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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Man and His Gods

I HAVE no means of determining how far people read the works of Herbert Spencer. I do recall the fact that in my youth he stood as one of the great men of his day. He was colossal, and he had the quality of learning as he worked. For my own part, I learned from him as much as I learned from any man, and when I look up at the top shelves and see his numerous books marshalled there, I feel that I am in the company of a very great man. Indeed, I count it as one of Spencer's qualities that he learned *as he worked*, and taught his pupils to grow beyond him. That is the mark of a good teacher, one who leads his pupils to higher and higher levels. His influence on me was very great. I began to read him when I was about sixteen—and if, in after years, I began to be doubtful of some of his teachings, it was because I had such a fine teacher. He incited and helped me to teach others.

Next to Spencer I would put George Henry Lewes. He has been borrowed from very liberally by others, but without any acknowledgment of the source of their ideas. I think that Lewes was a much greater evolutionist than he himself recognised. After all, although *man* cannot live without food and shelter, it is not those factors that create the greater human qualities. Man derives from the animal world, but he does not live with them. The need for "material factors" is plain to all, but it is the additional factor that gives us a true creative *social* life.

Still one more consideration. Religion is *not* one of the oldest features or a perpetual quality of human existence. It has been fairly well demonstrated that the break-off which separated man from the animal world took place at least a million years ago, and there is general agreement that the gods did not begin to make their appearance until half a million years of crude human existence had passed. Even then it is justifiable to say that the division between the human and the semi-human was not very clearly marked.

A great deal had to be learned—the nature of death and of birth had not been discovered. There are in fact large numbers of "primitives" who do not know to-day the meaning of either birth or death. Indeed, we have in our own communities numbers of "educated" men and women who, in their religion, are very little removed on the matter of life and death from the groups of recognised primitives. Man had to advance a very considerable distance before he understood the natural birth of a child.

The unwritten history of mankind has to develop considerably before the facts of life and death are appreciated. Indeed, in our own communities, there is going on the steady fight between the socialised mind and the primitive. For a very long time, religion had its way without any serious opposition. That opposition was not always by

open speech and plain life. It is offered in a thousand-and-one ways, many of which are not recognised at all. One may safely say that religious ignorance is in constant warfare against developing intelligence. That opposition is always with us; and no one has put the situation more plainly than that great anthropologist, Sir James Frazer. He says:—

"The continuity of human development has been such that most, if not all, of the great institutions which still form the framework have their roots in savagery."

And he says with equal justification:—

"That these men fail to reckon with the equal influence of superstition which pervades the life of the savage, and has contributed to build up the social organism to an incalculable extent."

I think that gives us in a completely satisfactory way the original and the perpetual struggle between science and superstition. Less than a century has enabled us to express in terms of scientific exactitude the problems that puzzled so many, and which were used to prevent human development. During that time modern science has explained the world by working from without, inward, instead of the deceptive plan of working from within, outward. There is to-day substantial agreement among those able to express an authoritative opinion as to the origin of the supernatural, and the degree to which it has perpetually obstructed human development. To the savage the only force at work is a living one. The problem before the savage is a very real one. He is not concerned with the elaboration of theories, or with the desire to gratify some vague "spiritual yearning." The great problem of primitive man is how, in what form, and by what means can he placate the personal force upon which he believes his welfare depends. Even the remaining primitives would gladly dispense with their gods if they believed that things would go on without their help. But there they are, up against inescapable "facts" that have to be reckoned with. In that respect there is not the least difference between the devoted godite of to-day and that of the most primitive groups of humans. The superiority of the religious man of to-day rests on his secular qualities, not on his religion.

Miss Mary Kingsley, in her "West African Studies"—and she lived among these primitives for some time—says:—

"To the African the Universe is made up of matter permeated by spirit. Everything happens by the direct action of spirit. The thing he does himself is done by the spirit within him acting on his body . . . everything that is done by other things is done by their spirit associated with their particular mass of matter. . . . The native will point out to you a lightning-stricken tree and tell you that its spirit has been killed. He will tell you, when the earthen cooking pot is

broken, it has lost its spirit. If his weapon fails him, it is because someone has stolen its spirit or made it weak by means of his influence on spirits of the same class. . . In every action of his life he shows you how he lives with a great spirit world around him. You see him before he starts out to fight rubbing stuff into his weapon to strengthen the spirit that is in it, telling it the while what care he has taken of it. . . You see him leaning over the face of the water talking to its spirit with proper incantations, asking it when it meets an enemy of his to upset his canoe and destroy him. . . If a man is knocked on the head with a club, or shot by an arrow or a bullet, the cause of death is clearly the malignity of persons using these weapons; and so it is easy to think that a man killed by the falling of a tree, or by the upsetting of a canoe in the surf, or in a whirlpool in the river is also a victim of some being using these things as weapons. For a man holding this view, it seems both natural and easy to regard disease as a manifestation of the wrath of some invisible being, and to construct that intricate system which we find among the Africans, and agree to call Witchcraft, Fetish, or Jujut.'

Miss Kingsley is dealing specifically with West Africa, but it applies in general terms to the whole of the primitive world. For the savage philosophy of things is simple, comprehensive, and given the situation, logical. The supernatural appears only as a distinct category when a definite knowledge of the natural has arisen to which it can be opposed. The primitive has no such distinctions as that of the material and immaterial; even death itself has a different meaning to that which it subsequently carries, and a different appearance. To the modern mind death puts a sharp termination to life. To the primitive intelligence there is no such ending. Death is no more than unbroken sleep; the "dead" man goes on living. He is alive, he may be incarnated in a tree, in a stone, or an animal; or he may remain one of the innumerable company of tribal ghosts. . . But he remains a force to be reckoned with, and the need for dealing with these ghostly personages lies at the root of most, if not all, fundamental religious ceremonies.

Once this blunder has been committed, daily experience appears to give it the strongest confirmation. The only thing that could correct the blunder is knowledge, and that is not merely a plant of very slow growth; there is a positive danger in its application to religious beliefs. Above all, there is the proof conveyed to a savage mind by the presence of disease, mental and physical. I do not now labour this point. It is enough to say that all over the uncivilised or semi-civilised world there is the one prevailing theory of disease which is, that it is due to the activities of ghostly beings. We see that in the Old and New Testaments we hardly need to be told that this is the Biblical theory of disease. It was one of the Fathers of the Christian Church who laid it down that "it is demons which produce famine, corruption and pestilences, also that all diseases of Christians can be ascribed to demons." On this topic the leaders of the Christian Church were precisely on the level of Miss Kingsley's West Africans. The Church of England still retains in its Articles an authority to cast out demons.

It is, therefore, not difficult to conceive the kind of environment in which religion is born and to which religious ideas are adapted. Situated in a world where everything has yet to be learned, man's earliest attempts at understanding are naturally wrong. He sees himself, his passions and weaknesses, reflected in the world around him. Leave out these considerations and primitive life becomes an insoluble enigma. It is in this mental atmosphere that religion is born. This being established, the mistakes once made are perpetuated. It is from this point of view that the phenomena of sexuality and disease have played no small part in confirming, strengthening and perpetuating religious beliefs. How much this has been the case has never yet been fully recognised. But it is tolerably certain that if there had not been offered to people evidence in the shape of visions, ecstatic states, etc., religion would now be a quite negligible force in all civilised communities. Religion has not been without its evidences. To-day the hopelessness of the religious outlook is most clearly seen by taking all the historic facts of the religious life and explaining them in terms of natural happenings.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## CLOSING STAGES OF THE PRESS STRUGGLE

PROMINENT poets, philosophers and prose writers assisted in the battle for the freedom of the Press. Byron, Shelley, Leigh Hunt, James and John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham played their part. Julian Hibbert afforded Carlyle financial aid and apparently paid for the publication of Holbach's *System of Nature*.

Freethought and Radical influences had promoted the appearance of reading rooms and stimulated the study of books. From a purely critical policy, Radical endeavours changed to one of construction, and men of letters largely replaced the earlier public speakers and Press writers.

When Southey became Poet Laureate, he was scorned as a time-serving renegade by all the Reformers. For, as Wickwar notes, Southey "in his unregenerate days had written a little play on the legend of *Wat Tyler*, making it the vehicle of much invective on war, taxes, Church, King, nobility and injustice. For over 20 years the manuscript remained unpublished. Then in 1817 it came inexplicably into the publisher's hands. Southey applied to Lord Chancellor Eldon for an injunction to prevent his copyright from being infringed, but the defendant's Counsel defeated the application."

As, in an earlier decision, Eldon had refused to grant protection to what he deemed a libellous publication, an author under this ruling had no remedy for piracy if his work displeased the authorities. Thus, Eldon's decision enabled free-lance publishers to print unprotected writings without any payment to, or even the consent of, their authors. So when Eldon refused to protect Southey's copyright, Sherwin published a two-penny edition and this, with Wooler's *Black Dwarf*, Carlyle carried to the booksellers and in the course of five years sold 25,000 copies.

Carlyle exulted over what he considered as Southey's shameful apostacy in this exposure of the renegade, and not only did this strengthen the Radical cause, but it also led to cheap editions of Byron and Shelley and other writers. When *Queen Mab* was pirated, its author was refused an injunction. This famous poem Shelley penned at the age of 20, after his expulsion from Oxford for writing the *Necessity of Atheism*.

Shelley protested against this piracy but he was really little shocked by this proceeding. In a letter to Gisborne he stated:

"A droll circumstance has just occurred. *Queen Mab*, a poem written by me when I was very young, in the most furious style, with long notes against Jesus Christ and God the Father and the King and the bishops and marriage and the Devil knows what, is just published by one of the low booksellers in the Strand. . . . You may imagine how much I am amused. . . . and I have directed my attorney to apply to Chancery for an injunction which he will not get."

Clarke, the Strand publisher, was, however, prosecuted by the Vice Society, found guilty, and spent four months in Coldbath Fields Prison. Then, Carlile purchased the unsold copies of Clarke's edition and subsequently secured the remaining copies of the privately printed edition. When he was liberated from prison in 1825, Carlile formed a company whose earliest production was a pocket edition of *Queen Mab*. "It became especially popular," avers Wickwar, "among Owenites and vegetarians, Betherington, Watson and Linton all helped in the struggle for its publication." This poem was then the only well-known work of Shelley's in proletarian circles, where it became popular mainly as a result of Carlile's defiance of the Vice Society. Byron's *Don Juan*, his *Vision of Judgement* and *Cain* proved anathema to the ultra-pious. Still, while prose works were prosecuted as libellous, seditious or blasphemous publications, poetical writings were mostly immune. Having composed the first two cantos of *Don Juan*, Lord Byron submitted them to Holhouse and other friends for their candid opinion of their poetical merits. They took exception to passages in the first canto. So, in a letter to John Murray, dated 1819, Byron stated: "If they had told me that the poetry was bad I would have acquiesced; but they say the contrary and then talk to me about morality—the first time I ever heard the word from anybody who was not a rascal that used it for a purpose. I maintain it is the most moral of poems; but if people won't discover the moral that is their fault not mine."

Byron had 50 copies printed privately with his dedication to the "epic renegade" Southey suppressed, as well as his onslaught on Castlereagh, as he wished to assail them openly. "Come what may," he declared, "I will never flatter the millions' canting in any shape. Circumstances may or may not have placed me at times in a situation to lead the public opinion, but the public opinion never led, nor ever shall lead, me. I will not sit on a degraded throne."

Murray was perturbed, but the two cantos appeared at a guinea and a half. But the title page bore neither name of publisher nor author. Murray and his printers were not molested, nor were any of the booksellers prosecuted for retailing *Don Juan*.

Smarting under previous persecution, Hone published a descriptive review of *Don Juan* with striking extracts from the poem. He thus courted prosecution even if Murray, the favoured Government printer, remained scot-free. Hone concluded his 2s. essay as follows: "Why did not Mr. Murray suppress Lord Byron's parody on the Ten Commandments?"

"Because it contains nothing in ridicule of Ministers, and therefore nothing that they could suppose would be to the displeasure of Almighty God."

Four small pirated editions of the two cantos appeared and Murray became concerned for his copyright. But Byron told him that Eldon would decide against him and intimated that: "You will also recollect that if the publication is pronounced against indecent and blasphemous that I lose all right in my father's guardianship and education—in short, all paternal authority."

Still, when an injunction was applied for, a pirate's agent secured the Court of Chancery that *Don Juan* was a pornographic production, so the Vice Chancellor dissolved the injunction. Consequently, the poem enjoyed a very extensive sale.

*Cain a Mystery* now obtained the fullest facilities for circulation. Naturally it was denounced as blasphemous, so

Byron met the outcry in a letter which Murray sent to the Press. "If *Cain* be blasphemous," wrote Byron, "*Paradise Lost* is blasphemous. . . . *Cain* is nothing more than a drama, not a piece of argument. The attempt to bully you (John Murray) because they think it won't succeed with me seems to me as atrocious an attempt as ever disgraced the times. What! When Gibbon's, Hume's, Priestley's and Drummond's publishers have been allowed to rest in peace for 70 years; are you to be singled out for a work of fiction, not of history or argument?"

Prosecution was expected, but even *Blackwood's Magazine* condemned this. As Benbow, a notorious pirate was publishing *Cain*, Carlile asserted that while desirous of respecting the property rights of Byron and Murray the Chancellor had failed to do so. "I shall confine myself to *Cain*," he said, "as a publication within my line of business; I do not follow Mr. Benbow in pirating other works of Lord Byron. I take *Cain* under my protection because a prosecution and suppression is threatened." So Carlile promptly published and undersold Benbow's cheap edition.

Byron's *Vision of Judgment* is one of the supreme satires of our tongue. But the description of George III's arrival at Heaven's gates and its comic sequel alarmed Murray. Byron suggested its private distribution, hoping to see it pirated. So John Hunt was prosecuted for publishing the *Vision*, while the *Times* newspaper, to the utter disgust of the Ministerial Press, printed the whole of Byron's alleged libel on George III, which occupied "in small and close printed type four whole columns."

Carlile now declared that prosecutions must cease, so he published the *Vision* in his *Republican* for 6d.

But Byron's stormy career soon closed. Still, 1824 witnessed the alleviation of Press Prosecutions. Vice and other societies lessened their baleful activities, for it was now clear that the Reformers had won and that by granting copyright Eldon and his Vice-Chancellor could have severely limited the sales of obnoxious writings. But when they denied protection to authors and publishers, thereby encouraging the pirates to print at their pleasure, Press prosecutions seemed meaningless and absurd.

T. F. PALMER.

## "I'M SORRY"

IN the House in Gladstone's day, a member was asked by the Speaker to apologise for a remark made in the heat of controversy. "I never apologise," was the answer. The sequel doesn't matter, the attitude is important.

Apology is an admission not that one has been wrong, but that one has been cruel and unfeeling; in that sense, of course, one has certainly been wrong. To grievously hurt another's feelings is a serious matter, and grievously must serious answer be. True, 'tis better far to stay the hand that would strike, to check the word that would wound, for all acts are invocable, all words irrecoverable. We are all slightly sadistic, we are all wholly selfish. To hurt is human. Most of our actions, good or bad, are instinctive. We reason to justify, we relent for pleasure. And sometimes apologise—for our own satisfaction. But if from the lips, and not from the heart, then "I never apologise" is nobler.

All of which copy-book moralising means that apology should never be cheap. We all know the coarse grained fellow who bumps his way around: "Sorry, old man," he says, as his umbrella pokes in your eye, and he treads on your corns. I wouldn't be sorry if an ardent truth-teller said, "You're a liar. You're not sorry, and I'll sock you on the nose, you scaly hypoerite." As profanity loses power when we experience surfeit, so this casual "I'm sorry" stuff becomes meaningless, except as covering trifles, its real purpose. I am all for manners in this respect, but I write of higher things than "Pardon me"

and "Sorry—No Beer" courtesies. I am considering the considered philosophy of the Moral Re-armament group. It is seriously stressed by them that apology to those whom one has treated badly would have a far-reaching effect on family life, and social conditions. Instances are given without number of homes re-united through the "I'm Sorry" technique, crooks come clean, employers humble themselves to their men, and operatives admit that they were wrong in thinking unkindly of the management. Strikes have been settled by this approach. Buchman says "Human problems aren't economic; they are moral, and can only be settled by moral measures." How easy to make smooth the troubles of this world! "Sorry, old chap, I dropped my cigarette ash on you"; "Sorry, old Jap, I dropped my atom bomb on you."

There is psychological acumen in noting the satisfaction experienced by the apologist when he makes the apologise morally uncomfortable. The latter, then, envious of the self-gratification achieved by the person who has humbled him (on the hypocritical pretence that he was humiliating himself) thinks up some cause for getting a glow on his own. He may even commit some mild sin, that he may repent afterwards. And so the "sorry" game goes on. I may as well testify to one or two strange happenings in Belfast since the visit of the Buchmanite company. "Fifteen thousand people, of all creeds and classes, heard the message," so it is not to be wondered at that there were conversions in every quarter.

One evening in early July, a procession of Orangemen in full regalia, might have been seen, with band, banners, and drums. Nothing new in that, but this lot marched up the Falls Road, the Catholic quarter, to the amazement of onlookers. And, strange to say, their tune was not "We'll kick the Pope" but "Faith of our Fathers." They were halted, and "King Billy" was interrogated. Dismounting from his white steed he advanced to the leader of the curious Romanists. Speaking under the stress of deep emotion he said he had been a leader in the movement twenty-five years ago when thousands of Catholics were "chased" from their work in the shipyards. His comrades had now been morally re-armed, and they joined him in saying to the Catholics "I'm sorry."

Irishmen are generous. The apology was accepted, taverns were visited, and it was proved that a well-known beverage lived up to its much advertised boast. To an enthusiastic send-off the merry Orangemen playing "Phil the Fluters' Ball" took their departure. Two evenings later a Nationalist procession marched up Sandy Row displaying banners of Wolfe Tone, Robert Emmett, and Henry Joy McCracken. They were singing "Derry's Walls" with great feeling when one of the Sir Knights of the Orange Order asked what was the big idea. Mickey Murphy, the Catholic leader, gave the low-down. "Thirty years ago we burnt your kitchen houses. We dun ye wrong, so we did. Well we're sorry, so we are," he said. Of course, magnanimity was again manifested, they were all stout Irishmen, and differences were liquidated—as far as limited stocks allowed. After ten they joined forces for a procession unique in Belfast's history. They ended by dancing round Shaftesbury Square singing each other's Party Songs, a memorable evening drawing to a close as the vast gathering sang "The Soldier's Song" and "God Save the King" simultaneously.

Joe Lambe, an old trade union leader, saw the light. One morning he went into the office, and, emptying his pockets, spread out a collection of rusty screws, bolts, nails, and a wee chisel. "What in hell's name's this?" said Hyam Wolfe, the boss, not a bit pleased at the rubbish being dumped on his polished desk. Joe explained that in 1910 he took these out of the yard. The boss was touched profoundly for he had read Karl Marx, and knew that the firm had taken a battleship of surplus value out of Comrade Joe. Knowing that he couldn't make restitution in kind, he gave Joe a chew of tobacco, and actually shook hands with him. With a fine gesture he swept the junk into the waste basket, saying fervently, "I, too, am

sorry, brother." Then he added with deep meaning: "Would to God Joe they were all like you." So you see why it is unlikely that there will be more industrial strife in Belfast. This strike of bankers clearly shows that malignant materialist forces are at work in the bourgeoisie. If only they would sing a little song—"Money 'is the root of all evil"—say they were sorry, cross the cheques, check the crosses, introduce a forgotten factor to their calculations, ah, brothers and sisters, if only they had God in their hearts, not Gold. . .

An old brutal looking fellow went into the police barrack one night just as they were closing, and the sergeant was making to go home. He had a kind of rambling story about shooting policemen at a remote date during some "trouble." The sergeant didn't want to be bothered at that time of night with such trifles. Had it been something important, say a lost ration book. . . Still, he humoured the old ruffian and asked for particulars. It appears that he had been out of work for a long time, and, being well recommended as having some experience, he took a job as a gunman. The rate for shooting the police was £7 10s. a time, and on the average he knocked out £15 a week. But, unfortunately, the job wasn't permanent. The slump came, and he was redundant. He had just heard about moral re-armament and called to say he was sorry. "Sure that's all right with me," says the sergeant, "An' 'tis brave an' dacint to gret that ye dun wrong. There's many a way would cut the tripe out of a polisman an' nivir have the manners like you to say 'I'm sorry.'"

The hoodlum looked at the officer stupidly. Then he spoke with deep feeling, "You got me wrong, sarge. . ."

"Then, what the hell?" roared the sergeant, "I could swear you said you were sorry. . ."

"So I did. So I am sorry. Sorry I didn't get my cards stamped."

J. EFFEL.

## THE MODERN ABRACADABRA

STURGE-WHITING thinks we ought to commiserate with the B.B.C. in their onerous task of finding soporific for lost souls. But pandering to popular prejudice is part of a general policy, another aspect of which is seen in the "Scientific" talks. The purpose appears to be that of the mystery; the production of specific psychological states: In the one case a quiescent mind and in the other a state of intellectual confusion. Selected scientists are instructed to be as unscientific as possible so that the result is completely non-sensical. It would also appear that specific orders are given that under no circumstances must the mysterious scientific method be disclosed. Disdaining the dismal science, parading theory as fact, the idea is to swamp the initiate listener with scientific miracles so as to produce bewilderment, if not actual superstitious awe. But one suspects that the novitiate is not the only one to be lost in the fog.

It need not be assumed that the B.B.C. is conscious of this, indeed, if the mentality of their "Experts" is any indication it is a case of the blind leading the blind. For instance, in "Your Questions Answered," to the question, "How does the scientist account for the difference between the intelligence of man and animals"; an "Expert" argued that it was the size and complexity of the brain. He persisted in his case in spite of the fact that 50 per cent. of his evidence disproved it; e.g. there is no difference between that of modern and paleolithic man, and many of our literary and scientific giants have had exceptionally small brains. He did not question the difference in intelligence and was oblivious of the fact that head-hunting was a very ancient superstitious practice. Animals do not worship figments of their imagination, nor invent instruments to blow themselves to atoms. The fact that man has a swelled head is no indication of intelligence. The great difference between man and the animals is social.

It appears to have become an axiom among our scientific obscurantists that we cannot be sure of anything and that a truly scientific attitude is a permanent suspension of judgment. But if there is one thing certain it is that no one will ever learn anything about science from the B.B.C. In one of the Science Survey talks, Professor Andrade said that science is "in search of the unknown." It gives one furiously to think, echo furiously. He must have been having lessons from the priesthood, it is too good for a tame scientist; surely, only a theologian could have thought of that one. One remembers what one learned from Chapman Cohen years ago; that there is a difference between a chestnut horse and a horse chestnut; that an elephant is not more marvellous than a flea; that there is a difference between instruction and education. Following the lead of advertisers pushing "Scientific Preparations" with a "Guarantee of Parity" where no criterion exists; and of journalese about "Living in a scientific age"; the B.B.C. uses "Scientific Experts" to produce intellectual confusion and wonderment; the duplex character of the mystery arises in the attempt to square science with religion.

The combination of two conflicting cultures needs the careful avoidance of logic. The trick is easy if definition of terms is avoided, and plenty of demonstration given; a little inversion, and there is the rabbit; the illusion is complete. It is the old story of teaching *what* to think instead of *how* to think. Professor Andrade speaks of a "Pure Science"; knowledge for its own sake, leaving the listener to infer its corollary, and impure science; knowledge for ulterior motives. This suggestion fails to remind one of the difference between Christian truth and other variety. Instead of definition we are given a classification, "Experimental science and applied science"; which completely clouds the issue. We are told that it would take too long to go into the question of what science is. To one who is not a B.B.C. "Expert," nor afraid of the odium theologium the task should not be a difficult one. It would be less difficult than trying to avoid it.

The word science is an old Greek word meaning knowledge, so that applied science becomes applied knowledge; but the application of knowledge is not the same as the knowledge applied. So, applied science is not science. And what are we to make of scientific knowledge and scientific instruments? If science is a particular kind of knowledge, it is acquired by the use of a particular kind of instrument. What is the nature of this instrument? Is it such as the expensive radio equipment for the examination of the ionosphere or photographic equipment for the observation of the distant stars, or electrical equipment for examining radio-activity? Science existed before they were developed. These are the products of scientific knowledge and not the instruments of its production. Is a man in a white smock using a test tube any more of a scientist than a man in a boiler suit or overalls using a set-square, level, plumb-bob or spanner? If the use of such "scientific" instruments makes a scientist then the listener with his radio is as much a scientist as the "Expert" he listens to. The characteristic "Instrument" of science is not a physical but a cultural one.

Not only are the words scientific and scientist bandied about, but the word science is used with a variety of meanings; sometimes referring to a specific method of investigation, sometimes to the knowledge so gained, or to the application of such knowledge, to the men who obtain it, or to those who use it; sometimes to an idea, sometimes to an institution, or to a personification of it, even to a mystic miraculous power. These indicate different types of mentality. The old Greeks had two words, Science and Gnosis; to refer to the knowledge gained through the medium of the senses and to divine or inspired knowledge respectively. We have given up the idea of divinely inspired knowledge, except in so far as theologians still argue that the scientific method cannot be applied to morality; appealing to ignorant prejudice and pandering to those to whom science is still magic.

And so, for the B.B.C. science refers only to the physical; its application in psychology and sociology being doubtful; and in morality the theologian reigns supreme.

These physical instruments of investigation are extensions of the senses, for the purpose of observation and comparison. Based upon the use of the senses, science is as Huxley said, trained and organised common sense. The use of the senses, in observation, comparison and differentiation, is psychological, involving memory; classification, calculation, mensuration and generalisation are cultural; and in recognising the development of science from systems of classification and mensuration we can see that just as the symbols of the alphabet are derived from hieroglyphic pictographs, so also is the verbal and mathematical formula of science developed from philosophical analogy and myth. The symbolism of science, like that of language, handed on generation to generation, is part of the social memory and develops greater flexibility and accuracy. It is of interest to note that the etymology of such words as mensuration and mentality are from the same root, and we can realise that the development of mentality is social and cultural.

So far from the method of science being inapplicable to psychology, sociology and morality, the position is the reverse. As understanding involves the comparison of types of mentality; to appreciate the difference between science, philosophy, and religion. To get an understanding of religion, some knowledge of social anthropology and folk lore is needed, but the development of science, more so than philosophy, is so recent as to be entirely historical. There is no difficulty in explaining science. It is inductive and critical logic in practice. The difficulty is that of explaining religion, and though religion can be explained by science, science cannot be explained by religion. Religion is a maze of rationalisation, inversion and substitution; a dream phantasy; moronic, nostalgic, allergic to innovation; a type of the unconscious; a form of social insomnia associated with antiquated conventions and institutions justified by tradition and custom.

It is a mistake to confuse intellectual with aesthetic development. The escapism, inhibition and wishfulfilment of religion need the antidote of common sense criticism, for the question is one of adaptation. If an animal shows intelligence in adapting itself to change in its physical environment, man will show intelligence in adaptation to change in his mental environment.

H. H. PREECE.

## MAKING OUR GODS

FROM a religious journal we take the following: "In his origin, the priest was a kind of middleman. He acted for man before God. In times of ignorance, he had his uses. Naturally, it was an important office; but the one condition of rightly discharging it was that the priest should not regard himself as an important person. But that seems to have been too much to expect from human frailty. The priest ceased to regard himself as a middleman, and began to behave like a nobleman. The priesthood became a religious aristocracy, and lorded it over the Lord's inheritance. . . . One aspect of the great revolution that Christianity began was to sweep away the aristocracy, and to replace religion on its true democratic basis, on which every man is his own middleman—that is to say, he stands before God and transacts his business with God in his own person." That might almost have been written by an Atheist. It would then read let every man make his own God. Actually this is what most men do, and we are ready to wager heavily that any man who does make a god for himself he will get from his making a rough picture of himself.

## ACID DROPS

Exeter, a rather pious kind of a city, is now to go through the pangs of a fight for cinemas on Sunday. We expect it to be adopted; but it is certainly time that the Government took steps to make it legal for all places of amusement to open on Sunday. We may be quite sure that these places will not be opened unless they pay their way. The owners of cinemas and entertainment places are not set going from any philanthropic motive. If people do not want entertainments on Sunday they will not attend. If they do not attend, the places of interest and amusement will soon shut up. No one wishes to stop people going to church if people wish to go. The question of Sunday entertainments will settle itself.

The Archbishop of Canterbury has discovered evidence of the "public manifestation of an underlying religion." That sounds rather interesting until one notes that these prayers come when people are hard up. Then some may wonder the value of a religion that only exerts power when people are hungry for food or discouraged with life. A religion that looks to the misery of people for its chief supporters cannot be of a very high order.

Once upon a time words were counted as living things. They are still with very primitive peoples, and in the Christian bibles. They were very powerful, as anyone will see if he turns to the first chapter of St. John. But as we cannot get people to believe that words actually possess power nowadays, the Churches have to strengthen hold on people with loud-sounding titles. The latest example of this we have noted is there has been appointed a "World Church Commission" which is to inquire why Christians are not doing more to help the Churches. The Commission must also "make it apparent that the Christian faith and doctrines appeal to world affairs."

All this is sound—that and nothing more. People are beginning to understand Christianity has been in power—not merely in existence—for about 1,500 years. What has been the result of long control of power? The world that lies in ruins to-day is one that has enjoyed great power, and could punish men and women in two worlds for their misdemeanours. What betterment accrues is from man, not for gods. In plain fact, the two greatest and most helpful revolutions during the last thousand and a-half years have been the revolutions that caused the French and the Russian uprising. From both gods were absent, and in both they made for a better life.

Neither the wickedness nor the wisdom—and God appears to hate wisdom on the part of mankind—can be held responsible for such things as earthquakes. But they come, and then fear is followed by stupidity. Prayers to God to protect them from such catastrophies are said. Recently the people of Dominica were troubled with an earthquake, and the churches were thronged with worshippers praying to God to be merciful. But God had had his fling, the damage had been done. Shattered homes and mangled bodies followed God's burst of temper—or malignity. And people pray to him to exercise his "love and goodness." Of course, to a Freethinker, a genuine "thinker," with or without the belief in God one could not honestly praise God for forgiveness. The boot should be on the other foot. It is not man who should cry to God for forgiveness. It is God, if he existed, who should plead for charity. He is the only criminal in the situation.

The "Church Times" is inordinately proud of the way the Anglican Young People's Association is coming to the fore. It recently met in Oxford, devoting a fortnight to the study of the Bible—as if that was something to be proud of. Most of these young people are about 19 years of age, and they are already talking the ineffable jargon of the godly. They want to promote little cells of "convinced" Christians all over England, but it will require something far more formidable than their infantile optimism to bring any fresh victories to their outworn creed. And they have plenty of time to learn that inescapable fact.

Somehow or other God's miracles for the benefit of his Roman Catholic followers are better advertised in Ireland than anywhere in England. There is quite a long list of miraculous acts performed by this or that Catholic Saint, and of which we hear little or nothing. "The Irish Press" (Dublin), for instance, gives an account of miraculous cures performed in this benighted country. We wonder whether that is because the Medical Association in England will not even allow God to interfere with its business.

"Christian Calling" is the title of an association in Leeds, and it announces to the world that during the history of the Labour Movement the names of many Christians are to be found. Of course, what else would one expect? But it is also true that in the early years of the struggle for a little decency in the life of the working classes, the advanced movement lay with unbelievers or luke-warm Christians. The great Methodist movement, for instance, boasted that it took no part in political or agitating work. As a labour movement, the early days of Methodism did little or nothing to assist the advance. And the "upper classes" and the growing commercial classes were mainly concerned in keeping the "common people" in order. Those who wish to realise this would do well to read the documented work in five volumes of Mr. and Mrs. Hammond dealing with the Rise of Modern Industry.

Bishop Heywood, of St. Albans, must be either very simple or very artful. Writing in the St. Albans' "Leaflet," he says that there are some semi-instructed people who suppose that there is a conflict between science and religion. "Conflict" is not a good term, for it implies a conflict of equals. And that does not exist. To-day science treats the original "revealed" account of origins with complete contempt. Once upon a time, and not so long ago, the Christian account of origins had to be fought with. To-day the scientist treats the Christian miracles with silent derision and moves on to other matters. Christianity has had its best days.

The Bishop says "There is a solid weight of scientific opinion on the side of Christian truth." That is just gas. Truth is truth, and a statement is truth only so long as it falls into line with sense and truth. "Truth" is the accordance of fact with knowledge, and that holds good whether we are dealing with the New Testament account of Jesus or the weight of a pound of butter. Truth, in other words, is indivisible. The Bishop tries hard to make headway by saying that there are members of the Royal Society who believe in the truth of Christianity. Of course, but they who submit to being called Christians usually adopt the position of having two different kinds of truth—the truth of religion and the truth of science—and that is not a scientific principle at all. Analysed, is it just nonsense. Truth is one and indivisible. It cannot be split into two things.

Archbishop McNicholas has found a striking argument against Atheism. He says: "Just as we do not expect a person who is deranged mentally to be normal, it cannot be expected that an Atheistic Soviet Russia can act normally." Really, right or wrong, Russia has done pretty well, certainly better than any other country has done in so short a time. Russia closed most of the churches because they were shelters for enemies to the new Russia, so if there are now more churches open there, are lying preachers—with one or two exceptions—claim this is due to the growth of Christianity in Russia. It is nothing of the kind. There are not more churchgoers than there were. Russia has kept its word that churches would be found for those who intended them for religion. But to-day there are fewer Christians than there were. That is certain.

Another Liverpool parson has found out that after nearly 2,000 years of Christianity, the Christian message is no longer reaching the "outsiders." So the Rev. G. N. Roberts is organising a panel of experienced speakers to address open air meetings and see if that won't bring the unwilling to church. We would dearly like to hear these "experienced" speakers. Up to the present their most outstanding feature has been complete ignorance of the Atheistic position, and they are not too well instructed as to the origin of Christianity either!

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

H. W. SAVAGE.—Received and will appear in next issue.

C. H. WILLIAMS.—We are hoping to reprint the "Bible Handbook" soon. It is a book that is always in demand.

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.

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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

Once upon a time, and not so very long ago, Christians denied even the existence of genuine Atheists. They did admit that there were few, very few men who called themselves Atheists, but they were very obedient and all, or nearly all, died shrieking for Jesus to save them from hell. Now, Atheists are very common, and appear to be growing rapidly. The Archbishop of Canterbury for some time was almost raving about it, and solemnly declared that Atheists were the only real enemies that Christians need worry about. Well, we have said that ever since we were in our 'teens, and we have repeated it many times. Now we have some of the clergy saying the same thing. Even parsons cannot hide the truth for ever.

Here and there some daring preachers are—apparently—willing to discuss Atheism—after a style. Here is the latest example. It comes to us through the columns of "The Beckenham and Penge Advertiser," in the form of a letter to the editor. The hero of the occasion is the Reverend C. E. Leighton Thomson. He informs the world that on October 20, at the meeting of the "Youth Clubs" there will "be a discussion, or perhaps a debate." Mr. Leighton Thomson says, "We have no difficulty in finding exponents of the Christian point of view. The Committee wishes to invite any young Atheists or Agnostics to take part in the conference—persons who would be ready to set out and support their views in open debate." That sounds very daring, but we are afraid that it will not mean much in the end. But if the Youth Council, and the selected youth, or youths, are of a reasonable age, we think we might lend a hand. But we should like further information.

The Editor of the paper from whom we derived the information says that to-day "the Church is not afraid to meet argument with Christians and yet have intellectual faculties worthy of respect." We agree, but unfortunately the Christian who is really able to hold a discussion is the one who nowadays will not risk it. Fools so often jump in when commonsense would restrain. We once had a quiet approach us with a desire to hold a written discussion. We agreed, the discussion ran about a hundred and fifty pages, and the discussion passed with good nature. But we have had no offer since. Still, if Rev. C. E. Leighton Thomson desires, we think we could venture again. But, candidly, the only thing that distinguishes the clergy of to-day is the readiness with which they run away.

A member of the N.S.S. entered an evangelist tent in which the Rev. Lewis of Birmingham was giving one of his performances. Presenting his N.S.S. membership card, to signify he was a genuine lost soul, he took a seat. The Rev. Lewis then got to work and with Christ-like abuse and accusations set about the Secularist in real Christian fashion. The return of his N.S.S. card was refused and he was told to call for it at the local police station next morning. Our member called a police constable who ordered that the card be returned, the order was obeyed and the adventure ended. A soul was lost to Jesus but the soul-saver avoided an awkward situation, for there is more joy in an evangelist tent over one penitent drunk than over ninety and nine intelligent citizens seeking an honest exchange of opinions.

The Manchester Branch N.S.S. has arranged a course of Sunday afternoon lectures in the Chorlton Town Hall (with an excellent programme), All Saints, Manchester. Mr. F. J. Corina, of Bradford, opens the course today and takes for his subject: "Birth Control and Christianity." The lecture begins at 3 p.m. A syllabus of the whole course, ending in April, 1947, can be obtained at the hall from Branch officials, who will also give details of membership and accept offers of help. Local Freethinkers should give the Branch every possible help. It is working hard and deserves support.

From a religious journal we glean the information that there are many "well placed" people to whom Christianity is of no consequence at all. Full marks for the gentleman in question who has such a piercing understanding of the state of things. Of course, the news was intended for us. One wonders whether the information will shake others. Of course, there was a time when an Atheist was regarded as something abnormal, someone who might have a "good time," and chance whatever will happen to him in the next world. Perhaps the "unspeakable" cheered himself up with the thought that if God turned out to be a distinct kind of person, he might excuse the Atheist for never giving him any trouble. And now he is beginning to see things, and to ponder their significance. "Well placed" Atheists. If there is a God he ought not to be happy and comfortable. If there is not, then the writer is wasting his time. What if the Atheist really has the better of it? Poor devil! He has spent his life trying to get on good terms with something that isn't there.

## THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY

IN the biblical story of Christian origins the "forerunner," whose mission it was to prepare the way for the coming Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, is represented as being John the "Baptist." We do not actually know what, if anything at all, was the real part played by this shadowy figure, for the historical existence of whom Josephus seems to offer some degree of evidence. Be that as it may, it is, at least, historically certain that the real "forerunner" of Christianity the social and cultural results of whose career alone made the new religion possible, at least, in the precise form that it actually assumed, was not the shadowy "revivalist," John, but the very real soldier and statesman, Alexander the Great, King of Macedon and Captain-General (Strategos-Otpathyos) of the Greek Confederation (356-323 B.C.).

For without the work of the great Macedonian king—one of the very few kings in all history to deserve his honorific title of "The Great"—it is as certain as anything can well be that the Christian Church, as history actually knows it, could and would never have come into existence. In that sense, the so often misused word "epoch-making" may well be legitimately related to those marvellous campaigns which, in the course of a single decade—335-25 B.C.—subjugated the "gorgeous east," and by blending the high philosophical and artistic culture of the Greek-speaking West with the more advanced political and material culture of the Persian East created an entirely new civilisation, the "Hellenistic" culture, the first real cosmopolitan civilisation in all history.

In a recent book the eminent anthropologist, Lord Raglan, has gone on record with the opinion that the campaigns of Alexander have influenced the course of human development more than the work of all the philosophers put together. With all due respect to its distinguished author, the above dictum seems to be somewhat sweeping in character, and to sin against the authentic axiom which has it that, "like can only be compared with like?" The work of a great thinker like, say, Spinoza, or Alexander's own tutor, Aristotle, surely lies in different fields, and touches different chords than the work of a great statesman, a great political artist, like the Macedonian?

But we would, notwithstanding this limitation, go a long way with Lord Raglan in his estimation of the creative work accomplished by Alexander. For the great conqueror was an unique personality and accomplished an unique work. Equal to Hannibal as a soldier and to Julius Cæsar as a dazzling personality, Alexander was the greatest statesman in and of Antiquity. He set the political and cultural thinking of the classical world in an entirely new social framework. In so doing, he left an indelible mark on the classical world. That world, and, indeed, the whole world since his day has never been the same after him as it was before. In that ultimate sense, there is much truth in Lord Raglan's remark already referred to.

What, in brief, was the epochal significance of the career of Alexander? (We are not, of course, here concerned with his technical military achievements, remarkable as these were.) Undoubtedly, one can say that it was immense. Indeed, it is hardly too much to say that he was the effective founder of the idea and the practice of cosmopolitanism, of a truly international culture embracing impartially all nations, languages and cultural traditions. And we may note that this was an original conception on the part of Alexander himself. Certainly, it was not derived from his tutor, Aristotle, who justified the enslavement of "barbarians" (i.e. *all non-Greeks!*) on the now familiar Nazi argument that they were "naturally" inferior to the Greek "herrenvolk," and who specifically declared that one could only regard that city as a state wherein all its citizens could actually hear the voice of the town-crier. The politics of the "parish pump"! More precisely, of the petty Greek "City-State" (Polis) of the days before Alexander "put the world on the map."

The practice of Alexander far outstripped the most advanced Greek thought of his age. In fact, he forced the world into new channels. He conquered the East as far as India, and seems to have planned to conquer the West (including the still immature Roman Republic) had not the world conqueror been cut off by fever at the early age of 33. (Was it a coincidence that, in a civilisation saturated with legends about Alexander, Jesus of Nazareth was reported to have died also at this precise age?)

The work of Alexander, however, survived him. For it seems clear that the great king had clearly and consciously intended, not only to conquer, but to unite the ancient East both politically and spiritually with the Greek-speaking West, thus forming the first genuinely cosmopolitan and international civilisation in human history. What a stupendous mental and political superiority this indicated on the part of the young chief of a semi-civilised hill-tribe like Macedon (always rejected by the genuine Greeks as an outsider to Greek civilisation), over the much-vaunted Greek philosophy of thinkers like Plato, Aristotle and Demosthenes for whom the world remained divided into the east-iron categories of "Hellenes" (Greeks) and "barbarians"!

(N.B.—In a summary article of this kind we must, for evidence of Alexander's own attitude, refer our readers to such learned works as "The Cambridge Ancient History," and Ulrich von Wilcken's remarkable biography of Alexander the Great.)

The work of Alexander, however, survived his premature decease. In the succeeding centuries precisely such a new, cosmopolitan civilisation came into existence in the Eastern lands

of the Mediterranean. At first, indeed, it penetrated as far as India, where it left profound traces upon Buddhist sculpture and art, as Professor Tarn has recently demonstrated in his book on the Central Asiatic Greek kingdom of Bactria, which was founded by one of Alexander's generals. Persia, however, eventually recovered her independence, and in consequence the gravity of the new "Hellenistic" civilisation shifted westward to the shores of the Mediterranean.

Between the death of Alexander and the origins of Christianity, and of the Christian era, the foundations of the new cosmopolitan civilisation were firmly laid—a culture of mixed Greek and Oriental descent. "Hellenistic" Greek (in which the New Testament is written) became a kind of cultural "lingua franca" which circulated everywhere and which became the "second language" of the educated classes everywhere. The later Roman emperors, such as Augustus, wrote their private letters in Greek. For example, Marcus Aurelius wrote his famous "Meditations" in Greek, though Latin was his mother-tongue.

Similarly, philosophy itself discarded the parochial traditions which it had inherited from the old Greek city states. The philosophical schools which arose in the Greek-speaking world after Alexander were also cosmopolitan in character. Unlike Plato, Aristotle, etc., compared with whom these later philosophic schools, have been unduly deprecated, Stoics, Epicureans and Cynics, in fact all the post-Alexandrine schools, consciously transcended racial and linguistic boundaries and clearly advocated the unity of the human species.

In brief, all the above schools were, in a sense the spiritual offshoots of Alexander's career. The "Gordian Knot" of nationalism and language was cut by Alexander's sword, along with the original "Gordian Knot" itself! A "world-civilisation"—as yet limited to the Mediterranean by geographical limitations—had now, for the first time in human annals, made its appearance.

F. A. RIDLEY.

(To be continued)

## JESUS CHRIST BERNARD SHAW DALE CARNEGIE

TO the first two of these, readers will need no introduction, and those with connections in the United States or an acquaintance with modern U.S.A. publications, Dale Carnegie will not be unknown as the author of a book which has had phenomenal sales in his own country, and a small sale here. Though differing so widely in time and place, all three have something in common, in that each can be attributed a different version of the age-old injunction best summed up in the expression "Love your enemies."

Let us then look at the pronouncements of each. Jesus Christ is said to have told his hearers to "love thine enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use you. . . ." Bernard Shaw sees his neighbour as a "thinly veined unlovable savage" and whilst deploring any attempt to love him as "unnatural vice" (a brilliant allusion) goes on to lay it down that however one hates him, he must be treated fairly and with justice even by his most injured victim.

Carnegie turns the whole age-old ethical principle to enlightened self-interest by pointing out with some acumen that by hating and trying to "get even" with one's enemy, one only achieves his object for him in allowing him to make you unhappy, and thus giving him the last laugh. Write him off your list of acquaintances, he tells us in effect, and forget him. This in the true spirit of his embarrassing little book bound in shiny red cloth with a name so utterly blatant and un-English that when reading it in the train recently, I felt it necessary to cover the

back with a newspaper—"How to Win Friends and Influence People."

And yet both Shaw and Carnegie show far more realism and sound judgment than Jesus Christ. "Love" in any of its infinite connotations is essentially a constituent of emotion, and as such is utterly and absolutely beyond control. No one can love or hate at the dictates of reason or conscious will. How one feels is a matter of infinitely complicated causes in relation to subtle and unpredictable relations against a background of temperament, and beyond anything but the smallest and most ineffective conscious control. Not so, however, *how one acts*. Thus the truly moral man of enlightened social ethics, whilst feeling all the bitterness of hatred and antagonism natural towards his enemy, may so train himself as to effect a complete disassociation from the natural desire for revenge, even to the point of deliberate magnanimity where the need arises.

I suggest that in such a conception of the "love your enemy" injunction there is something far more manly, far more human, and in the last resort purer than the impossible conception attributed to Christ (though actually of course older by many centuries). And between Dale Carnegie's "high pressure goodwill" version, and that of G.B.S. there is still much to choose.

Think of it in practice. A man has just tripped you up in a side-street, stolen your wallet, and in running away falls and injures himself. Jesus presumably would put his arm on his shoulder, talk to him gently, and take him off to hospital—probably leaving him with the money to cover the incidental expenses. Carnegie, bluntly practical, would recover the wallet, walk away, and try to forget the incident for the sake of his own peace of mind. But I can see Shaw's enlightened realist coming up to the prostrate wretch, hesitating, and after collecting his property, giving the fellow a symbolic kick to get him out of the way before the policeman a little farther down has turned the corner.

The example is not perhaps the most apposite, but one can multiply it indefinitely. It is the more subtle and sustained persecution to which the ordinary man's reactions tend to reach the highest intensity—the ruthless plotting and scheming of unscrupulous and jealous women for instance, which would provide the highest test. But could any sane moralist in such instances so prostitute the language as to invoke "love"? Not only that, but could such a miracle be achieved by any known or unknown psychological gymnastics, the resulting "praying" and "doing good" would be completely devoid of merit. For neither would present any difficulty towards someone one loved.

J. R. STURGE-WHITING.

## PESTILENCE - STRICKEN MULTITUDES

### I.

PROTESTANT Britain and other Reformation nations of Northern Europe are prone to commiserate Roman Catholic countries for their misfortune in having to live under the dominance of a dictatorial and greedy church and its priesthood. Nor are they far wrong. When one considers the condition of Southern Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and parts of Central Europe under Roman Catholic control one is amazed at the contrast with the economic prosperity, personal freedom, general healthy happiness and public activity of the non-Roman communities, the former sunk into poverty and the sloth of despair, or dreaming of past greatness.

It postulates a great question: is the degradation caused by religion, or are ignorance and misery the circumstances in which Roman Catholicism flourishes?

Further illumination to elucidate the problem is provided by India, where millions of people exist wellnigh destitute, in a country whose hoarded riches, and wealth in a few hands, is

enormous; while idle priests and religious beggars live as parasites more comfortably than those who labour and give to them of their small substance.

Significant in this connection were the reactions of Russia and Turkey when they revolted against oppression. In both Russia and Turkey religion was hand in glove with effete despotism. To get the Soviets functioning successfully the Bolsheviks had to destroy the power of a wealthy and corrupt Church. The Young Turks found it necessary to abolish the Caliphate, which—surprising to most Britons—was a religious office.

In both cases the reformed and progressive new governments found secular organisation the only solution for present and future. Never again dare they let a hierarchy hold civil control or authority.

But, respond the English, also Scots and Welsh and Northern Irish, we have nothing of that sort here! We are in no danger of priestly absolutism or impoverishment!

### II.

If so we are delivered from the worst evils not by the absence of priests but by competition among them. We suffer from a trinity of religious officials, namely priests, parsons and ministers of the three great groups, Roman Catholic, Anglican Church and Nonconformist.

Additionally there is a variety of smaller sects ranging from Salvation Army through those which have no paid pastorate, trusting to lay preachers and other voluntary workers. Not to be forgotten is the simple pious layman, often narrower minded than his priest, more bigoted than his church, more faithful to the letter of his hidebound creed; acting as servitor and missionary for the little cause he has at heart, never entertaining doubt or allowing new ideas to impinge upon his stubborn though not tough—soft rather—mentality.

Having thrown off the yoke of the Roman Catholic hierarchy the greater part of the populace in the British Isles proceeded to hamper themselves with fresh manacles and fetters. As Milton wrote:—

"New Presbyter is but old Priest writ large."

Four centuries ago John Knox bullied the Scottish Queen and her counsellors and browbeat the commonalty. His successors have followed his example, keeping up the dismal game ever since.

As from Ireland and Wales the emigration from Scotland is enormous. One suspects escape from the three species of priesthood may largely influence the Celts in their eagerness to go to other lands.

In Wales rule of the Nonconformist minister was equally dire. Here one gets remarkable substantiation from Welsh literature. Of recent years young Welsh poets and story writers have produced outstanding work, highly original. Reading it one finds revolt against or desertion of classical Welsh literature of sermons, hymns and devotional moralising. The new Welsh literature is human and secular, especially since Caradoc Evans dealt hypocrisy and humbug such staggering blows.

### III.

The battle of freedom from black-frocked regimentation is far from won. Bishops sit in the House of Lords. Dissenting Ministers and pious laymen get elected to the Commons, as they do to local authorities and are far too often co-opted on to committees.

Chaplains with officer rank and salaries permeate Army, Navy and Air Force. Orphanages, hospitals, asylums, prisons and nearly every kind of institution have their paid chaplains.

It is notable how religious the population of prisons and other places of detention are. Infidels, heretics, freethinkers, atheists and all such godless people do not seem to need so much attention from police and other government control any more than they need that of religion.

Charities are still linked with religiosity. All the churches run organisation—really busybodies—to interfere with the free

conduct of secular life. Sabbatarianism, a religious taboo, cheeks and spoils enjoyment of what should be a weekly holiday, seeking to do so more, fighting all the fiercer for its Blue-Law hold as one item of pleasure and entertainment after another is wrenched from its paralyzing grasp.

Likewise, handling great money power, the priests have command of a vast output of spoken and written propaganda. Radio gives them too much time and scope; their most rapid utterances are publicised. Newspapers are too generous to priests, both in space and avoidance of criticism. So although less than ten per cent. of the people attend places of worship the priest-parson-pastor combine continue to act and talk as though ninety per cent. were worshippers in their temples.

Established custom and social pretence play into their hands, as well as lingering superstition. Though unable to formulate definite religious doctrines thousands of parents have their children baptised, although few believe them to be born in sin or children of wrath.

Similarly with weddings and funerals, the only times when numerous people enter churches. It needs to be clearly impressed that the civil ceremonies of registration of births, marriages and deaths, and in the latter case decent interment or cremation, are enough. But a tag of religiosity is profitable to the priests, so they will continue to encourage it on all possible occasions.

#### IV.

With the falling-off in churchgoing is a decline in Sunday school membership and in all other organisations.

Here the priesthoods are especially concerned. If they do not get adherents young they will not get them at all. So the churches are seizing on education as a means of accomplishing this. Scouts, Guides and youth movements have already been nobbled by churches for potential supporters, and in education they see further chances.

Why education should be religious any more than science, art, literature, sport, mathematics or other human activity is a mystery. All sections of human life grow more secular, except education, which seems unable to disentangle itself from ecclesiastical hands. We do not allow priests, parsons and ministers to manage or direct garages, mines, mills, shops, docks, railways, ships, aerodromes, factories or any other human business, so why permit them to interfere in schools?

Summarily, the position now is that man's affairs and energies are taking him farther from religion and churches and their paid professors, but these last are entrenched, have vested interests to which they will cling clutchingly till forcibly detached.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

### SINCERITY, REASON AND POLITICS

I FIND that a sincere belief in the righteousness of a political creed is a very common incentive to abandon ethical considerations in the method of acquiring and retaining converts. It seems to me that the desire to prove political claims to be legitimate almost invariably causes a sincere desire for truth to lessen; the end apparently being presumed to justify the means. It is usually overlooked that should it be necessary that the means to "prove" be irrational or dishonest, then the end is a mere fetish. Sincerity of argument wanes in the atmosphere of prejudice that usually results from the desire to prove something at all costs. By abandoning a desire for truth we vitiate our own cases, for when an urge to prove something supplants a desire for knowledge of reality, truth with its then embarrassing implications becomes a mere inconvenience.

The majority of politicians at the extreme ends of the political scale are not, in my opinion, sincerity-minded. They appear to me to be pathetically devoid of the ability to differentiate between making out a case for their particular "ism" and surveying the political scene with honesty. Consequent on this

trait our more bigoted politicians appear to have a strange distrust of honest rationality.

Such a distrust is by no means confined to the political extremes, although they are noteworthy in this respect for the feeling is widespread that sincerity and calm reasoning are somewhat irrational. "That is all right in theory, but in practice . . ." seems to be the reaction of many people to the word "logic." It does not appear to be generally realised that if a plan is found to be impractical then it must have been wrong in theory. To be reasonable, all factors, human and otherwise, must be taken into consideration, to ignore any factor or to gloss over relevant evidence of any description is unreasonable if we really want to get to the truth of a matter. If reality is our goal we must not just keep harping upon those items of information favouring our ideas.

I believe that if we rate knowing the truth in politics above mere mental comfort, then logic is our most valuable aid. But it must be realised that a study of logic will not necessarily free us from unreasonable convictions. The knowledge so gained is only of use in those instances when the desire to be impartial is actually present and not merely professed. We cannot help having human tendencies and so we may not possess the requisite degree of academic detachment necessary to conceive certain burning questions dispassionately. We should not be surprised therefore to find people possessing a knowledge of elementary logic, accepting facts, but rejecting the conclusions the facts entail, because the conclusions cannot be reconciled to certain cherished conceptions. Such people may speak of being "guided by common sense rather than by logic," there is no conflict, however, between logic and common sense. This is the prevalent attitude when those ideas that are dear to us are suddenly confuted. The natural conservatism of most people will almost invariably demand a flight from reason in such instances.

It appears to me to be a popular tradition at the political extremes to distrust reason and rely on "common sense." The contention that common sense is more reasonable than reason is, I believe, made chiefly by those who have no desire openly to subject their ideas to the light of real common sense. A special type of "common sense" favourable to certain doctrines is implied by this, genuine common sense and reason being in effect synonymous. It is true that the words are normally used in a different tone; common sense usually being understood to mean "manifest reason," but to imply that there is a difference between common sense and reason connotes a desire to concoct something more merciful to a political ideology than real common sense.

It is sometimes difficult to stress this point adequately. In heated political discussions rational arguments are frequently discounted by those who are familiar with but one side of the question at issue because they are not "common sense." The fact that a truly logical argument embraces all and only that which is relevant, is often sufficient to perplex those who have not before considered the question in an objective manner, but have based their theories on a few pet assumptions.

The use of "common sense" is as a facade is understandable when the object is to justify the retention of beliefs that are to the advantage of the believer. Such conduct is usually accompanied by a refusal to search for or even to entertain contrary evidence. If, however, we have a sincere desire to understand present-day problems then such an attitude is an extremely formidable obstacle that must be removed if we are to make any appreciable progress. Presuming a knowledge of reality to be our goal then we must not be hostile to any rational suggestion, and our search for evidence must not be restricted.

It is not always realised that those beliefs that are dear to us tend to become still further embedded by our continually selecting instances appearing to be favourable to them and ignoring those appearing as unfavourable. Even more important is that they often condition us to a perverse sense of credulity.

so that we are likely to be hyper-critical of information that apparently contradicts our beliefs and unduly receptive to that which reinforces them. It can be seen that in this case we are a prey to almost any sort of Machiavellian propaganda ostensibly favouring our beliefs.

I do not think that we can lose anything that would warrant lamentation by sincerely examining the foundation of our political outlook. It is vital, however, to realise that we must begin such an investigation at the beginning, not the end. By commencing at the end, I mean that we must not work backwards attempting to justify the retention of our present attitude to world problems. This is a natural tendency and can make the task of clarifying our outlook extremely difficult, if not impossible. It is tantalisingly easy to cheat like this, but if our desire to do the right thing is genuine then we must unfetter our critical powers so that they are under no obligations to respect those political principles we have endorsed previously.

E. G. GORDON.

(To be continued)

### "A FREETHINKER WRITES TO HUGH REDWOOD"

So the Bible speaks to Britain now! In my ignorance I have always believed that it spoke to the entire world—in spite of the British Israelites' claim that we are the specially privileged race—the Upper Crust of the Shepherd's Pie. How "frightfully snobbish" we are getting these days! Really, Mr. Redwood, if it wasn't so pathetic it would be almost funny. But, after all, does it matter very much to whom the Bible speaks?

In the light of modern knowledge the Bible is obviously nothing but a Book of Truth. How can you expect children who are taught the Origin of Species and biological Evolution at school to believe in the very first opening chapters? If the Bible is the inspired Word of God then why is it a mass of pagan fables and an exposure of blood-thirsty and revolting cruelties on the part of a so-called *loving* God? And why is it filled with contradictions too numerous to mention which require an army of paid apologists to explain exactly what it means when it says something entirely different? What is the use of a book that cannot be understood by the masses until it has been interpreted by various theologians in various ways according to their ideas and thinking? And, above all, what colossal impudence for such men to presume to think they know what God really meant better than he knew himself!

Religion, in one form or another, has been associated with Man from the earliest ages. It's origin then is a *savage* one. Religion has not come to Man since he has developed culturally and intellectually so we cannot say that it is the result of his more enlightened outlook and of his more highly developed intelligence. On the contrary, it came to Man when he was a savage with practically no intelligence at all.

Primitive Man, as we all know, was a creature of superstition and fear. Anything he could not understand or account for he attributed to some supernatural agency or unseen force. As he could not, in his ignorance visualise a force he naturally interpreted it in his own image—a sort of Super-man who could watch his every movement and know his every thought while remaining quite invisible to the human eye; precisely the same child-like mentality that enables infants to believe in fairies, giants and ogres.

It was this predominant "fear obsession" which made early Man afraid of the darkness, afraid of loneliness and afraid of the elements—especially thunder and lightning. Thunder, to his childish mind, could only be the voice of this unseen god or spirit raised in anger against him for his misdeeds; the lightning, the fiery sword by which transgressors were smitten down.

As both came from the skies obviously that must be the place where this vengeful God resided! When his crops were destroyed by flood, drought or tempest Man accepted it as a punishment for his sins and offered sacrifices in order to appease and placate the Divine Wrath. Prayer followed as a natural sequence. Man supposed that having invented this God in his own likeness, God must surely understand his language and be able to hear him, so he appealed to the Unseen by flattering his vanity and hoping in return to obtain some special benefit or blessing. He became a servile and cringing creature begging for mercy and forgiveness and for ever haunted by the fear of punishment.

All this is quite understandable of a primitive savage; but, surely, Christians class themselves a few grades higher than that! Today we are fully aware of the operation of natural laws which account for the strange phenomena that bamboozled the savage—yet Christians still fall on their knees and pray for more or less rain according to their requirements. They still regard their God as a super Meteorologist—or, perhaps, a Master Plumber in charge of the celestial waterworks! All he has to do is to turn the tap on or off as it pleases him. But why, if God is All-knowing does he have to be asked by us? We are told he knows all our requirements so it seems a triflingly inconsiderate of him to deliberately spoil our crops and then wait for us to ask him to desist. Or does he do it on purpose?

All right, Mr. Redwood, don't bother to tell us—we know the answer. It's the good old stand-by—"Punishment for our sins!" But even that does not quite explain why West Coast farmers may have good weather for their crops while the East Coast farmers are ruined or vice-versa—unless, of course, they have been good boys in one district and bad lads in the other! No, I hardly think you can expect us to be quite so credulous these days. There is absolutely no excuse either for begging Divine favours or for returning thanks for any small benefit received such as, for example, winning the war after God had allowed it to continue for *six years*; causing untold misery, suffering and death; when, according to Christian belief, he could have prevented it but didn't. A God who deliberately permits such a blood-bath is not likely to obtain much of a following among *thinking* people.

It is high time we learned to rely on our own unaided efforts instead of leaning for support on some mythical and pagan prop of the past ages. To-day, religion can only survive by the suppression of Reason, by the prohibition of Inquiry, and by demanding a blind relief in the Unbelievable—for no reason at all!

W. H. WOOD.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

#### LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 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. SAPHIN, J. HART and E. PAGE.

#### LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m., Mr. S. K. RATCLIFFE: "The Crisis of Jewry."

#### COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.  
Liverpool Branch N.S.S. (Ranelagh Street, opposite Lewis's).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m., a lecture.  
Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday 6-30 p.m., Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

#### COUNTRY—INDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. F. J. CORINA: "Birth Control and Christianity."

# FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF

The books listed below should appeal to all Freethinkers, but particularly to those who have recently joined the movement. In them will be found answers to the many questions which are almost always asked by people leaving the religion to which they were brought up; and most of the books and pamphlets should certainly grace the library shelves of readers of this journal.

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- MISTAKES OF MOSES**, by Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 3d.; postage 1d.
- THE MOTHER OF GOD**, by G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; by post 4d.

## CHRISTIANITY

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