

THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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Price Threepence

IEWS AND OPINIONS

Calamity—with a Recovery

FOR the first time in its challenging history, the "Freethinker" has failed to make its weekly appearance. I call the history of the "Freethinker" a challenging one because that is the only term that properly describes the very heart of this journal. From its first appearance it was plainly and openly attacking all forms of religious belief, with special attention to the English people. The "Freethinker" asked for no mercy and it received none. Moreover, it had neither time for such terms as "true religion," "the greatness of Jesus," etc., etc. They were good enough to provide cover for the timid or the self-seeker. It never pleaded to be heard, it was demanded as an unquestionable right for every man and woman and asserted that such terms as "true religion" were terms that were a mere mixture of misunderstanding and ignorant impudence. The "true religion" condemned itself.

From the first appearance—May 1, 1881—the "Freethinker" made deadly enemies. It also made loyal friends. It still has them. Without them the "Freethinker" could never have survived.

As an example of the character of the "Freethinker" I may cite the introduction written by its founder, G. W. Foote.

"The 'Freethinker' is an anti-Christian organ, and must, therefore, be chiefly aggressive. It will wage relentless war against superstition in general, and against Christian superstition in particular. It will do its best to employ the resources of Science, scholarship, philosophy and ethics against the claim of the Bible as a divine revelation; and it will not scruple to employ for the same purpose, any weapons of ridicule and sarcasm that may be borrowed from the army of common sense."

That was a bold beginning, and it was needed, for the new developments in science, and new discoveries concerning religious origins, had already set many of the more wide-awake Christian leaders considering by what means the ancient superstition of Christianity could be harmonised with the new developments in science and history.

"The Freethinker" had not long to wait for religious malignity to express itself. Foote found himself charged with the ridiculous offence of "blasphemy"—a "crime" which might lie with a Christian, but which could not be committed by an Atheist. Foote appeared at the Old Bailey facing a judge who was obviously determined to secure a verdict of "Guilty." The sentence was twelve calendar months, and it was served to the last hour. Condemnably, Foote looked at the judge with "The sentence is worthy of your creed." It should be said that a number

of prominent Christians and eminent lawyers publicly stated their disgust at the sentence.

But this was not the end of the attack on the "Freethinker." Foote had to meet another charge of "blasphemy," and this time it was in the High Court before a judge who paid Foote a high compliment for his defence, and created a new view of blasphemy, and in the end no definite verdict was forthcoming. The case was reserved, but as the Lord Chief Justice made it public that he would take the case when it appeared, the authorities gave it up. It was really victory number one for free thought. Foote served his term of imprisonment, and the first thing he did after he was released was to take a current copy of the "Freethinker" and leave it at the house of the judge who sentenced him. The "Freethinker" continued its unbroken work.

The final blow, for the time being, to the Christian religion was a House of Lords case turning upon the legality of a legacy to the Secular Society. In a sense the case was a vital one. Large amounts of money had been lost to the society. We won the case, and in the reasoning in the House of Lords one of the law lords who went carefully into the whole position, in the end declared that the description of England as a "Christian Country" was not law; it was rhetoric. I felt particularly proud of this decision because I had always insisted that legally calling England a Christian country was just bunkum. I was the more pleased because on the issue Foote had followed the line of Bradlaugh on this matter.

The next important period of the "Freethinker" came with the first world war. Foote died soon after the war began, and I took his place as both editor and president of the N.S.S. It was no light thing to follow two such men as Bradlaugh and Foote. Many expected disaster, with the war in full swing. Many journals did disappear, and there was the question of the paper supply. There was no government control. Each firm sold what it could and as it could. To add to the difficulty our paper merchant closed his business for good, and we were left with no regular way of getting supplies. One good natured paper maker offered to supply us if we could give the raw material. At once I became a collector of old paper and rags. Our "Freethinker" friends are very loyal and we pulled through. We were not only able to supply the old readers, but to add many new ones to the "One and Only." Our friends have always been very loyal. I owe them much.

We went our way cheerfully until the second world war appeared.

This time, paper and other things were controlled, and for the first time in our history we were refusing many new subscribers. Then early in the war our premises in Farringdon Street were completely wiped out. There was nothing left but a huge hole. Our supply of paper was burned, a loss which we felt most of all. The intensity of the fire may

be regarded as a simple fact. We had a huge machine, of solid metal. One would have thought that it might be smashed, but we never expected it would be simply wiped out by the intense heat. This occurred on a Sunday. The issue of the paper *should* be on sale on Wednesday—and it was! Not only that, but we had also secured new premises. God was *not* on our side, but we had beaten the war.

For myself, the most serious loss was a fine selection of books—about 1,800, dating from the seventeenth century, and all dealing with free thought. It was a very valuable collection, and my idea was to give it to the N.S.S. as the beginning of a *real* free-thought library. No such public collection—so far as my knowledge goes—exists. For the first time I was beaten.

But the week's issue of the "Freethinker"? Well, we could not be bothered with such trifles as a world war. The paper must come out. The paper did come out, and there was not a minute of delay. I had a very heavy post of congratulations and thanks. But one really could not set aside an issue of "The Freethinker" merely because so many god worshippers had led us into a world war and had made Churchill Prime Minister of England.

And now we come to the most grievous event in the annals of the "Freethinker." The order went forth ordering that for two weeks a certain class of paper should not be printed. It was maddening. The "Freethinker" sales had increased, and the cry of new readers "Why did we not know this paper earlier" was common. We could not act as we might have acted some time earlier, we were in the hands of the printers, and the printers refused to print. The "Freethinker" had fallen into a trap, a political trap, but still a trap. We had no control, the "Freethinker" suffered from a blow we could not foresee, and we simply could not resist. For two weeks the "Freethinker" has not been seen. It is almost unbelievable.

The government explanation was that the shortage of coal, and gas for lighting up was also ordered to be "cut." But it is worth noting that the Sunday churches were not ordered not to light their evening services. In fact, the bombarding of heaven was to continue. Surely God could have been satisfied with two services in one day. No, he demanded—or his representatives did—that there should be an evening service. We must remember this for future emergencies.

It is over fifty years since I began to write in the "Freethinker" under my own name. I never wrote or spoke merely to attract attention. I took a pleasure in discussion, mainly, I think, because I never met anyone yet from whom one could not learn something. Philosophers and fools have something to teach others, if the others are wise enough to take what they have to offer. But I never aimed at gain in any form. Intellectual gain must come in its own way—if it comes at all. My reward apart from what I gained from others, has come to me lately from people in many places thanking me for having "taught me to live" (that last phrasing is not mine). If it be accepted, then I have not lived and worked for nothing. And I hasten to say that a man who does not learn from others will never have the satisfaction of understanding what is going on in the world around him.

Perhaps what I have said will make it easier to understand why I feel acutely the fact that the "Freethinker," for the first time in its history, has not been issued for two

weeks. Something appears to have gone wrong. Of course there has been a world war, but perhaps that world war would never have happened had the "Freethinker" been read more than has been the case. I feel that this cessation of the appearance of "The Freethinker" for two weeks has left something wanting. All we can say is that we have no responsibility for robbing "Freethinker" readers of two weeks' issues. We must make that gap a warning that there is a lot to be done before we can sight a really desirable human life. We must see what we can do to at least bring that desired life nearer.

CHAPMAN COHEN

CHRISTIANITY AND ANTI-SEMITISM

AN alarming position in Poland created by certain clergy of the Roman Catholic Church was reported in the "Manchester Guardian" of December 5, 1946. It is alarming in view of the menace of a revived Fascism and of the part which anti-Semitism plays in that particular politico-economic ideology, but it is also alarming because of the high status of the newspaper reporting it which places it far beyond the realm of mere idle rumour. The Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs has deliberately indicted the Roman Catholic clergy on a charge of fostering anti-Semitic propaganda. "Pictures and dishonest tricks" are called into service in order to inflame the passions of an illiterate peasantry against the Jews. The mummified body of a small child was taken from the church at Lenzyzyca, a town between Lodz and Warsaw. It had been publicly displayed before the altar with an inscription that the child was murdered for ritual purposes by Jews during the seventeenth century. A painting depicting the ritual murder was suspended over the glass coffin with an inscription saying that the murderers were afterwards cut into little pieces. It is significant that the Jesuits in charge of the church gave evasive answers when asked why they allowed so provocative a picture to remain in place and that the vicar merely declared that "he was too busy to remove the coffin and the offending picture."

The incident is typical in fact of the attitude of the Roman Catholic Church towards the Jews. As E. S. P. Haynes pointed out in his work, "Religious Persecution," the Arians were more tolerant to the Jews during the early centuries than were the orthodox because they laid less stress on supernatural incantations and the rest of the Christian belief. As the centuries went on and supernaturalism increased, violent attacks upon the Jews became a regular Christian occupation. As the people who had crucified Christ and who were therefore damned eternally, were visited with the most frightful persecutions. Pope John XXII allowed wandering bands of French marauders to treat Jews in the most appalling way and his conduct was typical of the age of the ghetto. This particular Vicar of Christ carried his intolerance to the extent of ordering the burning of the Talmud. Roman Catholic apologists sometimes claim that the Counter-Reformation Pope, Sixtus V, ushered in a new era of toleration for the Jewish people, but the legend has been corrected by Joseph McCabe in his work "Crises in the History of the Papacy." Sixtus, who was in sore straits financially, found his chief financial adviser in a Portuguese Jew who had fled from the Inquisition. As the Portuguese was damned on the greater count of crucifying Christ anyway, Sixtus was willing to tolerate him in order that he might commit the lesser sin of lending his money upon usury and that the Papacy might thereby tax the wealth of the Jews. Certainly, it must be admitted that Sixtus allowed his financial interests to lead him on to a more humane feeling. He cancelled certain orders concerning the banishment of Jews made by Pius V, ordered Christians to treat Jewish synagogues with respect, and dispensed the Jews from wearing the yellow dress which Christian princes and prelates

had forced upon them. But, as a generalisation, it may be said that both the "Mediaeval and the post-Mediaeval periods show the Church of Rome to be an anti-Semitic body, inspired in its attacks by the bitter tirades of Christians against Jews which have their roots in the New Testament and which find their sanction in Christian theological ideas of the crucifixion. The Polish Jesuits merely stand in a tradition which, as Edith Moore has shown in "No Friend To Democracy," is essentially autocratic and totalitarian in its make-up.

Christian theology leads to a crude anti-Semitism by its unhistorical imputation of the crucifixion to the Jews and by its use of the Jewish people as a theological scapegoat. "Magnolia Street," Louis Golding's novel of a mixed Jewish and Gentile working class district, "Doomington," a Manchester suburb, reflects the intense hatred worked up by the Christian clergy of half a century ago against Jews as the people who had crucified Christ. In 1943, the distinguished scientist, Dr. Charles Singer, published "The Christian Failure," a short though telling indictment of the churches for their failure to protest against the racialism and anti-Semitism which Hitler released with the coming of the Nazis to power. The Roman Catholic Church was all but dumb and the Pope, who now rushes to excommunicate General Tito for his imprisonment of a collaborationist Roman Catholic Archbishop, remained neutral so far as the deeds of Hitler, a baptised Catholic, were concerned. The German Protestant Church fought hard against Nazi encroachments upon ecclesiastical prerogatives and some of the Confessional Pastors endured a rigorous persecution on account of their claims, but they did nothing to protest against the maltreatment of the Jewish people. Archbishop Lang of Canterbury had little to say and his ineffective and half-hearted remarks, as Dr. Singer shows, only served to make the Jewish position more difficult. It becomes a significant history in view of a report which also appears in the "Manchester Guardian" of December 5, of a meeting in London of the Council of Jews and Christians. Even at this ecumenical body, there was an obvious tendency on the part of the Christian spokesmen to imply that Jews at large must bear some share of the blame for the present terrorism in Palestine. It is small wonder that a rider to the main resolution, proposed by the Vicar of Leeds, the Rev. A. S. Reeve, "was vigorously opposed by Rabbi A. S. Super, the senior minister of the United Hebrew Congregation of Leeds." It would be about as sensible to blame all Irishmen for the outrages of the small and irresponsible I.R.A. group! Yet, wherever Jews are concerned, the old Christian venom shows itself at once. It is certainly a serious matter recalling the extent to which anti-Semitic implications in the contemporary world go far beyond theology in their support of Fascist political policies. The activities of the Polish Jesuits are put into a most sinister light.

But one fact stands forth. If it be generally admitted that racialism and anti-Semitism are anti-social factors in the world of to-day, orthodox Christian theology must stand beneath this charge. The teaching that a particular race is accursed for having crucified Christ is quite as anti-social and as definitely anti-Semitic as was the teaching of Hitler even though its anti-Semitism be based upon theological rather than racial grounds. A Divine predestination takes the place of "blood, race and soul" in its ideology. The Roman Catholic Church stands forth pre-eminently among Christians for its anti-Semitic attitude, but this is because it is naturally a persecuting body, intolerant to the extreme, knowing no latitude towards those who differ from its preposterous beliefs, and refusing to risk the rivalry of any Jewish contribution to contemporary culture. It has always been anti-Semitic and remains so to-day. Yet the orthodox churches at large are in no better case. Protestantism is marked by a whole group of "Missions to Jews," existing in order to raise money from their supporters for the avowed object of paying missionaries to turn bad Jews into worse Christians! The propaganda of these bodies is of the most insulting type and is calculated to stir up a patronising or antagonistic feeling among

Gentiles towards persons of Jewish race. Again, the reason for this intolerance is not far to seek. Toleration implies a degree of scepticism and an orthodox Protestant is no more sceptical concerning his intolerant theology than is the Catholic. When Oliver Cromwell permitted the Jews to return to England and showed a qualified toleration in matters ecclesiastical, he was exhibiting, perhaps unconsciously, a latent scepticism which ranked matters of political moment above those of theological speculation. Tolerance is only regarded as a moral virtue in a community where scepticism is commencing to do its work concerning received or inherited dogmas which seek to set forth the ultimate nature of the universe and of Divine revelation, a point which is illustrated by the cursory treatment accorded to the idea of toleration at the hands of Mgr. R. A. Knox and his friends.

It is a moot point whether or not anti-social expressions of anti-Semitism should be made illegal, but it certainly concerns those who are disturbed by its undesirable manifestations in the contemporary world to realise that Hitler is rivalled in his anti-Semitic furies by the Roman Catholic Church and that Christian anti-Semitism must be combated as being in essence quite as anti-social a force as that of Sir Oswald Mosley or of Captain Ramsey. The Polish Jesuits have certainly succeeded in illustrating the anti-social nature of their church to an extent which may lead some Rationalists to forget their tolerance and to remark with H. G. Wells that "the Gordon rioters acted from a sound instinct!" Certainly they have proved, if further proof be needed, that their religious body is an enemy of democratic civilisation and must be regarded in this light.

"A GENTILE."

TOBACCO AND CHRISTIANITY

"IT takes all sorts to make a world." That saying has become almost a truism with the majority of people. The philosophy of "live and let live" would, to a superficial eye, appear to have won over to its side the many millions who in an earlier age would have been in the ranks of the intolerant instigators of the thumb-screw and the rack. And yet . . .

The somewhat grim pages of *The Christian World* have in recent weeks been enlivened by a correspondence querying whether Christians can be smokers. Much has been said in this typically Nonconformist journal of the allocation of grain for brewing and distilling (thus ignoring the fact that beer and whisky have been two of the very few extravagances allowed in a world of general shortages), and not a few people outside the Christian churches might be found to agree that we should think twice before making more beer when there is not enough bread to give everyone in the world a satisfactory "basic ration." But then some clerical correspondent bethought himself that millions of dollars were being spent by this country in importing tobacco from the U.S.A. He said that he thought this was a bad thing, since these millions might better be used to import bacon, dried eggs, and other valuable foods. One gentleman went so far as to describe a meeting which he had attended, when the air was so polluted by tobacco smoke that he was unable to pay the necessary attention to the business of the day.

There was once a virtue described as "Christian tolerance." That evidently exists no more among these readers of *The Christian World*.
H. L. S.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. By Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

THE MOTHER OF GOD. By G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; postage 1d.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; postage 1d.

ACID DROPS

Dr. Barry, Bishop of Southwell, believes that our civilisation has in it the ominous seeds of decay. We suspect that this kind of talk is the sort of nonsense that delights a professional agitator and which showed itself in the growth of real Christianity. Signs of decay are always to be found somewhere and to the scientific thinker decay is often something that makes for better times. We may put it down as almost self-evident that existing ideas, modes of life, and many other things that may be decaying are often only an indication of the beginning of better things and conditions. This is an important generalisation and could be pointed out in many different ways. For the moment we may be content with pointing out that Dr. Barry's lamentations really mean that Christianity is dying. The only fault we find with it is that the dying is not rapid enough.

According to the Bishop of Exeter Sunday is a "heritage which cannot be lightly thrown away." Well, it all depends. If it is a day of rest, of enjoyment, or of freedom, that is good and it is secure beyond being seriously threatened. What the Bishops mean by a day of rest is a day that is to be "given to God" which is about the worst way of "enjoying" Sunday one could imagine. A day of rest, real rest, means change of occupation, of freedom, of jollification, when men, women and children may make the air ring with happiness. To talk of the Christian Sunday as a day of rest or happiness is one of the greatest falsehoods that even our Christian leaders have manufactured.

Mr. W. Teeling, M.P. for Brighton, is a very ardent Roman Catholic; but, like most Roman Catholics, he puts the interests of his Church first and those who voted him into Parliament second. For example, he says the time has come when all the Christians in the House of Commons must come together. By that he means that all Christians must put their religious opinions first and their political obligations last. If Mr. Teeling wishes to act honestly, he must face the fact that he and his fellows were not sent to the Houses of Parliament to further the interests of Christians, but to see that justice is done to all, irrespective of their religious opinions. One thing that should arise from this impudent plan is that those non-religious members of Parliament should have the courage to say so. It is high time that freethinkers in the House behave as such. If that were done it would certainly lift up the quality of our Houses of Parliament to a higher level than they stand today.

Impudence continues with the godly. Here, for example, is the Rev. D. K. Cook, of Barningham, Richmond, who writes indignantly at the B.B.C. allowing "Itma" and similar performances on Sundays. He points out that the B.B.C. has a religious director, and it should be his duty to see that the "Sunday worship is not desecrated by humorous performances." Mr. Cook believes that these Sunday "shows" tend to keep people away from church. He charges the B.B.C. by encouraging people to stay at home to listen to broadcasts when they should be at church. This is sad. People must choose between God and "Itma." And "Itma" appears to have an easy conquest.

The Bishop of Gloucester has been telling the world, through the medium of the National Association of Head Teachers, "Why Education must be religious." He proves this curiously by the not uncommon method where bishops are concerned of telling us, not anything new, but the age old song that only Christianity can keep men along the right road. We have heard that again and again. It began with the existence of the Christian religion, but in its early years the churches made it quite plain that it was not in this world where the superiority was to be found. As a matter of fact, the first five or six centuries of Christianity are known to history as the "Dark Ages." That certainly does not look very promising as to the influence of Christianity on morals.

The change for the better came with the neglect of the Christian Churches following the rediscovery of the culture of ancient Rome and Greece through the medium, mainly through the influence of Mohammedan culture which had developed on the base of Greek and Egyptian culture. The Bishop of Gloucester might remember that the beginning of the "new life" of Europe owed nothing whatever to Christianity. The new life had to develop fighting the churches step by step. The Bishop says that in schools boys and girls must be taught to realise their responsibility to God. But that is sheer nonsense. The Bishop has turned things upside down. Mankind has not and cannot have any responsibility to God. It is the other way about. If God exists then the responsibility rests with him. Man is as God made him; if he wanted him better he should have made him better. As it is, Man has generously tried to improve his God, but he has succeeded only in making him ridiculous.

There is just one other thing that might be said to the bishop and others of his kind. Does the bishop really believe that Christians—from the cradle—are inferior to Atheists? The Atheist is as good a parent, citizen, and friend as Christians can offer—we do not say better, although a good case could be put forward. Are Christians of an inferior type of human? If the bishop is right, they are. We really do not believe that. We believe that Christians can lead as good a life as Atheists. They will shake off the grovelling to an impossible god and play the part of decent men and women.

We are not sure that the Rev. Frank Ballard is the Ballard that we knew years ago, but it sounds like him. For example, he has discovered "the war has shown that secular humanism and reform without religion, and education without piety is a fraud and a delusion and gets us nowhere." For downing impudence that really does sound like the Ballard we know. Whatever is bad, and that always is in evidence, put down to the credit of non-Christians. Whatever is good put down to Christianity. Mr. Ballard forgets, or will not remember, that the vile laws that existed at the end of the eighteenth century and well on into the nineteenth were created and nursed by Christians. It was largely due to those who put human interests before religion that laid the foundation for better things. We suggest that Mr. Ballard should pay just a little attention to historic facts, even schoolboys nowadays might know a little of the run of historic fact.

Miss Barbara Ward is a frequent lecturer—or talker—on behalf of the Roman Church. She is very enthusiastic, which is common with those when they pick up something that they think is real gold, only to find later that they have been fooled. One favourite phrase of hers is that the Church stands as a "Bed of Rock." We wonder whether that term was given to her by an artful friend, for a bed suggests time to go to sleep and a "Rock" suggests something that is very hard, and we say that a man has a head of rock does not suggest good fortune. Still she counts as a new convert, and the Catholic papers are very fond of saying how many converts they get. Curiously, they never tell the world how many they lose. The fact it is a rule with the Church that nothing short of ex-communication can loosen the Catholic chains. That news is very, very seldom published. There are more ways than one of fooling men and women.

The Roman Catholic "Universe" is very hurt in discovering that, despite the scarcity of paper, Atheism is receiving supplies of paper. It also says that the quantity given to Atheists is unlimited. We have our doubts that this should enable the church to show its supreme power. Some of our readers will remember the story in the early Christian writings, and which is as authentic as anything in the New Testament. The stepfather of Jesus found himself with a plank of wood which was not quite long enough for its purpose. Whereupon Jesus took hold of one end of the plank and his stepfather the other end and stretched the plank to required size. Here is a fine chance for the Pope. Some of his angels might print a whole issue of newspaper out of, say, the covering of a religious tract. He misses his opportunity.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

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To the "Freethinker": May L. Rupp, £1; Miss J. Stupert, 5s. 6d.

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 again we meet our readers, and we feel certain that the reunion is returned with equal pleasure. For the association of the "Freethinker" between writers and readers is not that of a newspaper. If one newspaper goes, another is there to take its place. But if the "Freethinker" goes, then we may safely say that the vast majority of our readers will feel that something has gone which cannot easily be replaced. All we can say with regard to the missing two issues is that it is due to no fault of ours. Probably the government felt that a mere order not to issue might not have been obeyed. But an order to printers not to print left us helpless. We can only hope that this kind of business will not occur again. It is a very dangerous method. Papers are held up for one reason today. They may be held up for other and more dangerous reasons tomorrow.

A word to annual subscribers. The only reasonable way in which the account can be straightened is to make their renewal sixpence less. The loss must be ours. We do not expect any revival of the steps taken by the government, but one can never be certain.

Somehow, while writing the above, we thought of the famous words of Milton:—

"As good almost kill a man as kill a good book; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature . . . but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself."

Milton gave the world one of the most profound lessons that ever existed; for you cannot measure a genius by a rule stick, nor by how far he can see the head of a fool. A book always contains a glimmer of greatness when it can speak of the past so that we may be prepared for the future, carries with it a foresight of the future. A good book is one of the greatest things that life has to give us.

We are pleased to note that Mr. F. A. Hornibrook is lecturing for the Manchester Branch N.S.S. today (Sunday, March 9) at 3 p.m. in the Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints. His subject is "The Colour Bar" and is one upon which he can speak with authority and interest. We hope he will attract a good audience.

The clergy continue to lead the opposition against Sunday cinemas, but their patter is so weak, clumsy and stupid that it must have helped rather than hindered the case for Sunday opening. Here are some results of recent polls:—

	For Sunday		Majority
	Opening	Against	
Northallerton	1,069	343	726
Tunbridge Wells	4,744	2,355	2,389
Cleethorpes	3,779	530	3,249
Swindon	9,196	1,770	7,426
Worcester	5,607	1,492	4,115
Lewes	1,866	532	1,334
Eastbourne	10,798	2,822	7,976
Plymouth	16,217	4,134	12,083

In spite of our pressing Mr. R. H. Rosetti not to risk the journey to Birmingham, he insisted on keeping his lecture engagement with the local N.S.S. branch. It must have been pleasing to him to reach Birmingham and back without too much difficulty, but more important to him was the sight of a good audience and a very successful meeting. Those present deserve full marks for turning out in such weather.

JAMES JOYCE

"Art in its perfection is not ostentatious; it lies hid, and works its effect, itself unseen."

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

"This oracle opens Olympian, in mystical moods and triangular tenses."

A. C. SWINBURNE.

RIFFLING through a not-so-old issue of a periodical the other day I came across a tirade against James Joyce's "Ulysses." It held me a moment, not for its critical interest, which was negligible, but because of its transparency: behind the gauze of words could clearly be seen the simmering blood of the Purity Campaigner, the hot spleen of the Lord's Day Observer. And behind that—well, really, to work oneself into a lather of indignation about pruriency is, in the post-Freudian era, too obviously revealing. Perhaps the writer was encouraged by a knowledge of her good company, for critics as prominent as Frank Swinnerton and Elmer E. Stoll have roundly decried "Ulysses." More curiously, distinguished and original craftsmen in the great modern art of novel writing, themselves, like Joyce, standard bearers against the host of the Philistines, have found grave fault with the book: D. H. Lawrence tetchily dismissed it as "a clumsy *olla putrida*"; to the hypersensitive E. M. Forster it was "an epic of grubbiness and disillusion"; and Virginia Woolf, with more attention to rhetorical effect than verbal precision, spoke of "a memorable catastrophe—immense in daring, terrific in disaster."

There is, of course, another side. Thousands of readers, myself amongst them, have closed "Ulysses" with the feeling of elation and wonder that only supernal works of art can induce. And both this and other works of Joyce have been generously eulogised.

It is unnecessary to know anything about Joyce himself in order to appreciate his novels, but as few can remain incurious about the personality behind writing that flouts the codes, the Joycean milieu claims some attention. To be born, in the Dublin of the 1880's, into a Roman Catholic family having strong clan links with the west of Ireland, to be brilliant in mind and literary in bent, should, by all the known rules of Celti: arithmetic, add up to romanticism, fairies (or should it be faeries?) in the twilight, Cathleen ni Houlihan, and Up the Republic. But Joyce freed himself from Rome in his teens and afterwards turned from romanticism to classicism, and from nationalism to cosmopolitanism. At home in divers countries and more languages, standing aside—almost contemptuously aside—from the creeds and the schools, he embarked on the conquest

of words. He was the arrogant ringmaster, and under his whip legions of words were coaxed into fantastic patterns and intricate combinations, were made to express moods and conjure up emotional subtleties hitherto unattempted. A new and taxing form of verbal acrobatics was born, often bewildering, oftener beautiful.

Joyce's bibliography is comparatively slender: some odds and ends of verse and prose, a play, a volume of delicately toned short stories, and three novels. Of these the first, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man," although complete and remarkable enough in itself to have secured its author's fame, is prolegomenary to the second, "Ulysses," which tells of an ordinary June day in the lives of a few Dubliners. The third, "Finnegans Wake," is an impressionistic record of a night's dreaming on the part of a middle-aged Dublin publican. Thus these last two books jointly cover little more than 24 hours. The writing of them occupied Joyce for 27 years. A rough average of a year's work per hour of novel-time is worth noting: it indicates a certain deliberation, and an approach to fiction far removed from that of an Oppenheim.

Nothing much happens in "Ulysses." The subject matter is the thoughts and behaviour of three principal characters: Leopold Bloom, advertising agent and wittol; Bloom's wife, Molly, a dissatisfied small-time adventuress; and Stephen Dedalus, a brilliant but drifting, Hamlet-haunted young schoolmaster. The incidents of the day are ostensibly trifling. But into a breakfast scene, a walk on the shore, a funeral, a session in a pub, are packed worlds of feeling and experience. To achieve his end Joyce used a multiplicity of styles, dependent upon mood and environment; he discarded syntax when expressing the kaleidoscope of fleeting thought, and he dispassionately put in the trivial, the ribald, and the wildly erotic. Yet the whole is wonderfully balanced: it is by turns solemn and high-spirited, moving and witty. And it is luxuriantly poetic—I cannot easily bring to mind a more imaginative piece of writing than this (Stephen is helping a boy in algebra): "Across the page the symbols moved in grave morrice, in the mummery of their letters, wearing quaint caps of squares and cubes. Give hands, traverse, bow to partner: so: imps of fancy of the Moors. Gone too from the world, Averroes and Moses Maimonides, dark men in mien and movement, flashing in their mocking mirrors the obscure soul of the world. . . ."

Bloom and the others are normal deviates from the average man or woman of the times, portrayed naturalistically and in the round. The singularity lies, not in the sordid detail or the quirk of character, but in the way Joyce has dug beneath the veneer of surface appearances, and has yet obtained an overall effect of the worthwhileness and dignity of mankind. The standard technique of shedding the light of nobility is to use the lenses of romanticism—lenses that, inevitably, select and distort. Joyce, presenting not, of course, the whole truth but at least a wholly representative sample of the truth, is more convincing. And diversity is bonded with an extraordinary spirit of serenity: the reader senses the personality of the writer only as an impartial contemplator. Furthermore, over and above—or, rather, beneath and interwoven with—all this is an allegoric symbolism of almost unbelievable complexity, based on a parallelism with Homer's "Odyssey." Like Odysseus and Penelope, Bloom and his wife are eventually reconciled. The book ends with a decisive and symbolic "Yes."

While both "Ulysses" and "Finnegans Wake" are indebted to psycho-analytical theory, it is naturally the latter, the dream narrative, whose debt is the heavier. Thus, for example, the pun is an integral feature of the book—whole sections are surrealist pun-poems lavishly crammed with plural meanings and tortuous allusions. The most knowledgeable and sympathetic reader cannot hope to catch more than the flavour of such passages at a first reading. And even if, after much probing, and he eventually manages to disentangle parts of the meaning, it is unlikely that he would possess the out-of-the-way erudition

and the Irish lore—in short, the equipment of Joyce himself—necessary to catch their full significance. Here indeed is a new phenomenon: a novel that is in some senses unreadable. The difficulties of sustaining intelligent interest in more than 600 pages that have apparently been set up by a polyglot printer, blindfold and in his cups are something more than formidable. (It may be mentioned parenthetically that the feat has at least one claimant: I understand that opinion is divided in the question as to whether Thornton Wilder will go down to history as the author of "The Bridge of San Luis Rey" and "The Skin of Our Teeth" or as The Man who Has Read "Finnegans Wake.")

Is this carefully planned obscurantism of any value? Can any excuse be framed for the novelist who plays Torquemada to his readers? What is the point of invisibly stitching, as it were, some 500 river-names into a passage centred on the Liffey? (Joyce admitted spending 600 working hours on that particular job. Having finished, he read the section to Max Eastman, and was chagrined to find that his listener didn't catch the name of a single river—and even after a careful subsequent study Eastman could find no more than three and a-half!) These are questions all too easily answered to Joyce's disadvantage. St. John Gogarty, who is far from being anti-Joycean, summed up "Finnegans Wake" as "the most colossal leg-pull in literature since McPherson's 'Ossian.'" A stupid dismissal: it is idle to doubt the serious intent of the book. The patient reader (particularly if he studies some of the "Finnegan" analyses) will discover treasures in it; he will find the book richer the more he turns back to it; and he will be rewarded with an astonishing insight into the mind of modern man.

Nevertheless, that a writer should deliberately erect barriers, as Joyce did, to his readers' understanding, is a disquieting business. Finnegan is the apotheosis of the exasperating tendency for certain authors to cater for a narrow circle of initiates, for those who happen to have the same interests and the same social and cultural background as the particular writer. It's rather like writing something in private slang based on family jokes, and expecting the general public to buy it and read it without a glossary. This indifference to, and withdrawal from, the ordinary reader is partly a reaction to the floods of tawdry literature that have been surging on to the market this century. None can predict how far this literary extremism will spread, or how long it will endure. Meantime the universalism of the great works of the past is evidently not for us. Courses of instruction were never essential to the appreciation of Shakespeare or Dickens, yet their works, dissected by the literary surgeons, have yielded plenty of between-the-lines material for the student. Joyce will never be popular (this, despite a "translation" of parts of "Finnegan" into Basic English—I am helpless to comment), but his influence on other writers should produce more good than harm. Perhaps the next classic novelist will be he who underpins the bookstall appeal of an Edgar Wallace with the revelation of a James Joyce.

N. T. GRIDGEMAN

GOD AND THE WORLD

NATURE provides man with many good things, but it also afflicts him with many evils. Among these are the destruction of crops by bad weather, the occurrence of floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes, all of which man is powerless to prevent; and besides these there are calamities that he might have avoided or greatly diminished, had he been endowed with more intelligence, or assisted by the earlier development of his higher faculties. The injury done to our race by these hindrances seems appalling, when we remember how many physical evils have in recent times been abated, or even abolished by human activity. When primitive superstitions had given rise to the setting up of a priestly class, and the priests began to make dogmas out of religious beliefs, those of the Monotheist persuasion

explained natural adaptations useful to man as providential arrangements made by his wise and benevolent creator, whose purpose in giving him existence was to have his obedience, and to enjoy his praise. Lest the natural occurrences harmful to man might appear incompatible with the above explanation, the same authorities further explained that such evils were inflicted upon men both to punish those who had violated the moral laws and religious ordinances given through the priests and also to confirm in their godly fear those who had not forsaken the paths of righteousness. If anyone had suggested to such skilful apologists that in each of the above cases the alleged purpose would have been far better effected by making an emphatic distinction between the fate of the bad and that of the good instead of confounding both in the same disasters, the answer would have been that, under the present dispensation, the course of nature is very rarely subjected to divine interference; and that innocent sufferers from this all but invariable consistency will doubtless be recompensed in another and better world.

Hereupon, the responder would not have failed to observe that the explanation given had quite ignored the objection touching the ambiguity of the lesson intended; and that as to the suggestion concerning recompense, most people could not be expected to regard hypothetical justice as a likely remedy for actual injustice, because we usually reason from the known to the unknown, and if we are ill-treated by a man in Jerusalem we do not expect better treatment from him in Alexandria. Here the apologists would protest that *their* deity should not be compared with man. To which the objector would reply that all parties must be judged by their conduct, and that a higher being should not do what a lower being could not do without remorse. Hereupon, if the law did not permit them to silence the objector by removing his tongue, the apologists would probably have proceeded as follows: "Life is full of mysteries. Providence has designed it so to be in order that we may develop Faith which is the great instrument of the soul." To which the objector might well have replied: "Why should I believe unless I have a reason for believing, especially if I see many reasons for not believing? I do not say that there is no god. What I say is that the one whom you propose is unacceptable." At this point the apologists would probably have remembered that they had a sacrifice to offer, and the debate would thus come to an unsatisfactory end.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

LEGENDS AND SUPERSTITIONS OF COUNTY DURHAM

HOLY BIZONS

In the good old times, to which some sentimental people would fain return it was customary to make men or women found guilty of certain misdemeanors, stand on 'the stool of repentance' in church for three successive Sundays, in face of the whole congregation, and be rebuked by the minister. This penitential act was performed in a white sheet, and the misdemeanant so undergoing purification was commonly known as a 'Holy Bizon' from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning 'an example.' But a 'Holy Bizon' now is held to be any shameful person, scold, rogue, termagant or hypererite, who by the judgment of his or her fellows ought to be made a public example of. The word 'bizon' used by itself signifies a shame or scandal, or anything deemed to be monstrous or excessive."

SIGNS OF BEING A WITCH

"Himny, if ye ivver gan intiv a hooso, an' ye see a person there who has eye-brows meetin' each other, that person's a witch. An' ye must be sure to cross yoursel' an' close the fingers of ye left hand over ye thumb; an' that tak's awa' her power. I allus do'd, an' they can do nothin' to wer.' Such was the sage advice given to a young woman by a real old crone in the hearing of a friend of mine, only a short time ago."

"A certain farmer's wife at Hylton, seems to have offended an old neighbour, possessed of the 'evil eye,' and in consequence could obtain no butter, churn and churn as she might. At midnight the malignant old hag rapped at her door, came inside, and asked what was a-miss. 'We cannot get no butter,' was the reply. 'Why, woman,' rejoined the witch, 'you have your churn too far from the fire.' So the churn was quickly shifted, and the butter came in a 'jiffy.'"—E. H. S.

OBITUARY

We regret to record the death of Albert Webb, which occurred on February 10 after a short illness.

Although not a member of the N.S.S. he was a Freethinker and at the request of his brother—who is a well-known member of the Manchester Branch—a Secular Service was conducted by the undersigned at the Southern Cemetery, Manchester, on February 14.

Mr. Webb, who was unmarried, leaves a brother and sister, to whom we extend our sympathy. WM. COLLINS.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, March 11, 7 p.m.: "Churches in the Modern State," Rev. F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT, M.A., F.R.Hist.S.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday 11 a.m.: "Quitting India," 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.: "Money and Religion," Mr. CHARLES HARVEY.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Life After Death," Councillor JOE WALKER.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Church and Religion in Russia," Miss EDITH MOORE.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: "The Colour Bar," Mr. F. A. HORSBROOK (London).

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Shakespeare and Religion," Mr. H. HASSELL (Pres.; Leicester Secular Society).

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Fitzwilliam Room, Grand Hotel, Sheffield).—Monday, March 10, 7-30 p.m.: "Did Jesus Christ Ever Exist?" Mr. G. L. GREAVES.

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THE POSITION OF THE PAPACY

THE rise of Communism, and the enormous power of Soviet Russia, with her friends in many countries, have thrown the world into a violently contrasted controversy of ideologies. On the one hand is the new revolutionary banner of Marxism, with its basis in dialectical materialism, involving an atheistic view of the universe. On the other is the ancient tradition based on the theology and the morals of Christianity—an essentially spiritual and idealistic viewpoint, however defectively it may express itself in practice. The Marxians are united, disciplined, and speak with one voice. What is said in Moscow is echoed in London, Paris, even in China and other widely separated lands. Not so the representatives of the Christian tradition! They are split into rival Churches and Sects. The advantage of unity seems with the revolutionary side. Is there, however, another side of this question?

The mind at once turns to the Pontificate of Rome. Venerable with the tradition, gradually developed, of nearly two thousand years, it confronts the problems of this tragic, changing age with the challenge of its own unity. In the midst of those problems the position of the Roman Pontificate is apt to be ignored by the public mind, or largely ignored, at least in this country. That mind is preoccupied by the crude, pressing things of economic distress, political innovations, and other secular results of the war. It has little time for consideration of the Papacy. Yet such consideration is eminently necessary; for, after all vicissitudes, the Popedom remains—even looked at from an outside point of view—a powerful international force, venerable in age and ever-vivacious; revered by millions as the interpreter of divine, supernatural truth; and the head of a mighty international religious corporation. It seems usefully interesting, therefore, to take a brief—reluctantly brief—glance at the present position of the Papacy; viewing the matter from a non-controversial point of view.

During the last seventy or so years the Papacy, there can be small doubt, has lost a vast amount of political prestige. The Vatican Ecumenical Council was celebrated in 1870, and its deliberations and decrees were followed with keenest interest by the statesmen of Europe. The definition of "the infallible magisterium of the Roman Pontiff" brought to a head an ecclesiastical controversy which had raged off and on during five centuries, and whose roots were in an even greater antiquity. Were the decisions of the Pontiff, when speaking "from the chair" (*ex cathedra*) on faith or morals, immune in themselves from error, or did they require the confirmation of the Church? For a long period the chief representative of the latter view had been the great Church of France, which, in its Gallican Articles, expressly maintained the necessity of confirmation by the Church. The French Revolution, at the end of the 18th century, drastically weakened the hitherto mighty French ecclesiastical power, and, though Gallicanism survived—it influenced greatly the outlook of English and Irish Catholicism at the end of the 18th and the early part of the 19th centuries—yet in the Roman Catholic Church as a whole it was a rapidly decaying theory. By the middle of the 19th century it was, to use a colloquialism, "on its last legs." When Pope Pius IX called the 1870 Vatican Council, the time was ripe to condemn Gallicanism as a heresy. This, after vehement debate, was done, and it became a dogma of faith—"a doctrine divinely revealed"—that the Roman Pontiff, when he speaks from the chair defining a doctrine of faith or morals, is infallible in his own person, "by the divine protection promised to him in Blessed Peter" and not from the consent of the Church.

This definition was regarded with alarm by European statesmen, who feared it would place the political allegiance of Catholics at the arbitrary call of Papal commands. A strong controversy followed in which, in England, such fears were voiced by Gladstone in especial and were rebutted by Newman,

Manning, and others. The question, however, remained unsettled, though fortunately—if we disregard the then perennial struggle between Great Britain and Ireland—no controversy existed here to make it practically urgent.

It is very commonly overlooked, however, that amongst its decrees binding as articles of faith the Vatican Council had also one on "the immediate jurisdiction of the Roman Pontiff." This was to the effect that the Pope has "ordinary and immediate jurisdiction" over all Catholics, lay and clerical. This definition was of more real practical consequence than that of Infallibility. The latter, after all, applied only to theological dogma. The former, on the other hand, related to the everyday working of the Church. The Pope was the direct sovereign, in all religious matters, of the consciences of all Catholics and of their acts as guided by religion.

There was a notable ambiguity in the definition of Papal Infallibility. While the Pope was declared to be *inerrant ex cathedra*, the term "*ex cathedra*" was not precisely defined. As a result some theologians have given a large, others a small, list of Papal declarations which must be accepted as infallible. Nevertheless, whether infallible or not, all such declarations must be received by Catholics with reverence and interior assent as coming from the august Pontiff. Moreover, though they may in theory be regarded as possibly fallible, yet also they may be in some respects infallible.

A notable consequence of the Infallibility and Jurisdiction decrees has been the frequent publication of Papal Encyclicals. Letters giving teaching on a multitude of questions, public and even domestic.

The breakup of Christendom by the 16th century Reformation and the revolutionary movements in later ages, deprived the Papacy of the possibility of acting, or of being accepted, as the theological and moral teacher of a united Christian world. It became, in relation to the world as a whole, but the greatest amongst many voices. It must not be forgotten, however, that while the loss of England, Germany or a great part thereof, and some other countries greatly decreased Papal influence the retention of Spain, Portugal, France, etc., and the Catholicising of the South American continent meant not only that the Papacy remained exceedingly powerful but also that it acquired vast domains hitherto not Christian in any sense. As a result of this the Roman Pontificate stands in our time as perhaps the most influential—and certainly the most determined—opponent of the revolutionary tendencies of the age.

The Papacy stands firmly for a return to "the old Catholic tradition"—or for so much of it as may be possible. In the many Encyclicals issued since 1870 that fact has been made abundantly clear. The extreme "Left" has been condemned; the duty of the State to uphold Catholicism has been enforced on the Catholic conscience; divorce, "artificial birth-control," and secular education, have been repudiated; moderate democracy has been admitted as a legitimate form of government, "provided the laws of the Church are safeguarded." At the same time, while condemning "Atheistic revolution," the Pope has demanded fair play and better conditions for the working classes, and have advocated social reforms. On peace and war the Papal teaching does not deny the possibility of "a just war," but its whole modern tendency is to regard war as while perhaps in an extreme case unavoidable, at best a detestable necessity. Its influence is for peace theoretically, but ecclesiasticism too often arouses war-like passion.

The loss of actual political power has caused Papal influence to take mainly a moral mode of working on men's minds, but its power in that respect is real and should not be ignored. This article is objective and non-controversial, so no opinion is given as to the merits of the controversies involved.

J. W. POYNTER.

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