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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### With the Gods

I FANCY that not many people nowadays read the works of Professor J. W. Seely. Yet in our youth he was treated with respect, and he deserved it. Time is a severe test for most, but there is something to be learned from the dead as well as from the living. One of the far-reaching sayings of George Eliot was that, "The world would not be as comfortable as it is today were it not for those who lived unknown lives and rest in unknown graves." It is a lesson we should all bear in mind. If we can see further than our forebears could it is because we stand on their shoulders. We profit from their failures as well as from their successes. None of us make ourselves at most we can only tread with greater certainty where our forefathers walked with faltering steps. The heritage may be good or bad.

In the greater part of my life I never indulged much in the direction of making notes. I did not banish them but I reduced them to a very small compass. It was, in fact, one of these small collections which reminded me that the rule of reading an old book when a new one is published may not be a bad one. The evidence was a batch of notes taken from Professor Seely's "Lectures and Essays." Dealing with the influence of the early Christian Church under the reign of Constantine the Great, without whom the Christians might never have risen to power, he says:—

"Liberty is force of character roused by the sense of wrong . . . such had been liberty in the old Republic, the rebellion of strong spirits against laws strained too far, self-assertion, sturdiness, combativeness. Such was not the Christian spirit. In this when it was genuine there was no rebellion, there was no assertion of right. Those who practised it there were not less obedient, but more obedient than others. They had no turn for liberty, they had no turn for the despotism of the Cæsar, this they met, not in the spirit of Brutus or Virginia but with religious resignation. Therefore, saving the law of Christ, the Christians were the most loyal of the Emperor's subjects, and Christianity confirmed as much as it controlled despotism. It produced a complete change in the attitude of the people to the Emperor. It made their loyalty more intense, but confined it within definite limits. It strengthened in them the feeling of submissive reverence for governments as such, it encouraged the disposition of the time in its political passiveness. Constantine . . . may be said to have purchased an indefensible title by a charter. He gave certain liberties, and he received in turn passive obedience. He gained a sanction for the Oriental theory of government. In return he accepted the law

of Christ. He became irresponsible with respect to his subjects on condition of his becoming responsible to Christ."

There are two more passages which must be cited from Professor Seely:—

"The effect of Christianising the Roman Empire was that it destroyed what we may call the classical view of life, which asserts human free will and regards government merely as useful and respectable machinery for economising power, and introducing order, beauty and virtue into human affairs. In place of it they introduced the Asiatic view which . . . elevates government into a divinity, teaching the subject to endure whatever it may inflict, not only without resistance, but also without an inward murmur. . . . With the Oriental theory of government was introduced Oriental cruelty and wastefulness of human life. In the early (Pagan) Empire there had been cruel Emperors, but now cruelty was part of the system. . . . Executions, tortures, massacres, make the staple of the narrative even in the reign of good Emperors . . . subjects have lost all rights, and governments all responsibility."

These deliverances may, or should, help everyone to understand how the Christian Church rose to power. Nothing that characterised Christianity had occurred in Rome or Greece. The Christian hatred of human independence was complete.

Of the general character of Constantine we may take the picture, first, from Voltaire. He says, of Constantine:—

"He had a father-in-law whom he impelled to hang himself; he had a brother-in-law whom he ordered to be strangled; he had another brother-in-law, 12 or 13 years old, whose throat he ordered to be cut; he had an eldest son whom he beheaded; he had a wife whom he ordered to be suffocated in a bath."

That is not at all a good character for the man who saved Christianity. Perhaps, as with Hitler, Constantine felt he was carrying out the wishes of God.

But it may be that Voltaire was prejudiced. So we will take another historian, whose statements stand as soundly to-day as when they saw the light in the 18th century—Gibbon. He says:—

"In the life of Augustus we behold the tyrant of the Republic converted into the father of his country and of human kind. In that of Constantine we may contemplate a hero . . . degenerating into a cruel and dissolute monarch. The general peace which he maintained . . . was disgraced by the opposite vices of rapaciousness and prodigality. . . . His unworthy favourites . . . usurped with impunity the privilege of rapine and corruption. A secret but universal decay was felt in every part of the public administration.



And the Emperor gradually lost the esteem of his subjects . . . an impartial narrative of the executions, or rather murders, which sullied the declining age of Constantine, will suggest to our most candid thoughts the idea of a prince who could sacrifice without reluctance the laws of justice and the feelings of nature. . . . He pursued the great object of his ambition through the dark and bloody paths of war and policy: Instead of asserting his vast superiority above the imperfect heroism of the Antonines . . . he declined in the practice of virtue, and the same year of his reign in which he convened the Council of Nice was polluted by the execution, or rather murder, of his eldest son."

The reader will notice that Constantine belonged to the type of men who are said to "walk with God," we also note that God never repudiated the companionship.

But now I bring another helper—this time a very modern one—Mr. H. G. Randall, who recently wrote a very attractive and authoritative book with the title, "The Creative Centuries." I like that book because in many ways it is endorsing what I have always said. Mr. Randall, prepared to accept the dove-like qualities of the early Christians and probably to take Christian stories with his "tongue in his cheek," does not offer any. But when he reaches the reliable story of early Christianity this is what he says:—

"The Church became a political entity whether it desired it or not. Gone for ever were the obscure communities of saints with their enthusiasms, their loyalties, and sometimes their sufferings. Christianity was now supported by the government and had power behind it as an incentive to faith, missionary work could become open and avowed and could add the persuasion of personal immortality. It became profitable to be a professed Christian and so all the indifferent and the worldly wise swelled the nominal congregation of the Church. The Church became a political institution with governmental support, and men rose to positions of authority and influence in political institutions by the possession of qualities and the exercise of means that are much the same everywhere and at all times. . . . The Church did not succeed to the principles of Augustus but to the despotism of Diocletian, and it endeavoured, and in measure succeeded, in imposing a tyranny that the earlier Emperors would have hardly imagined. The Roman Empire imposed orders on their government in conduct, but to conform their thinking to the model officially approved. An intolerant religion from the beginning, it was only the alliance with the State that enabled Christianity to practise intolerance without restraint."

At this point I politely ask Mr. Randall to stand down for a few minutes while I ask a French writer of considerable resource to give his opinion of Rome under Christianity and Rome under Pagans. He says, very emphatically: "We may search the whole Roman Law before Constantine for a single passage against freedom of thought, and the history of the Imperial government furnished no instance of a prosecution for entertaining abstract doctrines."

Now I may return to Mr. Randall. Without any qualifications he says that Christianity did not shine in the matter of liberty. On further questioning he says:—

"Christianity survived by absorption into the Mediterranean culture. It bears the mark of the world and the culture in which it was cradled. The Adoration of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Birthday of Mithra, the Birthday of Christ. The feral gods were transformed into Latin and Eastern rejoicings. The Conception, the Visitation and the Assumption were everywhere. Paganism was incomplete without the presence of a female deity. They were present through the Mediterranean lands, and the Egyptian Isis, the Great Mother, Artemis, Diana and Ceres are only prominent examples of a great multitude. The people would not be satisfied without a goddess, and so the Virgin Mary gathered into her ample folds the attributes of all her predecessors."

Now I think I will give my witnesses a rest. Readers will have facts before them, and they will please note that these are mere tastes of what might be handed.

But I said I would hand over this week's "Views and Opinions" to outsiders. And they have done it so well, and saved me so much work that I think I will advise them again.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## DEMOCRACY, SLAVERY AND CHRISTIANITY

AN article in the "New Statesman" dealing with M.O.I. and a suggested reorganisation of the B.B.C. referred to the possibility of a "true Athenian democracy." Was this just lip-service to the ideals of the classic age? Does the writer not know that Greek "democracy" was an oligarchy; that the mass of the people were Helots; that the Greek economy was a slave system? The "Demos" was not the "people."

We may still use Greek words, but the difference in meaning is reflected in two thousand years of evolution. It is customary to think of democracy as political and slavery as economic. The development of slavery, through serfdom, the emergence of the "free labourer," to the "Proletarian wage-slave" is well known. But to get an idea of the social organisation of the classic age it is necessary to have some idea of what it was derived from as well as what it developed into. The difficulty is that of relating history to pre-history; the historical to the archaeological and sociological.

It is not possible even to think of economic slavery among Nomadic people, the mobility of the herd limits the accumulation of property. The economic circumstances make the accumulation of wealth impossible. The possibility of exploitation is not there. It was the development of agriculture which was the condition of such a possibility, but the basic ideas of slavery antedate civilisation. The disappearance of a primitive communism (?) is an interesting phase, for it coincided with the growth of powerful theocracies. Slavery was not economic, it was theological in origin. We get a better understanding of both democracy and slavery in the "mystery" of the "Ecclesiastical." The voice of the people is the voice of God, who speaks through the mouth of the "Elect," who utters the magic "Word." An understanding of the ideological aspect shows how so many, for so long, have been subjugated by so few.

The difficulty was seen by Lewis Morgan, who, in his "Ancient Society," explained that he used the words Gens and Genes instead of totem in order to give an historical connection.



Morgan well illustrated the amalgamation of totem groups into the tribe, and he well understood the personal relationship of the totem. But he did not appreciate the development of the totem into the tribal god; from totem worship to the hero-worship of the classic age; nor what we have learnt of animism from Tyler; nor of magic from Frazer; that the tribal god or hero was an incarnation of the power of the social group. He did recognise in the hero, the head of the clan, the paterfamilias, the leader of the household. The Godhead of the paterfamilias is shown in that he had power of life and death over all members of the household, and we can see that the familias is developed from the totem group.

The idea of the family only arose with the discovery of sex; with phallicism. The members of the clan or household then had not only the same "name," but were of the same "seed." The totemic "attributes" of Godhead are derived from the "ancestor." The projection of personality in nature worship and ancestor worship is also seen in the social anthropomorphism; the social group being conceived as the body, the hero-god or paterfamilias as the head and the individuals as members of the deity. The mystic "power" of the hero or paterfamilias within the social group parallels that of the nature god or magician. There is only a slight modification of the old magic and animistic ideas. The continued amalgamation of social groups; of tribes into kingdoms and empires; brought kings and national gods, kings of kings and gods of gods. Gods became so common that we cannot fail to see their human form, and behind the mask of the masquerade, discern the features of our democratic slave owners.

The totems became the "attributes" of the gods; the properties or symbols of the power of the gods. The phallic-magic concept of "seed" continued in the development of agriculture, which brought with it the astrological concept, and, as the god developed from the totem so also did "the Law" from the Folk Law, the taboo. Both the ideology and the social organisation was religious. The attribution of property and power, and the reverence for the law, led to powerful theocracies. The concept of "power" is magic; in personification it became religion; the power of the magician became the "Will" of the god. The more the human character of the "living god" became apparent, the more insistence upon the "other world." Men discovered "death" as a physical fact, but had not discovered "dreams." The psychological misunderstanding is carried on in the mystical duality of body and soul has its parallel in the struggle for the possession of men's bodies and for political and moral supremacy. But the "assumption" of the hero-gods to the heavens did not alter the basic structure of society.

Man had debased himself in looking up to the skies, to the hero-god, to the authority of the law; in worshipping power, and found himself possessed. With hieroglyph becoming written script, knowledge (gnosis) of the "power" of tradition was to be found in "the Book," which enshrined both the "Word" and "the Law." The conflict between Church and State was a struggle for the power of possession against possession of legal precedent. In the reinterpretation of the law, the folk law became "wrongs" of the law, slaves became serfs, the slave owner having "rights" with the possession of the land. The paterfamilias became the lord of the manor, his power being symbolised in the attributes of property and the totemic emblems of ancestry. It is still a question of the law, of the "will," of God, of the King, the Boss, or the People. The magic "power" is still with us.

The basic character of social organisation is partly obscured by the increasing complexity, by the astrological superstition, and also by the reinterpretation of tradition. This is shown in the mis-translation of documents; for instance, in the Pauline

epistles; "Princes of this world" should be "Archons of this eon." This is a Gnostic concept, referring to the emanations or messengers; intermediaries between man and the celestial deities, who operate for an eon, or age, a period of time. These are of the same character as the dominations, principalities and powers; the angels of the Roman Church. These "powers" are the super-natural beings which "dominate" this world. In this reinterpretation, we still pay tribute to the ideals of the classic age; to the crude simplicity of the ancient idea of the knowledge (Gnosis) of right and wrong, of good and evil. In considering the maxim "Know thyself" we should realise that man is a social animal.

We get a better appreciation of all this if we observe the etymology of such words as potency, power and possession. The saying that power is possession is a tautology, for the two words have the same meaning. To possess is to have power over, to be possessed is to be in the power of. So, if we read in the scriptures, for instance, of a prophet as a servant of the Lord, we should understand that we have an animistic concept which may be interpreted as meaning that he is the slave of, possessed by, in the power of, animated by or expresses the "will" of the Lord. Christian theology is based upon the ideas of power and possession. In place of servant read slave, in place of service read servitude, for in both this world and the next we must serve and glorify "the Master," the "powers that be." It is no accident that a capitalist economy developed in Christian countries, for neither the possession of power nor the power of possession show any sociological understanding.

The vicarious self-satisfaction in the praise and glorification of hero-worship is as dangerous as the vicarious blame and condemnation of the scape-goat. They are both forms of substitution and rationalisation, and they arise at the same cultural stage. The Commissar and the Yogi, domination and submission, are not alternatives. In glorifying authority and abasing himself, man has been crucified between two thieves. Caught on the horns of the social dilemma, the Challenge of our Time, like the Christian God, man has sacrificed himself to himself. Not only did Christianity sanctify slavery and the "slave virtues," but it perpetuates the mystic antagonisms of a pre-scientific era.

We still seek "Absolution" and "Salvation" in the sacrifice of "Divine Reason" in the satisfaction of the scape-goat and bask in the phantom sunshine in the Lotus-land of illusion.

H. H. PREECE.

#### LOOKING BACKWARDS.

"GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE," COUNTRY INTELLIGENCE, JUNE 8, 1809.—The wife of a tailor at York lately took up a large toad in her hand, through curiosity, and held it for some minutes; soon after she felt a slight pain, accompanied with swelling; it increased, and she has since been obliged to have her thumb and two fingers amputated.

#### Country News and Domestic Occurrences

"GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE," APRIL 18, 1809.—Mr. Burroughs, of Marsden, near Grantham, in passing through the churchyard there, was struck to the ground by lightning, and lay for a considerable time before he recovered his senses.

"GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE," OBITUARY, APRIL . . 1809.—At Hackney, Mrs. Pickering, an elderly lady, whose death was occasioned by a cancer in her mouth, caused by the too frequent but pernicious practice of picking her teeth with the points of her scissors.

OBITUARY (same day).—In St. Martins-lane, Charing Cross, of a cancer in her nose, Mrs. Bates, who was in the habit of taking great quantities of snuff. The Doctor who attended her in her illness stated that there were particles of glass in the snuff she had used visible to the naked eye; and that these, having been strongly inhaled, had lodged in the cartilages and bones of the nose, and thus caused the fatal disorder.



## CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE—ON ICE

A DAY in "Passion Week"—a coincidence that was said to explain the paucity of clergymen in attendance—was chosen by the Christian Evidence Society for its annual meeting at Caxton Hall. There assembled about fifty people, mostly advanced in years, the proportion of men and women being as one to five.

The new Bishop of London presided. His idea of Christian evidence was highly original. He frankly admitted the difficulty of belief, but thought this was a good thing. Perhaps, like Sir Thomas Browne, he could have done with a few more miracles to try his faith. "I have a strong suspicion that if the Christian faith were easy a very large part of its value would be lost." This was Mark Tapleyism applied to theology. Possibly atomic bombs could be greeted with a cheer. In face of these it is indeed difficult to believe, at any rate, in the omnipotence of "the all-enfolding love," to use a saccharine expression of the last pastor under whom I sat. The Bishop confessed that he had never felt it possible to prove to demonstration the existence of the Christian God, and added: "The Christian faith is reasonable in the sense that it is not contrary to reason."

Surely this was rather a cold douche for some devout hearers, coming, as it did, from a father in God! It sounded as if the Bishop, like Hardy's Laodicean lady on approaching the baptismal pool, was a little timid. He would fain plunge into stock apologetics, but shivered on the brink. Perhaps the thought of his brother at St. Paul's—the modernist Matthews—made him pause.

"We have been in the habit of thinking we are in possession of the field. We are now having to realise that we are not the only people who are trying to propagate a religious faith. We have not merely attacks on religious faith as such; we have a rival religion."

This sounded ominous. Were the forces of Islam preparing to invade our sanctuaries? Would there be a formidable boosting of Buddhism? No, all this solemn warning was provoked by the fact that the Bishop had seen Orientals distributing at a tube station a booklet displaying a picture of an Indian temple beneath which, it was alleged, was the body of Jesus Christ! The Bishop quaintly added: "The assumption that if the tomb was opened the remains would be found was not entirely scientific." This, he said, was another religion undertaking an intensive form of propaganda.

The Bishop's hearers did not seem to shiver in their seats. To me it seemed as ludicrous as to have suggested that the late German Reich would have been profoundly perturbed by the news that the Toxophilites were practising with bows and arrows at Bayswater. Surely the Rock of Ages would not shake at an attack of paper propaganda by the lithic Indian? However, His Lordship grew a little more cheerful. It was going to be better for the faith—some day. "I have a profound belief that the modern scientific approach is going to make it easier for the coming generation." This was based upon new views of matter. The table before him was not dead—it pulsed with electrons. Then there was the Bible. They once had the idea that it had come down from Heaven, bound, with pictures and headings—all complete. The Bible was the result of a long development. It was not of equal value throughout. It was an anthology of Jewish literature, collected over 1,000 years. Very questionably, the Bishop added: "The organised Christian bodies as a whole have made that transition." The Bishop asked, in conclusion, "How are we to produce conviction?" "We cannot procure conviction," was the reply, "we can lead the way to it."

Subsequent speakers were Canon Marriott (Chairman of the Board) and the Rev. E. T. Bagnall, who represented the Free Churches. The latter was coldly announced at "Mister." Was this a gesture of disdain for a dissenter? "Mr. Freeman"—thus cursorily introduced—was really W. Marshall Freeman, Esq., K.C. Our King's Counsellor had a wisecrack. The Society

was founded in 1870. Was it due to the alarm felt by the Elementary Education Act? What a suggestion! Was a little learning to imperil the faith? He also referred to those of whom Shakespeare said they were so full of assurance of their own opinion that they did not want to be convinced, but only to shine in argument.

I do not recall Shakespeare saying anything like this. I do wonder what Gladstone would have said—say, in 1896—about this Christian evidence meeting. From him we should have heard of the "impregnable rock of Holy Scripture." I fancy he would have thought the head of London's hierarchy an ugly duckling in the brood. What a superficial unity was here. There was safety in vagueness. I was reminded of a hymn I sang in my youth: "Christian walk carefully, danger is near." No speaker defined his Christianity. There was no mention of Virgin Birth, the Trinity, Atonement, or Resurrection; there was much about Science, but little said of Revelation. There was much skating over thin ice, dexterously done. Lost Christians should collide with one another. If this was Christian evidence in 1946, what will it be in 1996? I fancy then there will be few Christians in evidence.

\* The one real laugh of the afternoon was when Dame Beatrix Lyall (proposing a vote of thanks) said that the Bishop's address had been too clever for her poor brain, and she still thought the table was solid! It is indeed a sad prospect for Christendom if its faith depends upon the immateriality of furniture.

I noticed in the Annual Report that Dr. W. R. Matthews had contributed a guinea. What would have been his contribution if proportionate to his honest support of the Society's theology? Perhaps a widow's mite, or shall I say a Dean's dime? The Bishop blessed the Society but made no offer to be a Bishop Boanerges in Hyde Park.

Since attending the meeting I have obtained the pamphlet referred to. It is entitled "Where did Jesus Die?" The author is J. D. Shams and it emanates from the Mosque at Wimbledon. It is of considerable interest to those who do not reject the historicity of Jesus. The view taken is that Jesus did not die on the cross, but left Palestine after his attempted crucifixion. This was the view taken by Thomas Henry Huxley, and propounded in fictitious form by George Moore in "The Brook Kerith." Readers of the "Freethinker" will be pleased to know that the Introduction (as it was written by the author) Preface would have been a better word) includes two quotations from Thomas Paine.

WILLIAM KENT.

## GOD MUST SAVE MANKIND

THE Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool (Dr. Downey) recently announced that mankind will never be saved from disaster until the Russians are converted to "the faith." But surely mankind is saved. Did not Dr. Downey and his fellow Christians deliver a wealth of prayer and thanksgiving last year to Almighty God for having done the trick after trying for six years? Anyhow, it must have been Christians only who were saved. For instance, God seems to have no truck with the Russians. And no wonder, for they have not even thanked him for the victory.

They actually drove the Christian Germans off their soil, and lost millions of dead without asking his help. Furthermore, they found no employment in connection with their war effort for a corps of God's firemen on earth. Now this is going to be a bad business for Russia.

The U.S.S.R., after an exhausting campaign, has emerged with her internal economic affairs in better order than in other countries at the present time. Food, clothing and shelter are in better working order just now than in either Britain or America. Russia has this, plus experience gained in the war.



June 2, 1946

Other belligerent countries, although they too have gained experience, are so economically unsettled that such experience may be obsolete before they are able to turn it to good account. Thus, Russia, with about 170,000,000 people, without officially asking or acknowledging one grain of help from God, stands in a happier position than countries in which organised grovelling and pleadings for Divine help were almost the order of the day during the six war years. This poignant fact is steadily leaking out, and what a network of filthy intrigue is being thrown about it!

With the Pope as generalissimo, it seems that Christianity, regardless of sectarian principles is lining up behind him. This, in the hope that his Holiness may be able to wed the might of God to the puppetry of Mammon and hurl forces of destruction against mankind's most progressive community.

In Spain, the Vatican gramophone, Franco, is on top of the world. He is being petted, whitewashed, and secretly helped by many of the leading governments even though the same governments opposed his membership of U.N.O. The falange is now the "Catholic Action League" and is represented in most countries. The activities in the Iberian peninsula are too well known to need further mention here.

The "God save us from Russia" campaign is world-wide, and getting into full swing. Recall, for instance, Mr. Churchill's oration at Fulton (U.S.A.). At the present stage of his career it would not, in this country, have justified utterances, but Yankee bally-hoo gave it pseudo-status. One does not remember Mr. Churchill ever speaking so drastically against Fascism. He has certainly prated against its leaders, but his criticisms of the regime itself have never reached the heat of "life-long opposition" as has been the case when he has dealt with Socialism.

The new Polish Government has deposed the Roman Church, one great step forward being, of course, the legalising of secular marriage. But it has, until quite recently, been the reactionary Polish forces and General Anders that the British Labour Government has mainly sponsored. Again, our Foreign Minister, Mr. Bevin, as arrogant towards the Russians in U.N.O., as against the "Daily Worker" in his well remembered libel action, recently permitted thirteen mobile electric power plants to go to Spain. These units are war equipment built for Russia but not needed. Did the Trade Unions raise any official objection or obstruct loading? Not likely! Our Trade Union Executives have the God v. Russia complex too!

Now, over to Burma. Thakim Tim Ok, head of a quising Burmese Army assisting Japan, in a book written during the war called "My Struggle," confessed to cutting off three British soldiers' heads and mounting them on bamboo poles, violently anti-British until cessation of hostilities, is now Minister of Planning in the British Burma Government under Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith!

In China, the outlook of Chiang Kai Shek (converted Christian), towards Russia is too familiar for more than mention, and the Roman Catholic Church will most likely "receive" the ex-god Hirohito. To South America then. The case of Carlos Duaste ex-bishop of Rio is fresh in mind. He was ex-communicated by the Pope for not only refusing to co-operate but for exposing the whole plot in Brazil.

Films are "getting religion." Of course this may be put down as "general advertising," but it does seem a little strange that the Roman Catholic brand is mainly advertised thereby! Now Cardinal Spellman has written a book to be filmed under his direction.

Whilst it is true that 45 countries of U.N.O. have cited Franco as a menace to peace, nothing has been cited of his backers. The Roman Catholic influence in recent continental elections stands out a mile. In Britain, the Labour Party, T.U.C., and Borough Councils are becoming hotbeds of this Catholic activity. Even the Church of England is becoming increasingly Romanised.

One notices the number of cases in which a new incumbent is much higher church than his predecessor. Recently, too, despite some outcry from Protestantism, a very Romish-minded cleric became Bishop of London.

The Press, always antagonistic to Freethought, rarely prints any complaint against the conduct of the Roman Catholic Church. Throughout all communities anti-Soviet poison is being infiltrated from many points. It would need volumes to describe it all. Two main factors, however, emerge:—

- (a) Enemy of peace No. 1 is Pacelli, Fascist Cardinal, now Christ's Vicar on Earth.
- (b) Unless the peoples of the world bring more mass opinion to bear upon the deliberations of their delegates in U.N.O. this organisation will breed an alliance to crush Atheistic Russia. If this should happen, and it can, the Charlatans of Our Lady will gain the satisfaction of knowing that a raped, blasted, and devastated Mankind will have saved God—and themselves.

G. L. C.

### QUESTION AND ANSWER

If this mad world is sane—then am I crazy?  
 If I am sane then must this world be mad?  
 To use one's time for *thinking*—is that lazy?  
 Or should one sweat and think not—and be glad?  
 To follow with The Herd in close congestion;  
 Or walk alone and out of step with Man?  
 Just to believe what we are told—not question?  
 Is that our only Purpose in this Plan?  
 Is Man an Individual or merely  
 A Robot, minus mind and matter grey;  
 Incapable of reasoning more clearly  
 Than some poor fish that failed to get away?  
 Must he dangle on the hook the Parson throws him?  
 Must he wriggle, squirm and flap in helplessness?  
 If he would use the sense that Reason shows him  
 He would not flounder in this tangled mess.  
 If only he would stand on his *own* trotters  
 Instead of leaning on a broken crutch!  
 And trust *himself*—not put his faith in rotters  
 Who only want to hold him in their clutch!  
 Is he so sinful, savage and immoral  
 That he must beg forgiveness on his knees?  
 Although with no man has he any quarrel  
 And always tries to help and strive to please.  
 It isn't sense—it isn't human nature  
 That we should cringe and cry for help unseen;  
 If we are Men, not creatures of low stature,  
 Why act like puppy-dogs who've been unclean?  
 Why lend ourselves to savage superstition?  
 Why listen to such ignorance and lies?  
 We must be free from moth-eaten tradition;  
*This is our Life*—There is no other Prize.  
 Do as you would be done by—bear no malice;  
 And hurt no man by Thought or Word or Deed;  
 Treat all as equals—born in hut or palace;  
 There is no need for any other creed.  
 The Priest can keep his high falsetto moaning;  
 His list of endless sins with which we're crammed;  
 His grovelling, his greed and all his groaning;  
 His gloating on the tortures of the damned.  
 Such stuff is only for the feeble-minded;  
 To frighten foolish savages it's fine.  
 But we're not cannibals; so we're not blinded  
 But revolted—though for *blood* they give us *wine*!  
 They can bleat till all is blue in empty Churches;  
 And threaten us with pitch-forks in the Pit;  
 As Scare-crows they are merely useful perches  
 Where little birds like you and I can—*sit*!

W. H. Wood.



## ACID DROPS

We have always been interested in liars—but we hasten to say they must be clever and interesting. The man who is found with his hand in another person's pocket is not clever, he is just a fool and a common thief. He is not interesting so we hand him over to the police, which means he will be sent to prison, or he will be discharged and warned to be more careful in the future. No man should undertake that kind of occupation unless he is properly equipped.

But there are men like Roman Catholic Cardinal Griffin who warns the world that we are now faced with the choice between "Materialism and Christianity." But there are several meanings implied in this. The cardinal means Roman Catholicism, but doesn't say so. That is a safe way of suggesting a lie. Next "Materialism" may mean several things such as things required to reach certain ends or something which makes a situation misleading. Our cardinal says one thing and means the other. It is not exactly a lie because it lacks the courage of a robust and direct liar, but it is misleading. "Materialism" in its scientific sense has lost the old significance of some hard and solid material. That is as dead as a doornail. We doubt if Cardinal Griffin is aware of this, but he belongs to a body that is never particular where truth is concerned.

The "Daily Mirror" publishes the following:—

Letter from a W.A.A.F. at an R.A.F. station near Nottingham:—

I think this—on our notice board—might tickle you somewhat: "The undermentioned personnel have been detailed for a voluntary church parade on . . ."

*Make even the ground staff go "up in the air," we should think! We'll ask m'lord Swinton his views on it.*

That order for men to attend, with joy, and march to Church is what the clergy with the Forces, and even a large number of officers, understand by "liberty." Seriously, we have to travel a hell of a way yet, before we can say with truth that we understand freedom.

The "Cousdon and Purley Times" sets a problem to any who feel inclined to reply. The problem forms the beginning of a special article and commences: "Why do only a comparatively few members of the community avail themselves of the opportunity for public prayer?" That is very, very easy. The reason is that a man doesn't object to playing the fool in private but he does object to playing the jack-ass in public. Next question please?

On a first glance at some of the Scottish papers Scotland appears to be falling to pieces. On a closer examination it turns out that it is merely the Churches that are in trouble, particularly with regard to the Sabbath. Thus the Glasgow Presbytery of the Church of Scotland reports that: "In one of the city's restaurants hundreds of young people meet together to be regaled with Secular songs and to enjoy a cup of tea." We take it that the Glasgow Presbytery would not have been so shocked over the tea, but to sing Secular songs as if they enjoyed them was too, too much. Of course the Church would not object nowadays to have tea in the Church and even the singing of songs of a kind, but to *enjoy* both on Sunday is too much.

One further point. The Church and the Tories together have re-placed the parson in the school so far as it could be done. That, of course, means that teachers are invited to be humbugs, and children are to be mis-educated. Now we have to work for another reform. At present all pupils may be withdrawn from all religious instruction. Thanks to the carelessness of parents this is not done to the extent it should be. The next step should be that if parents wish their children to have religious instruction it should be given. But it must be asked for. Then we could see where we are and the humbug which at present rules would be at an end.

It is not only the Church of England which laments the difficulties of finding more priests. A similar cry comes from the Archbishop Amigo (R.C.). He says the Church needs 200 new churches and 200 convents, in addition to more priests. But we must not misunderstand the situation. When the churches cry out for more clergy and more buildings that does not mean that there are not enough preachers or buildings, it means that there are not enough preachers and churches for those who wish to worship, and also there are not enough preachers to persuade people to bother with their preaching. Artful beggars are these parsons!

We fancy most people who know much of the social character of South Africa are aware that there flourishes therein a very primitive form of Christianity. Perhaps that is a result of the number of Dutch settlers some centuries ago who were for some time cut off from the cultural development of Europe, followed by an inrush of British folk and others whose whole desire was to get money at any cost—to the natives and to one another. Whether our guess is right or wrong it will not affect the fact that every now and again there are attempts to prevent freedom of thought regarding religion. There have been several attempts to prevent the circulation of "The Freethinker," and another attempt was recently made in the Cape Town House of Assembly. The mover was Mr. F. E. Mentz. The charge was that "The Freethinker" was subversive of religion, and the tradition of the Africander. To the first item we plead guilty—with the assurance that if it were not against the tradition of the Africander and if it were not subversive to religion it would not be doing the work for which it exists. And, of course, we shall continue the work while we exist. And one must remember that these people who object to "The Freethinker" have had full mouths with the praise of freedom. There are many manifestations of what we have come to know as Nazism. There are samples of it all over the Christian world.

Mournfully the report of the Presbytery of Glasgow confesses that "a wave of lawlessness seems to be surging over our land." Of course it is the game of the Presbytery—and all Christian bodies—to admit the "lawlessness" and lay the blame on the growth of Freethought. But that is just a well-known Christian lie. But we have had a war, and all wars make for moral disorganisation. And when young men spend five years of their life in a brutal and bloodthirsty war a lowering of the level of life is bound to occur. We have had scores of letters from the more thoughtful soldiers concerning this lowering of the level of life during a war. On the whole we ought to be pleased that after so long and so ruthless a war we have come out of it so well as we have.

As to the matter of religion. The decline in the belief in religion did not begin with the war and certainly it will not end with it. What has occurred is that the futility of religion, the falsity of its teachings, the humbugging of its representatives, all have set people *thinking*. So far as our experience goes one feature has been pressed upon us. This is that along with the better education of the people as a whole the army itself requires a higher level of education than has been the case with soldiers in the past. The circulation of anti-religious publications among the Armed Forces—we have taken a good hand in this—has played its part. Finally, the losses of the churches and chapels have been so great that not even they dare deny their losses.

Judges should be the last of all people to see that the law is not operated unfairly. They are where they are to see that the law is properly operated. That and nothing more. But now and again even judges slip. Thus quite recently in the Coventry County Court—the case is of no consequence—a doctor appeared as a witness. The doctor wished to affirm. When the Judge asked him why he refused to affirm in the usual manner, the reply was that he was a Roman Catholic and could not use a Protestant Bible. The Judge ordered him to stand down, remarking: "I don't know where these people get these queer notions from." But it was the queer notion of the Judge that was exhibited. The Judge refused an affirmation and the Roman Catholic was within his rights in refusing a Protestant Bible.



# "THE FREETHINKER"

41, Gray's Inn Road,  
London, W.C. 1.  
Telephone No. Holborn, 2601.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

**T. A. QUINN** (Philadelphia).—Thanks for your letter, and the pleasure you gain from this journal. We have numerous readers in the U.S.A., but of course would welcome more.

**W. EDWARDS**.—We must have the date and name of the paper containing the matter which you send before we can publish it. You are not the only sinner in this matter, so perhaps this will be taken as a general notice.

**H. L. MASON**.—You are right. Charles Bradlaugh worked very hard for India when it was in its darkest days. His name is still revered as a friend and as one who never failed to bring India forward when circumstances permitted.

**T. W. H.**—So soon as we can "bag" enough paper Mr. Cohen's "Almost an Autobiography" will be reprinted, probably with additions to bring it up to date.

**J. SMITHERS**.—We are not surprised. We think the Christian gen, Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," to be one of the finest examples of brutal selfishness that we are acquainted with. His chief concern is the saving of his own miserable soul. He really deserved to go to heaven.

**BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.**—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges the following donations to the Benevolent Fund of the Society: Mrs. D. Killarney, 5s.; Mr. F. McKay, 10s.; A. Edwards, £1 1s.

**T. W. J.**—There is really no ground for surprise at the clergy of to-day comparing so badly with the clergy of the 17th and 18th centuries. In the earlier days men could accept Christianity without necessarily labelling themselves humbugs or fools. To-day the acceptance of Christianity as genuine truth labels a man as a fool, or a rogue—or both.

**E. H. SIMPSON**.—Received with thanks.

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, 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 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.*

## SUGAR PLUMS

As announced last week, the business meetings and evening demonstration of the N.S.S. Annual Conference at Bradford this Whitsun will be held in the Mechanics' Institute, Town Hall Square. A reception for members and friends will be held at the Talbot Hotel, Kirkgate, at 7-30 p.m., on the Saturday evening, while the conference lunch will be at Benson's Cafe, Ivegate. For those staying over Whit Monday special arrangements are being made.

The Bishop of Truro has declared that the position of the clergy is steadily getting worse. He says that "masses of people have drifted away and left the churches in neglect. If they did not do something about it the situation would become hopeless." We wonder what the Bishop thinks can be done. The quantity of people who forsake the Church is very great; but what can be done to bring them back? If a man is blind to what is going on in his business when income gets smaller and the out-going larger, anyone would say either things were not used or

the quality is poor. And that is really what is bothering the clergy. Every step in real mental development brings a number from the Churches, and as the number of able preachers dwindle the people who go to Church find better methods of spending their spare time. You cannot unpull a man's nose. A nose pulled remains for ever pulled. Anyone who understands the relation of Christianity to other primitive religious systems must at once recognise their likeness.

The "Northampton Chronicle" reports that Rear-Admiral J. B. Scott, during a preaching in St. Matthew's Church, said that "our success in the war was due mainly to the fact that we were sustained by God." Well, we cannot say he didn't, but he took a hell of a time making his presence felt. A God who could, but didn't, is much more objectionable a God than one who tried his best and failed.

The Archdeacon of Warrington (J. P. Baker) is feeling the squeeze of modern thought. Addressing 200 Church officials he is reported in the "Warrington Guardian" as saying:—

"The Secularists are openly in the field. At the moment they are scheming, as they say, to get the parson out of the schools. It is not the parson they are afraid of. They will get him out of the schools as they would have him outside the law of the home, the market-place, and the recreation ground. . . This is a new fact in our time. Bradlaugh and his companions. It is different now. . . Christianity is challenged to-day by those who claim to preach a more promising scheme of life for men and nations in this post-war and worn-out world."

The Archdeacon of Gower, as reported in the "South Wales Evening News," repeats the doleful cry that the demand of the "ordinary man" has gone further than the demand for "a fair deal of life." There is now dominant a "Secularisation" which threatens the Churches and their doctrines. These two deliverances are evidently taken from a concerted circular. The form and even the words are repeats from a body of priests who feel the end is approaching.

The Congregational Church Assembly is sad, and also wild. Consider. The Congregational Assembly was told that "The absence of men in our service is nothing less than a tragedy." That is very sad, and we appreciate the sadness it evokes. All the same, Mr. Glassey seems to be taking much for granted. He is assuming that the undischarged soldiers are as eager to come back to the Church as the Church is to have them back. In that case Mr. Glassey should prepare for a shock. Even Field Marshal Montgomery, who appears to say a good word for God whenever he can, is not likely to believe that there will be a race between discharged soldiers as to which reaches the Church first.

Another calamity has occurred to the Church. Between 700 and 800 padres have been released from the Forces, and in consequence the Army is 100 short of requirements. At least, that is what the Church says. But how do we know the men want all these parsons? There may be some, of course, but our own experience has been that most soldiers bitterly resent religious compulsion in any form, and have strongly welcomed the proposed change in King's Regulations to abolish church parades. Perhaps the Army will be all the better if the 100 padres required stay at home.

From another religious source, the Bishop of Southwell, comes the information, "The pretence that religion is merely a matter of private individual concern is no longer possible to keep up." We wish the priests could come to some agreement on the matter. One religious authority tells us that God can be had for the asking, the other says you must get hold of God in the lump. Perhaps unintentionally the Bishop lets the cat out of the bag in the sentence, "Religion seems to count for less and less."



## A VICTORIAN ESCAPIST

THE fashionable literary jargon of the day tends to describe as "escapist" everything in literature and art which is not grimly realistic in its appeal. Thus Ethel M. Dell, Agatha Christie, and the author of "No Orchids for Miss Blandish," are lumped together under the same label. Actually escapism is not invariably a bad thing. When the world is in an almost completely crazy state, it is sometimes good for readers to have temporary respites from the insistent appeals of politics and science, as typified by Fascism in the one case and the atom bomb in the other. For that reason I am sure that many readers will welcome the reappearance, in the orange cover of the Penguin, of F. Anstey's "The Brass Bottle."

This book appears at first sight to be escapism at its purest. To begin with, it is set in Victorian London, which is about as far away from the London of 1946 as if it were Timbuctoo. Hansom cabs roll noisily through the streets, the Lord Mayor holds receptions in a Guildhall which never dreamed that it would be damaged by bombs, and in one magnificent scene the hero is perched on the dome of St. Paul's, from which exalted post he can view the city unhampered by any intervening aeroplanes or barrage balloons.

The plot is simple enough. The hero buys a brass bottle at an auction of antiques, which he has attended in order to please his prospective father-in-law. When he takes the stopper out a genie emerges, and proceeds to explain that he was imprisoned within at the request of King Solomon, 3,000 years earlier. The genie wishes to do all he can to advance the welfare of the hero, a young architect, and he builds a fantastic palace in the country for a client who merely wanted a more orthodox country house. He quarrels with the prospective father-in-law of the hero, and proceeds to turn him into a one-eyed mule. There is no need to go into the further misadventures of Fakrash, since the reader can find them out for himself if he reads the book. The main thing is to see what there was about this book which ensured it a huge public in 1900, when it first made its appearance, and which will quite certainly make it one of the most sought-after Penguin books today.

Anstey was a capable journalist, who did much for "Punch" in its heyday; he was therefore always able to tell a story in a convincing manner. Even the most fantastic of occurrences sound real enough when he describes them. The reader willingly surrenders his unbelief in genies in order to chuckle over the mess into which the hero and his friends are landed by this invasion of the supernatural into their humdrum lives. That is the first point.

Secondly, the whole background of the story is stable. In a world which has included Belsen camps and atom bombs, black markets and starvation rations, it is not so easy to consider such queer happenings as those of "The Brass Bottle," save as the pure escapist fantasies which they are. It would therefore appear that the original readers of "The Brass Bottle" probably enjoyed the book because it put extraordinary things in a familiar frame. The readers of today will enjoy the book because both the frame and the extraordinary things are unfamiliar.

That is the distinction between escapism as we know it in present-day literature, and as it was known in the past. Even such masterly works as the scientific romances of H. G. Wells attracted wide attention because the men who went to the moon (to take a typical instance) were ordinary men, leading normal Victorian lives except for the moment when some scientific invention or discovery suddenly changed their whole outlook.

No one who set out to write an escapist book today could do it in quite the same way. What is happening in the world is just as remarkable as any fantastic events which can be brought into being by the imagination of the most impressionable writer of fiction. Consequently we get such manifestations of

current lunacies as "No Orchids for Miss Blandish," or, alternatively, the American magazines, now just filtering back into this country which exemplify what is, I believe, called "scientific fiction." In those magazines we have happenings far more amazing than anything which happens in the pages of Anstey or H. G. Wells, but there is an air of the most complete unreality about the whole affair which makes them totally impossible as satisfying reading, either for the scientific or the lay reader.

It is, indeed, possible that Anstey did not realise what he was doing. He died in 1934, before the final breakdown in Fascism and war, of the civilisation which was the background of all his best work. He set out, I imagine, to create amusing stories which would make his readers smile. He found that his own particular talent worked most satisfactorily on themes of fantasy, whereby miraculous events were thrust into the lives of ordinary people; and with that he was content. If he had been told that his books would be readable to a future generation, more for the background than for the events themselves, he would have laughed the idea to scorn. For the background was drawn quite unconsciously; it was merely a picture, produced by an acutely observant reporter, of the life which he was himself living—the exquisitely comfortable life of a member of the upper middle class in the later years of the reign of Queen Victoria.

The average reader of 1946 will not find it at all easy to appreciate the changes which have occurred in 50 years; but the social and economic background of "The Brass Bottle" will help him to do so. He will see the way in which the majority of the professional classes of 1900 tended to play for safety, to get themselves a comfortable living, and then to settle down in comparative luxury until the age for retirement came round. Few people today can take quite that complacent attitude towards things, though it is probable that even as recently as 20 years ago some of the less politically-minded could still manage to do so by shutting their eyes to what was happening in some continental countries.

And that leads on to my final point. Are we, after all, quite justified in thinking that such writers as Anstey are pure escapists? In their own time they certainly were. But to this generation it is possible to consider that a realistic picture of middle-class life in 1900, even though it has superimposed on it fantastic outlines of genies and similar creatures, is a document of some historical value, with a very real lesson for ourselves.

The background of "The Brass Bottle," with all its emphasis on the quieter creature comforts, is a background of comparative stagnation; and its lesson for the politically-conscious people of today should surely be to teach us what stagnation really means. We can therefore say that, while the story of the book is an escapist, there is a direct impact between the background and the background of our lives now, nearly 50 years later.

S. H.

## SCIENCE AND SCIENTISTS

SCIENCE has made advances; the scientist is still a primitive man in his psychology.

The intellectual calibre of scientists was put to a test by the European War. The same men who had prated fervently at international congresses about the cosmopolitanism of science turned jingoes with the declaration of war. Ostwald, the great chemist, had been working for years at a universal language and a better understanding of peoples. Now he suddenly announced that Germany, as the supreme organiser, was bound to impose her efficiency on the countries still dawdling along on an individualistic basis. Pre-eminent German scientists renounced honorary degrees and distinctions that had been conferred by English learned societies. Britons and Frenchmen were not slow to reply. The gist of their utterances was that German scientists



had never amounted to much; its reputation was based largely on bluff. Before the war Pierre Duhem, the French historian of physics, had expressed himself none too favourably about great British physicists. He regarded their lack of logical precision as a national trait, and contrasted them with French and German thinkers. But in 1915 his views of Teutonic psychology suddenly changed. Now the Germans were merely uninspired plodders working along with the patience and docility of medieval monks. In England Sir William Ramsay and Sir Ray Lankester expressed themselves in much the same spirit. In 1916 a Canadian scientist broke loose in *Nature*, and accused Germany of a conspiracy of silence about the accomplishments of English-speaking savants. The Germans were to be made to confess their indebtedness to Newton, Faraday and Clerk Maxwell. Apparently this wisacre had never read what Helmholtz and Holtzmann have to say about these men; he did not know that Willard Gibbs, America's outstanding figure in the more abstruse aspects of exact science, was rescued from obscurity by Ostwald; and that almost every chapter in Mach's historical writings glow with admiration for the achievements of great Britons. But by 1916 scientists for the most part no longer cared what they wrote provided they could advertise that they were on the hand-wagon of mob prejudice. This sentiment prevailed after the armistice, and has by no means wholly disappeared. For several years at least scientists of the Allied countries declined to meet Germans socially. Some of them organised and held "international" congresses from which Germans and Austrians were excluded.

This is sad enough. But it is more humiliating to compare recent practice with that of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. About 1748, while Spain and England were at war, Uloa was returning from an expedition to measure the arc of a meridian. He was captured and sent to England, but British men of learning came to his rescue. He was released and elected to the *Royal Society*. Were the hostilities of the country of a minor character? Well, the Napoleonic wars were not. Having regard to the times they were quite on the same level of magnitude with the late unpleasantness of 1914. Yet while Prussia was crushed and dismembered, Alexander von Humboldt peaceably climbed Vesuvius with his friend Gay-Lussac and remained one of the eight foreign members of the French Academy. With the consent of the King he made Paris his headquarters and published his principal monographs in French. In 1841 there was talk of war between France and Germany. Humboldt wrote to his old friend Arago, asking whether these political differences would have any effect on their personal relations. The astronomer is insulted by the very suggestion. "I must not," he writes on March 12, 1841, "I will not believe that you have seriously asked me whether I should be glad to have you come to Paris. Could you doubt my unchanging affection? Know that I should regard any uncertainty on this point as the most cruel insult." . . . Again in 1806 Humphrey Davy wrote a paper on "Some Chemical Agencies in Electricity." French scientists awarded him a medal for the best experimental work on electricity. He accepted it notwithstanding the life-and-death struggle between England and Napoleon. Said he, some people say I ought not to accept this prize; and there have been foolish paragraphs in the papers to that effect; but if the two countries are at war, the men of science are not. That would indeed be a civil war of the worst description. We should rather through the instrumentality of men of science soften the asperities of national hostility. In the fall of 1813, Davy, accompanied by Faraday, went to Paris and regardless of the war was welcomed by French scientists.

What a contrast in mental maturity between the scientists of 1813 and of 1918! Men of learning had not yet been debauched by Chauvinism. They might be snobs like Davy, they might hob-nob with Kings, like Humboldt, but intellectually they were freemen who guarded the interests of mankind as a whole.

R. H. LOWIE.

(From "Are We Civilised." Routledge.)

## THE GOSPEL OF SAINT JOHN

IT was advertised that St. John Ervine was to be the lecturer, but it turned out to be Rip Van Winkle. To begin with, the title "Socialism and the Individual" has whiskers on it. Any comrade, any time in the past fifty years could (and did) bore an audience to tears with some such talk as:—

"The workers must emancipate themselves from the domination of capitalism and the thralldom of a soulless individualism . . ."

St. John must have spouted that sort of stuff in his socialist youth, for it is the same thing he talks now, only inverting the words socialism and individualism.

Now, one not unreasonably expects that a famous author will give us some intellectual enjoyment. But not if one is a reader of the "Belfast Evening Telegraph" where this famous man of letters has been writing a weekly page at the top of his voice for a long time, and has never put on record a sentence worth remembering. That is a stupendous achievement, and I thought the laws of chance might operate sometime in his favour, but this epoch-making lecture in Belfast touched abysmal depths of dullness.

It may be said, why worry? Well, for several reasons. Although the meeting was held under unionist auspices, there was a poor attendance (a tribute to his popularity!) and the Press reports which reach many thousands were inadequate and one-sided.

At the very outset, instead of copying the Joad formula, Doctor Ervine made such a jumble of Russian terrorism, the British Labour Party, family allowances, the steam engine, atom bomb, and Winston Churchill's greatness, that nobody knew what he meant by the words socialism and individualism. Oh, how weary I am of the old clichés about no two people being alike, one man's meat being another's poison, a man may be poor with ten thousand a year while another . . . etc., etc. Garnished with platitudinous sauce St. John served them all up to a listless audience. There was no bright spot in the lecture, and scarcely ever a ripple of applause.

To an adroit word-spinner the subject could yield a fine address, but one must not confuse the philosophy of personality with the narrow outlook of "private enterprise." For, make no mistake, giving words their proper meaning, St. John Ervine cares not a hoot for individualism. All he does is to lend his support to a tottering and outworn social system that has for its basis the right of the individual to exploit the needs of the community for his own enrichment. He is merely special pleading for the continuance of support for a party in Ulster now discredited in Britain.

We were told that every great idea, every epoch-making invention (the wheel was mentioned), sprang from the mind of one individual, and was invariably obstructed by the community. Numerous instances were given but were badly chosen (I missed the man with the red flag in front of a motor) and merely illustrated the innate conservatism of man, not the social significance of an attitude. Mention of Hargreave, the treatment of his spinning-jenny, and the sabotage of Luddites might lead a thoughtful mind to ponder over the inventiveness of the individual, and the effect on the lives of the many.

Suppose we admit that the individual is the great guy. So what? Clearly what Doctor Ervine says is that as we owe everything to the cleverness of a numerically small number of Smart Alicks it is fitting that they take all the good things in profusion, the less gifted being held in perpetual bondage. But we don't give the bright child of the family ten breakfasts, and the dull ones no egg. All that is very elementary. Moreover, very superficial investigation will show that the inventors themselves are not too well treated by private enterprise and that the outstanding qualities of capitalists are greed, grab, and exploitation



resulting on the one hand in vulgar opulence, and on the other in insecurity and frustration for the great mass of the people.

It is true that everything new is looked at askance—I remember about sixty years ago I laughed, as one of a jeering crowd, at a man who rode a bicycle with pneumatic tyres! But surely the deduction from Doctor Ervine's many illustrations of man's lack of imagination should be that one ought to regard sympathetically an honest attempt to manage the country's affairs better than hitherto.

The allusions to the atomic bomb were particularly unhappy, and decidedly frivolous. The lecturer argued this way; people were afraid of the steam engine, the motor car, the aeroplane, but they found their fears were groundless. *It is just the same with this question of atomic energy, but there's really nothing to worry about.* Substantially, those are St. John Ervine's words. Let us ponder over them.

I have little doubt that we could revolutionise industry with atomic energy. That is merely the belief of a layman, but I have positive knowledge that whole cities have been devastated in war by its use. And that knowledge appals me. For, unfortunately, "Death pays a dividend," and to the soldier who kills or is killed it matters little whether the ammunition was made by a private firm or a government department. Oh, I'm not going to argue that nationalisation of armaments would prevent war, yet as long as it is a profit-making concern there will be the perpetual menace of the fomentation of strife. And it is significant to note that Mr. Attlee has announced the government's intention to control atomic energy. Does Doctor St. John Ervine think private enterprise would manage this matter better?

Curiously, another Irish dramatist wrote an illuminating essay on individualism. I read "The Soul of Man Under Socialism" over fifty years ago, but it is still fresh in my mind. Wilde was as bright as Ervine is dull and his arguments are as sound to-day as ever. Only "under socialism" when one is relieved of the sordid necessity of living for others can one develop one's personality to the fullest. Millions of our people from school to old age are occupied, practically to the exclusion of everything else, with thoughts of work, of lack of work, of planning for work, of strikes, trade unions, and the thousand other ills that work gives air to. And along comes our successful Doctor to tell us that he never was so humiliated in his life as when he heard the radio appeal to parents to apply for the family allowances for their children. Five shillings a week per child, some demoralisation!

Doctor Ervine believes that every day in every way, we get better and better. Look at the mill girls for instance, he remembers them shuffling to work in the middle of the night. And now, they have dyed hair and bare legs as I look at them. Yes, factory conditions and working conditions generally have improved in the past half century. But how, and why? Largely because of the vigilance, the hard work and public spirit of enlightened men and women who compelled governments to pass legislative measures restricting the rights of individual employers regarding hours of labour and working conditions.

To those whose knowledge of politics is comparatively recent, ministries of food or coal are taken for granted, but in my young day—there was no Labour Party then—we were always told, when asking about some industrial abuse, that the matter was "outside the function of government." I remember old Keir Hardie telling us once of a deputation to the Home Secretary and they were given that stock reply. "But," said one of the persistent ones, "we thought you were the Home Secretary. What then is your duty?"

"Recommending murderers to the Queen's pardon," was the answer.

And that's about how it was. Shop assistants worked ghastly long hours, and conditions in mines, in factories, on the land, and on ships were very bad. Hours of labour, scales of wages, these were matters between employer and employed.

Yet, there has been improvement and it has been due largely to the curbing of what is sometimes called individualism. But it must not be forgotten that production is much greater than formerly with the expenditure of less energy, and it is possible that relatively we are not better off. But that worries me but little, for even without atomic energy there is more than enough to provide adequate shelter, security, food, clothing for every one of us. Until that is accomplished, until men have economic freedom, personality will be perverted and individualism inverted—as Doctor St. John Ervine would like to have said.

J. EFFEL.

## CHURCH AND STATE

UNDOUBTEDLY the most absurd and pernicious principle ever received into any society of men is that of permitting the clergy of any denomination to have the most distant share of influence upon the legislative authority of any nation. In times past, the clergy, ever subtly and crafty, succeeded by their influence and schemes, in possessing themselves of, in a great measure, the legislative authority of this country, and consequently in proportion, of the office of masters of the State; for whoever is master of the legislative authority in any State is undoubtedly master of that State. Having as it were, taken possession of the mansion, they were not long before they began to plunder it. They first, though, established and secured the power of the Church by a variety of laws made in her favour, and defended them by every ecclesiastical sanction that human cunning could invent, so that they were soon prepared to receive "in the name of the Church" all the riches, honours, and power which they could by any means obtain. And they know how to keep the "filthy lucre" when they had obtained it, for, according to their maxim, whatever was given to the Church was given to God, and therefore was never afterwards subject to be taken away by any earthly power whatever. Thus the astute clergy endeavoured to provide against all revolutions in the State, so that their property might always be safe under the name of the Church. By such smart manœuvring the clergy have, at one time or another, grafted themselves upon every State in Europe. They are plants that will grow in any soil; they have so deeply rooted themselves that there is scarcely a State where they have not secured a hand in the Government.

Unhappily there is, and has been, too much clinging to the State's purse-strings, and too much hungering for "pomp and circumstance" influence and power in high places by those who claim to be the successors to the poor fishermen of Galilee. How closely they imitate the lives and examples of the Apostles. Verily, they have clung tenaciously to the State, more for the wealth and power she could yield them than for the aid she could give in the extension of Christ's kingdom.

"EPICTETUS RENKLUAF."

## CORRESPONDENCE

### FREETHOUGHT PROPAGANDA ON MERSEYSIDE.

Sir,—During the years prior to the war there were active branches of the National Secular Society, functioning in both Liverpool and Birkenhead.

These organisations carried on active "Freethought" propaganda both outdoor, during the summer, and indoor during the winter.

Some of us who took part in, and were responsible for, the organisation of this work feel that it is both desirable and necessary to commence similar activities at the present time.

A meeting has therefore been arranged for the purpose of making the preliminary arrangements, and will take place at the D.A.S.C.A. Club, 14, Colquhitt Street, Liverpool, on Sunday, June 2, commencing at 7 p.m. You are cordially invited to be present, or if this should not be possible, you might wish to communicate with the writer.



It will probably be agreed by you that the need for clear thinking, with freedom from superstition and primitive beliefs is at least as important as ever, and your support is invited with every confidence.—Yours, etc.,

GEOFFREY THOMPSON.

WHAT THE CATHOLICS ARE AFTER

Sir,—I was very glad to read Mr. Corina's article in your issue of May 19. The complacency of the Labour Party chiefs towards Catholic infiltration, which has been gaining ground since 1912, contrasts oddly with their hysterical attitude to the Communists. It is not often that the Catholics in Parliament show their colours. But I notice that on May 15 when Mr. Stokes, the Catholic member for Ipswich, was trying to make the flesh of the House creep about "Communist propaganda from the East," Mr. Gallacher very properly pointed out that the danger to Europe was not this but propaganda from the "black" international (the Catholic Church) represented by Mr. Stokes. The latter gave himself away by retorting: "That is what comes of being a renegade Catholic." I did not know Mr. Gallacher had ever been a Catholic, but will take Mr. Stokes' word for it. The present drive against the C.S.S.B. is undoubtedly due to terror lest millions more should be lost to the Catholic Church and turned into potential Gallachers.—Yours, etc.,

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

"BOGEY, BOGEY"

Sir—I would emphasise the urge expressed by S. H. to read Hayek's "Road to Serfdom" as a reasoned case showing the solution, inevitably, of Socialism into Tyranny. The argument is flawless. As Hitlerism in Germany translated National Socialism into terms of Force, and the abrogation of Freedom, just as surely shall we see the same result here. Cheap writing about "a final hangover of outmoded ideas" does not help thinking much. Ideas stand or fall by the incidence of the Truth in them.—Yours, etc.,

W. ROBSON.

Sir—in "The Freethinker" of May 12 "S. H." contends that because there is financial disparity in this country the whole ground of Professor Hayek's book, "The Road to Serfdom," is thereby destroyed; i.e., the ground that Socialism leads to slavery.

But is there no disparity in Russia between a Peasant and a Commissar? Can a Russian workman become a professional agitator with the object of undermining and overthrowing the Communist Dictatorship? Can he go on strike or vote for anyone outside the Communist Party? Can he leave Russia or travel about as and when he likes? Can he indulge in the right of free speaking, free writing and free thinking? And if he cannot do all these things is he not a slave? So far from being a bogey, millions of thinking people in this and other countries are genuinely convinced that Socialism does mean, as Aldous Huxley puts it, "a process of restraint and regimentation, of curtailment of liberty and denial of human rights."—Yours, etc.,

H. CROSSLEY.

TAXATION.

Sir—Did any of your readers read a short report in a recent issue of the "Evening Standard" which quoted Mr. Justice MacNaghten, who said: "You have a dilapidated cottage and make it good and habitable, but immediately you have done that you have to pay much more in income tax on it. People are hourly clamouring for good houses, but the real cause of our disgraceful housing conditions is nothing but taxation." The Judge might easily have added that the real cause of the disgraceful and disgusting food and clothing conditions is entirely due to taxation. However, this Judge certainly deserves and fully merits a super-laurel crown for making in a public court a statement redolent of that elemental truth which is so sedulously and craftily concealed by every sort of official publicity, which is represented by every branch from high churchmen, Tories, Liberals and Labourites, and other politicians,

radio evangelists and ubiquitous Press Lords—all of whom join in the deep impenetrable conspiracy to defend the very crime of taxation. It would seem that the only classes of people who publicly rip the veil of this ghastly conspiracy and light up the interior are the comic artists and cartoonists who, sharing the goodly company of music-hall comedians, are, with the extra help of comic cartoons, always ready and able to reflect the inner convictions of the masses of British people and give those convictions utterance.

Only in those spheres of entertainment does taxation ever receive its just meed of contempt and derision. But now that the supreme voice of high justice has made a pronouncement that can be truly considered as being the absolute voice of the people, we really should try and be grateful, to say the least, for this sign that our common law still has a stout defender in its ranks.

Those knowing ones amongst you (alas still far too few in these trying days) fully realise like myself that wealth does not and never can pay taxes. You just try it. Not one of us is capable of producing a farthingsworth of wealth. The miner and the farmer know that the wealth they do produce is not acceptable as taxes. They have to pay in the money which is taxed, controlled and restricted by those officials who reign under the thumb of the Bank lords. It is clearly not the production of coal and carrots which pays taxes, it is the pay-packets.

This fact is quite unrealised by the class of person who produces nothing, but it is a stark bit of unextinguishable realism that has never had but one answer for the real producer of wealth.

The number of big industrialists who have corroborated this fact is too numerous to mention. But that our bank-ridden bureauerats are still dead to the truth is shown by this delectable quotation from the Labour Party's latest blurb: "Fair distribution according to a plan of priorities" (which when set to music means £1,000 a year to M.P.s but only £3 10s. a week for you, Geordie) "calls for a continuance of high taxation, high savings, rationing and price and quality control."

All of this, Geordie, is because if you are allowed to hold the money you earn you will, of course, spend it and to spend it will cause inflation because goods are in such short supply and your spending would make prices rise, according to the old, old story.—Yours, etc.,

ED. H. SIMPSON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EMERY. Parliament Hill Fields, 4 p.m., Mr. L. EMERY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m., MESSRS. E. C. SAPHIN, J. HART and E. PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., Dr. J. C. FLAGGEL, M.A.: "Some Needs of a United World."

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Bradford).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. A lecture.

Brierfield (Quaker Bridge).—Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. J. V. SHORR will lecture.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m., Mr. T. M. MOSLEY will lecture.

Oswaldtwistle (near Public Library).—Saturday, 1st June, 6-15 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Scoutbottom (Rossendale).—Wednesday, 5th June, 7-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.

Worsthorne.—Friday, 31st May, 7-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON will lecture.



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— A —

# FREETHOUGHT DEMONSTRATION

WHIT-SUNDAY, JUNE 9th, 1946

Chairman: Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN  
(President of the National Secular Society,  
Editor of "The Freethinker")

J. T. BRIGHTON  
L. EBURY  
R. H. ROSETTI

SPEAKERS:  
F. A. HORNIBROOK  
F. J. CORINA  
G. THOMPSON

J. CLAYTON  
J. V. SHORTT  
C. McCALL

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