

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

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Vol. LXVI.—No. 28

Sunday, July 14, 1946

Price Threepence.

VIEWES AND OPINIONS

The B.B.C. and the Public

THE time has come when the B.B.C. applied for and received a renewal of its licence. The Government has, however, decided that things must remain as they are, but the question may be brought up in five years' time. That in itself is suspicious, for when a government is satisfied with an institution such as the B.B.C. the odds are that the time has arrived when the "common people" should look into matters and particularly when the B.B.C. boldly proclaims the education of the people to be its main object. When the people above are satisfied with the state of things it is time for common folk to examine with care just what the B.B.C. is doing. Slow thinking easily deceives masses of humans known as the "people." It was that great lover of real freedom, Thomas Paine, who said that governments are the signs of lost innocence. Reforms, when analysed, seldom come from above.

In the case of the B.B.C. quite a large number of people that may be properly called representative in character have asked for a Selection Committee for an examination of the B.B.C. The Government has refused. If what exists is not perfect we must act as though it is. The Government of to-day, like the Government of yesterday, sees no reason for overhauling a monopoly at a time when change is one of our greatest needs. I do not wonder that in the circumstances great discontent is manifest. Many of our leading newspapers have supported the demand for an examination, but the Government sees no need for it. "The Times," "The Tribune," the "News Chronicle," "The Observer," with many others, ask for an examination. The "Government sees no need," is pronounced, and a liberty-loving people must consider the matter closed. If we must, in the name of liberty, eat unattractive bread, surely we should not kick against the unattractive manner in which the B.B.C. does much of its work. But in the manufacture of opinion the B.B.C. is one of the greatest instruments we have, therefore the greater the need for our seeing to it that the machine works as it should. "We see no need for examination," says our Government. So said Hitler to his people, and the result is before the world. But those who can keep a close eye on the B.B.C. know that things are not conducted as they should be.

Our interest in the B.B.C. began in the early days of its career. The B.B.C. began as a six-day endeavour, but it wanted broadcasting on Sunday. It was felt that anything in the shape of Sunday entertainments would meet with strong opposition from the Churches. But it thought that Sunday entertainments might be permitted if something was given to Sabatarians. It was the old story of selling one's soul to Satan for favours done in the hope of

getting the better of the bargain. So to avoid Church opposition the B.B.C. permitted a modest amount of religious talks. The amount of religion was not "as deep as a well or as wide as a church door," but it provided a foothold for the Churches, and the advance of religious influences was rapid—so was the amount of religious lying. We remember being one of a deputation that waited upon the B.B.C. to ask that if radio was to be used for religious propaganda Freethinkers should, in justice, be permitted to broadcast Freethinking ideas. The men we met were very sympathetic and thought something might be done later. Of course nothing was done. One cannot touch pitch without being defiled, and we suggested that religious interference was more likely to be extended than otherwise. We were right; the evil grew greater and greater until the B.B.C. ran up the notice, "No criticisms of religion admitted."

Then came upon the scene that double-dyed religious bigot, John Reith, after to become a Member of the House of Lords. His religion got thicker and thicker. Reith's plan was to ask every candidate for service, "Do you accept the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ?" One stood a poor chance who did not. Some of the best men in the service of the B.B.C. resigned or were discharged. The roads were cleared for Jesus. The places of these independent men were filled by more pliant souls and apparently Reith was satisfied with the "fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ." The Reith malady spread. Men of position who should have acted more worthily were muzzled, one may say because of the world-wide advertising offered. A direct bribe would have been rejected as an insult. But it was a different thing when unbelieving scientists and men of standing muzzled themselves. They must have blushed inwardly when they remained silent while religion was being constantly introduced, and in its most ignorant forms.

An example may be offered here. The time came when the centenary of Newton had to be noticed. The man selected was a very able one, and the speech was delivered. The author had written that Newton's theory met with strong opposition from the Churches. The B.B.C. altered it to "The theory met with opposition." The very heart of the passage had been taken out. Nearly everything has met with opposition, but the Churches had to be protected. Jesus and Reith were triumphant.

Another glaring example was connected with the centenary of Charles Bradlaugh, one of the giant figures of his time. An Association was created to pay honour to him, and permission was asked for a broadcast. The reply was not an honest refusal; that would be too much for the religion-soaked B.B.C. The reply took the form of a deliberate lie—the programmes had been made for the date required. The matter was pressed and it looked as though there would be an open scandal. But the committee

pressed the matter, and at the last moment a tame speaker was selected and Bradlaugh came before the public in the guise of a Liberal Non-Conformist. It was an insult to Bradlaugh disguised as a compliment. The B.B.C. was running true to its policy of boycotting anything that ran counter to what it called the "Christian tradition."

A very fine example of the method of the B.B.C. came to us in a rather round-about manner. I note it because it was a common practice of the B.B.C. authorities. One of our South African readers wrote to the B.B.C. in London with regard to the boycotting of the National Secular Society. The reply came in due course, dated July 20, 1942. It ran:—

"Thank you for your letter dated May 5. The work of the department of Religious Broadcasting is guided by a Central Religious Advisory Committee on which sit representatives of all the more important denominations. The recommendation of this committee is that the B.B.C.'s religious broadcasts should be confined to the main stream of the Christian tradition, and the B.B.C. has accepted this recommendation. The attitude of the Freethinker and the Agnostic is dealt with in the 'Brains Trust' and similar programmes where free discussion is encouraged."

Of all the double-dyed lies that have ever been printed by a responsible body of men and women this stands an easy first. Presumably it may be that the one who replied thought that a letter sent to South Africa would not be handled by people in England, but we have many useful and loyal friends in many parts of the world.

The plain fact, openly expressed, is that no direct or honest criticism of Christianity is permitted. Every talk about religion must fall into the "Christian tradition." The only rule that dominates religion is the lie direct or the lie by suggestion. To do Christians justice they have been loyal to this rule. Presumably it is based on Paul's "If my lie hath rebounded to the greater glory of God why am I then judged a sinner?"

Would anyone but a Christian advocate say that Freethinkers and Agnostics will find *free* discussion in the "Brains Trust?" It has been admitted that the replies are often cut, and when and where was any discussion about religion permitted? Of course Christians are permitted to mention the value of Christianity, but no one has ever been permitted to criticise. Huxley could, and so could others, but when have they been permitted to do so? In fact most of the things that might be said against religion are never said because they would not be printed if they were, and many speakers refrain from saying what they could and must often wish to say. They dare not say what they believe. The historic Church sent the heretic to prison, the torture chamber and the stake. The B.B.C. has achieved the feat of making the heretic reject his real opinions without prison, torture himself into quiescence, and end by throwing his fundamental opinions on a blazing heap which he has himself provided. When Bruno came before his enemies and heard his sentence to be burned alive, he replied: "You pronounce this sentence in greater fear than I hear it." Some of our modern heretics might well say to the B.B.C.: "We have saved you much trouble by refraining to tell you the truth that we both

know, but will not rebound to our reputation if we give it to the common people."

Exposing some of the dishonesties of the B.B.C. particularly where religion is concerned, I said (in 1942)—

"There never had existed in this country a more subtle method of preventing the development of independent opinion than that practised by the B.B.C. The Churches are obviously one-sided, and are taken as such by most. The statements of professional politicians, from the Prime Minister downwards, are taken with a grain—or a lump—of salt. Newspapers may lie, but the lie of one paper is held in check by the lie of another, and readers may reach the truth by balancing statements. But the B.B.C. enters every house and the unseen speaker's message comes with all the mystery attached to a voice from heaven. It is because the B.B.C. enters every house that there is created the necessity for a statement on both sides. If broadcasting is to maintain a monopoly, as it is now conducted, one of the greatest threats that can be made to the development of a real democracy is before us. The lie on the air is far more dangerous than the lie that meets us either in a church or on the political platform."

Just as we are going to press we learn that the Government—attributed as all our governments are to an unsoiled freedom of speech—has declined any further attempts to improve the B.B.C. for the time being. We are not surprised. The Tory Government while in power found no fault in the B.B.C. Now it is a Socialist Government's turn. But there are very many in the House of Commons who do not believe in freedom where religion is concerned. We wonder whether one of the House will display sufficient courage to introduce a Bill for the abolition of the laws against the idiotic "crime" of blasphemy?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE CHURCH IN POLITICS

(A lecture delivered by Mr. F. A. HORNIBROOK to the Leicester Secular Society.)

IN dealing with the influence of the Church in politics, I am referring chiefly to the Roman Catholic Church—not that the Protestant Churches are guiltless, but their influence and political power is much less. The Roman Catholic Church is the oldest; it is numerically the greatest; it is easily the richest and it is the most corrupt. If we glance over the history of the last few years and study it, we shall find that the Catholic Church has been in the forefront of every movement that has opposed democracy and championed reaction.

Let us take a few examples. We will commence with Austria. In February of 1934, 1,500 Socialists were killed by Dollfuss and his Fascist thugs. The American Catholic paper, "The Commonweal," on July 24, 1936, page 317, said: "When a man's faith is menaced it cannot be without danger to his immortal soul. Since there was no other way of removing the menace, Dollfuss would have been justified, on this score alone, in blowing the Socialists to pieces."

It is considered an act of piety to murder 1,500 men, women and children because they protested against Catholic Fascism and the murderer is excused his crime.

Then we take Italy. The Catholic Church blessed the banners of Mussolini's soldiers before they went out to murder 250,000 innocent, helpless, unarmed people in Abyssinia. After the Italian victory, the church bells in Italy were rung. We must not forget that the church bells in Italy were rung after the massacre of Saint Bartholomew. The Church would now have us believe that they are opposed to Fascism, yet that did not prevent the Pope from making a highly satisfactory bargain with Mussolini. The latter gentleman gave back the control of the schools in Italy to the Church after they had been free of church influence for half a century.

Bishop Spellman, of America, recently paid Europe a visit. He could hardly find words strong enough to express his admiration for Salazar, the Fascist President of Portugal, while he expressed the deepest regard for the faith of the Portuguese. Portugal is held up by the clerical Fascists as a country deeply religious and democratic. The former statement is probably correct, but the latter is a clerical lie. Democracy, as known in England and America, is unknown in Portugal. Here is a country in which over 70 per cent. of the people are illiterate; but if its illiteracy proportion is high, it is not as high as its incidence of venereal disease, which is the most appalling in Europe. Tuberculosis is rampant, while the conditions of the general run of the workers are disgraceful. Not that these things count with the Vatican policy. After all, it doesn't matter, in the eyes of the Church, if the worker cannot read so long as he can memorise portions of the Catechism; nor does it matter if he does not wash so long as he puts his dirty paws into holy water to cross himself. Dirt and ignorance have always been the handmaidens of the Church.

And now we skip to Spain. We glance at the regime of that gallant Christian gentleman, Franco. Today the synagogues in Spain have been closed. Jewish marriage, circumcision and burial are banned, and Jewish children required to attend Catholic religious instruction in the schools or go without schooling. Jesuits have returned and their property has been restored. During the brief period in which the Republican Government functioned, there was an honest attempt made to wipe out the illiteracy which has disgraced Spain for so many centuries. During the Spanish war it was very extraordinary to me that one found men who called themselves Freethinkers and yet supported Franco. How could such people call themselves Freethinkers? It was a disgrace to a noble word. Let them call themselves Atheists if they like; but to oppose Christian theology and support Vatican politics is absolutely contradictory. If clerical Fascism won throughout the world, how much Freethought would be left? Fascism is the negation of everything that men who have fought and died for freedom believe and believed in—and the Church is just as totalitarian as Nazism and Fascism.

At this stage it may be argued that I have quoted only from foreign countries. Well, let us turn to Canada and compare Catholic Quebec with non-Catholic Ontario. With regard to reading: Ontario, with the same population as Quebec, has 17 times the number of public libraries. The book circulation is eleven times greater; nor is that circulation affected by the scores and scores of books placed on the index in Quebec. The priest-ridden French Canadians are as badly off culturally as any people in the civilised world, for the Church always tries to keep its dupes in intellectual darkness. The banning of books of liberal opinions and, of course, of those dealing with the criticism of religion, occurs not only in Canada, but also in Eire; in fact, the list of books placed on the index in Eire is growing at such a rate that soon the only books that will be admitted will be Hans Andersen's Fairy Tales and the fairy tales of the Catholic Church.

Now let us look at America. Few people realise that 80 per cent. of all the money that the Vatican comes from America. Father Caughlin, that anti-Semitic, anti-democratic, pro-Fascist, radio priest who boasted that his audience on the wireless

numbered nearly 5,000,000, in his paper "Social Justice," urged America to refuse material and moral aid to England. In this he was supported by the Jesuit paper "America," "The Paulist," "The Catholic World," "The Brooklyn Tablet" and "The New York Catholic News." These papers wanted Fascism to win. They praised Petain for having destroyed French democracy and for having restored the power of the Church. They approved of Franco's influence in the Argentine, because the priest can expect more privileges from Franco and Fascist Argentine than he can from a democratic Government. Before America entered the war, ten priests out of 33,000 signed a statement denouncing Hitlerism. The man who would look for or expect tolerance from a Church whose main creed has been intolerance, must indeed be a simpleton. It is interesting to read the Catholic views on the subject of toleration. In the "Catholic Encyclopaedia," volume 7, page 262, we read: "Toleration came in only when Catholic faith went out. Lenient measures were resorted to only where the power to apply more severe measures was wanting." (One can almost sense here the regret that they cannot still use the weapons of the Inquisition.)

The Rev. Father Garvin, in an article, "Catholicism and Americanism," in the July, 1940, issue of "Catholic Truth," writes: "The authority of the Catholic Church is as superior to that of the State as the authority of God is to that of earthly rulers." No wonder, then, that some of our R.C. M.P.'s seem to take as their inspiration the opinions of Pacelli, the Fascist Pope, and consider that their first duty is to the Vatican and their second to their constituents. It is not alone in those countries where Catholics are in the majority that we find this intolerance—here in England, which is, nominally, at all events, a Protestant country with a Catholic minority, we see the desperate attempt made to prohibit the teaching of birth control and to make divorce illegal. If the power of the clergy is so great with their own dupes, why interfere with people who do not profess the Catholic religion? It does go to show what they would do if they had the power. The Church wants a Protestant majority to pay for the poisonous education of a Catholic minority who will teach the children that "the authority of the Catholic Church is superior to that of the State"—in other words, to teach sedition.

F. A. Ridley sums up the situation so well in his book, "The Papacy and Fascism," when he says: "The destruction of modern civilisation has, therefore, become a sine qua non if Rome is to survive the crisis that at present confronts her. As the Papacy has clearly realised, the victory of Socialism means the end of the Catholic world and of the Catholic Church. Hence the fanatical and morbid fear of a militant Socialism that characterises her utterances at the present time. A Church whose declared motto is, 'For ever the same' cannot hope to survive for long in a world that is never the same. Fascism and Catholicism are both anti-Socialist, anti-Communist and anti-Labour. For both, the destruction of the Parties that are Left is necessary for their continued existence. Both alike can only solve the crisis of the 20th century, the crisis pre-eminently of Socialism and of social evolution, by the destruction of Socialism and the consequent repudiation of economic democracy and the denial of economic and social justice."

BUDDHIST PRAYERS

If the dead could by some means come back to life for a spell, the Atheistic Buddha would be smiling over a recent issue of the "Singapore Straits Times" in which is published the news that the Chinese Buddhist priests have threatened to "strike" if their salaries are not increased. They are asking for an extra allowance—in cash—for the three special prayers which are offered every week. Of course, we can meet this in our own country, some of our feather-headed Socialists discover the essence of social reform in the teachings of the New Testament Jesus.

"WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?"

II

AS far as its intellectual history is concerned the criticism of Christian origins can itself be divided under three separate and sequential headings. Firstly, modern historical criticism, during the three centuries between our own age and that of Spinoza, has completely battered down and made utterly untenable to all but Jesuitical equivocators the view, common both to Catholics and to the earlier Protestants, of the Bible as the infallible, verbally inspired "Word of God," equally and entirely sacred and unerring in each and all its component parts.

This work, already sketched in outline by Spinoza, Meslier, and the English Deists, was popularised with incomparable brilliance by Voltaire and with tremendous controversial flair by Thomas Paine, the two greatest exponents of the Deistic standpoint. Since their day a host of scholars, critics and historians have got busy on the problems presented by Christian origins. The measure of their success is to be found in the current fact that, today, the axiom that the Bible must be critically treated "like any other book" is accepted by everyone clergy included, outside Rome and the most ignorant "fundamentalist" sects. Such a view—which would make the original Protestant reformers turn in their graves equally with their Catholic opponents—if honestly and logically held, makes any belief in traditional Christian orthodoxy impossible, since such orthodoxy was, in last resort, only a logical "rationalization" of the old exploded biblical "fundamentalism." The old breed of theologians, who were both logical and consistent, is fast dying out. (Cardinal Newman was, perhaps, their last representative to whom intellectual and moral greatness may be freely accorded.) Today a theologian who is both honest and a real scholar, must be a rare bird! Soon he will be as extinct as the proverbial Dodo and the New Zealand Moa.

Secondly, a series of anthropologists from Darwin's day to our own, have torn to shreds the whole idea of the "Fall of Man," and, for the doctrine of original sin, have substituted an evolutionary view of the Universe, which leaves no room either for a Creator, a Redeemer, or for the concept of "sin," upon which the whole fabric of historic Christianity was built. Mankind is not "fallen"—quite the contrary! He is steadily rising, even though more slowly than he should, and his frequent set-backs have social and not theological causes. *Man comes from the earth, up; not from the heavens, down.* Such is the teaching of modern anthropology, the anthropology of Darwin and Frazer, as against that remote oriental predecessor of Hans Andersen who wrote the fairy tale about the fall of Man and the promise of a Redeemer, preserved in Genesis.

Lastly, though for reasons of an obvious character not as yet so universally accepted as those intellectual revolutions at which we have just glanced, we must consider that the modern sociology and psychology associated with the names of Marx and Freud and their respective disciples, have made hay of the Ten Commandments and, equally, of the whole moral system of the Bible and the Church. We now know, for instance, that theft is not the product of the Fall of Man, but of the hardships imposed upon the poor by a scarcity economy. The whole Christian morality was, from the circumstances of its origins, a slave morality congruous with the servile society amid which it arose.

As for sex, "Christian morals" are merely primitive superstition, the concentrated summary of how many pre-historic taboos! We now know, since Freud, that any sane view of sex must regard dreams as of far greater importance than devils, and glands than ghosts. "The Temptations of St. Anthony" bear about as much relation to the scientific practice of a modern clinic as "Christian morals" do to any sane and scientific moral code which the modern world can seriously consider.

Thus, it is easy to observe that the whole system of Christian

belief is, and always was, a mass of errors, inconsistencies, and sheer superstitions as and when viewed from the purely intellectual standpoint. But it is not the beliefs that make the success of the religion, but, rather, vice versa—and this generalisation applies to the origins of Christianity. For Christianity owes its existence to social, and not to intellectual causes. It arose, that is, out of the *social* needs of antiquity, not, certainly, out of a disinterested passion for knowledge.

For when considered from the standpoint of sociology, Christianity presented the final synthesis assumed by the social class-struggles of the classical civilisation.

In two subsequent articles—if the Editor and the readers of the "Freethinker" can endure for so long!—we propose to elaborate this contention, respectively, from the contemporary standpoint of the rulers and the ruled; of the servile masses of the Roman world, and of the Roman ruling class itself. Both of whom, though for widely divergent reasons, required at this precise historic moment just such a cosmopolitan religion of salvation as Christianity eventually became.

F. A. RIDLEY.

FOREST CATHEDRAL

I.

CORRECTLY attired in orthodox European clothes the negro attracted little notice—no more than he was accustomed to—he entered the Cathedral, seating himself in a chair where the shadow of a great pier fell. Not leaving West Africa till he was grown up the man watched English customs with great interest, trying to understand if not assimilate them.

Here at the bottom end of the Cathedral he had an uninterrupted vista all up the vast long nave to the choir beyond. Banded with carved scrolls, rows of elaborately fluted pillars terminated in complex floriated capitals. From them curved spandrels to form the intricately crossed arches of the clerestory, then up by more involved arches to the boss-centred groined roof, heavily shadowed, with surfaces of light among the many curves and angles and corners and recesses.

It seemed to the negro these spaces of light were palest blue, brightening as the moon ascended behind the lofty massed trees whose boles rose sheer, column-like, and their branches curved over in huge arcs, unbragous and interlacing at the top.

A clear area was a pool of moonlight, at the far side of which almost in the same relative position as the altar and basking in the reredos of this Cathedral, stood a raised platform with some hideous effigy on it, but so deeply shadowed as no details to be discernible. Nevertheless, it was unmistakably a representation of their god, the tribal god, the deity to whom they appealed for victory in battle against other tribes.

All the while there was continual susurration, shuffling of feet and faint distant murmur of subdued voices.

II.

Lowering his eyes the West African native watched the crowd of people coming in by all doorways, walking along aisles and passages and settling themselves into seats with numerous little movements and fidgets. Their numbers were unusually large because this was a Day of Intercession ordained by the King and Archbishop for prayers to Almighty God beseeching victory to the Allied armies and a successful peace following.

Keeping scrupulously away from the sacred spot, in deepest shadow and leaving the moonlit enclosure clear, through the brown naked or lightly clad negroes were congregating in the verge of the forest where it was thinner, the trees wider spaced. As they increased in multitude and crowded closer round the padding and rustling and shuffling of feet rose louder, as did the murmur of voices, yet all were hushed and full of awe. No one dared expose himself to the full moonlight or make any loud articulate noise, only whispering and muttering and light foot falls.

Behind it all, continuous and insistent the negro thought he heard the thud and rumble and boom of drums, positive but not aggressive, tapped and fingered gently rather than beaten or thumped; but persistent, various notes higher and lower from many different sized drums, and emphatically rhythmic, with meaning to the initiated.

III.

The Cathedral organist was playing the Introit, softly at first, a few slow scattered notes which he appeared to be collecting and grouping into chords, mostly low rolling harmonies worked out on the bass and pedals.

As the drumming came closer and grew louder the negro heard rather than saw the assembled tribe settle into fearing and reverential attention, stillness and silence of expectancy. From an opening in the forest facing the god on his platform rushed a group of young warriors in full panoply, shaking their spears and shields, beating the former upon the latter in crude but marked rhythm as they danced away in two diverging lines right and left.

Not exactly a dance it was an exaggerated spectacular march displaying the great muscles of their arms and legs and throwing out their chests. Further to emphasise their frightfulness they burst into a yelling chant, defiant and lustful of battle and bloodshed.

IV.

Intoning slowly to the organ accompaniment the choristers entered the Cathedral from their vestry. Resplendent in scarlet cassocks and snowy surplices they crossed the middle transept and turned up toward the altar, deploying to right and left into the choir stalls.

All the congregation had risen to their feet. As he did so the negro visualised the witchdoctor of his tribe prancing into the middle of the moonlit arena. He was a fearsome spectacle, his face and body painted lurid red and white accentuating his height, his length of arms and legs and the fierce fanaticism of his face. A gigantic headdress of coloured feathers, and limb and body bands of leopard's skin from which the tails swung loose stressed the monstrous and terrifying effect under the cold impersonal moonlight.

V.

The Bishop walked up the middle passage of the nave, the chief vergier going before him carrying a silver cross-topped staff. Several resident Cathedral clergy followed behind, escorting him to his great chair, where he sank on his knees for a moment in soundless prayer, then stood. Silence fell on the large congregation prefatory to the opening sentences of the service.

Likewise the West African saw the bedizened witchdoctor stand for a few seconds in the middle of the clearing, his arms raised, striking his most impressive and scaring attitude before starting to leap around in circles.

All the tribe fell deathly silent and still at their priest's instant of statuesque movelessness.

Then the drums took up their plaint and the warriors chorused savagely as the priest gyrated and postured. Steadily the dancing and drumming and chanting would increase, all the tribe joining in till it rose to a frenzy, an orgy of furious, urgent and passionate demand upon their god that he accord them victory in to-morrow's battle with the other tribe: who at the same time were going through the same performance: total, complete and absolute victory, slaughterous and bloody.

VI.

Joining heartily in the responses the negro felt comforted, at ease. Never before had he been so at one with white people, experiencing an atmosphere of sympathy all round him. The superiority of these white folk was superficial; in their religion they were in principle and essence identical, with the forestal tribe he had left many years before; the transition from the forest clearing to the Cathedral came quite naturally. He was spiritually as much at home here as in the forest.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

CHRISTIANITY ON TRIAL

Do good, for good is good to do;
Spurn bribe of heaven and threat of hell.

—THE KASIDAH OF HAJI ABDU EL YEZDI.

IN 1943 Professor John Anderson, Professor of Philosophy at Sydney University, was censured by both chambers of the New South Wales Parliament for having said this:—

"If religion, then, were to play a part in education as the development of understanding, it could only be as a subject on which various views could be considered by the child and grasped in terms of his own experience. . . I should argue (1) that the morality natural to an educational system is the morality of education itself, of scholarship, of freedom of thought; (2) that the protecting of any morality from competition makes for moral weakness; and (3) that the clergymen who give instruction in schools are not experts in ethical science. Teachers, then, would be well advised to keep the clergy out of the schools."

Clergymen, both Protestant and Catholic, always claim that good conduct depends on religion (supernaturalism). Does it?

According to the census of 1933, 21 per cent. of the people of New South Wales stated that they were Roman Catholics. Approximately two-thirds of the Catholic children are educated in schools conducted by the Catholic Church in N.S.W., receiving an intensive religious training from priests, brothers and nuns. Therefore, if religion conduces to good social behaviour Catholics should have a low rate of delinquency. Actually, they have the highest rate!

Each year the Government Statistician of N.S.W. publishes, in the Official Year Book of N.S.W., statistics showing the religions of prisoners in N.S.W. on June 30 of each year. Now read these revelatory statistics:—

Year ended June 30	Total Prisoners	Catholic Prisoners	Catholics per cent.
1934	1,515	540	35
1935	1,398	454	32
1936	1,330	464	34
1937	1,183	404	34
1938	1,176	422	35
1939	1,364	481	35
1940	1,357	487	35
1941	1,236	423	34
1942	1,497	471	31
1943	1,558	529	33
1944	1,739	614	35

Delinquency amongst Catholic women is higher than the average male Catholic rate, there being 63 Catholic women incarcerated in 1943 out of a total of 139 women prisoners on June 30, or 45 per cent. The figures are not published with the intention of belittling Catholics, but with the object of proving that the claims of priest and parson are false. Protestants generally send their children to State schools, but what figures have been collated for Church schools conducted by them show that the rate of delinquency is higher than that of State school products. In short, the Catholic one-fifth of New South Wales produces one-third of the delinquents. Professor Anderson is right! The clergy should be kept out of the schools.

(Compiled by B. Calcutt and issued by the Queensland Rationalist Society).

ANATOLE FRANCE

Anatole France was human, and, being human, he was not always consistent in his ideas, or at least in his expression of them. But underlying all these apparent contradictions, was the compassion he felt for the sufferings of the down-trodden and the helpless; the scorn, passionate yet restrained, which meanness, cruelty, and injustice never failed to awaken in his heart.—J. LEWIS MAY.

ACID DROPS

We are a democratic people—at least we should be if the majority of the people thought along the right lines and behaved in the proper way. For example: There is a school in Herefordshire that is looked over by a parson, the Rev. Evan James. There is also a school, the headmistress of which is a Mrs. Davidson. There were no complaints of her ability as a headmistress, but there was a grave, a very serious fault in the school headship. She had not been to church since October last, and the parson therefore gave her the "sack," and now the country is having a row over it. So much for freedom if the churches had their way.

The weekly meetings of Roman Catholic converts are still on show at Foyle's bookshops. There is a double advertisement here—one for the bookseller, the other for the church. The parade of the converts of the church would be more convincing if it told us how it loses its followers. It is a queer stock-taking that deals only with gains and has nothing to say about losses. But the Roman Church is a curious thing, and its methods of gaining converts are also peculiar.

The latest capture on view is a lady, Dr. Letticia Fairfield. She will now believe that miracles are worked by the Saints to save the lives of men and women—that is right to the time when the patients die. We wonder how much she depends solely upon the Saints for curing her patients, and also how many of her patients would really prefer to trust to the saints and "Damn the Doctor." When the Doctor and the Saint are mixed it would puzzle anyone to say which does the trick. For Miss Fairfield to say that she believes the Saints do cure people, will not do. It is not evidence, it is only hearsay. We do not mean that the Doctor willingly or knowingly deceives her patients or her hearers. She believes what she said. But her saying was very poor.

Here is a sample. She tells the world that her parents and her ancestors were the blackest of black Protestants. She has our sympathy, although she ought to know, as a doctor, that religious beliefs are not hereditary. It is a matter of environment and personal strength of character. A great many people improve both. Dr. Fairfield lacked that courage. She went about trying to find a religion that she liked, just as she might walk round a shop looking for a hat she liked. She even says that she actually read some of the cheaper publications of the Rationalist Association. And that did the trick. It made her a Roman Catholic. If the Church believes her it should distribute these same papers among the people. But perhaps the doctor does not mean all she says. But now her family may boast that they have the darkest of the Protestants, and the most foolish of the Christian world. But of someone who understood human nature, and therefore was able to tell a subject more about himself than the subject knows, what then? Might not an examination lead to the conclusion that she belonged to that class of people who cannot stand alone; they must, at any cost, have someone against whom they may lean? After all, great discoveries do happen in the way Miss Fairfield speaks. She might also reflect—had she been different from what she is—that truths are not found by timid people. Or even when poor weak people stumble on a great thing they will often shiver themselves to the darkness to which they belong. The Catholic Church seems admirably adapted to Dr. Fairfield. She has our good wishes. But do not give us the old, old piece of Christian humbug that she became a Roman Catholic because she read a freethought book. We are sure Rome will fit her mentality.

We have already given an account of the way in which the numbers of men in the forces attending church, when it ceased to be compulsory, literally dropped to nothing. Now a similar result has been seen in another attempt to induce the men to attend church. One side of the church was filled with sailors—they were marched in like cattle. On the other side, devoted to soldiers, only seven. We do not wonder the Church is making a last desperate effort to create Christians by striving more than ever to control the children. The aim is villainous, and parents should see to it that their children have a fair start by withdrawing them from religious instruction.

It should be borne in mind that the freedom to go to church or stay away is in operation only in a few places. The men in the forces should insist that both soldiers and sailors should go to church service only when they wish to do so. Grabbing children and forcing adults to attend church is a contemptible business. But historic Christianity is on the whole a contemptible creed.

Lourdes will have to look to its laurels. The cures at Fatima, that holy spot where the Virgin appeared and caused the sun to hop round the heavens as a proof of her authenticity, has had another "miracle." It is the fifth up to date, and is quite sensational. An old lady of 78 broke her leg and it failed to heal. She heard over the radio the blessing of the sick at the recent pilgrimage and immediately jumped out of bed completely cured—"it is claimed," adds the pious journal which gives the report. There was a time when there would have been no doubt about it, and the "cure" would have taken its place in the medical records as another "miracle." But these days it is just as well to add "it is claimed," the spirit of scepticism even invading the holy precincts of Catholic journalism. It is just a reminder of what freethought can do.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has announced his determination "to attack ignorance in the religious education of England's children." That is very good of him indeed, it even savours of self-sacrifice, that is if the Archbishop means what he says. But we fancy that he does not mean exactly what he says. The education of religion should mean the instruction of the origin of religious ideas, how they once dominated life, and how people are gradually, some rapidly, displacing religious ideas together. He would then go on instructing pupils of the number of Pagan signs and symbols identical with those used by Christians of to-day. He would then go on explaining that morals really have nothing to do with religion, and . . . but we must stop here because if the Archbishop was caught letting the cat out of the bag he would be turned out of the Church. . . . But we expect that he doesn't wish to educate children, he merely wishes to *instruct* them. And the difference is vital.

The Bishop of Lancaster is a very much "wondering" man. At present he is wondering where God is with atomic bombs flying about. Well, we would, as a likely guess, say he is just sitting tight, smiling broadly at the foolishness of his children, knowing that whatever he does, or does *not*, to his children, they will continue to praise him for the help he never gives. There are plenty of people on earth who get their living in that way. To live on other people's foolishness is quite common on earth. The Bishop of Lancaster substantially tells us that the practice in the other world also operates.

A very curious case was recently brought before the Church Assembly. A woman complained that her son had become an Atheist when he was only thirteen years of age due to an Atheist teacher in his school. It is, of course, not impossible for a boy of thirteen to be sufficiently developed to become an Atheist, but it is unlikely. But it is very unlikely that a teacher in a Church school would risk his job by teaching children Atheism. It would ruin his standing and also his job. If there is any truth at all in the incident it should make them think twice before they force their out-worn religion on intelligent children of thirteen.

What we have said is supported by another incident that occurred at the same Church meeting. Canon Dudley, a clerical headmaster, complained at the State interfering with religion. He was of the opinion that "the battle for religion should be fought at home." Good enough, if the fighting was fair. But practice it is not a fight of one set of opinions against another. It is not child instruction—it is open kidnapping. The child is presented with religion as something worthy of attention, but something that it must believe on pain of punishment in the next world—and sometimes in this. It is not a fair fight; in fact, it's not a fight at all. The parents deceive the children, and the children—in large numbers to-day—dismiss the beliefs that have been forced upon them.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

The General Secretary N.S.S. will be leaving for a short vacation on July 24 and matters requiring attention should be forwarded to the office as soon as possible before that date. During his absence only items of urgency will be dealt with.

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.

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

There is one good feature attached to the war that may not have been noticed. It is that the time is passing when the glories of war were commonly expressed. The glory of war is almost dead. War, as we have said for many years, does not even develop courage; it takes advantage of the courage that has been developed in social life. And the more that sentence is studied the more truthful it becomes. The longer war lasts the more steadily the futility and the senselessness of war becomes. In our own legacy from the war we note that the looting of houses goes on with hardly a diminution. Never was robbery so common as it is today. It has become almost an industry. Cheating and dishonesty meet one in almost every street. There is a difference in the manner, but there is no mistaking their popularity. But still movements are developing which may be noted with approval. India will receive a considerable degree of self-government, and that far from splendid page of our history will be partly wiped out. But it is worth noting that a measure of justice to India, not because of war so much as the nature of the last war, made it impossible for any country to be ruled from a land so far away as India is from England. The motto of Churchill: "What we have we hold," is good enough for a company of pirates, but not for men and women who wish to conduct life with developing decency. It looks as though war can no longer be looked on as a glorious thing. It is not. It is a sign manual that we have been unfit for government. If the war has killed that ridiculous measuring the greatness of nations by the possession of countries they have "taken," then the war may not have been fought in vain.

Apropos of the scandal of the B.B.C. using the English radio system as an advertising centre for Christianity, these items in one day are worth considering:—

7-50 Morning devotional reading. 9-35 Service for schools.
10-15 Daily service. 1-45 What are the Churches doing? (A glorification of the Churches). 3 Choral evensong.
7-30 Religious commentary. 9-45 Christian interpretation of civilisation.

Here is the parson up to date. He is exhibited by the Rev. Rüssel Sherrer. This reflection of God's wisdom has discovered that there is a "small influential group of people in London . . . who have vowed that their brilliant powers should be consecrated to the task of cutting out of British culturalism." If Mr. Sherrer will shake his head a little and open his eyes to what is right before him he will see that the Christian religion is merely following the same course that other creeds have trodden. Direct attack is doing its part, but more significant than the influence of the cultured few is the fact that the "common man" has also reached the point of understanding the origin and history of religion.

OBITUARY

FRANK SKIDMORE

With deepest regret we have to announce the death of Frank Skidmore, a loyal and trusted servant in the Free-thought cause. He had just concluded a brief holiday and was making his way to the office when he dropped dead. For him it was a painless end, but to those who knew him it marked the death of a devoted friend and Freethinker. He will live long in the memory of those who knew him. The Free-thought cause owes him much. To his wife and members of his family we offer our deepest sympathies. The cremation will take place at Golders Green Crematorium at 3-30 on Friday, July 12. C. C.

Owing to the black-out at the beginning of the war, the North London Branch of the N.S.S. was compelled to cease its open-air meetings at Highbury Corner. We are glad to note that they will be resumed there from July 14 until the end of the season at 7 p.m. every Sunday. The Branch will be pleased to have the support of all Freethinkers in the district and is ready to enrol active members.

"The Universe" declares that it is a mistake to say that no Catholic can study science. Of course that is a mistake, if taken literally. There are many able scientists who somehow or the other do claim to be Roman Catholics. But there are several things that one should bear in mind. First of all many scientific works cannot be read by strict Catholics unless they get permission to do so. Apart from this there are a fair number of modern works, literary and scientific, that are indexed and we have only to look up to see confronting us two bulky books of this kind which are filled only with the names of scientific and other books that Catholics must not read. And when a sound Catholic reads a scientific book his conclusions must fit in with Roman Catholic doctrines. There is more than one way of killing a cat, and the Roman Catholics are very expert in spelling lies with other letters of the alphabet. We should always remember that it was only about the beginning of the 19th century that the Roman Church officially admitted that the Earth went round the Sun.

Dean Swift had an explanation for the quality of the clergymen that England sent to Ireland. It ran thus. All the clergy that were sent were decent, brave, honest and able men. But on the coast somewhere in some lonely place the wise and good clergymen were seized, robbed of money and clothing, and then the brigands dressed themselves in clerical clothes, took command of the churches and robbed the people right and left. . . . We wonder? . . . but we had better not go any farther.

The Jews in Palestine are causing and feeling a deal of trouble. The Arabs do not want the Jews to expand, and the Jews wish to expand as much as they can. From one point of view this trouble is due to the Bible God and the New Testament deity. Man can make enough trouble on his own account where religion is concerned, without governments stepping in to take a hand. The political interests begin to play their part, and the trouble becomes greater and greater.

We must bear in mind that the landing of the Jews in large numbers in the "Holy land" was to protect them from the injustice and brutality exercised on them by Christians. So far so good; and if some non-committal name was given to the settlement, and if the Jewish religion had been left out of its concern it is certain that the opposition would not have been so bitter as it has become. But to settle the Jews there and to treat them as a Jewish nation, with religion the leading figure, was bound to cause trouble. If we took a streak of England and sent all Roman Catholics to dwell there, giving them the right to make laws that suited Roman Catholics, it would have been fatal to the well being of the country. It is astonishing that this feature of the matter has never been noted. A national home for ill-treated people is one thing. A national home for a body of religionists is quite another matter. We may return to this subject when we have time and space to do so.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

I

ALTHOUGH there are scattered articles dealing with the Decalogue in various encyclopedias and books on the Bible, there appears to have been no systematic study of the whole of the Ten Commandments in a big way before Mr. Joseph Lewis attempted the task in his work just published, "The Ten Commandments" (Freethought Press Association, New York 1, N.Y.: Price 5 dollars).

It is a very big book of over 600 pages, packed with literary, historical, and anthropological illustrations and comments of a most exhaustive kind. Such a work must have entailed an enormous amount of reading—which indeed is indicated in the very full bibliography given; and the energy and completeness with which the author has ferreted out his facts, must command the admiration of every reader uninhibited by religious bias.

The Ten Commandments comprise perhaps the very first religious instruction we get at school, and there must be very few people brought up to believe in the two religions, Judaism and Christianity, who do not know them by heart; they are, so to speak, taken for granted as the very foundation of all morality though it is true Christians have always wanted to add the so-called original teaching of Jesus, "Love ye one another," to make an Eleventh Commandment.

The beautiful picture of God Almighty giving them to Moses on top of Mt. Sinai, engraved by his own divine finger on two tablets of stone, was once unreservedly believed in, and is now, in many religious quarters; somehow or other, intelligent Jews and Christians these days feel the story does not exactly ring true, however beautiful are the sentiments expressed in the Commandments. That particular story is in precisely the same category as the "Arabian Nights"—though exactly how the Ten Commandments were written, or who put them in the forms given in the Old Testament are, of course, quite unknown.

There are two distinct versions given—one in Exodus and the other in Deuteronomy; and in addition Jews, Protestants, and Catholics disagree as to what really can be considered the Ten Commandments.

The Jews claim that the first Commandment is, "I am the Lord Thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." (The word "slavery" is sometimes substituted for "bondage.") Protestants, of course, realise that this introduction proves that the Commandments were addressed to the Jews *alone*, and therefore the Old Testament is really a Jewish work which they "pinched" in trying to set up the Bible as a kind of "universal" Word of God. They therefore make the Commandments begin with, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Thus the precious Word can be moulded like a nose of wax just as it pleases thorough-believing Christians.

There is another Commandment which Fundamentalists throw overboard when it suits them, and that is the fourth—"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." The sabbath day is the seventh day, and not the first, which Christians prefer to keep.

Now it really does not matter which day is kept as a day of rest, for nobody knows who commenced the calendar. Until that point is settled it is quite impossible to say which day is the seventh, and which is the first. Moreover, the day is bound to be different in various parts of the world so that arbitrarily to fix a day as the first is quite impossible. But if Christians insist that the Bible is the Word of God, and believe every Commandment as Divine, the arguments they use for shifting the sabbath day from the (Biblical) seventh to the first look a bit thin. There are people who call themselves Sabbatarian Christians, and the arguments they produce are quite unanswerable. The only point at which they fail is to produce evidence

that Saturday is the seventh day. It is, of course, so called by Jews, but they give no evidence either.

There is still another point to note and that is that the reason given in Exodus for keeping the Sabbath is flatly contradicted in Deuteronomy. Exodus says that Jews must keep the sabbath day because God obviously tired out in creating the heaven and earth in six days—who wouldn't be!—rested on the seventh. In Deuteronomy, the reason Jews must keep the sabbath is because God rescued them from slavery in Egypt. Obviously, Christians are not going to abide by the second reason given—though, as it has never been proven that the Jews were ever in Egypt as slaves as related in the Bible, they also could throw over Deuteronomy.

Mr. Lewis deals very fully with the whole of this calendar question, and he makes it a most interesting discussion. Actually there are no dates in the Bible and it has taken many generations of scholars to settle some of the most necessary ones even approximately.

The Hebrew calendar is still partially founded on the moon with the result that to get it right they have to add another month every now and then to their current twelve. In truth, the whole question is confusion confounded, and to talk about one day of the week as being "holy" for any of the Biblical reasons is unmitigated nonsense.

Indeed, when one goes fully into the subject it is astonishing how much material can be gathered to prove that all these "holy" days are the result of the grossest credulity and superstition; and this goes particularly for any influenced by the moon or moon worship. Sex enters largely here, and it is astonishing to what depths of downright stupidity that fear and ignorance can cause people to descend, directly sex enters into religion and its ridiculous taboos. There are still many, who believe in "lucky" and "unlucky" days—a belief, of course, perpetuated by priests who are always ready to sell lucky charms. Just as old Dr. Pusey thought he was placating God by wearing a hair shirt and suffering its torments for years, there are still Jews who wear specially made garments with fringes, and Catholics who wear rosaries for exactly the same reason as that of poor Pusey. Those of us who have devoted many of the best years of our life to fight religious superstition in particular may have no spectacular victories to show for our earnestness, but we have certainly made many people ashamed of beliefs which are so silly as to defy rational comment. And in this field of "holy" days or "unlucky" days, the fact that we have made compulsory Church parades in the Services a thing of the past is proof that our wearing down tactics can achieve success.

Readers who want to go more fully into the whole subject will find a mine of information in Mr. Lewis's pages, supported by a wealth of authority astonishing in quantity. Even the question of the magic number "seven" is fully dealt with. Seven is the number *par excellence* in the Bible as it is for that matter in the Talmud—and also among believers in fortune-telling by cards. For those curious in these things, however it is a fact that "seven" mathematically doesn't come within miles of "nine" as a magic number; nine has some really marvellous combinations. All the same when associated with spades it is very, very unlucky.

On the seventh, the sabbath day, Jews are prohibited from doing 1,521 acts, according to the Jewish Encyclopedia. It seems positively certain that there still can be no limit to human gullibility.

H. CUTNER.

But Byron and Shelley did not succeed in their attempt freely to apply the modern spirit in English literature; they could not succeed in it; the resistance to baffle them, the want of intelligent sympathy to guide and uphold them, were too great.—MATTHEW ARNOLD ("ESSAYS IN CRITICISM").

OLD NICK COMES HOME

"QUEUES for everything," said the dear old Christian lady. "Except churches," I said with malice, indicating the ordered crowd outside the picture house.

"Yes, they queue for the Devil," was the sad reflection. I smiled, for the film title was "All this and Heaven too."

But if churches are seldom full, a Christian evangelist hauled the biggest queue ever seen in Belfast.

Queenerly, it was the god-fearing who queued for Old Nick! For Nicholson is back again in Belfast. (Hallelujah.) Nicholson, the blatant, vulgar, loud-mouthed spouter who shocked his way to notoriety a quarter of a century ago has returned from his spiritual home in Yankeeland to give one more proof that Barnum was strong in logic but weak in arithmetic.

Some forty years ago an astute American called Torrey had worked a terrific racket in Great Britain. In company with a singer named Alexander he cleaned up huge money by spectacular soul-saving. This Alexander was the first of the crooners, and he had an extraordinary fascination for women. Frank Sinatra's swooners are said to be bobby-sox teen-agers, but Alex had a wider range. Standing in front of his 300 choir girls he squirmed and googled, and breathed out, rather than sang, in sweet, slow, seductive drool, his soul appeal:—

Would you believe . . .

And Jesus receive . . .

If he were standing here . . .

Then the organ crashed out "The Glory Song," and the effect was electric. Women of all ages, yearning virgins, dissatisfied wives, starved spinsters, and quite a few good timers stood up nightly in a shameless sisterly bond of suppression. Waving arms and hankies wildly, they found a sublimated outlet in singing voluptuously:—

Oh, that will be, Glory for me,

Oh, that will be, Glory for me,

When by his His grace,

I shall look on His face,

That will be Glory, be glory for me!

Then Torrey got to work on us. Everything was done on the nothing succeeds like excess principle. He mounted a very high, lighthouse sort of contraption to deliver his message. There were no microphones then, but he had a powerful voice, and he belled out about gentle Jesus, with a nasal twang. He was sure some spellbinder. He was sure some durned liar too, for his personal reminiscences were memorised tracts. He slanged opposition Christians and threw mud at all Freethinkers dead or alive. But he always came back to salvation and shekels. The show concluded with an orgy of soul-saving. Torrey was an astute, mercenary mountebank, and he and his buddy sure got some dough.

Now, young Nicholson, a crude, rude Christian of Belfast, seeing possibilities in this method of making a living without working, soon graduated in the Barnum philosophy. He was remarkably successful, managing his mission without a crooner to split his takings. I only heard him once. That was enough. There were a few clergymen on his platform, and I was genuinely sorry for them. For this fellow was vulgarity personified, but he drew the crowd, and they couldn't, so they had to tolerate his rudery and crudity, and general offensiveness particularly to women, their dress and their behaviour.

I do not know as yet how the old Nick performs nowadays, although I was early on the scene I was one of the many hundreds who failed to gain admission to the "Welcome Home" meeting. It transpired that two hours before the advertised opening time the huge hall was full, in consequence our long fruitless wait was just so much advertising. I am frequently more interested in the audience than in the show. This queue was of decided respectability. My comrade and I seemed the

only ones who were smoking—Nick, I remember, was terribly down on tobacco. "If the Lord had meant you to smoke, He'd have put a chimney on the top of your head." Conversation was of hymn books, meetings, choir practice, testimony. A little talk there was about a money transaction, but the labourer being worthy of his hire was quoted, and silenced the sceptic. A crippled itinerant cashed in on the chance, whined something about God, and raised a few coppers. I felt sorry I hadn't a pocketful of Atheist leaflets to distribute. There's an idea. Are there any Freethinkers in Belfast willing to display our literature to Christian queues? There is a big field in Northern Ireland, a few of us have worked hard in the past in the cause of Freethought, and there are many who regularly attend our meetings. Who will volunteer for this service? Names and addresses should be sent to this office, or handed to the Secretary of the Belfast Secular Society. Surely we can do something to counter Old Nick? Take heart from this fact. While these evangelists win thousands over temporarily, they drive hundreds out of Christianity permanently.

J. EFFEL.

AN ANSWER TO B.B.C. RELIGION

I WAS quite taken aback by Mr. Whiting's opening sentence. Am I faced with an ironical "courteousness" or am I to take the remark at face-value?

Surely to bring statements and assertions to their logical conclusion is the very essence of Freethought. As to assumptions, I never assume anything from what a person writes except his open meaning. If the writer I take it into my head to criticise, hides his real meaning and then asks his readers to hunt through a column-and-a-half of sentiment to find it, he is surely expecting too much; especially so in a case when he has already said so much which is detrimental to his *obvious* meaning.

This leads me to the question whose side is Mr. Whiting on? He mentions his "uncompromising agnosticism" yet his original article was merely a compromise with the B.B.C.

May I next suggest that to answer a logically put together case in a criminal court with a long declamation of sentiments would hardly save a defendant from a verdict of "guilty." Mr. Whiting in both his articles indicates that he thinks it would.

Mr. Whiting mentions innumerable listeners, far from the surrounding they love, to whom *solace and comfort must have been brought by various religious scripts*. Now, I put it to Mr. Whiting that a serviceman abroad is just as capable of changing the radio programme as a civilian at home. I suggest that these listeners are not innumerable because their numbers cannot be counted, but because their numbers are not known. May I add in all seriousness that if all they needed was a breath of the English language, a gentleman by the name of Thomas Handley is as capable of supplying that as is the Archbishop of Westminster.

My own impressions, before I ever turned Atheist, of B.B.C. religious broadcasts were hardly ones of moral uplift. But "men who are so weak, so dependent, so uncertain of themselves" that they have to call on such men as the religious lunatic of 7-50 a.m. fame for help, may possibly see in the wailings of the modern puritan something which is denied the view of mere Freethinkers.

I put it to Mr. Whiting, with no intention of the irony or sarcasm which has so far characterised this article, that none of us, Atheist or Catholic, Agnostic or Baptist, can stand alone because we none of us *do* stand alone. We, all of us, retain the human fears and the human emotions which give rise to religion. We are few of us Bradlaughs or Paines who can stand mentally and physically alone against the "world in arms" or against all the stresses and strains of modern life. May I draw Mr. Whiting's attention to a very old proverb of unknown origin?

It runs like this: ". . . Life . . . a leaf in a hazardous wind. And the wind blows the leaves together, for good, for evil, whichever it may be." In the face of this how many of us *claim* that we stand alone either in an immaterial or a material way against all that has made this world the living Hell which it has become in the past fourteen years?

But even in the face of my own admissions, I refuse to accept the tale that for any man of intellectual honesty there can be any real comfort or strength in a B.B.C. religious talk.

"Throw out the Christians and you throw out the men." Well, if you threw out the men, would you throw out the Christians?

Yes, without the theological monotony, much is left in a sermon which is worth weighing (even if it is found wanting!) But that can be said of any sermon in almost any religion, and is therefore no justification of the policy of the B.B.C. towards religion.

Finally, I concede the point, no Freethinker could have said anything finer than did Weatherhead. But a better churchman might have said this:—

"How sad. The boy had many troubles, and his life was hard, but how I wish his religion had been able to make him man enough to see it through to the end."

FRANCIS I. GOULD.

A DEFENCE OF DICTATORSHIP

WHEN will public men and some intellectuals learn to sift the meanings behind the terms they so uncritically use? The Pope and his followers, for instance, orate pompously about religious freedom and *pretend* to believe there is none such in Soviet Russia. When, however, the Papacy comes down from the general to the specific in this lying propaganda we find that it is *only* Catholics who are in the Papal mind.

In Spain, however, Franco was and is outlawing all those who are not "safe" Catholics. In fact, Franco openly proclaimed his intention to re-make Spain a "purely Catholic country."

No Protestant or member of any other religious body is allowed, *by law*, to propagate the articles of their creed. There is no excuse for ignorance of this since Franco himself told the world of his intentions more than once over the world radio, and his speech on this matter was printed in many of our chief newspapers. One would wonder, in passing, why "Protestant" Britain, even under Labour control, is holding its hand so obviously against this privileged dictator, what time our "lily-white" democrats in Transport House and Whitehall are concerned to have "real democracy" in "Russian-dominated" Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria and, *of course*, North Persia!

The real answer to this is supplied by your able contributor, G. L. C., in current issue of the "Freethinker." It is about the best summing up of the situation I have read for a long time in any journal.

In the letters column, however, there are two letters dealing with Hayek's "Road to Serfdom." Both letters are a good example of the meaning of my opening sentence, embracing a query.

Hayek's book is worthless as an historical document as it mixes up two utterly opposed conceptions of rule, viz., Serfdom and Socialism.

There are many grounds on which this nonsense could be exploded but one will suffice and it is this (known to all with any pretence to historical knowledge) that society may go *forward* to what may seem, on the surface, worse forms of slavery than it has escaped from, but it does *not* and for *obvious reasons*, cannot go back. Even the Hayeks and the millions of "lesser lights," despite their pessimism, are a guarantee against such a reversion! The present system, called here and in U.S.A., capitalist and

democratic, means freedom to those who benefit most from it but it means slavery to those, numbered often in millions, who get little or none of the benefits. There were millions in this *very free* country between the wars who wasted away for years in *enforced* unemployment on a miserable pittance of 15s. 3d. per week. Socialism was not here then, yet many of those *wretched citizens* of a wealthy country would have gladly changed places with their feudal-serf fore-fathers, if that were possible, for the sake of getting that kind of economic security!

Both of the letters applauding Hayek's attack on Socialism as leading to Serfdom, reveal the short-knowledge so prevalent even in the ranks of the more eminent. One, particularly, H. Crossley, drags in Huxley who is supposed to have stated that Socialism is "a process of restraint and regimentation, of curtailment of liberty and denial of human rights."

Now if Huxley is as brilliant a thinker as some claim he is, surely he must see that he has faithfully described not Socialism as a *developed* system which does not exist yet *anywhere*, not even in Russia; but of all previous systems of society including the present one which, incidentally, produces intellectuals like Huxley and intelligent thinkers also who see life whole and continuous and don't make the mistake of believing that the pattern never changes! Not even the Huxleys of this world can stand still in the surging crowd!

All this in its own peculiar-relativity way has a bearing on the title of this article and forms a necessary, albeit brief, foreword to a defence of dictatorship. Really, I am merely honestly accepting an obvious historical fact, the fact that society since the break-up of the early tribal communes (which had their own form of restraints on the individual, incidentally) has always been under a dictatorship. Society comes to an end as soon as the individual becomes more important than the community. To do so he must be completely self-sufficient. After ages of fully-developed Socialism (Communism) he may become so but until then he has to submit to the fact that the whole is greater than the part. It is, anyway, and if he is wise he will accept that fact and work unceasingly for the modifications which may be the means of reversing that onerous condition which impinges upon his individuality. In other words he must be two things at once; a citizen and a rebel—consciously in both cases.

If he recognises that there is no such thing as democracy except amongst economic equals, which is *advanced* Socialism, and furthermore recognises that the present dictatorship, which is a dictatorship of property, profits and privilege masquerading as democracy and can only be overthrown by a stronger dictatorship, then he will cast off the ancient Shibboleths, which were invented for him by his pastors and masters the better to enslave him, and decide then for the dictatorship which will ultimately lead to its liquidation as wealth abundance is created for all, as is being attempted in Socialist Russia; and fight the other kind of dictatorship which has for its aim the maintenance of the profit system, which can only flourish on a basis of "hunger in the midst of plenty"! In God-fearing communities food is deliberately destroyed to keep up prices. Nobody, not even the Pope, could lay such a damnable charge against God-less dictatorial Russia!

Here, too, is a question the critics of dictatorship in Russia ought to face up to: Suppose Lenin and Trotsky in 1917, instead of establishing themselves in power as they did, had, on the contrary, submitted the whole question to the vote of 170,000,000 illiterate peasants through the medium of a general election on our model, does any sane person believe for a moment that Czardom and its priestly hangers-on would have disappeared? Would the Cromwellian Revolution (to which we all here owe so much) and the later French Revolution (to which we owe so much more) have triumphed without the forms of dictatorship then established, to carry them through?

The best answer to the critics of Russian dictatorship lies in our own "democratic" case here. Consider, whilst the Russians have advanced beyond land-lordism and private enterprise capitalism *we*, with all our great advantages of literacy and "democratic freedoms," have only got as far as voting into power—to the tune of 12,000,000 (half the voting population!)—a Labour Government which is *not* interfering with basic feudal-capitalist-church interests. Is it any wonder then that these vested interests fear a dictatorship on the Soviet model, whilst conniving at the older dictatorship of the Vatican pattern. Just cant!

CHARLES DORAN.

Voltaire entered too eagerly into the interests of the world, was by temperament too exclusively sympathetic and receptive and social, to place himself, even in imagination, thus outside of the common circle. Without capacity for this, no comedy of the first order. Without serious consciousness of contrasts, no humour that endures.—LORD MORLEY ("VOLTAIRE").

CORRESPONDENCE

OTHER PEOPLE'S GODS—SHAKESPEARE.

SIR,—I am delighted to find that Mr. Du Cann is a barrister. I have "instructed" so many in my time. I use inverted commas to imply a merely conventional use of the term. Whilst I might instruct one of them on Shakespeare, far be it from me to assume I can instruct them in law! Most of the barristers I met seemed such models of propriety that it is most pleasing to find one who does not think it beneath him to contribute to "The Freethinker."

I have cross-examined a few thousand witnesses in the office, as possibly Mr. Du Cann in court. Here are questions I should like to put to him in cross-examination.

On what ground does he say that Robert Green accepted the Stratford actor as the author of the plays? Does he not agree that "Shakescene" might as fitly stand for an actor as a writer? Does he know that this was pointed out by the orthodox Prof. George Saintsbury? Where did Ben Jonson say he believed the "Stratford" man had written the plays? Was Ben Jonson such a simple, honest soul that he was incapable of lending himself to deception? What is the evidence for Shakespeare resorting to the "Mermaid"? Who were the people who heard him talk? Where do they report these conversations? Why did Ben Jonson if he was friendly, write nothing about Shakespeare until he had been dead seven years. How can it be explained that there have been found fifty allusions to the death of Jonson and none to the death of Shakespeare? Is there any other case where a hyphen (Shakespeare) appeared in an author's name on a title page, and not anywhere else? Is it suggested that Elizabethan writers conceal authorship? What is the authority for saying that Edward de Vere tried to murder Sir Philip Sidney? Is it really more likely that "an actor, a malt dealer, and a litigant for small debts" would have written the plays than a "violent-tempered, erratic, spendthrift, duelling creature"? Would one not be surprised if a great modern genius displayed the characteristics thus delineated of the Stratford man? Would one expect, for example, that, say, John Masefield or T. S. Eliot, would keep a fried fish shop because someone might say "Why not?"

These questions will suffice, and cannot fitly be answered in the pages of "The Freethinker." I am prepared to give Mr. Du Cann his opportunity to reply in public debate on the question "Is it reasonable to believe that William Shakspeare of Stratford wrote the 'Shakespeare' plays?" I hope he will show more courage than the orthodox usually do when challenged. Perhaps some branch of the N.S.S. will offer a platform.

When I was young we used to sing a hymn that ran: "I will believe, I do believe, that Jesus died for me." The orthodox say "I will believe, I do believe that Shakspeare of Stratford wrote the 'Shakespeare' plays, but excuse me from defending my faith." I am sorry that Freethinkers should, in this matter, resemble religious dogmatists.

I hope that Mr. Du Cann has read Mr. Effel's admirable article in your issue of June 23—"Genius and Shakespeare."—Yours, etc.,

W. KENT.

GENIUS AND SHAKESPEARE.

SIR,—A study of the lives of many great men and women does not confirm Mr. J. Effel's statement that genius must have "experience." Mozart played the pianoforte and composed music at the age of four, and Beethoven's budding genius was discerned at the same age. Alexander Pope despite an unmethodical and imperfect education wrote his "Ode to Solitude" at twelve, and the mature poem "Silence" at fourteen. The shy Fanny Burney was scribbling stories, plays and poems at the age of ten although two years previously she did not know her letters. Goethe wrote a pastoral drama at eighteen and another play a year later. Victor Hugo produced a tragedy at fourteen. Goethe appears to confound the argument of your contributor that genius has its "limits." His work shows that the only limit to his genius was *time*. In addition to his outstanding achievements as a poet, dramatist and novelist he was distinguished in Botany, Optics, Anatomy, Osteology, and founded the doctrine of Morphology. In the field of science he was eulogistically acclaimed by such authorities as Auguste and Isidore St. Hilaire, Sir Richard Owen, and Helmholtz. Leonardo da Vinci, Victor Hugo and others showed versatility in various arts and in science. Again, Goethe studied jurisprudence and was sworn in as a lawyer. Perhaps Mr. Effel will define the terms "experience" and "limit" when applied to genius.—Yours, etc.,

S. GORDON HOGG.

BOGY, BOGY!

SIR,—W. Robson and H. Crossley (issue June 2) both miss the real point of Socialism, which is that there is no possibility, in the social state, of absolute liberty. Hayek argues for perfect freedom of competition, and includes in the field of that competition the land and capital instruments. Socialism merely makes the sensible comment that these must be taken out of the battlefield, for the simple reason that they are *the very means of life* of the community. It is feasible for a society to indulge in many freedoms, but not the freedom of its members to get and hold privately its means of existence. This is part of what Marx meant when he wrote that freedom is founded on the recognition of necessity. History has already told your two contributors what the "curtailment of liberty and denial of human rights" (Aldous Huxley) means under the system of free competition for the means of life.

The plain injunction here is: Let the community abolish the one anti-social liberty of competition for its means of life; the scope it will allow for the enjoyment of the various other social freedoms can then be worked out at leisure, and will vary according to many circumstances, the enumeration of which would be too lengthy here.—Yours, etc.,

L. J. BALL.

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North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 4 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY. Highbury Corner, 7 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

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

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