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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### The Irrelevance of God

**MOST** Atheists start a criticism of God on the basis of his non-existence. Let us for once try the very opposite and assume that God exists. I admit that is a very large assumption, but it is a very common one. It is made by a multitude of people in a community that claims to be civilised, but where illogicality still holds an honoured place. For that reason, one more unwarranted assumption will not be of great moment. On the one hand we have a history of gods which leaves no reasonable ground to doubt that all the gods known to man began their existence as a consequence of conclusions drawn from unwarranted premises. On the other hand we have multitudes affirming a belief that is a direct denial of all that the science of anthropology affirms concerning the idea of God. There are those who claim that we must take the existence of God for granted, and we grant that is the only safe plan, if we are to continue that belief. To discuss the gods is to sow the seeds of unbelief. There is a bible text that runs, "Though he slay me yet will I trust him." The modern version of that would seem to be "Though all they say about God be the most arrant nonsense, yet will I regard the affirmation of God's existence as one of the most valuable of truths."

This is not an effort at sarcasm. It is a statement of sober fact, for it runs through religion whenever its exists in an otherwise civilised society. There is, of course, some little originality in the form of the presentation of arguments for the existence of God, but in substance there is nothing new in them. There are those who say that the existence of God is self-evident, and then proceed to disprove their statement. Men do not argue about self-evident things. Argument implies the possibility of error, and no real believer in gods can safely admit that probability. God, say modern believers, will make himself known to us if we are humble and pray to him to grant us the power of belief. But can we pray to God to make himself known unless we already believe that he exists? If there is a God, it should be his duty to make himself known. Gods depend upon belief for their existence. Self-interest ought to lead them to make their presence known beyond the possibility of doubt. At any rate, belief must precede prayer, it cannot follow it. The savage does not look for gods, they look for him, and their worship is based upon the benefits conferred or the punishment threatened.

Another safe generalisation is that the power of the belief in God is directly proportionate to the culture of the people who are studying him. With primitive people, the power of the gods knows no limits. With the advance of civilisation the belief gets weaker and weaker, and always the stature of the gods knows no limits. God, said Spinoza,

is the asylum of the ignorant. God, says the Archbishop of Canterbury, is the refuge of all who are in trouble or in distress of mind. The wording of the two versions is different in form, but they are the same in essence. We call on God to cure a fever because the factors that lead to a cure are obscure. But no one prays to God for a leg to be restored after it has been cut off. Priests pray to-day that our raiding airmen may come home safely. They never pray for the machine to come home after the petrol supply has run out. Prayers were offered for victory over Germany. But none ever prayed that the aeroplanes would secure their provided capacity. God may be in the machine, but it is the machine that has the last word.

So instead of spending time on arguments for and against the existence of God, let us start with the assumption that God really does exist. And let us put the godite to a very severe test, that of manifesting intellectual honesty. When we and they talk about God, we must have in mind what people have believed in as God, and for the worship of all the churches, temples and synagogues devoted to gods—black, white and coloured. It will not do to follow the prevailing fashion and call any ideas we have "God," and so attempt to fill a vacuum with an empty name. Belief in a kind-of-a-sort-of something will not do. None of us can honestly believe in a mere mathematical formula as God such as some of our half-emancipated scientists present us with, nor can we substitute for deity the aesthetic pleasure we may feel for the sight of a glorious sunset. It may be true that "God moves in mysterious ways his wonders to unfold," but that is no justification for a civilised human being seriously to thank a landscape for being beautiful or praising the divine care that guides an earthquake away from the house in which he lives. Looking at something that is without locality, shape or structure needs a very powerfully constructed optical instrument. A man may derive comfort in his solitariness from the advent of a "harmless necessary cat," but pussy has at least the quality of definiteness and may show its appreciation of our friendship with a complimentary purr. These instances give us something on which we may lay our hands, but a something that is unlike anything living or conceivably living means nothing at all. The religionist must reflect that whenever we lose hold of "things," all the babble that was ever mouthed is evidence that we have grasped—nothing. God, if he exists, must be something in a world that is made up of things. No Church can get away from that plain thing. If God exists in a universe in which he is anything, he must represent a very fine specimen of nothing.

As I have said, I am inclined, for the moment at least, to admit that God lives. But this is only to give sharpness to the plain truth that God is completely irrelevant to the modern scientific world. What revelancy has "God" in relation to our modern civilised life? Can we say that he performs any useful part in our lives? There

was a time when for good or ill he at least did something. He ruled the air and infected the earth. He raised storms and spread disease, caused earthquakes, managed the weather, preserved health and smote men with death. He revenged himself on those who offended him, and rewarded those with whom he was pleased. God was then terribly relevant to human life. If he still takes a more or less benevolent interest in human affairs he is not concerned enough actively to interfere with what is going on.

My case then is that to our science, to our philosophy of everyday life, God is absolutely irrelevant. We do not say in so many words that it does not matter whether God exists or not, we lack the mental courage and clearness of vision to say that. We profess to believe in God, we proclaim that we must have a God. Officially we have a God, we pay him lip homage, but in actual affairs we treat him as though he is of no consequence whatever.

In short, we treat God as we treat our hereditary monarchy and aristocracy. Anyone who understands our political machinery knows that our hereditary monarch is a mere figurehead. He has no real power to direct affairs. He must do what he is "advised" to do. But we still talk as though the Army, the Navy and Air Force is royal property; it is "my" Army, "my" Navy, etc. The old formula remains but the life has gone out of it. We allow the past to become our masters when we should use it as our servants.

My case then, with regard to God, is just this. I am not now bothering whether God exists or not. My case is that, granted God's existence, there is no need to bother about him or her. What he is has less relevance, far less relevance, than whether the planet Neptune has or has not living bodies on it. There is not a single branch of science which bothers in the least degree whether God exists or not. In science God is not merely the great unknowable, he is the permanently unusable. We do not say A plus B will equal C God willing, we say it will be so, and leave God out of the matter. It is true that God comes upon the scene in connection with such things as earthquakes, but up-to-date worshippers are more careful in connecting God with an unpleasant thing.

All that we can say about God is that ideas concerning him may affect human action. But that gets us no further than the plain fact that fear of a ghost may cause a man to give up his house. Human motives will tell whether the motive be wise or foolish. I am trying to deal with the belief in God from the view-point of intelligent people. After Bradlaugh had won his great fight in the House of Commons one of the members said, after some consolation, "Good God, Bradlaugh, what does it matter whether there is a God or not?" That is really my case. If God never does anything, or effects anything, what does it matter whether he exists or not? God is irrelevant to the modern situation. In antiquity there was an annual ceremony in which devotees cried out "Great Pan is dead." But the god came to life again. To-day there is no resurrection of Gods. We say with Lucretius—with a slight alteration:

When once the fates have cut the mortal thread  
The (God) as such to all intents is dead.  
Who dies to-day, and will as long be so  
As he who died a thousand years ago.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## A DEFENCE OF HATRED

### I

I HAVE deliberately chosen a provocative title for this essay. My purpose is not to maintain a paradox, but to redress an overloaded balance in our ethical thinking. We talk of giving a dog a bad name and hanging him. I suggest that we have given the emotion of hatred a bad name, and that while we all on occasion feel hatred, most of us are uncritically and unnecessarily ashamed of doing so. I am not going to say that hatred is always and in all circumstances good; but I am going to deny that it is always and in all circumstances evil. No one would say that love is always and in all circumstances good. It depends on whom and what you love, and on whether your love is informed by reason. In the same way, whether hatred is good or bad depends on whom and what you hate, and whether your hatred is informed by reason.

Hatred, we are told, is condemned by Christianity. We open the New Testament and we read: "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you." But even Christ (assuming the record of his life to be historical) did not always love his enemies. The man who said to the scribes and Pharisees, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of hell?" and who anticipated the day when he would consign the wicked to eternal fire, displayed a pretty healthy capacity for hatred. His disciples from that day to this have on the whole preferred his practice to his precept.

And that is natural. For hatred is as necessary a part of our biological make-up as love. The inter-connection of the two is well expressed by Browning in *One Word More*:—

"Dante, who loved well because he hated,  
Hated wickedness that hinders loving."

It is a law of life that living things exist only by struggling against their environment. Nature is "red in tooth and claw." Man, being ill-equipped with teeth and claws, has found a substitute in co-operation; but he co-operates in order to struggle more successfully. Since to most of us co-operation is pleasant and struggle painful, we naturally wish that the area of co-operation may be widened and the area of struggle restricted. But to envisage the end of struggle is to envisage the end of life. Now our various emotions are a mental reflection of our various biological activities. Love answers to the sex instinct, fear to the flight instinct, anger or hatred to the fighting instinct. As long, therefore, as it is necessary to fight anybody or anything, it will be natural for us to hate that which we fight. Since hating and fighting is an unpleasant business, our object should be to canalise these activities in those directions in which they do the most good and the least harm. But we cannot abolish struggle and we cannot abolish hatred. They are part of life; and it will save much trouble if we recognise that fact.

Whatever our professions may be, in practice we recognise it. From our earliest years we learn to discriminate between hatred which is permissible and respectable, and hatred which is impermissible and disreputable. We regard it as wrong to hate members of our own family, or to hate schoolfellows for no better reason than that they have red hair or snub noses or are better than we are at work or play. That is because the family and the school are each a co-operative unit serving a common purpose. Such competition as exists in a family or in a school, at work or at play, is arranged to serve a co-operative end. It must not be allowed, therefore, to generate real enmity; for that would defeat the co-operative purpose of the family or school. Hatred within the family or school is therefore discouraged. But we regard it as right to hate the enemy when

our country is at war. That is permissible and respectable hatred. It is expressed in the words of the National Anthem:—

“O Lord our God, arise,  
Scatter his enemies,  
And make them fall:  
Confound their politics,  
Frustrate their knavish tricks;  
On Thee our hopes we fix:  
God save us all!”

That is because our country, like our family and our school, is a co-operative unit which, at the level of thinking which the National Anthem represents, we conceive to be perpetually struggling against and threatened by other and alien units. Hatred of the enemies of our country is therefore encouraged. I know Blimps who boast that they hate all foreigners, as if such hatred were a virtue. Again, when a general election is on, hatred of the other side is permissible and respectable. That is because, although our country is a co-operative unit serving a common purpose, there are unfortunately, as every good party man knows, always a large number of unprincipled or deluded citizens who do not play the game. They are an alien element in the body politic. It is therefore right to hate their unprincipled leaders and to despise, if we do not actually hate, their deluded followers. In doing so we do not weaken our country; on the contrary, we strengthen it by combating and disarming the enemy within.

This is not a caricature, but a correct delineation of the intellectual climate in which most middle class Britons, at any rate of my generation, were brought up. My earliest political memories belong to the time of the Boer War. In those days we hated the Boers and hated or despised the Radicals who were tarred with the pro-Boer brush. And we felt better for hating them. Our hatred took us out of ourselves. As Tennyson puts it in *Maud*, we “felt with our native land” and were “one with our kind.” Or as Shaw puts it, we were “a force of Nature instead of feverish selfish little clods of ailments and grievances complaining that the world would not devote itself to making us happy.”

Of course there was a catch in all this. The catch was that I and my whole generation, thanks to the structure of the society in which we lived and moved and had our being, were for the most part still are, grossly uneducated or what is worse, mis-educated. We did not know the first thing about the world with which we had to cope. We were taught that we were created to be members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, and that to that end it was our duty to believe all the articles of the Christian faith, honour and obey the King, order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters and do our duty in that state of life to which it should please God to call us. We were not told that we lived in a rapidly changing world, that science, industry and commerce had made that world economically one and inter-dependent, and that unless we set to work and discovered a way of running that economically inter-dependent world for the common good of all, merely honouring and obeying the King and ordering ourselves lowly and reverently to our betters would in a measurable time land us in a very sticky and unsavoury sort of soup. And that is what has happened.

We did not find this out all at once. Some of us have never found it out at all. The process of enlightenment, so far as it was allowed to take place, was gradual. It began, I think, in many cases with the discovery that our spiritual pastors and masters did not themselves really and effectively believe the religion which they taught. They taught us to regard as God one who said, “Love your enemies,” “Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon the earth,” and “Judge not, that ye be not judged”; but that did not prevent them from supporting war, having a keen eye to their investments, and following a murder trial with eager zest. I do not say that they were wrong in so

doing. A society run on the principles of the Sermon on the Mount could not last a week. But I say that, in professing a religion which they knew could not be practised, they were lazy thinkers and arrant humbugs. I say it with the more confidence since, although they knew that their religion could not be translated into practice, they treated any overt attack on it as a form of moral delinquency. Men who never pretended to love their enemies, who spent their whole lives laying up for themselves treasure on earth, and who regarded the judging and punishing of crime as all in the day's work, nevertheless kept—and still keep—the Blasphemy Laws on the statute book, voted (and still vote) public money for religious education, and have lately, in the person of Mr. Churchill, proclaimed the first of their political principles to be “the maintenance of Christianity and resistance to attacks upon it.”

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

(To be continued)

## MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AND RELIGION

AN extremely interesting and significant event took place during the November municipal elections in Manchester which is worthy of comment over a wider area simply because it suggests an invidious process taking place throughout the country. The retiring Lord Mayor was a Liberal councillor and was forced to stand for re-election. Whilst the Conservative Party decided not to oppose, a Labour candidate was put forward for the seat and a heated election campaign opened out. It was a situation not without parallel elsewhere and the issues for and against the opposition were widely canvassed. So far as political questions were concerned, arguments developed along the usual party lines. At the eleventh hour, however, the contest took to itself a new note. Councillor Lee is a Roman Catholic and has been extremely prominent in the defence of ecclesiastical interests in local politics. A statement suddenly appeared in the press from the Anglican Bishop of Manchester and Professor Manson, chairman of the local Free Church Council. Both denied any intention of intervening in a political contest but both advised the electors to return Councillor Lee. Despite the fact that a similar municipal situation had arisen at Heywood, only a few miles away, neither the Bishop nor the Nonconformist Professor made any comment. It was lacking in any form of ecclesiastical significance. Their thunders were solely reserved for the ears of the electors of the Blackley Ward, Manchester, on the grounds that it was a bad principle to oppose a Lord Mayor who had carried out his duties successfully. In both cases, there was no consideration whether some expression of opinion was not to be allowed to electors who, so far as that particular seat was concerned, had been disenfranchised for nine years.

It was curious that no statement was forthcoming from the Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford on behalf of his co-religionist but it may be that he was forced to consider a large Irish element in his diocese opposed politically to Councillor Lee. The religious-political antecedents of the two gentlemen who did intervene are, however, not without significance. Both represent interests which have been prominent in the Sword of the Spirit movement, one of whose avowed aims is to create a united Catholic and Protestant interest in politics transcending the usual party lines. In the Manchester area, this movement has been extremely active and it has been allied to other movements fighting a hard battle to maintain the Roman Catholic and Anglican schools. Both groups possess schools which are out of date and, so far as condition be concerned, should have been condemned and closed long ago, but both are more vitally interested in the preservation of a dogmatic control over education than in the provision of up-to-date educational facilities. Incidentally, both the Roman Catholic and the Anglican schools provide by far the largest number of juvenile delinquents in the area. So far as noncon-

formity is concerned, it has largely lost its grip and its orthodox exponents are living upon a Victorian past when the chapel really counted for something in Lancashire life. The "Nonconformist Conscience" of Dr. Clifford has withered away; Professor Manson represents an interest locally which has sold the pass on the "passive resisters" and on secular education. Any union of the Christian forces is to be attempted which can prop up a dying ecclesiasticism against a more rational and humanistic way of life. There are strong reasons for thinking that the intervention was hardly disinterested when the immense power of such a body as the Manchester Local Education Authority be recalled.

Both the Bishop and the Free Churchman stoutly denied any intention of political intervention. The denial is, of course, absurd; in practice, they did intervene by supporting a particular candidate for the polls. There was no reason why, as individuals, they should not have expressed an opinion; neither had abrogated, in virtue of their office, common rights of citizenship. But it is a very different matter when a plea of non-intervention is used to cover up a very practical ecclesiastical interference. In his autobiography, *Looking Forwards*, Canon Anson, the Master of the Temple and once a Manchester rector, remarks upon the extremely reactionary and unprogressive nature of Lancashire church life so far as political and social progress be concerned. Canon Anson is not a party man in the political sense and he merely states a notorious fact. The Bishop of Manchester must therefore have been well aware of the results throughout local civic life of his intervention. In practice, under a somewhat specious plea, two ecclesiastical gentlemen joined forces to protect an indirect but strongly ecclesiastical influence in the Council Chamber and to justify the type of social intervention for which the late Cardinal Hinsley and his Sword of the Spirit movement had planned.

The event is of far more than local interest. In former days when, even though church and chapel did have unseemly differences, ecclesiastical influences were strong, such interventions were rendered unnecessary. Times have now changed and ecclesiasticism is only likely to maintain its control by means of a united front, acting by means of semi-political intervention. Infiltrating all political parties, it seeks to create a body of religious opinion in the House of Commons and in the major Council Chambers which yet transcends them all. So far as the Roman Catholic Church is concerned, the Catholic Parents and Electors Association is an active body which brings pressure to bear upon political candidates of every party with the idea of mobilising a Catholic vote on behalf of those who are most compliant to its claims. The other church bodies are now engaged in similar organisation and the Manchester incident may prove to be a significant forerunner of many similar incidents throughout the country whenever suitable circumstances arise. Certainly, the threat of ecclesiastical intervention of this type is serious and can easily prove to be a road to "Tammany Hall."

In *No Friend To Democracy*, Miss Edith Moore has produced a dossier of evidence illustrating the results of Roman Catholic teaching in the political field. But no autocratic ecclesiasticism can fit in with modern democracy, whether it be that of an Anglican bishop or of an orthodox Free Church professor. Whether Councillor Lee should have been opposed or not is, of course, an open question to be decided by personal political allegiance and by local circumstances. But the methods used to secure the certain return to an important City Council of a prominent Roman Catholic citizen illustrate the manner in which orthodox ecclesiastical interests are used to sway an influence out of all proportion to the comparatively small numbers who accept its allegiance. Rationalists, and indeed voters generally, should keep a constant watch to see that important fields of local government are not influenced in this way and that the sinister inroads already made by ecclesiasticism into public life should not be allowed to continue.

"JULIAN."

## LEIBNIZ

WE cannot allow 1946 to pass without a salutation to the shade of Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz who was born just 300 years ago. His name finds its way into most lists of geniuses. But, asked "Why?" we hesitate, and then begin explaining that Leibniz's important contributions to Western culture, like those of his countryman Goethe—a universalist of like calibre—are peculiarly difficult to assess. He is thought of primarily as a philosopher, and secondarily as a mathematician; yet one of his key philosophical tenets is principally remembered as the butt of the most devastating satire in the world, *Candide*; there are modern philosophical conspectuses that give Leibniz no more than passing mention; and the huge drag-net of Wells's *Outline of History* doesn't even touch him.

Concerning his mathematical stature, there is no doubt whatever; he was gargantuan. Quite independently of Newton, he devised the calculus, and, beyond Newton, gave the ground-plan of the modern notation of higher mathematics. (It is fairly certain however that in inductive reasoning, the motive power of scientific advancement, Newton was Leibniz's superior.) He dispelled that fear of infinitesimals that had bedevilled mathematics ever since Zeno enunciated his celebrated paradoxes. His was the fertiliser responsible for the prodigious crop of mathematical thought in the two or three following generations. Of his "mathematical proof" of the necessity of the Elector Palatine of Neuberg's becoming King of Poland (he didn't, incidentally), the less said the better; it merely illustrates the disconcerting tendency for the exuberant energy of creative minds to slop over into vessels of wondrous shape and fantastic purpose—witness Dvorak's zealous collecting of railway-engine numbers.

But mathematics was neither Leibniz's earliest, nor his predominant, passion. All subjects were his subjects. At 12 he had taught himself Latin and was beginning Greek. Before he was out of his teens he had critically absorbed every available book on mathematics, philosophy, law, theology and history. Thereafter he interspersed bouts of invention (e.g., land yachts and calculating machines), diplomacy, travel, sericulture and voluminous correspondence, with distinguished achievements in each of his many fields. Above all, Leibniz was the syncretist, striving to combine the essentials of his philosophical predecessors into a timeless and comprehensive world-picture; to confederate the Rhenish sovereignties; to reconcile Catholic and Protestant; and to fuse religion and philosophy. In this last he was, inevitably, unsuccessful, although we may concede to his "monadic godism" more originality and technical subtlety than is usually associated with the products of this favourite metaphysical outhouse where savants such as Schleiermacher, Coleridge and Hegel later worked to hard to produce tedious diatribes.

Leibniz's main contribution to philosophy was his hierarchical system of psycho-physical atoms or "monads," each conceived as a "windowless" uncontactible isolate. The apparently co-operating and interacting aggregate forming the world-as-we-know-it was really, said Leibniz, maintained in "Pre-Established Harmony," the pre-establisher being the chief monad, identified with God. This amazing set-up owed something to both Descartes and Spinoza, and, in its turn, was to give rise, by reason of its implicit distinction between sensory perceptions and "reality," to that complex body of thought, loosely labelled German Idealism, which was to exert so powerful, and in many respects so baneful, an influence in the 19th century.

Many Leibnizian critics have pointed to the inconsistencies that emerge if his arguments are pressed to logical conclusions. How, for example, could the colony of monads that was Leibniz himself, possibly know anything about, must less analyse, an external universe that is, from his own definitions, completely shuttled out? Other critics have singled out Pre-Established Harmony for attack, among them Schopenhauer and Feuerbach.

the latter pertinently suggesting that Leibniz was too anxious to mollify orthodoxy. And Bertrand Russell has tilted at the monadic God. It should be mentioned, however, that Russell, in a remarkable analysis of Leibniz's philosophy, demonstrates that a few simple postulates, not all explicitly stated by Leibniz, underlie all his speculation. Leibniz's logical erections on these postulates are, says Russell, brilliant; the trouble is that the postulates themselves are not all mutually consistent.

There are certain departments of philosophy and of science in which Leibniz had ideas far ahead of his age. His treatment of space and time was prescient of Einstein. He was obviously feeling towards the principle of conservation of energy. He thought that the earth might have emanated, still hot, from the sun. Most interesting, too, was his realisation of the semantic limitations in philosophising, and he attempted the construction of a symbolism to replace language in this connection.

But if his intellect was among the most penetrating ever known, his character merited scantier praise. Perhaps consonance is rare in such men. Leibniz was quarrelsome, prejudiced, mean and sycophantic. His unseemly wrangle with Newton, and his hysterical, unbelievably stupid, denunciation of Newton's theory of gravitation, permanently marred his reputation in England—Dr. Johnson, for instance, dismissed him as "paltry." And his joining the obloquy heapers on the death of Spinoza was signally shocking. There is a kind of grim justice in the fact that his own funeral was attended by a sole mourner: his secretary. But at least one witness of that ceremony was moved to refer to Leibniz as "the ornament of his country." We may add "and of mankind."

N. T. GRIDGEMAN.

## ROMANCE AND RELIGION

THE late G. K. Chesterton made himself widely known to us by virtue of his pronounced adherence to the Catholic faith, which became emphasised to a remarkable degree in his various writings.

Purely as a Catholic I have not much use for him, yet despite the Popish taint that encircles his individuality, I must confess to getting a kick or two from reading his quaint fantastical "Father Brown" stories, and especially from that most remarkable and equally fantastical book of his "The Flying Inn." The figure of that impossible Irishman, that little beast of burden, and the ever brimful barrel of brandy plus the ubiquitous inn-sign which itself constitutes the whole *raison d'être* for the plot—what there be—those things appealed strongly to my sense of humour, and I must also speak up for the original and very delightful verses which add charm to that particular book.

What I have just said, however, is somewhat beside the point. I really want to bring before you—that is, those of you who have not read any of Charles Dickens's writings in the form of the cheap reprints published by the house of Dent under the popular title of "Everyman's Library" editions—the fact that G. K. Chesterton was appointed to edit these particular editions, or so I presume, because the edition of "Nicholas Nickleby" (reprinted at least a dozen times in this series) contains an Editor's Introduction signed at its conclusion by Chesterton.

I do not intend to dwell at all upon the whole of the introduction, which in itself is somewhat protracted as it occupies seven pages of closely written script being designed to show or try to show that romance did not begin to feature in Dickens's writings until "Nicholas Nickleby" put in its appearance. Instead I shall limit my remarks to the first paragraph of this introduction. This offends against the canons of all accepted literary doctrines in so far as it runs to no less than 31 lines, whereas it is widely held that the initial paragraph of any chapter or essay should be brief, and as concise as possible, or so I understand.

Furthermore this particular paragraph is utterly spoilt by the totally unnecessary reiteration of that nauseating word "religion," being quoted no less than 13 times in that paragraph. Whether or no Chesterton was unconscious of this unnecessary repetition, I cannot of course say, yet whilst he was attempting to show that Romance and Religion possess some aspects in common, he mentions "romance" but three times in all, and then only in the course of the first four lines.

His belief in the efficacy of religion as an antidote to all ills is of course widely known as he took great pains to emphasise this in nearly every book that he wrote and its vein can be seen like a fine thread permeating or running through his writings whether they were political, pseudo-scientific, ethical, literary or anything else. Here, however, in this offending paragraph I am discussing, he has concentrated upon some of the particular points where religion affects our everyday life.

To enable you to judge for yourself I have copied out the whole of the paragraph, which I dare say I am safe in doing, as I hardly think it will be subject to any copyright limitations.

"Romance is perhaps the highest point of human expression, except indeed (1) religion, to which it is closely allied. Romance resembles (2) religion especially in this, that it is not only a simplification but a shortening of existence. Both romance and (3) religion see everything as it were fore-shortened; they see everything in an abrupt and fantastic perspective, coming to a point. It is the whole essence of perspective that it comes quickly to a point. Similarly, (4) religion comes to a point—to the point. For instance, (5) religion is always insisting on the shortness of human life. But it does not insist on the shortness of human life as the pessimists insist on the shortness of human life. Pessimism insists on the shortness of human life in order to show that life is valueless. (6) Religion insists on the shortness of human life in order to show that life is frightfully valuable—is almost horridly valuable.

"Pessimism says that life is so short that it gives nobody a chance; (7) religion says that life is so short that it gives everybody his final chance. In the first case the word brevity means futility. In the second case the word brevity means opportunity. But the case is even stronger than this. (8) Religion shortens everything. (9) Religion shortens even eternity. Where science, submitting to the false standard of time, sees evolution, which is slow, (10) religion sees creation, which is sudden. Philosophically speaking, the process is neither slow nor quick, since we have nothing to compare it with. (11) Religion prefers to think of it as quick. For (12) religion the flowers shoot up suddenly like rockets. For (13) religion the mountains are lifted up suddenly like waves. Those who quote that fine passage which says that in God's sight a thousand years are as yesterday that is passed and as a watch in the night, do not realise the full force of the meaning. To God a thousand years are not only a watch but an exciting watch. For God time goes at a gallop, as it does to a man reading a good tale."

All that took up 31 lines whereas he could have said what was necessary in less than half the time. The rest is sheer padding and repetition, being nothing but ordinary statements of facts applied to everyday comparisons, with religion held up as being a prime mover activated only by the speed God, and slowed down by the Pessimist. I look forward to reading in some future issue a few comments by our Editor in a way that will utterly debunk this Chesterton conception of religious idealism, in his customary and vigorous style.

ED. H. SIMPSON.

A Catholic is in favour of enough education to make a Catholic out of a savage, and the Protestant is in favour of enough education to make a Protestant out of a Catholic, but both are opposed to the education that makes free and manly men.—INGERSOLL.

## ACID DROPS

The B.B.C. has again been exposed in practising its favourite method of altering an accepted speech without consulting the author. In this case Lady MacRobert, who had lost three of her sons in the war, was invited to make a speech. She prepared her speech and heard no more of the matter until it was in print. Then she discovered that her speech had been tampered with. On inquiry the reply given was that as written it might be construed into an adverse attack on the Government. Why not? And why should the B.B.C. be accepted as a watchdog for whatever Ministry might be in power? Of course the B.B.C. having the right to accept or maul an author's text because it might offend the Government, is monstrous. At any rate we have in future this case in which the B.B.C. acts dishonestly. There are more instances, but that is enough to go on with. Apart from entertainments, the monopoly is a standing social danger. We have a not very exalted view of our daily Press in spite of the praise they put on each other, but while the B.B.C. is as it is, the Press does a service to the people in occasionally throwing light on the "lie that floweth from night and day."

La Salette, that great rival—and forerunner—of Lourdes, has had a centenary, and no fewer than 1,500,000,000 Hail Marys have been said by the 9,000 pilgrims able to visit the shrine. That's something like prayer. But may we timidly ask what good have they been? Has a single authentic miracle happened in La Salette? Did the presence of ten live and active Bishops bring with it just *one* apparition of the Virgin? Perhaps the answer is that business has been transferred to larger, livelier, and more commodious premises in Lourdes, where the Lady has been seen more often, and where miracles, if not quite as common as house flies, are at least a respectable number.

According to the Rev. McCulloch, "The people are clamouring for a reasonable answer to their questions about the Christian religion. But the answer must be a firm one." Well there are at least two ways of telling a lie. One is to say it outright with strength and definiteness. That we may call the lie courageous often succeeds. Another plan is the more common one, and that takes the form of double meanings. Such a phrase as "He is a Man," may be applied to a born rascal who has courage to pose as a monument of goodness and truthfulness. It may be a politician whose "truthfulness" is of the kind that many will admire because of the skill with which truthfulness is evaded. What is required is courage. That given, the "people" will swallow it.

So we get back to the Rev. McCulloch. When he talks of the people clamouring for the truth about religion he has in view a number of people who are ready to swallow anything that is labelled Christianity. Through the B.B.C. thousands of people have asked for the truth about Christianity. But the B.B.C. will not permit anything to be said that will shock the minds of the more ignorant Christian listeners. This is not our summary of the B.B.C. attitude; it is their declared policy where Christianity is concerned. Thousands, even hundreds of thousands, have asked for the truth about Christianity, but that has never been told "on the Air." Heine called the Roman Catholic Church "The great lying Church." We think Mr. McCulloch endorses—unwillingly—Heine's opinion.

The Christian "Commandos," which are going into action next April, appear to have got into hot water at the recent London Diocesan Conference. The trouble is not so much a question of "aggressive assault," as the fact that "Churchmen" will have to go into the fight with "Nonconformists." A Mr. R. K. Cowie was horrified to think that, as in the Litany, churchmen prayed "to be delivered from false doctrine, heresy, and schism," how could they go into battle—even to save infidel souls—with mere Methodists?

However, other voices were heard. One of them, the Rev. J. Frost, retorted that as Methodists and Churchmen both accepted Jesus Christ as their Saviour, they could bring the truth to thousands who "were unaware" of it, and who could not be

reached by the clergy. He was supported by many others, including the Bishop of London—who, by the way, is being accused of "Romanism" and "Popery" by some of his fellow Christians. We expect his own Commandos will therefore studiously avoid lukewarm "Protestants." In any case, though we deprecate prophecy, we predict a wholesale defeat of the Christian Commandos. The day of insane revivals has gone for ever.

For a long time the English Church and the Roman Church have been conducting an unexpressed war on each other. Each tried to get recruits from the other, and we are inclined to believe that the Roman army is winning. We leave on one side the matter that while one is winning in relation to the other, both are losing if we reckon the number of Christians to-day to a few years ago. That the English Church—or Churches—have lost most appears to us from the fact of the Archbishop of York publicly pronouncing war on Rome—so far as the methods adopted to capture followers go. On the other hand the Roman Church has apparently resolved to put difficulties in the way of marriage between members of the two groups. What the Papacy demands on a mixed marriage is that the Protestant shall sign the following document:—

"I will not interfere with the future religious belief of my husband (or wife), and I will allow him (or her) full liberty to fulfil all his (or her) duties as a member of the Catholic religion."

This has raised the "dander" of Archbishop of York who considers that is a disgraceful arrangement. He says:—

"I feel it necessary to warn Anglicans against signing this document, and to ask them to do their utmost to dissuade members of our church from doing so."

That seems to put the war flag fully over each representative of Jesus, and we shall watch the results with interest.

Miss Barbara Ward is a lady with whom we came into newspaper contact by her appearance as one of the "Brains Trust" selections, and also because she recently threw over the faults of the English Church in order to embrace those of the Church of Rome. She has now further enlightened the world by saying that: "If we violate the principles of Christian and social justice we shall have another war." Such foresight really does require supernatural enlightenment. How can poor humans—minus Miss Ward and the Church of Rome—come to so brilliant a conclusion that if we behave in the future as we have done in the past the past will repeat itself? And Christianity? Well, we have had that in power for thousands of years, and if we are to judge the future by the past, the less we have to do with religious doctrines the better.

The Editor of the "Schoolmaster" must be of a very sanguine type to write, apropos of the desire for freedom of speech and thought with the B.B.C., that Christianity has "survived the attack through the centuries." That may of course be right or it may be simply untrue. There are some Christians who still keep to the original doctrine, but where knowledge and ability are allowed to even breathe, the real Christianity has been badly, very badly, beaten. The Christianity of to-day among men of honesty and ability is not *historic* Christianity. They use the language—to some extent.

The Roman Catholic Church has a number of organisations that link up with the Labour Party, and the leaders of the Church see to it all the giving is on one side. For example, recently the Catholic Union of the Archdiocese wrote to Glasgow Labour Party asking whether the Labour Party has at any time "interfered with the religious beliefs of our members." The reply immediately came back to the effect that there was no such interference. As a play of words that will pass. But everyone is aware that the Catholic Church demands unquestioned obedience to marriage, religion and education, and as that means obeying the orders of the Church at all times and without qualification, it is rather difficult to see how the Labour Party can express itself honestly without running across the Roman Church. We should like to see a plain explanation from both sides.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

G. SMERTIES.—We appreciate your pleasure in returning to your work after being for so long out of England. We do our best to keep the paper up to the mark. We are sure you will be pleased to know that compliments like your own have been plentiful.

R. ROMSON.—Thanks for article, but we are so crowded at present that we dare not invite a cloud of pros and cons, which is likely to continue for a year or so. If we find a chance we will insert. We have to consider several things—space at our disposal, interest to readers, priority based on the main object of the paper, and the number of people who feel as we do, the pleasure of working in a great cause.

C. R. WILLIAMS.—We are not surprised. It is not common for children who are withdrawn from religious lessons during school hours to be subject to trouble. And it is something for children to have placed before them the value of independent opinions.

A. BRUNNAL.—Will appear in next issue. Crowded out in this.

W. J. M.—To "Freethinker," £2.

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

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## SUGAR PLUMS

The "Schoolmaster"—apparently it is the editor who writes—expresses approving wonder that the B.B.C. should permit open discussion of the Sex Question. Knowing the B.B.C. we should not care to believe that the B.B.C. permits anything that has not gone through a close examination by a censorship. We need only turn to the account given by Lady MacRobert of the manner in which the B.B.C. censored what she had to say about her son—one of three who were killed during the war—and when pressed explained that what she said would have offended the Government. That really makes the case worse because it is a confession that the B.B.C. is an instrument of the Government of the day. Things will look very black if we are to have an instrument of the kind of the B.B.C. adding its power to fool the people.

To come back to the "Schoolmaster." It adds:—

"The principle of free discussion has been extended over almost the whole field of human thought. It cannot be for the advantage of religion that it should be treated differently. Certainly it does not make easier the task of the supporters of religious instruction in schools who are constantly being charged with teaching, or rather giving instruction which cannot be submitted to the test of examination that free discussion involves. We believe in religious instruction in schools; but we hope that the B.B.C. will not think they have to safeguard and shield the Christian orthodoxy from attack. Better service to Christianity is done by showing it has survived the attacks through the centuries, and is still able, because of its vitality, to resist successfully onslaughts made upon it."

Unless the Editor is writing with his tongue in his cheek the ending of his note reads curiously. First, the B.B.C. has declared over and over again that it considers its first duty to safeguard what it calls the "Christian tradition." Moreover, they pick out the "old people" and the uneducated ones as furnishing their standard. Next, a schoolmaster ought to be sufficiently alive to know that the one thing that Christianity has *not* done is survive the attacks of a few past centuries. Over and over again certain teaching has been thrown overboard. The infallibility of the Bible is gone, the belief in the miraculous creation of man is gone, the doctrine of hell has gone. There are a score of teachings that once accepted are now rejected. We wonder whether the "Schoolmaster" was writing with his tongue in his cheek?

Mr. F. A. Hornibrook will lecture for the Leicester Secular Society today. His subject, "The Colour Bar," is one of sociological importance and interest and local friends should see that the hall is well filled. The lecture begins at 6-30 in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate. Mr. Hornibrook is a clear and forceful speaker and well able to handle his subject.

In the Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Newcastle-on-Tyne, today Mrs. M. Whitefield of Glasgow will speak on "What Atheism Means to Me." It is one of a series of lectures organised by the local N.S.S. Branch and the good attendance so far should be well maintained on this occasion. The lecture begins at 7 p.m. Admission is free, with some reserved tickets at 1s. each.

The West London Branch N.S.S. has a visit from the General Secretary N.S.S. today. Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak on "Do We Live When We Die?" The lecture takes place in the National Trade Union Club, 12, Great Newport Street, London, W.C. 1. The hall is opposite Leicester Square Tube Station, and the lecture begins at 6-30 p.m.

Mr. T. Davies, Minister of Mill Road Baptist Church, does not believe in entertainment on Sundays. One of the reasons is a curious one. He objects to Sunday cinemas because cinemas exist for what they can get out of their patrons while the churches exist for what they can give. Suppose we put that statement another way and say the Churches are there whether people want them or not; they depend upon people providing the wages of the ministers—or performers—and the Government does not make them pay rates and taxes; no charge for them is made, but people are asked to "give" something. In our churches the public can always find a seat and are relieved when it is all over, but they must pay for cinemas. If we were Mr. Davies we would try another line of argument.

It may be of interest to some that one of our Ministers—he who announced the cutting short of bread, Mr. Strachey—is an Atheist. Our authority is Mr. Oliver Baldwin, who, in a sketch of Strachey, says his religious beliefs are expressed in his written works:—

"Not until Man has understood the nature of his relationship to his fellow men, and has acted on that understanding, will he be able to so refashion his life that he will be able to do without the illusions of religious beliefs."

Out into every-day language Mr. Strachey says that while human beings are clogged with ignorance he will continue to believe in gods. We fancy we have said that in plainer language many years before Mr. Strachey was known to the world.

The Jewish priest is not one by choice. He cannot be elected to become one, and so far he may put in a plea for the office which he has had thrust upon him. But the Christian priest has no such excuse. He was not born a priest; he became one out of sheer cold-blooded determination. He might have become a city man, and so satisfied a matter of wealth; he might have become a politician; he might have picked up some trade. He chose none of those things. He chose his profession of a priest as a burglar decides, in cold blood, to become a burglar.

## THE B.B.C. AND GOD

WHETHER the B.B.C. really likes free discussion on the way it is using the microphone to inculcate belief in a particularly primitive type of Christianity may be difficult to say, but there can be no doubt that the more intelligent of its listeners are beginning to ask very serious questions. One comes across this questioning in all sorts of journals and places, and it is becoming a little too voluble to be entirely ignored. It may be though that even yet the B.B.C. has not quite understood the temper of the opposition to its religious policy, but it is certainly learning—if only a little.

One of the signs of the times is the article by Miss Hilde Marchant in "John Bull" (November 9). Miss Marchant is obviously ready to tackle anything in the journalistic line so long as she can gather some of her facts through the time-honoured method of interviewing—and, like many journalists, is prepared to swallow anything so long as it is told with the usual air of veracity. She calls her article "God and the B.B.C.," but of course she managed very discreetly to leave God entirely out. Getting an interview with any Deity is too much for even the most enterprising journalist. Mostly she tells us what the B.B.C. does to get its religious services over the air, and how the retiring Director of Religious Broadcasting, the Rev. J. W. Welch, managed to do it.

Facts and figures speak more eloquently than mere descriptive words, so we are solemnly assured at the outset that nearly ten million people "listen to some kind of religious broadcast" during the week. There can be no doubt of it whatever. When you see it in "John Bull" it is so, it must be so; but it would be most interesting to know how the figure is arrived at. No evidence is given, but as Miss Marchant is dealing with religion she should be believed, and that is that.

It appears also that the B.B.C. "has received no complaints" that its seven hours twenty-five minutes of religion every week is excessive. On the contrary indeed; the complaints are from listeners "asking for more instructive and controversial talks."

It is just here that we must halt a little while. What does this particular "complaint" actually mean? On the face of it, one thing seems to be pretty clear, and that is that whether the seven hours odd of religion is or is not excessive, the "complaints" do not appear to be asking for more religion, but for more "instructive and controversial talks." I like particularly the bit about more "instructive" talks. It must cause even Dr. Welch a wry smile to realise that what people want is at least a little more instruction, the kind of instruction that religion simply cannot give. And as for controversy, this can only mean controversy between the believer and the unbeliever, and I respect Dr. Welch's intelligence too much to imagine that he or his successor would ever allow that. If the greater proportion of the ten million religious listeners heard such a discussion, the probability is very great that one or more of those millions would learn with not a little dismay how the Churches and the B.B.C. had hoodwinked them for years; and what a holy rumpus that would cause among the very religious "governors" of our noble Corporation.

In any case, it appears that, in spite of the ten million satisfied listeners, the B.B.C. must move with the times. So we learn that its religious programmes have been switched from "the talks department to the entertainment section." We are assured at first that all is right in the very happy religious world created by the B.B.C.'s clerical staff on the air, that there are no complaints from ten million of satisfied customers, and yet the department which had such phenomenal success is sacked, and religion has now to be "entertaining." There must be more "variety," fewer "straight" religious talks, and more "dramatised" religion. Even the least sceptical must smell a rat somewhere.

Of course, I am all out for "brightening" religion even to the point of its complete disappearance, and a good variety show unobtrusively, even cunningly, worked in instead. But that would be a Heaven violently opposed by the very pious. Still it may come—and sooner than one expects.

What added to my interest—and delight—in Miss Marchant's article was the refreshing way in which she swallowed all the dainty dishes put before her by the chief religious cook who, alas, will soon be the ex-cook.

Dr. Welch told her "There is no censorship in the negative sense of the word"—a rather cryptic pronouncement. However, he added an "although," which made it more or less clear. "Although," said Dr. Welch, "we do not allow open and overt attacks on the Christian religion." Perhaps the proper description of this is that it is quite clear. And yet almost in the same breath, Miss Marchant tells us there are going to be "even debates between clergy and men of agnostic belief." Perhaps these "men of agnostic belief" will treat Christianity so reverently and so wistfully that there won't be the slightest suggestion of any "open or overt" attacks on God's Holy Revelation. Or, perhaps—dare I whisper it to Miss Marchant?—the "men of agnostic belief" will be the creation of the clergy themselves, as the Reverend Canon Cockin was wont to do in those happy days of yore when he had command of his own religious broadcasts.

But we are informed much more than this. It appears that "there is no ban on atheists or agnostics." You and I, dear reader, would think this "no" ban applied to the religious—even if entertaining—broadcasts. But we are soon disillusioned. The "no ban" is the religious department's sop to the "Brains Trust." In fact, Dr. Welch with that humble benignity which distinguishes the true Christian, gets Miss Marchant to tell us that "several disbelievers have taken part in Brains Trusts or discussions"—and here comes the part that clinches, so to speak, the whole matter—"without any interference from Dr. Welch's department." Yes, the italics are mine—I feel that I really must emphasise such stupendous and rare tolerance.

And the position of the Church must, insists Dr. Welch, be discussed in everyday life. To make sure of this, there are the services for children, in and out of school, with plenty of prayers which the children are forced to follow—or is it to swallow? Two millions of the children are thus catered for and, by dramatising some of the Bible stories, Dr. Welch boasts of his "outstanding success" in stimulating "a child's imagination." Perhaps one day the child will grow up to see that the Bible stories are all imagination.

One thing does emerge from the "John Bull" article. It is the astounding, nay terrifying, success of B.B.C. religion. The blind, the crippled, the bedridden, the missionaries everywhere, soldiers and medical workers, all, all depend on these broadcasts for "spiritual" comfort. All constantly write grateful letters of thanks. Yet somehow or other the Churches themselves, through their mouthpieces, bishops, parsons and priests, appear to have missed this wonderful enthusiasm. With dismal regularity, they fill their journals with whines and moans that this is no longer a Christian country. Even the ex-padres, back in their old posts—and new ones—complain of their tiny congregations and of the downright "paganism" they encounter everywhere.

I leave it to Miss Marchant to explain the apparent paradox. I can only express my gratitude that there is one thing I am still free to do with my radio. I can switch it off when the doleful tone of any parson accidentally makes its mechanical appearance.

II. CUTNER.

A fair controversialist will refrain from personalities. I have done this, and I will do no more. I believe in free thought and honest speech. In the war of ideas there is neither treaty nor truce. To ask for quarter is to admit defeat; and to give it is treachery to Truth.—G. W. FOOTE.



## VATICAN POLICY IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

(BY LEO H. LEHMANN)

## II

NOR was it only a geographical accident that the Fascist dictators emerged from a Catholic background. The influence of the Church and, in particular, of Jesuit strategy, is obvious in "Mein Kampf," where the most formidable and ruthless of the Fascist dictators pays unstinted and, from his point of view, not undeserved homage to the political genius of the Vatican which we have elsewhere denominated as "the incarnate genius of counter-revolution." Whether or no, as Dr. Lehmann himself suggests, the actual composition of "Mein Kampf" was immediately due to Jesuit assistance, at least, the book is bathed in the very spirit of St. Ignatius Loyola, the similar sinister and formidable leader of the ecclesiastical counter-revolution (counter-reformation) of the 16th and 17th centuries. In this fundamental aspect, in their mixture of cajoling-demagogy and of naked violence, we may, indeed accurately describe "The Spiritual Exercises" of Ignatius Loyola and the "Mein Kampf" of Adolf Hitler as, respectively, the Old and New Testaments of the Bible of spiritual, intellectual, and political counter-revolution. (cp. our book: "The Jesuits—a Study in Counter-Revolution.")

In broad historical outline we may say that the alignment of Rome with the Fascist dictators represented merely a continuation of the general policy so ruthlessly and successfully practised by the Vatican in earlier ages of social and intellectual revolt. Just as Rome crushed the mediæval heresies by a combination of the ecclesiastical demagogy of the "preaching Friars" (Franciscans and Dominicans) and the stark terror of the Inquisition and the Papal crusades; just as Rome similarly sought to repress the 16th century Reformation with the aid of Jesuitical demagogy and the naked terror of the Spanish sword, so, today, faced with the growth of an anti-clerical scientific culture and the entry of the hitherto inarticulate masses upon the stage of history—which last phenomenon is the peculiar and distinguishing characteristic of our epoch—Rome, yet again, combined her own "spiritual" ecclesiastical demagogy with the ubiquitous Inquisition of the Gestapo, with Franco's polyglot crusaders, and the stark terror of the Fascist sword. It is the serial and shameful story of this Fascist and Catholic Crusade against the western civilisation that derives from the secular Renaissance and from the French and Russian Revolutions, which Dr. Lehmann recounts in the brilliant pages before us. For the last word of Rome, like the last word of its secular ally, Fascism, is, and remains terror—whether it be the terror of "St. Bartholomew's Eve" (1572) or that of Hitler's "Night with long Knives" (1934).

It is not necessary in a brief review of the present kind to follow in detail the successive story of intrigue, political rape, and ruthless repression which fill these well-documented chapters. From the rise of Italian Fascism, of Mussolini's "March on Rome"—in a Pullman sleeping-car of the Milan-Rome express!—down to the present year of grace (and disgrace!), 1946, when the Vatican still sedulously watches over the remnants of defeated Fascism in Spain and Portugal, besides carefully nursing its members in contemporary Poland, the world of liberal and socialist thought has been in never-ceasing danger of complete obliteration at the hands of the two-headed monster of Clericalism and Fascism.

The successive stages of this "Rake's Progress" will be found amply documented in the book before us. Particularly revealing are the author's penetrating remarks on the Papal plans to revive the long deceased millennial "Holy Roman Empire" (A.D. 800-1806), and his analysis of the social and intellectual role designed by the Vatican for Marshal Petain and his short-lived Vichy Christian-Fascist "corporative state." With the aid of the sword of the new "Charlemagne," the founder of the

Third Reich (which, also, was scheduled to last for 1,000 years!) the Church hoped yet again to extend its totalitarian sway over the realms of culture and ethics, and to repress, yet again, the recurring movement of the human mind towards "heresy," towards free speculation, with the annihilating aid of the secular sword. And should civilisation itself disappear beneath the Fascist jackboot with its "iron heel," why, so much the better! "Dark ages" are ages, pre-eminently, of fear, and did not Lucretius long ago correctly draw attention to the so-often illustrated fact that fear and religion are cause and effect; that "Ages of Faith" are, invariably, ages of fear? The Papacy, too, evidently knows its Lucretius!

What was the ultimate cultural aim of the Catholic-Fascist alliance? The apt description quoted by our author of the social régime of Austrian Fascism applies, other things being equal, to the European and world-aims of this unholy alliance:—

"The absence of competition is the treasured advantage of the Church. Only Socialism seriously challenges its supremacy, and is therefore anathema to it. The mentality of the peasant of the old style is peculiarly acceptable to the Church. Submissiveness to authority, contentment with one's lot." (p. 31.)

Here we have in a nutshell the ideology of a static agrarian pre-industrial civilisation, socially static and intellectually submissive to authority, which was the social order of the Middle Ages, the golden age of the Papacy, which it is its supreme aim to restore. For the Church, despite current diplomatic camouflage, still repeats and endorses the axiom of its greatest doctor, St. Thomas Aquinas, "heretics must not be argued with; for it is more expedient to put them to death." And the Church's most eminent theologians still repeat this "infallible" dictum, at least, in works not intended for the prying eyes of the heretical public! (cp. Cardinal Lépicier—"De Stabilitate et Progressu Dogmatis"—"On the Fixity and Development of Doctrine"—et al.)

A most interesting side-line of the Vatican's "collaborationist" policy is provided by its attitude to the Pagan empire of Japan. Upon this subject Dr. Lehmann's pages make diverting as well as illuminating reading! We recall that during the 17th and 18th centuries the Jesuits acquired a dominant position at the court of China, then, the greatest power in the East; indeed, probably in its contemporary world. This position the Church subsequently lost on account of the refusal of the Papacy to endorse the worldly-wise opportunism of the Jesuits in allowing their Chinese converts to practise the pagan rite of "ancestor-worship," an immemorial Chinese custom, on the casuistical ground that it is a "civil right"!

Today, the Papacy, which is keenly alive to the formidable nature of "the Yellow Peril," has "infallibly" recognised its mistake. Japan, the contemporary successor of Imperial China in the hegemony of the Far East, must be wooed and won. Hence, a decree of the Holy Office in 1938 undid the Papal condemnation of the 18th century Jesuits and recognised the then omnipotent Shinto cult of Emperor-Worship as a "civil right" permissible to Christians! Who was it spoke of "the wisdom of the serpent"? And the resulting relations of the "Infallible" Pope and the Divine Mikado were, as the pages before us demonstrate with adequate detail, worthy of this auspicious beginning. But this section of Dr. Lehmann's narrative makes strange and incredible reading! The classical dictum of Cardinal Antonelli, that the Catholic Church, whilst inflexible in principle, yet in practice knows how to accommodate itself to the usage of fallible mortals has never been better illustrated than in the mutual relations of the theocratic Church of Rome and the Japanese State of the Pagan God-Emperor!

It is, perhaps, a negative weakness of a generally admirable book that it ends with the collapse of Fascism, the secular ally of the Vatican. But if the dictators have gone the Church still remains, "forever the same," and seeks new allies to pursue, with new tactics forced upon it by the necessities of the times, its age-old dream of a totalitarian world-domination. To this

latest aspect of the Catholic conspiracy against mankind we hope later to return in the columns of the "Freethinker." Here, it merely remains to congratulate Dr. Lehmann upon an absolutely first class piece of work of historical and critical investigation. Not only all professed rationalists, but all who take a realistic view of current world affairs, must regard this booklet as an indispensable aid to their study of contemporary institutions and ideologies. For it throws an invaluable searchlight upon what is perhaps still the most powerful enemy of human progress in every sphere; and, beyond question, the most persistent, experienced, and ruthless foe of the upward march of mankind.

F. A. RIDLEY.

## WAS CHRIST A CHRISTIAN?

IN a prologue to his letter of October 27, Mr. Du Cann gives us the sequel to his story of the Christian horse who died at Dunkirk, and who is now, it seems, enjoying the reward of his virtues in Heaven. Mr. Du Cann seems to think that the best palliative for an unwitting absurdity is an intentional one. In this instance it takes the form of a communication from the said horse in which he is represented as discussing certain remarks of mine. Bar a little misconstruction and some defects of knowledge natural to a horse the performance never falls below the best equine intelligence. As I have no wish to enlarge on errors arising from such a source I will notice one only that happens to combine both the faults I have named.

In animadverting on my statement that "there is no virtue in a compulsory act," my quadrupedal correspondent says: "Mr. Yates's view that there is no virtue in compulsory martyrdom uncomplainingly endured is not that of the Christian Church or most people." Whether or not it be the view of the Christian Church or most people it is certainly not mine. I did not mention "compulsory martyrdom" for the sufficient reason that there is no such thing. The essential "merit" of martyrdom lies in the fact that it is the result of a voluntary act. A martyr is one who deliberately *elects* to suffer for his belief as the only alternative to apostasy. If he were compelled to suffer without such a choice he would not be a martyr. The fate of Hypatia, (4th century) and of Bruno (16th century) are cases in point and serve to mark the difference. Bruno embraced death at the stake when he could have escaped by a recantation, and was therefore a martyr. Hypatia, on the contrary, had no such choice, but was the compulsory victim of a brutal murder.

Of course it is not to be expected that a horse, even a Christian one, could appreciate so nice a distinction—and Mr. Du Cann's delineation keeps strictly within the limits of "horse-sense." However, when he comes to discuss my remarks in his own character Mr. Du Cann is not quite so successful in adapting his style to the "change-over." Some of his arguments would suggest that he is still writing in the character of his Dunkirk horse.

\*

The question at issue is whether anyone taking Mr. Du Cann's view of Christianity can, without obvious inconsistency, call himself a Christian. Clearing his statements of the irrelevant matter encumbering them, we come to such as the following: "I believe in a great deal of Christianity. Much of it, like the Golden Rule is common to most religions and to much irreligion too. . . . He (Mr. Yates) sets out all the Christ-legends, credible and incredible, as 'fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith,' and insists on my accepting them all. Here he is, of course, in harmony with the creeds and the Roman, Anglican and Greek Catholics, but he parts company with modernists and many distinguished clerics of the Church of England."

Now, it is clear that "belief in a great deal of Christianity that is common to most religions and no religion" does not, for that very reason, entitle Mr. Du Cann to call himself a

Christian. A belief that may be shared by the Buddhist, the Mohammedan or the Atheist cannot, manifestly, be considered as differentiating the Christian from the non-Christian. Moreover, as there is nothing in Christianity ethically valuable that may not be practised without belief in, or knowledge of, its reputed Founder it follows that it is not in virtue of his morality that he is a Christian. The decisive question, therefore, is: What are those specific beliefs the acceptance of which distinguish the Christian from all others? They are precisely what Mr. Du Cann calls "Christ-legends," and what I call "the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith."

Mr. Du Cann asks: "Because I believe in Christ crucified must I believe in a levitating Christ or a judicial Christ? Because I believe there was a man-Christ must I believe there is a god-Christ? Mr. Yates will have it that all Christians must. But they don't." To this rigmarole I reply: If Mr. Du Cann does not accept Jesus Christ as God he believes no more than they who deny not only the divinity of Christ but all divinity whatsoever; and therefore he has no more right than they to the name of Christian.

The only criteria of Christianity are the claims, precepts and practices of its author as narrated in the Gospels; there is no other authority. That these differ, and are, on some points, even contradictory, does not justify Mr. Du Cann or anyone else in setting up his own standard of Christianity. It is not in their discrepancies but in their agreements that their authority consists; and of these the principal is the Godhood of Christ. In Mr. Du Cann's case the doctrine is logically indispensable; for, if he refuses to accept a "levitating, judicial God-Christ" his "theoretical Christianity" is a mere delusion.

Mr. Du Cann is correct in saying that my definition of Christianity would exclude "modernists and many distinguished clerics of the Church of England." Most of them are where they should not be, and where they would not be if intellectual honesty could prevail over pecuniary considerations.

A. YATES

## (A)GNOSTIC HERESY v ATHEISTIC PHILOSOPHY

I HAVE read Mr. J. Sturge-Whiting's article with interest and pass over the first part referring to "top hats" being out of date and suggest flaming coloured ties and ironed trousers instead.

He says: "There are and have been many gods; no one believes in them all—'Ergo' the man who believes in no god at all is therefore an Atheist," and then taking his "ergo" for granted. But why not let the Atheist state his own case; simply, he is without that belief, i.e., the belief is not there. He does not "believe in no god at all" which, if he will only think it out, may be able to eliminate from himself a belief which is under the misapprehension the Atheist suffers. I do not believe the writer of the article understands the import of "believe in no god at all" or *no* anything else at all. He then goes on "for instance," leaving his instance upon his own assumption—or rather assertion—of "an unknowable which may exist."

Perhaps he means an Atheist, and he may, even—without in the least impugning his honesty of purpose in seeking clarity. Belief must relate to something, it cannot relate to "no god at all."

Take his "Man in the Moon," well if man—such as we know him—does believe there is a Man in the Moon, the Atheist does not deny the man's belief, he obviously has it, but may well ask what sort of a man is it in whom he believes? Is he like the one we know, or is he something "outside time" which sounds rather like being inside out, a sort of biological monstrosity. Man as we know him has grown up in—or out of—this world, and not in the moon, and his make up is determined by the conditions and so has the idea of a god in the psychological personification of phenomena under the different names of all the gods and subject to the same causes.

If he means his discourse to be taken seriously, first be it known that some ethic of debate is necessary and that in any scholastic discussion it is always the affirmative that has to be proved, and if this be not admitted or understood, I do not know any means by which assumptions warrantable or unwarrantable, beliefs reasonable or unreasonable, can be distinguished, or proved right or wrong. Perhaps he will tell us what he is Agnostic about; perhaps he is the Man in the Moon. Absence of knowledge of unknowable is somewhat like ignorance of the limitations of human knowledge and its relativity, and that, as he rightly says, "the term Agnosticism is specially devised to cover." The term Atheism is designed for quite another purpose, it is to uncover what is untrue.

P. G. TACCHI.

CORRESPONDENCE

MARX, SCIENTIST

Sir.—Science progresses by materialistic treatment of its subject matter—that is by rejecting gods, devils, spirits and other immaterial agencies and seeking material causes for observed effects. It does this first in the case of inanimate bodies, then in that of living beings, finally in that of human behaviour.

By this criterion Marx is a scientist. Prior to him the course of history had been explained either by divine agency, or by the "spirit" or "genius" of this and that race, nation and individual. The service Marx rendered was to point out that before men can build States and make laws, they must get a living, and that in the process by which they get a living (and not in any "spirit of the age" or "genius of the race") lies the key to political and social development. This is a logical application of materialism to social science.

If Mr. Preece will read again the preface to the "Critique of Political Economy," he will see that this is its gist.

Engels does not say that he wrote "Socialism, Utopian and Scientific" because it was usual for German politicians to write philosophical theses. He twits Dühring for doing it, and leaves us in no doubt as to his own contempt for the habit.

As to Marx and Engels using French words to express certain ideas, if they found that those French words hit off the meaning they wanted to convey, what was wrong with that? And what is there unscientific in the "continuous restatement" of theories that need continuous readjustment to changing conditions?—  
Yours, etc.,  
ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

Sir.—Mr. Preece seems to argue (November 17) that because the philosophies of, say, Sir Isaac Newton and Tom Paine are not materialistic then they did not have some bright and useful ideas. Anybody in his senses can see that Marx thought and wrote scientifically. Let us have a look at the "History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union," and in particular at the chapter on Dialectical and Historical Materialism, in which the editors (Stalin, I believe, is one) point out that Marx and Engels took from the Hegelian dialectics only its "rational kernel," casting aside its idealistic shell. They also took the guts out of Feuerbach and put them in a modern materialistic body instead. In conclusion, I quote some brief statements of Marx which, when one considers how many years ago they were written, stamp him as no small scientific thinker and master:—

"The material, sensuously perceptible world to which we ourselves belong is the only reality. . . . Our consciousness and thinking, however supra-sensuous they may seem, are the product of a material, bodily organ, the brain. Matter is not a product of mind, but mind itself is merely the highest product of matter. . . . It is impossible to separate thought from matter that thinks. Matter is the subject of all changes."—Yours, etc.,  
C. A. MORRISON.

A QUESTION

Sir.—There is a point about the history of Christianity which seems to be generally disregarded in works on the subject, viz.: How did the Christian chronology come to replace and supersede

the preceding Roman chronology? When do B.C. and A.D. first make their appearance in world history? Was it decided by a conclave of State and Church dignitaries after Constantine's conversion, or had the Christians of the earlier centuries been using a new chronology while the rest of the Roman world went on using the old one (like the French Republicans of 1792)?—this becoming the official system on and after Constantine's conversion. I have been looking through such works as I am able to consult, but can find no mention or discussion of the subject. Perhaps Mr. Ridley will be good enough to write us an article elucidating the matter.  
—Yours, etc.,  
A. M. DAVIS.

OBITUARY

It is with the deepest regret that we chronicle the death of William Baily Stephenson, of Low Fell, Gateshead, on November 10. An ardent Freethinker, he was a very useful member of the Newcastle Branch of the N.S.S. He will be remembered as one of those gallant fighters for a great cause, seeking no applause for their work; he stood as one of that great assembly which finds gratification in the work done. For the last two years of his life he suffered from a very painful complaint, but his interest in the N.S.S. never faltered. Visitors heard but little of his pain, but his interest in Freethought never slackened. He died at the age of 53, and he leaves with those who knew him the memory of a brave man whose desire was to do good for his fellows. Cremated on Thursday his ashes, at his request, were scattered on the following Sunday on the fields in which he played as a boy. An address was given by J. Brighton.

The death of Henry Youngman, of Whitkirk, Leeds, connects with the early years of the Bradlaugh movement. So far as Freethought is concerned he followed in his father's footsteps, and his interest in Freethought never weakened. He was a man of convictions, but he carried a note of real liberality that was appreciated by all who knew him. He died at the early age of 56. Among the mourners were representatives of the "National Federation of Fish Fryers." Freethought has lost in him a man of strong convictions that were accompanied with a true regard for those who held different opinions. At his request the Secular service was conducted by Mr. F. J. Corina.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, December 3, 7 p.m.: "Intelligence; Its Nature and Assessment," Professor Sir Cyril Burr, M.A. D.Sc.

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (The National Trade Union Club, Great Newport Street, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Do We Live When We Die," Mr. R. H. ROSETTI.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Papacy and Politics," Mr. H. L. SEARLE.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Colour Bar," Mr. F. A. HORNIMROOK.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Birth Control and Religion," Mr. F. J. CORINA (Bradford).

Newcastle Branch N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mrs. M. WHITEFIELD (Glasgow), a lecture.

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