

But the Roman Church more than refused to give up the miraculous view of disease. It elaborated it. There is, and always has been, money in it, not to mention status. The cure of disease through the agency of Saints is a very prominent feature of Roman Catholicism, and there is a regular number of Saints each with his, or her, allotted job. No exact payment is demanded, but it is there all the same. There is in the Catholic Church an unbroken teaching that special Saints cure special diseases. But while the Pope believes in angelic cures, he has a doctor in case of an accident. Believers would be shocked if they were in the habit of thinking out the matter. It may be noted that if in this country any responsible person leaves a sick person without calling a doctor, in the case of death, he is subject to a criminal charge for neglecting

to call in a medical man. As we have said, no fixed charge is made by the Church. The plan is worked on the old-fashioned cabman's way when asked "How much?" The reply was usually, "Leave it to you, sir." It paid better.

Taking all things together the different Popes have not been very fortunate in the past twenty-five years in their major political manœuvring. It is true they were elected by the College of Cardinals, but they also are guarded by God. It was not wise, for example, for the papacy to come to terms with Mussolini, although it received a large sum of money by way of exchange. The papal blessing of Franco was also unfortunate. The papacy was also unmoved by the Italian raids on Greece and Abyssinia. It also took very easily the decision of Hitler and Mussolini to share out Europe between themselves. These were all bad moves for the papacy, and the constant use of "Democracy" by the present Pope is not very impressive. Still, we must not be harsh on this last point, for our own Prime Minister, who is the head of the Conservative Party, is also fond of praising "Democracy." After all, if one takes Lincoln's description of Democracy as "Government of the people, by the people and for the people," one has only to make it read, "Government of the people, by *some* of the people, and for *a few* people," the change would not be noted by many people. Probably ninety per cent. would not notice the change.

But we must be just, particularly when dealing with one with whom we may disagree. Roman Catholics here and in Rome are seriously disappointed because at the recent meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, the Pope was not asked to be present, even by proxy. It is a fact, says the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Edinburgh, that "every effort is being made to prevent the Holy Father from exercising his salutary influence in the organisation of peace plans, and the Allies acquiescing meekly in the destruction of smaller States by one member of the Alliance, not because they feel it to be just, but because they have not the moral courage to protest." There is only the one member who cannot be trusted. It is Stalin who has blustered or bullied or frightened Churchill and Roosevelt into submission. It is this we are asked to believe.

But why should the Pope be present? Here is the reason: "No mind of man, no mere human genius, however brilliant, no statesman, whatever be his ability and experience is equal to this gigantic task. If a satisfactory solution is to be found, it can only be through the power of Almighty God and the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost."

So now we know where we are, and as neither God nor the Holy Ghost will attend in person, the licensed member should be the Pope or someone representing these two beings. There is a further reason for letting Heaven loose, this is that some real Heavenly authority must be there to "check the ruler of the Russians who only recognises

God to blaspheme those who love and reverence the Holy name." What liars and cowards Churchill and Roosevelt must be! We confess we never pictured them as crawling before Stalin, but we assume that the Archbishop has been getting information direct from Heaven. The Archbishop may probably have some further information, and if mere human beings cannot manage the situation then it follows that the Pope is the only person who can save the after-war world. But in that matter we respectfully submit that the credentials of the party as representing God on earth should be very carefully examined. The awkward point is here that ever since Christianity came upon the scene it has never been settled who does really represent God on earth. How is this to be decided? It is true that the Catholic Archbishop of Edinburgh gives us the conversion of Russia as an essential move, but apart from this he can only suggest that we call in the Mother of Jesus because, "Never has her assistance been sought in vain." We are not so certain in this matter, and quite candidly we fancy that when it comes to action more reliance will be placed by the priesthood on those Roman Catholics who hold key positions in the State. In either case we may rely upon the mass of the Church's followers being fooled.

The Pope and the Peace Conference

But if it will give help to the editors of the three Roman Catholic papers, The "Universe," the "Catholic Herald" and the "Catholic Times," I suggest a very strong case exists for having the Pope at the peace table where the future of the world is planned. I am suggesting this in all seriousness because the Pope does represent one of the oldest and the widest spread examples of Fascism in action.

Consider. Nazism with its idiotic race theory will certainly be set aside. It is a theory that can be held only by those who lack an understanding of the evolution of Man. But there is need for an understanding and therefore a discussion of Fascism. It is here that the Pope may serve a very useful purpose, indeed I cannot think of anyone who is better fitted to represent Fascism. Some time ago I thought I would mark the number of those who used two terms—Fascism and Nazism, as identical. The number who so misused the two terms was so great that I soon gave it up. The illdoers ran from the Prime Minister onward. Yet the distinction of the two is quite clear, and it does not need very much wisdom to recognise the differences. Fascism meets us, in fact, in ancient history. Nazism is Fascism with a single addition, that of the idiotic race theory. Antiquity lacked this. It recognised different groups of humans, but that is all. One community might consider itself superior in knowledge, in art, even in general culture to another, but nothing further. Even the colour brand was generally no more than a difference. For all that Fascism stood for was a form of government. Where heredity did not rule it stood for appointment, by a group, or by the community as a whole, and from that stage all the rest depended upon appointment, either direct or delegated. In theory it may sound well. The best selected man is appointed as ruler, and he picks out the best-fitted for whatever position needs filling. It reads and sounds very well, but in practice it ends in tyranny and a denial of what is understood by Democracy.

Where then is the place of the Roman Catholic Church? Well, it is there, in almost a pure Fascist system. Theoretically, there is only one man in the whole of the Roman Catholic Church who is elected, that is the Pope. After that, all are appointed. Of course, the Pope is appointed by God, and all the others that follow the Catholic plan would say that he acted under the inspiration of God, but we may let that pass. Granting complete honesty and perfect judgment, the Fascist way is theoretically a good plan on which to work. In actual working it means trickery, dishonesty, favouritism and bad management with a host of minor faults.

Still, it might be a good thing to have the Pope present as the head of a Fascist institution that may claim to be the oldest in the world. He would stand there as the only ruler who really rules, and he would be proud of it—until the Allies sitting round the table asked for a report of the influence of Roman Catholic rule on the life of the people. And then I think the degree of lying, false reasoning, brutality, and the denials of the right of free speech, the open destruction of real human brotherhood and human progress, would incline the Pope to ask when he thought of his election to a world-making committee. "Who threw that brick?"

CHAPMAN COHEN

ATHEISM FOR BEGINNERS

III.

THE most valid argument against Design is that formulated first, I think, by Mr. Chapman Cohen. Before you can definitely say that the "Universe" is designed, you must conclusively show that you know what was the original intention of the Designer, and prove that what you say was designed fulfils in every detail that intention. In his "Theism or Atheism" (pp. 82-84), Mr. Cohen says:—

"You cannot start with a material fact and reach intention. You must begin with intention and compare it with the physical result. Things may be as they are whether design is involved or not. It is only by a knowledge of intention, and a comparison of that with the fact before us that we can be certain of design. Proof of design is not found in the capacity of certain clusters of circumstances or forces to realise a particular result, but in a knowledge that they correspond with an intention which we know to have existed before the result occurs. . . . No examination of nature can lead back to God because we lack the necessary starting point. All the volumes that have been written, and all the sermons that have been preached depicting the wisdom of organic structures are so much waste of paper and breath. They prove nothing and can prove nothing. They assume at the beginning all they require at the end. Their God is not something reached by way of inference, it is something assumed at the very outset."

Quite a number of first-class Theists and Christians in any case had realised the obvious deficiencies in the Design Argument and admitted that it not only failed to produce a God, that is one God, but failed to show when a God was produced that he had the admirable qualities of intelligence, wisdom, love, and so on, lauded to the skies so much by his believers. A number of them decided that only by the a priori (cause to effect) method of reasoning could you really prove God exists. Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Samuel Clarke, Descartes, T. H. Green

Hegel, James Martineau, and many others in different degrees, favoured the ontological argument, as it is called, and if the reader is fond of studying the meaning of words and following close reasoning he should try his hand at refuting some of these writers.

There was one work written specially for the conversion of Atheists by the a priori method which certainly caused plenty of discussion in the middle of the last century—that by William Honyman Gillespie, called "The Necessary Existence of God" (1833), later very much expanded and given the title "The Argument, a priori, for the Being and the Attributes of the Absolute One, and the First Cause of all Things." The final edition appears to have been published in 1871—Gillespie working on his book for over forty years.

The early edition was replied to by an anonymous Freethinker, put forward by the Glasgow Secular Society, called Antitheos, for whom Gillespie always expressed admiration though he claimed to have knocked him out of the controversy with his "Examination of Antitheos's Refutation." A number of other Freethinkers tried their hand later, and in particular in the early editions of "A Plea For Atheism" will be found Charles Bradlaugh's examination of Gillespie.

The Scotch metaphysician was convinced that Atheism hadn't a leg to stand on, and defined an Atheist propagandist as "a nondescript monster created by nature in a moment of madness." Bradlaugh felt that it was his business to show Atheism as logical, honest, and true, and Gillespie, after making sure that Bradlaugh was worth discussing with, and that he was put forward as their champion by many of the Secular societies existing in 1867, threw down a challenge to debate the whole issue in the pages of the "National Reformer."

This debate is far too long and involved even to be summarised in these columns and it certainly was not only very interesting but it called forth the whole power of Bradlaugh in controversy. He allowed, in addition, a number of other writers to have their say and the complete discussion was published by Gillespie most carefully annotated with all kinds of comments and notes in 1872. I have not been able to see this volume, but the first half appeared in 1869 and this I have before me as I write. I am quite at a loss to understand why, in the accounts of Bradlaugh's debates in his biography by Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, there is nothing said of this verbal and wordy discussion with Gillespie.

It would be a big mistake to suppose that Gillespie was not a very able man, and he made great play with the striking admissions and disagreements of his opponents. He seemed glad to meet foemen worthy of his steel, and with the greatest urbanity met their arguments—in my opinion—exceptionally well. Bradlaugh had no use whatever for the Design Argument, and had no difficulty in demolishing it; and in his early editions of the "Plea for Atheism," he devoted nearly eight pages of his pamphlet in dealing and refuting, or trying to refute, Gillespie. In the later editions, all this is omitted, and Gillespie is honoured only by being mentioned as one of the supporters of the Argument a priori.

In the debate in the "National Reformer," Bradlaugh refused to budge far from Gillespie's First Proposition—"Infinity of Extension is necessarily existing." Gillespie considered this absolutely incontrovertible, and they both roamed over many columns discussing the meaning of each word. Once safely over this, Gillespie took you to number two—"Infinity of extension is necessarily indivisible." This led you to the Corollary—"Infinity of extension is necessarily immovable." And so you get "There is necessarily a being of infinity of extension."

You are here only at the beginning of Gillespie's Propositions, and you are led very gently through many others to "The simple sole being of infinity and of duration, who is all knowing, all powerful, entirely happy, and completely happy, is necessarily perfect and good."

In his last editions Gillespie who, in spite of his acute metaphysical mind, seemed never to have given up a very large dose of Scottish Presbyterianism, endowed his "being of infinity and duration" with qualities, such as "God the Lord is the Best, so He is the Wisest of Beings and of ineffable Moral Purity. God the Lord is the Holiest One. The Lord God is the Self Beautiful, and the All Perfect Being—the Lord God is, necessarily, the Ever Blessed One."

I cannot do justice here, however, to Gillespie and his book, and particularly to his debate with Bradlaugh. He claimed that Bradlaugh was beaten, for the redoubtable "Iconoclast" got thoroughly weary* of trying to get clearly in his mind what Gillespie meant by the various terms and words he used. Bradlaugh himself carefully defined his terms, basing a good deal of his nomenclature on Spinoza, and Gillespie insisted on this being somewhat out of date.

At all events, the beginner in Atheism will find it, if he can get hold of a copy of the "Argument a priori," a good opportunity for refuting a work which the author considered completely overthrew the Atheistic position by the sheer weight of its unanswerable logic.

For us in these days, as has been shown often in this journal, the whole problem has been shifted. Science and particularly anthropology has exposed quite clearly the "origins" of the God idea, and such a work as Gillespie's is now hopelessly out of date.

He had no use for the Design Argument in any case. "The a posteriori argument (he says) reaches only a little way. If we confine ourselves merely to its evidence, we shall inevitably find ourselves surrounded by serious difficulties. This argument can never make it appear that infinity belongs in any way to God; for by no rule in philosophy can we deduce an infinite existence from a finite effect."

Cardinal Newman's brother, Professor F. W. Newman, who never gave up belief in God, had to confess the Design Argument never gave him satisfaction; while Humboldt, Jobert, and even Thomas Carlyle, among many others, all dismiss it as no proof of a God. But they do not seem to have thought much of the a priori argument either.

If the old logic and the new science both refute the existence of Deity—a personal God whose habitation is in the heavens, there is no need for the modern Atheist to be afraid of saying quite clearly, "There is no God." It is indeed the only thing he can say.

H. CUTNER.

* What Bradlaugh thought of the debate can be seen in the following: "I have until now permitted Mr. Gillespie in this correspondence (debate it is not) to praise himself, and to quote others in praise of himself. I have hitherto inserted without stint his statements, and depreciation of myself, and all his other opponents; but the repetition becomes tiresome, and if Mr. Gillespie's correspondents mistake egotistic twaddle for metaphysics, and wearisome repetition for demonstration, it is a mistake not shared by the many readers who have written me on the subject."

TRUTH

O thou fair Truth, for thee alone we seek,
Friend to the wise, supporter to the weak;
From thee we learn what'er is right and just—
Creeds to reject, professions to distrust,
Forms to despise, pretensions to deride,
And, following thee, to follow nought beside.

—GEORGE CRABBE.

THAT MARRIAGE—"ABOUT IT AND ABOUT"

IN the "Sunday Empire News," Dr. W. E. Sangster has had an article entitled "Marry In Church Only If You Mean It To Last."

There is a sinister implication in the title. It is insulting; as it is unmistakable!

It postulates the contingency that some who get married in Church do not mean it to last; that, like the "nice girl" he claims to know, they may have in mind what she had when she told him—"Oh, well, if it goes wrong . . . there is always divorce."

To the reader his comment is—"Too many, I fear, have entered marriage in that way" . . . The impudence and effrontery of such a pretended fear!

Neither he nor anybody else can possibly "know" what the "too many" have in mind when getting married. He has no justification for his unctuous, hypocritical fear.

And how dare he so insultingly suggest that any couple, whether getting married in Church or elsewhere, do not mean it to last! However, so much for the title. It has a nasty taste; a distinctly "Christian" nasty taste!

The article opens with a description of the legal procedures governing marriage. It is interestingly correct and calls for no comment.

Then he makes his first "lead." He says of the "slight variations" in procedure which are possible—"that the normal distinction lies between the Church and the Registry Office."

Then in large type—"Let it be clear from the start that, in the eyes of the Law and of the community, both are fully legitimate ways of getting wed." A magnanimous admission.

Then in ordinary type—"the status of the children and the firmness of the bond are *theoretically* (italics mine) precisely the same." Mmm!

Note the greasy Christian craftiness of the difference between "fully legitimate" in the one paragraph and "theoretically precisely the same" in the other.

"Fully legitimate" indicates an established thing; "theoretically" indicates a thing not necessarily (or as yet) established and which may be quibbled at and debated; nay, even denied, directly or by implication, by those whose interests or stupidity incline them to such a course.

Which, Christian Dr. W. E. Sangster insidiously proceeds to do—in effect.

He asks: "What idea do the couple really hold as to the nature of marriage?" He can be told flatly!—neither he nor anybody else can ever know. He couldn't get to "know" even if he asked them all.

He goes on: "Is it, in its essence, a legal thing, or is it essentially sacramental?" In this he has in mind marriage in Church only and can again be told flatly!—it "is" in essence a legal thing; and nothing "theoretical" about it; and "fully legitimate" too.

As to the "sacramental" part of it, that creeps in only because it is one of the rites of the Church, and is not in the least essential; any more than is the froth on a pint of good old ale.

It is the fact of the officiating clergyman's being also at the time legally a registrar that makes the marriage "fully legitimate" and not "theoretically" so.

The sacramental ornament on the ceremony is, like all other ornaments, quite unessential. It doesn't even rise to the status of "theoretical."

It has no more significance or essence than the elaborate rites of other pretentious human organisations.

Then queries Dr. Sangster: "Is it an arrangement between a man and a woman, or is God in it?" Well, that makes one sit back. With regard to the man and woman "arrangement" in the affair, we might, like Pooh-Bah, pontificate—"We have known it done"; but as to God being in it, there is not the

slightest evidence to warrant even a suspicion of such a tenuous presence.

Many, who are married, hold the opinion in later years that the Devil must have been in it; but even that is merely an emotional "theory" and may be lumped with the sacrament as unessential.

The "fully legitimate" stage of the proceedings is arrived at without God, the Devil, the sacrament, or the priest—except in his office as a registrar. The priest, merely as such, counts for nothing. Neither does the Church, as such. It is the registrar in the parson's robes which gives it its status, a status not a whit superior to that of the registry office. Virtually it is a registry office with a trifle of crooning thrown in by way of emotional overweight.

The reverend Sangster knows all that, but he doesn't like the fact. Then he comes a little closer to grips. He wants to know, regarding those being married in Church: "If God is in it; is He in their thoughts in the sense that the vows are openly taken in His publicly acknowledged Presence?"

Dr. Sangster, or the printer, has here slipped up on the "capital" in "Presence." It was spelled with a small "p." The error has been rectified—quite easily. We reserve the right, though, to use a small "p" when referring to it. Mark again the Christian subtlety of the reverend gentleman—"acknowledged Presence." The implication is that the Church is the only place of "acknowledged Presence."

So that couples getting married in Church might believe (if they were simpletons) their wedding gained thereby an ethereal, mysterious investment wholly absent from a marriage in the registry office . . . In the face of the Church's own teaching the childish absurdity of this is patent.

The teaching is, amongst other things "theoretical," that their God is omnipresent, everywhere. That being so (so to say) one (or two or so) could be married in a balloon or a brothel, at the bottom of a coal mine or on the top of its slagheap, or anywhere else; not to mention the registry office, and He would be there.

Whatever halo or influence His supposed presence in the Church might bestow on a marriage would be equally bestowed on the top of a gasometer—if the registrar was there, with or without the parson vestments. "Acknowledged Presence" forsooth! Bah!

Notwithstanding Dr. Sangster's admission that marriages both in registry office and in church are "fully legitimate," and his hedging statement that the status of the children and the bond are "theoretically" precisely the same, he is out, in his article, to convey the impression that the church ceremony has a Ju-ju which the registry office has not. That is the purpose of the article; whatever Christian quibbling or circumlocution may be woven round the fact to camouflage it.

On the conveyed impression that the "acknowledged Presence" is only in church, read him again in large type: "Now that is a big difference: a very big difference. If we hold that distinction in mind, it would be comparatively easy to decide who should go to church and who should use the registry office."

There—that's bold enough! It could be added that if the "acknowledged Presence" is the "distinction," it would be just as easy to decide who should use a balloon, a brothel, a slagheap or the top of a gasometer; because Dr. Sangster and all of his kidney preach omnipresence. They preach monopoly of (bogus) sanctity away out of their own citadels. Everywhere is air as far as the presence is concerned. The situation is as farcical as Gilbert's lines: "When everybody's somebody, then nobody's anybody."

He further asks couples who are undecided where to wed: "Do you, or do you not want publicly to acknowledge God's claim upon you and to take your vows before him for ever and ever?"

For ever and ever!—by all the immensities of Time past and future, the reverend Sangster sure spills a bibful there! For ever

and ever?—and Dr. Sangster knows very well there are no marriages in heaven. It would be indecent! horrible! obscene! And no marriages in heaven—no registrars. Poor devils! the inference is plain.

No—everybody is divorced automatically at death; becoming gay bachelor or spinster again for ever and ever! What a life!

Surely! surely! the inside of his cheek (his facial cheek) and the tip of his tongue have met this many a time!

As to whether they want to admit any claims of God upon them, he can judge for himself by their subsequent conduct. Do they come to church? The coldness and indifference of 90 per cent. of the people tell him they do not want to make any such acknowledgement of any claims of God's.

It is either the church or the registry office for the marriage, and, as Dr. Sangster himself admits, "a spin of the coin may decide it."

Dr. Sangster develops: "If a couple have no faith in religion at all"—i.e., merely want to get married—"let them go to the registry office."

There you have it again in all its Christian baldness—if they won't come to the palace, let them go to the dustbin. Heil Sangster!

One can almost hear an arrogance from the centuries thundering: "Ay, and let them go to the Devil if they won't come to church"—or rather, burn 'em here before sending them to him, as a foretaste.

The marriage fees of Britain's churches would be but a trickle if all who had no faith in religion went to a registry office to be married, as Dr. Sangster arrogantly suggests they should.

He knows that, and knows he can indulge his insolent boldness in telling people to use the registry office if they don't "believe," because the church, as a marriage venue, is largely a convention which will last his time out, at least; as will burial fees, which are charged to people willy-nilly.

The publishing of the banns in church is now a futility. In other and more credulous days the size of the congregations could justly be described as a concourse of the people, and a reasonable degree of publicity assumed.

But can the present-day wan and very thin attendances of old women, either in female or male attire, be presumed as lending publicity to anything? The answer is obvious.

Dr. Sangster's peroration is to the effect that: "If they want to make their marriage 'successful and permanent,' let them come to church." The implication here is—if you don't want it to endure go to the registry office. Whew! This subtle disparagement of the registry office, which is a Crown office, might be actionable.

Further he claims: "Marriage is not just a human custom: it is a divine institution." Well—it isn't known whether Dr. Sangster really believes that, but if he took that stand on a public platform against a knowledgeable anthropologist, he would have a rough time of it.

He wouldn't be so foolish as that were he told to read any treatise on the evolution of marriage—written by a scientific investigator and not by a Christian apologist.

Of course, he could read both types, but even then he would be chary of taking the platform.

He ends his article with a few idyllic (not idiotic, Mr. Printer) remarks about Robert Browning and his wife who, he says, were married in a "golden secret hour" in Marylebone Church. In an acknowledged Presence, it is to be assumed.

Despite his idyllic comments, if Dr. Sangster would delve into his Browning he would find much to make him click his teeth, even though God might be in His heaven and all right with the world.

ARTHUR GODFREY.

TORIES AND THE CHURCH

I DO not know who it was who first said that "the Church of England is the Tory Party on its knees," but, whoever was the originator of that pregnant saying, he certainly spoke sense. A new book entitled "Why Not Trust the Tories?" (Gollancz; 2s. 6d.), by Aneurin Bevan, M.P., gives new points to the old saying. Mr. Bevan's main task is to point out the brilliant way in which the Tory Party has almost invariably succeeded in bamboozling the electorate of this country into supporting the side of power and privilege. But there is one special aspect of the fight for freedom which will appeal to Freethinkers and that is the way in which the Church has been converted into a tool for the defence of the powers that be. The late Archbishop of Canterbury, it is true, did show an occasional sign of interest in social questions, but that was only his personal reaction of the Beveridge Report. And there is certainly no sign at all that his successor has any particular interest in political and economic affairs.

Mr. Bevan goes over this history of the period immediately following the end of the last war, with the object of warning the younger members of the electorate against being deceived in the same way this time. And he points out one fact which Freethinkers would do well to note. The first hint of the Tory plot to foist a Coalition Government (Tory in origin and inspiration) came from the Church. In Mr. Bevan's words, "appropriately enough, it was the Archbishop of Canterbury who was selected to give an odour of sanctity." His plea for a cessation of the pre-war squabbles between parties and classes was made during a sermon delivered in Westminster Abbey on November 10, 1918.

I am anxious to point this out to readers of these columns in order that they should be forewarned. Plans are obviously afoot to instal the powers of privilege as soon as the European end of this war is reached. We may be sure that the Church will be as willing as ever to take part in whatever schemes are being devised. It may well be that Freethinkers, who are more alive to the dangers of Church interference than the majority of their neighbours, will be the first to scent something of this sort in the wind. I hope that they will do their best to "blow the gaff" as soon as anything of the kind make its appearance.

S. H.

ACID DROPS

JUST before the war we remember the case of a Roman Catholic Congress held in the Caxton Hall, with the speakers very jubilant as to the prospect before them. There was some ground for their rejoicing—the numbers of Roman Catholics in this country had continued—at the cost of Protestants. Beyond that the Vatican was on good terms with Mussolini, it stood well with Spain and that double-dealer, Franco; the Church was strong in Germany, and the stronghold of Fascist Poland was then unshaken. So the Congress went along happily, and one of the speakers could say with much justification:—

"We are receiving converts from almost all nations and sects. As people realise that Protestantism is dying they must instinctively turn to the ever-growing Roman Catholic Church. The Church of England is fast becoming a farce. Numerically we have just as much right to be the national Church. The Church will soon change to a sect and even possibly to an insect."

Then the bubble burst. In Poland there is not likely to be anything like the number of followers of the Roman Church there was in the pre-war Poland. The Vatican realises this, and it accounts for the Catholics being angry against the Allies for agreeing on the banishment of Fascism, and so breaking the hold of the Catholic Church in Poland. And in Italy, if the Italians get the proper form of government, the power

of the Vatican will be nothing like it was. Nor do we think that the speakers who jeered at the English Church in 1939 will feel so jolly at the prospect of to-day.

The Right Honourable Ernest Brown is rather fond of mounting the pulpit and advising people, and his latest is the not very original discovery that the world needs a great revival of religion. Well, if the world needs that what stands in the way of the great revival materialising? Much as the power of religion has declined, it is still strong enough for many politicians to be afraid of it. The attack on Atheism is not nowadays open and, so far, honest, but it goes on, and it is often more dangerous than in the days when the attack was made in set terms. We do not know what Mr. Ernest Brown's real opinions on religion are, nor are we certain that he is not speaking with his tongue in his cheek, but it is obvious that he stands to gain more by playing the religious card than he would by offering the Atheistic one.

Not being able to persuade—or force—the Government to foot the entire bill for the religious education of children of Roman Catholics, the R.C. bishops have resorted to the kind of propaganda by which Goebbels managed to corrupt a generation of Germans. We are not surprised at this because we have always claimed that German Nazism and Roman Catholic Fascism are two birds from the same nest. Degrees of persecution and of intolerance mark differences of opportunity. They do not mark differences of principle. The Roman Catholic Inquisition, with its elaborate machinery for torture, was a plain forerunner of the German Gestapo. Nazi Germany had no need to invent, the whole system lay before it.

Naturally the Roman Catholic Church welcomed the Government's move to reinstate the parson in the schools, but only so far as it would pave the way for making it easy for Catholics to benefit. It is now fighting for the continuation of R.C. schools with the whole of the costs being paid by the State. We agree that if the State pays the cost of Protestant teaching in one set of schools it should also pay the costs of Roman Catholic schools. But neither logic nor justice stands much chance of acting where religion is concerned. The result is that we set going secular schools in which pupils should develop interest in a common citizenship, and then upset the plan by introducing religion which is a threat to social solidarity wherever and whenever opportunity offers.

So comes Bishop Poskett (R.C.), with charges that Goebbels cannot beat. He says he "Has no hesitation in saying that the exclusion of religion from the National system of education has made shipwreck of both Christianity and the morality of the nation . . . The gradual loss of faith throughout the country, and of moral principles is due to the boycotting of definite religious teaching." That is a fine mixture of untruth and abuse. This is as fine a bit of Goebbelism as we have come across.

Consider that whatever "ethical landslide" there has been (really it exists only in the interested lying of churchmen) that "slide" has certainly been as great in religious quarters as elsewhere. We take it that not even Bishop Poskett would claim that the ethical quality of, say Italy, or pre-war Poland or some of the South American centres exhibited a higher moral sense than, say in England, France or the U.S.A. The Bishop ought to have looked up the prison records and noted the Roman Catholics in prison. But in any case, it is not true that definite religious teaching is banished from the schools. It never was, and the aim, the principal aim so far as it could be realised, was to saturate school life with Christian religious teaching. But of course, Bishop Poskett does not write or speak for non-Catholics. He feeds his flock on Roman Catholic truth, and most impartial people find it difficult to separate a religious truth from a secular lie.

The Vicar of Hanley Castle, near Malvern, is disturbed in mind. The people are not giving his church the support he would wish. He does not believe that people are telling the truth when

they say they stay away from Church because they do not like this or that kind of service. Substantially he says they are liars, and we agree. Hitler has ruled for a single generation, and then think of what the influence of the Church was century after century, and what it is even to-day, then you will have some glimpse of the influence of the Christian Churches in breeding bigots and liars.

Plans for the reunion of different Christian bodies are common nowadays. They believe that it will make for strength. So it may for a time. It was proved by the back-stairs meetings with the Minister of Education over the introduction of the new Education Act. This is a very great change from the earlier phase when one Christian gang would scarcely shake hands with another bunch of believers. For the moment this alliance may work. But it can be another step on the road to the disappearance of religious belief; the falling off of Church and Chapel attendances is certain to continue. Once more we may repeat the old saying that while one may fool all the people some of the time one cannot hope to fool all the people all the time.

But the danger of clerical rule is not ended. And one of the steadiest enemies that lovers of freedom—real freedom—have to be on their guard against, is "The great lying Church." For that reason we call attention to the following from a leading article in the "Catholic Times" recently:—

"As citizens of this country, as Europeans and as Christians, we are bound to regard with some apprehension and caution a future which is likely to be so greatly dominated by a Power that has not repudiated its Atheism and its hostility to Christianity—a Power to which, none the less, we owe our gratitude and our good will, so far as possible, for her courageous help in defeating Germany and bringing to an end this protracted and bloody struggle."

The Church that could fraternise with Mussolini, remain on terms with Hitler, bless the arms of Franco and his army, and stand smilingly by at the pillage of the oldest of Christian countries is still active.

We think that the cardinal fault of the Christian Church was in plunging for a single god running the universe. No one can ever make and no one will make sense out of that. With a number of gods, one sending good things and another sending bad ones, one looking after sunshine and the other sending heavy clouds, and so on, a tolerably reasonable godism might have been produced. Nature does act in this way. But when someone came along with just one solitary God who did everything, and that God endowed with supreme power, the theory began to take on a madman's nightmare. He set up and he hurled down, he sent a disease and often just missed sending the cure. And naturally he wound up like a king issuing perpetual orders that no one obeyed. And now gods are as much out of place as candles would be for the lighting of a theatre. The priest still shouts, "What can you do without God?" when the real problem before man nowadays is "What can we do with him?"

We are often called on to play the part of a father confessor—which we are not. And a little way back we were asked by a young couple with a child that arrived about two years before, what ought they to teach the child. We took a chance and replied very briefly and stressed that they should teach him to disbelieve, for that is a thing that children seldom get. Parents are so full of wisdom themselves that they are over anxious to impart some of it to their offspring with the result that the child becomes such an adept at swallowing that it counts for little as a disgorging. So the child gets chock full of wisdom and nonsense, but mostly nonsense, he can use but feebly the weapon of disbelief, or of doubt, with the force that nature has armed him. We haven't the slightest hope that this couple will follow our advice. But the man who gives advice expecting those to whom it is given will practise it, proves that his intelligence is of so low an order that he is not worth bothering with.

"THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,
London, E.C.4.

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- W. BARRET.—Thanks for copy of letter. It is a good one and should prove useful.
- C. L. MORGAN.—You will probably realise one day that to set people thinking and carefully guarding their thoughts, is often the surest way of driving along the wrong road. Thinking cannot be stopped, but it can be made harmless, and an opinion that does not upset someone is generally of small right value.
- H. BEDFORD, J. WILSON, S. WOLF, G. TACCHI.—Received and shall appear as early as possible.
- WILL CAPTAIN HERBERT CREAGH, of Johannesburg, please send on his full address; then order will be forwarded.
- FOR "THE FREETHINKER."—J. Humphrey, £1.

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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 Leicester Secular Society celebrated its 64th anniversary of the opening of its Hall last Sunday, and we were pleased to learn that interest in Freethought in Leicester is steadily growing. No fair mind could question the good that has been done in advertising Freethought by the long succession of able men and women who have appeared on its platform. The President, Mr. E. H. Hassell, delivered an interesting address and he was followed by Mr. Chapman Cohen. There was also tea and a musical entertainment and dance terminated a very happy occasion.

Orders are coming in for the Editor's "Essay on Thomas Paine." The booklet is well printed on good paper with a portrait. The price will be one shilling, postage extra. Owing to the paper shortage, although the printing is not a small one, we doubt whether it will be large enough to meet demands unless extra paper appears in the near future.

We have just finished reading "Der Fuehrer," by Konrad Heiden, and published by Gollancz. It is a formidable book to tackle—600 pages of close print—but it is interesting and will certainly help one to understand the German movement better than any other book we have read, and we have read many. That Hitler was mentally unbalanced is unquestionable, but there was still method in his madness, and the book does throw light on the lack of mental balance that ran like a wave through the whole of Germany. For those who have the time and patience "Der Fuehrer" is an interesting and instructive book.

"The Great Mystics," by G. Godwin (Watts and Co., 2s. 6d.), is a pleasant introduction of a subject that is both interesting and worthy of study. As Mr. Godwin says, modern scientific psychology can now throw a flood of light on the subject, and

admits of an understanding which explains the yagarics of men and women of mark without detracting from one's appreciation of their mental value. "The Great Mystics" will serve as an introduction to what is to many a fascinating subject. It is an essay all should read.

"Faiths of Many Lands" (Watts and Co., 8s. 6d.), by E. Royston Pike, is a work that seems to fall midway between a book for young people and an introduction to the religions of the world for adults. The book is well produced with a number of coloured plates and illustrations, and the matter is interesting enough as far as it goes. What we should like to see is a book that would picture an account of the origin of gods and the significance of religious systems in history written to interest children about fourteen or fifteen years of age. But this could only be done by one who is soaked in his subject. "Looking up" material will not do. A combination of qualities is needed that is not easily found.

Birmingham Freethinkers are invited to a social evening in Unitas House, 24, Livery Street, Birmingham, on Wednesday, March 14. The local N.S.S. Branch has arranged a first class musical programme, with dancing and other forms of entertainment. Further details and tickets may be had from the Secretary, Mr. C. H. Smith, 93, Willows Crescent, Cannon Hill, Birmingham 12. Proceedings commence at 6 p.m.

There are numerous discussion groups from the B.B.C. upward, the main purpose of which is to ward off "dangerous" opinions. Idle hands and idle brains are both dangerous. But we have just heard of one that stands out for goodness—certainly on one occasion. This "group" (18 Plus) is located in Barnsley, and it distinguished itself by inviting our old friend, H. Irving, to open a discussion on Atheism. We are quite certain that Mr. Irving would put up a good and interesting case—he comes from a Freethinking family—and we are informed that the gathering was large, very interested, and, best sign, there were questions as to literature, and also an expressed desire that more should be heard on the subject.

We fancy our readers will be interested in the following note from a new reader of this journal. It is one of many similar:—

"I may mention that I have become a regular reader of the "Freethinker," having found it to be the most practical, honest and commonsense "thinking" journal in the country to-day. It would be for the good of the community were its circulation equal to that of the prominent dailies that are little else than instruments of deception and suppression. I rather think it is only the ignorance of the masses to its existence (added, of course, to the restrictions on paper, etc.) that prevents the journal from becoming the most vital challenge to hypocrisy and humbug possible to-day."

Apropos of the talk about the Church—particularly the Roman Church—and freedom, it is always well to bear in mind that the Vatican claims in the name of God, supreme control over religion, education, morals and marriage. When that is conceded there does not seem much left for anyone to bother about. But if readers will bear this claim in mind it will enable them to realise the humbug of the Pope talking about his belief in Democracy.

Lest anyone should be in doubt concerning this matter, here is an illustration, given by no less a person than Cardinal Newman—the last theologian of real ability seen in this country. Newman says:—

"The Catholic Church claims, not only to judge infallibly on religious questions, but to animadvert on opinions in secular matters, which bear upon religion, on matters of philosophy, on science, on literature, on history, and it demands our submission to her claims. It claims to censure books and to forbid discussion."

As a certain humorist said, "The right of an Englishman is to do as he likes—provided he does as he is told." On those lines the Pope—each Pope—is the greatest defender of liberty this country has.

SPIRITUAL MATERIALISM

I.

IN their self-appointed mission to convert us all to spiritual values preachers are particularly severe against materialism. To hear their animadversions upon materialism one would deduce they regard it as the eighth deadly sin, more mortal than the seven medieval ones.

They are probably right. Materialism is the philosophy of this age, the only "ism" appearing likely to survive triumphant, the one which is ousting religion from its pre-eminence.

Butler in "Hudibras" tells us the Puritan preachers

"Compound for sins that they're inclined to,
By damning others they've no mind to."

That may have been correct in the seventeenth century. More often in this twentieth century the reverse is true. The Churches attack and condemn materialism because they are both its victims and exponents. By materialistic means they carry on, hoping so to retain present adherents and win new ones.

II.

Sings the poet Collins

"And point with tapering spire to heaven."

The Churches have taken that as an injunction. Not only Christianity but all religions have laid heavy burdens on the earth. They have been the greatest of builders. Longer and broader and higher have gone their edifices, employing domes and minarets, towers, spires and steeples, pinnacles, arches and flying buttresses in ever increasing efforts to impress the human mind? Gargoyles, niches with statues, doorways and window spaces more and more complicated till they reach the stage seen in Decorated and Perpendicular styles: no space or surface left on which to carve further complexity of ornamentation.

Is that spiritual? Is the effect upon the beholder spiritual? Many of those structures are gigantic museums, outside as well as in. They have great architectural interest, technical studies for expert and specialist, sources of wonderment to the ordinary man, subjects for artists and draughtsmen, marvellous in detail, amazing distant pictures under sunshine or moonlight. One remains sceptical of their spiritualising influence, no matter how ornate, elaborate or beautiful.

In their way the simplicity of Nonconformist chapels, the bareness of Quaker Meeting Houses, the imitation barracks of the Salvation Army have the same idea as the magnificence of Gothic, the splendour of Byzantine, the expansiveness of Renaissance. Yet austerity is no more a spiritual notion than floridity or grandeur; it is just as material as these.

Similarly with interiors. Impressive many of them are, noble at their best, sometimes gloomy, occasionally oppressive, technically ill-proportioned in a few cases. Nevertheless cathedrals, abbeys and priories, like mosques and temples of the East, are staggering in their large concept and awesome in florescence of detail.

Those religious builders omitted nothing to achieve their purpose. Pillars and arches, clerestory and gallery, windows, doorways and screens; they knew the value of height and length and width balanced to convey the sense of vastness. To it they added detail and repetition, tier upon tier, from the increasingly fluted column to profusion which makes a guidebook largely a catalogue of items to be look at, missed unless pointed out because of so much. Roofs expanded into fan tracery. Crowning glory those architects added colour; paint, gilding, silver, hammered metals, sometimes jewels, often parti-tinted stone, then filled the great windows with stained glass which dazzles and bewilders, but is dramatic in its intensity.

Spiritual they may have intended it to be. In practice entirely material.

III.

Still they could not check their flow of ingenuity. Statues and busts, weighty tombs and cadavers, altars, shrines, chapels, pulpits, lecterns, fonts, crosses, crucifixes, metal shaped and wood carved, pew-ends, miserere stalls, capitals and bases of pillars, pilasters, grotesques, candlesticks, vases, brazen and silver vessels, banners, altar cloths, tapestry, frescoes, reredos, memorial tablets and brasses, mosaics, tessellated pavements, arabesques, scrolls, relics, regimental flags—the list goes over the whole building; nothing left plain or simple; always something new and strange and different to catch the eye at every turn.

There is to be no chance of internal communion, no withdrawn personal meditation, no opportunity for the individual to think separately. Priests of every grade have their gorgeous and distinctive vestments, likewise choristers, servers, everyone down to vergers and sextons. Kneeling, signs, genuflexions, processions and other involved movements about choir, chancel, nave and transepts take up the tale, so the eye is constantly engaged.

And the ear. Organ and choir, precentor, preacher, Bible reader, highly specialised music for each ceremony and peculiar voice for prayers and sermons; anthems, psalms, chants, responses, hymns, carols; so that no sense shall be left untouched or untickled in case for the nostrils, sprinkling with holy water, laying on of hands.

Bells rung, censers swung, printed books of devotion, stalls of literature on sale, uncommon lamps and candles and tapers burning; crucifixes, crosses, badges, medals, reliquaries, rosaries, and bits of palm to wear, the handshake at the chapel door, the Wayside Pulpit with its texts and messages, crosses and tombstones in the churchyard, sundials and clocks, peals of bells, decorated porches hung with notices, Salvation Army bands and uniforms and penitent form, devised ceremonials for baptisms, confirmations, weddings, funerals, saint days, Christmas and other feasts, confession, penances, the gross and hearty spread at Harvest Festivals, the drama or opera of the Mass as well as former miracle and mystery plays, actual bread and wine at Communion, silence in a Quaker Meeting; not a material and physical force, influence or suggestion which can be brought to bear is missed by the Churches; all in the name of spirituality.

Spiritualists themselves have buildings apart with controlled lighting. The appearance of the spirits is boldly and baldly entitled materialisation, manifested in such forms as rappings andappings, floating trumpets, table turning, levitation and other simple phenomena which are as unspiritual as the practices of all the Churches and religions.

Fundamentalists who in essence worship a book—a crude collection of legendary, mythical, magical, fabular, allegorical, folklorish jumbings cannot be imagined, valuable only to the anthropologist—are at one in their materialism with the believers in heaven and hell.

Drawing heavily upon Dante and Milton the latter people imagine heaven and hell swarming with gods and devils, saints, angels, spirits, imps, demons and souls all behaving as human beings in their motives and impulses; merely magnified a score, hundred, thousand or maybe a million times; as their God is a super-magnified projection of themselves.

IV.

Examined dispassionately all the above is convincing enough proof that the spirituality of religious bodies is actually the mental and often physical, nervous and emotional reaction of their devotees to the materialistic conditions and practices of the Church to which they profess loyalty, a loyalty frequently stronger than their more abstract devotion to God or religion generally.

Worshippers are themselves materialists, the coarser seeking private benefits, finer temperaments drawing perhaps consolation or satisfaction, much akin to what other people get from art.

music, literature, hobbies, or the pursuit of public life or service to some reforming cause.

To clinch the matter consider the financial side of the Churches. Here is no pretence, disguise or mask at all. In these days of economics, accountancy and publicity for the affairs of trading companies, one has little difficulty in compiling a rough balance sheet. Not a statement to which an auditor might sign his certificate of detailed accuracy, because Churches are shy of exposing their business workings. We know enough to realise that behind the architecture, art, music, ethics, charity and activities of their priests and officials lies a vast monet machine.

By State subsidies, endowments, donations, investments, rentals, sales and collections the religious bodies remain solvent. Some are enormously wealthy, unable to disburse the whole of the interests from accumulated funds and other forms of income; not even after the upkeep of expensive buildings and intricate social and propaganda organisations, beside generous payment of stipends and salaries to all who work on their behalf.

This may be spirituality. To the plain man it appears nothing but materialism.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Christianity's "problem child" is Evil. Naturally.

"There was a war in heaven"—vide Bible. No rest for the good, apparently.

The angel Gabriel had a ghost of a chance, and he took it!

Open confession is good for the—priest.

A Christian is one who has a grudge against himself.

You may think you are square with the Lord, but the devil will want his hush money!

Ignorance is the "Church's One Foundation" and credulity its support.

The cross is the trade-mark of Christianity. Disillusioned investors cannot be blamed if they think they have been double-crossed.

Prayer is the sop for the Christian's hunger after righteousness.

"And he lifted up his voice"—A word-juggler?

If Christians had as much faith in themselves as they have in their religion they would soon lose their Faith.

When is god not a god? When it's "a-Gog" (with anger)

Religion uses morality as a cloak on which it spews its unctiousness.

Man made God in his own image. He certainly made a fool of himself.

At the words "Let us pray" Christians fall on their knees, close their eyes and clasp their hands. An appropriate attitude for propitiating God, but hard on the knees!

Give a god a bad name and you'll come to no "good."

S. GORDON HOGG.

GOD ON THE HILL

THERE is a prevalent idea that the person who does not believe in God is unable to appreciate the full beauty of nature and art, or conversely, that the theist has a more lofty and ennobling conception of these beauties, precisely because of his religious belief! This is one of the favourite arguments used against the Atheist, and it serves its purpose excellently because it is incapable of proof or disproof. Obviously, it is quite impossible to determine whether my Christian neighbour's reactions to a certain view are more appreciative than my own. He may think so! I may not! But neither of us possesses the means of finding out the effect that the view had upon the other, and, even if we had, there is no table of values by which we could measure and compare the two. All we can do is attempt to explain verbally what our own feelings were at that particular time, and language is invariably inadequate for this, however expressive we may try to be. Even the greatest poets fail to express completely, in words, what they saw, or felt, or thought!

Nevertheless, whilst we cannot categorically prove this question either way, we can, at least, approach it in a scientific manner and thereby learn something about it. I know, of course, that this is not a satisfactory method for the modern mystic. He prefers to sit aloft in his solitude and regard us with sympathetic superiority. This attitude has been exemplified recently by Mr. Paul Bloomfield—a Public School teacher, and one time literary editor of "The Listener"—in his "Letter to a Godson on the Teaching of Christianity,"* where he says that "it would be absurd to reproach anyone for having been born or brought up blind to the beauty of landscape or deaf to the beauty of music. This is a pity—not a crime. It would not have been damnable if you had walked on the hill that evening without feeling the presence of a hidden Personality; but it would have been your loss."

Well, if a person wishes to take the backward road to mysticism rather than the forward path of science he may do so, and it is highly probable that he will soon be "feeling the presence of a hidden Personality"; but it is fortunate for mankind that there are others who are willing to travel in the other direction. Professor E. T. Bell, of California, has likened these latter to one who is "cold sober in the midst of a merry party," and I think there is much to be said for sobriety, particularly when a little straight thinking is required.

Mr. Bloomfield must, however, be credited with realising the importance of the upbringing in determining one's aesthetic taste, and under this heading we have to include all the multiple influences of daily life. Home and local environment, education, facilities for travel and cultural intercourse, and many other factors, all have their effect upon the particular genetic make-up of the individual in question. The result, therefore, can never be the same in two instances, and consequently, no two people can respond to the same view in precisely the same way. Indeed, it is quite true to say that no two people see the same view, and, carrying this further, we may even say that no one person ever sees the same view twice, for both the panorama and the individual are in a continuous state of change. (It needs no great philosophical knowledge to recognise these points. Obviously, a farmer, a slum-dweller, and an artist, will each see a particular scene in a very different way. Anybody who re-visits a place after absence will also see it differently. For instance the trees of Warwickshire's Forest of Arden, though beautiful, never look quite so green to me as when I first saw them.) Similarly with art, our appreciation increases or decreases (or, at any rate, it changes) the more we see or hear the work, as the case may be.

Mr. Bloomfield says that something is lost if our stroll over the hill fails to reveal a hidden presence. The words are actually

* Published in "Transformation two." Edited: Schimanski and Treece. Lindsay, Drummond, Ltd., London, 1944.

addressed to his godson, but he evidently considers them applicable to a wider field, or he would not have had them published. Yet, bearing in mind the observations already made, it must be repeated that there is no means of substantiating this. Mr. Bloomfield may feel convinced that he would lose a great deal if the "Personality" was absent; he may think that I have missed a lot in never having discovered the "presence"; but these are only his opinions, and they are dependent upon such factors as I have mentioned above.

He also tells us that his godson met God more intimately in the open air than in church, and I gather that the presence of the deity was extremely elevating. Here we have shades of Wordsworthian Nature-worship, and the reader will do well to recall with Aldous Huxley, that nature in the tropics is considerably different from "the cosy sublimities of the Lake District." Mr. Huxley says of Wordsworth, what may be applied to Mr. Bloomfield—and his godson:—

"A few weeks in Malaya or Borneo would have undeceived him. Wandering in the hothouse darkness of the jungle, he would not have felt so serenely certain of those 'Presences of Nature,' those 'Souls of Lonely Places,' which he was in the habit of worshipping on the shores of Windermere and Rydal. The sparse inhabitants of the equatorial forest are all believers in devils . . . The life of those vast masses of swarming vegetation is alien to the human spirit and hostile to it." ("Do What You Will," pp. 90-91.)

In addition, it should be noted that the mystic—taking him at his own word—has a completely false (or unnatural) attitude towards nature. A flower or a bird is not loved for itself, but as a means of contacting God. The true naturalist, on the other hand, likes a flower for its "floweriness" and a bird for its "birdliness," and he might well turn round to Mr. Bloomfield and declare that much is lost if one does not approach nature from the naturalistic standpoint.

Then, again, it should not be forgotten that there is more in animate nature than the beautiful, and one mystic—among the greatest of his tribe—was not content with a merely superficial view. William Blake looked below the surface and had some misgivings about the tiger. "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" he asked, and it is a problem which needs to be faced. I wonder if the mystic senses the presence of God when he sees the hawk swooping on its prey or a weasel killing its captive? Yet these are as much a part of nature as its beauty, and they happen in our own English countryside. Even confining ourselves to the brighter side of nature, I see no reason for thinking that religion increases one's appreciation of it. Is it not just as wonderful to realise that an acorn develops into an oak through various combinations of circumstances, as it is to believe that "only God can make a tree?" I, at least, think so.

Likewise, a work of art can, I maintain, be loved and admired equally well for what it is, as it may be for the purpose of subtly divining something about the demiurge. This applies not only to what can be termed secular works, but to specifically religious works of art, also I listen with delight to the music of "The Messiah," and, as a matter of fact, the unbelieving Samuel Butler considered the religiously-inclined Handel to be the greatest of composers. One need not be a Christian or a Pagan to realise the grandeur of St. Paul's Cathedral or the Acropolis, respectively, and an architect (irrespective of religious belief) is most likely to have the fullest appreciation of both.

In short, many factors combine to form a person's aesthetic outlook, but there is no evidence that God is one of them!

C. McCALL.

Philosophy, like medicine, has an immense number of drugs, very few good remedies, and hardly one that is specific.

—CHAMFORT.

WILL CHRISTIANITY SURVIVE?

AN interesting question, "Can Christian Faith Survive this War?" was put to its readers by "The Daily Express," on January 17, 1945. Treated by a "Brains Trust" sitting in the editor's office, the matter was debated by a team consisting of the Bishop of Chelmsford, Dr. C. E. M. Joad, and Miss Rebecca West. It cannot be said that the team was weighted against orthodox Christianity. The Bishop came down naturally upon that side whilst Miss West avowed herself a believer. Dr. Joad likewise seemed favourable to the Christian viewpoint, ending his remarks with "I do not expect that (Christianity) will disappear, because I think it is true, and God will look after His own in the last resort." In some ways, the one-sided nature of the team made the enquiry more interesting and certainly more revealing than would have been the case had it been drawn from a wider field.

Each speaker was perturbed by the state of organised religion to-day. Miss West said that she had met many people who were profoundly influenced by Christian belief but that they did not go to church very much. The Bishop admitted the falling off of interest and said that it was world-wide; the church is dis-trusted as a social and religious force, but he found himself completely at a loss to explain the reason. Dr. Joad remarked upon a shifting of popular emphasis which had led opinion back from purely political interests to religion during the last two years, but went on to say that it mainly ended in a wistful agnosticism. In each case the future of organised religion was approached with fear and none of the speakers were able to supply very much comfort to the churchman in distress.

The old question as to the nature of Christianity hovered in the background and did not come very much to the fore. Each speaker was concerned with Christian ethics and anxious about their future in the world. Joad drew the obvious contrast between "love your enemies" and the war situation, ending with G. K. Chesterton's cliché that "Christianity had been found difficult and never tried." To the Bishop, decline of belief meant decline in conduct and he went on to prophesy that Christian ethics would not long out-live Christian theology. Certainly, the contemporary situation is perilous from his point of view and none of the speakers sought to disguise the fact.

But, for the Rationalist, it does bring out certain points. In the first place, the day of historical Christianity is over. The three speakers would be only too glad if they could secure some loose ethical attachment to the churches; popular adhesion to strict definitions of belief and creed have ceased to play a prominent part in their calculations. The Bishop fell back upon the Apostle's Creed as the defined basis of Christian faith. In so doing, he certainly had history on his side. But he failed to call attention to the tremendous latitude of interpretation which has grown up within the churches during the last eighty years. The creed can only retain its historic place by a method of "general assent" rather than of detailed application, and the basis has itself become a subject of anxious defence. In itself, this fact signifies that thinking men have given up accepting Incarnation, Atonement and Resurrection as the background of the universe within which their thought is formed. Christian ethics lightly attached to an historical figure are not a substitute for traditional Christianity and the attitude of the speakers suggests that the day has long passed when they could justify their ecclesiastical and ethical positions by appeal to the truth within history of the theological claims upon which the churches have been accustomed to ground their assessment of moral behaviour.

The Bishop was not far wrong when he connected belief and practice. Christian ethics have been founded traditionally upon Christian belief; the surrender of the one implies the probable failure of the other. But Joad's answers only raise further questions concerning the nature of the moral claims which

Christianity makes. Historically, they are a synthesis of various traditions. Jesus thought out his ethics against the background of a speedy end of the world. "Take no thought for the morrow"; it may never come. Property may be lightly regarded; it will not be needed in the Kingdom but a few months ahead in time. "Thou shalt not have gone through the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come." This Jewish messianism combined under Pauline influences with the ethical traditions of the Mediterranean coast to form a traditional but less eschatological ethic of love and virtue. As it approached North-Western Europe, a few characteristically Gothic ideas of honour and chivalry, unknown to Palestine and the Mediterranean, became tacked on. Again, there has been no period which could be said to represent the characteristic Christian ethic; various historical changes have brought change in stress and application. As Richard Niebuhr has shown in "The Social Sources of Denominationalism," there can be little doubt that during the Christian centuries it had been the social and economic background which had determined the ethics of any one period. The composite nature of the source and the varying interpretations through the centuries afford reply to Joad's assumption that there is a pure Christian ethic which men have found difficult and never tried.

In point of fact, the normal change of to-day is one created by the rise of the scientific method. The breakdown of historic orthodoxy has brought with it a collapse of the view that morals are based upon taboos revealed through Direct Divine instruction or Intervention. Comparison and experiment denote a method which has invaded the ethical field as much as any other branch of human activity. The problems of international morality can only be solved along these lines, including in their scope the whole scientific advance in psychology and sociology. Morals and the individual are profoundly influenced by war situations; a fact brought out by Professor Mannheim in "War and Crime." There is every need for the inculcation of a new spirit of moral responsibility; the need is underlined by the crime-wave which this war has brought in its train. But it suggests a greater need for the teaching of a moral humanism than for an attempt to resuscitate churches which, as each speaker agreed, have forfeited public confidence. Nor is it likely that popular moral advance will be achieved by an appeal to the polyglot tradition commonly referred to as Christian ethics for it either means too much or too little. In a scientific age, the only ethical standards relevant to that age will be found to be those possessing authority in the light of the scientific method.

On the whole, as is suggested by the "Daily Express" discussion, it seems more than unlikely that Christian faith, in any specific sense, will retain a considerable hold after the war. It has failed to justify itself, whether in the intellectual or the moral spheres, whilst its canons of authority have been found wanting when brought to any available test. Its negative moral standards, based in the last resort upon fear of the unknown, have perished in the light of common day. The result is one which the Bishop of Chelmsford, Miss West, and presumably Dr. Joad, agree in deploring. But, for the Rationalist, it suggests a future filled with hope. The old obstructions have melted away, leaving the path open to the evolution of an ethical humanism capable of creating higher moral standards in the light of the evolution of human reason and conscience.

"SIGMA."

SECULARISM

Orthodox believers content themselves with dwelling on the myths of the past and the imaginations of the future leaving the ever-present comparatively unheeded. We, as Secularists, prefer the more useful course of availing ourselves of the value of what is allied with the serviceableness of what was, and thus secure a better what may be.

FRAZER'S "GOLDEN BOUGH"

Where religion is concerned it is difficult to get Christians and semi-Christians rightly to understand that the world in which we are living is new, that is in contrast to that of, say a century since. Here is a sample from a well-known author and who would be counted as a liberal-minded man:—

"Even in the simplest beginnings of Society we find the first promptings of the religious sense. Sir James Frazer's monumental "The Golden Bough" is the history of the development of this religious sense and of the evolution of the idea of God."

We cite this as a fine example of converting truth into a lie. Of course, Frazer does show us the development of religion, and also the evolution of the idea of God; but the essence and the greatness of his work is that he showed the *origin* of religion and the idea of God, but those were secondary. The primary and great work of Frazer was that he showed how the idea of God came into existence and the manner in which religions were formed. Without this phase of his work his books would show us only an industrious and charming writer. Frazer damned all gods in describing how they came to be and the manner in which they die.

As to the "religious sense," there never was anything of the kind. There is no more a religious sense than there is a football sense, or a pork pie sense. "Race," in sociology and "sense" should be abolished from all writing and teaching. We are not surprised that terms of this kind flourish with politicians and parsons—the two social orders that are most dependent upon the half-baked intelligence of the general public. We agree with William James that it would be good to banish several terms in our vocabulary for a few generations.

OBITUARY

RICHARD T. KEYS.

"Dick" Keys, well known to East Lancashire Freethinkers, died at the home of his daughter in Nelson, 8th February, aged 70. For some years he had been unable to attend our meetings owing to bronchial trouble, but he always maintained his interest in N.S.S. activities.

Our sympathy goes to his wife and daughter in their loss. In accordance with his request, a Secular address was given at the Rochdale Crematorium by the undersigned.

J. CLAYTON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., Dr. C. E. M. JOAD, M.A., D. Litt., "Prospects for Civilisation."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanic's Institute).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., Open Discussion; bring along that bee in your bonnet.

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun).—Sunday, 2.30 p.m., a lecture.

Leeds Freethought Society (The Forum, 113, Park Lane, Leeds).—Sunday, 7 p.m., a lecture.

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6.30 p.m., N. CHARLTON: "Are We Really Free?"

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