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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Lord Bolingbroke

SINCE the Renaissance, that is somewhere about the eleventh century, Christianity has been on the defence. But "Renaissance" stands for "Re-Birth" and that tells a story—one that our churches do not like. In this case, "Re-Birth" stands for something that was either dead or nearly dead. In this instance, the "almost dead" refers to the state of the Western world under the control of Christianity. "The glory that was Greece" was almost dead. The civic development that belonged to Rome was almost forgotten. The Christian Church stood as a bar to human development. And the Western world, or a large part of it, was in decay. For the New Birth, we have to thank the developments achieved from the Mohammedan world. On that head we agree with Draper that we have to deplore the systematic manner in which the literature of Europe has contrived to put out of sight our scientific obligations to the Mohammedans. It was a section of the Mohammedans who preserved "the glory that was Greece," and enlarged science in the interest of humanity. Without that ally, we might be still living in the "Dark Ages" of Christian monopoly.

What opposition the Church could give to prevent independent scientific advance, it gave. There was danger in getting too much development in science, or to be too independent in speech. The greatest blow given to the churches was to come with the discoveries of Copernicus. Dean Inge has said that it killed historic Christianity. It is certain that the greater the advance of science, the greater the weakness of Christianity.

But this has still to be noticed, particularly in England. Until the end of the sixteenth century, the leading men of the Church were men of ability. Science had not sunk quite so deep as it might have done. It is also worth noting that a great number of the best preachers dwelt on the subject of Atheism. Then with the beginning of the seventeenth century a new policy was adopted. In the early seventeenth century, little stress was laid on Atheism but greater weight fell on the moral consequences of the moral aspect of Christianity. It was an artful game, but we see it today when our well-to-do parsons will say much about morals and little about essential Christianity. Our present Primate may be taken as a good example of that.

I commenced with the intention of writing about a man who puzzled many. He was denounced as a non-believer in religion, and remained a puzzle to many. He wrote many books, most of which I have on my shelves. The missing ones will carry my curses to those who borrowed the books which were intended to be returned. The man was Lord Bolingbroke, born in the year 1672 and died

in 1751. He has been much praised and also much cursed. It was Burke who, some time after the death of Bolingbroke, asked scornfully "who now reads Bolingbroke?" We will not stress the easy reply, "I did, and with interest." But I name Voltaire, who died twenty years after the man he held in esteem died, and who held him in esteem to the end. I believe Voltaire was a fine judge of good and bad writers. Also I have nearly all Bolingbroke's works on my shelves, and still find some interest in them. Also critics such as Churton Collins would reply that they read him with much pleasure. Others might be named.

My own reading and re-reading really began many years ago, inside a secondhand bookshop, which, among other books, had for sale "The Works of the late Right Honourable Henry Saint John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke," in five volumes, complete. Each volume published by David Mallet, London, 1754. That is the kind of thing that all book-lovers gloat over. And the whole lot cost four shillings. That is what comes from keeping one's eyes open—for books. The price of the books reminds us of the old bookseller who, when the price was asked of the "Last of the Mohicans," said it was "not a halfpenny for a Mohican."

Probably it was the size of the volumes that operated as a determining factor in fixing the price. Folios, while objects of desire at one time of life, may easily become *anathema* at another period. A single man may hug home huge books with pride and impunity; a married man finds many reasons—some spatial, some financial—in the way of the gratification of such a taste. One cannot smuggle a folio into the house with the intention of dropping it undetected on the hall-stand, until such time as it may be placed on the shelves, and lost amid the multitude of its fellows. Books 15 x 10 or 20 x 12 refuse being coerced into a handbag, or ignominiously hidden under one's coat. They enter in full view of she who keeps guard over the household goods and a watchful eye on the accumulation of "lumber." So it was, in all likelihood, the size of the volumes that had something to do with fixing the price of Johnson's "hungry Scotchman's" edition of Bolingbroke's writings.

There can be no question that Bolingbroke has been hardly treated by the generations that have followed his decease. He has been denounced as a libertine without any proof that he was worse in character than the people around him, while in many respects it might be shown that he was distinctly their superior. The story of his having run naked through Hyde Park as the outcome of a drunken wager rests upon no better evidence than a statement of Goldsmith, who avows that he "heard" it from someone else. The latter portion of his life certainly showed him capable of strong domestic virtues. At any rate, the first

half of the eighteenth century was not remarkable for the spotless character of its prominent men, whether they were divines or politicians, and there is a sad want of equipoise in writers who drag a man out of his natural environment in order to test him by the standards of a later generation. It is fairly just in the case of Bolingbroke to vary the defence imputed to Charles II, and say that in general his faults were of his time; his work and writing were products of the Man.

But posterity—unless it be that portion of humans who delight in scandal—will be more interested in a man's work than in the colour of his trousers. After all, the real importance and interest in one's life does not of necessity gather round a king, a politician, or a famous boxer. That Bolingbroke hit hard and deep in his time is shown by both enemies and admirers. He may not have been a great man, but he was certainly a notable one.

Leslie Stephen, in his not faultless "English Thought in the Eighteenth Century," sneers that he was neither a Comte nor a Montesquieu, but against that we may put the high praise that Voltaire paid him; and Buckle did not hesitate to declare that before Gibbon, Bolingbroke was "the only Englishman who took a comprehensive view of history."

His literary merits deserve, and have obtained, great praise. Pope, it is well known, idolised him. Pope's principal work, the *Essay on Man*, is only Bolingbroke versified. Critics like Swift, Chesterfield and Pitt showered compliments upon him. Voltaire was another of his admirers, and said that Bolingbroke could give him lessons in French. Some modern writers have complained of his treatment of his opponents. But his was an age when the amenities of literary warfare were not too nicely studied, and there are few of Bolingbroke's enemies who could deal a stroke with as much severity and civility. One suspects that his phrases were objected to not because they offended the taste of the time, but because they went home. His description of the House of Commons as a place where people "grow, like hounds, fond of the man who shows them game, and by whose halloo they are used to be encouraged," is worthy of Swift, and shows no little ability of using the lash.

His real offence—or, at least, his lasting offence—consisted in the publication of his writings on philosophy and theology. These were bequeathed in MS., with a substantial legacy, to his friend Mallet. A large bribe was offered to Mallet to avoid publication, but was refused. It is this edition—1754—which lies before me as I write. These writings were all penned during his exile in France, and, although rather diffuse, are marked by much shrewdness and, of course, grace. They went the usual way of heretical books in that day—that is, declared by a grand jury as subversive of religion, morality, and government, and burned by the common hangman. Walpole, his greatest political enemy, and glad as he was to see Bolingbroke degraded, was yet quick enough to point out that those "to whom he was a hero, a patriot, a philosopher, and the greatest genius of his age; the moment his 'Craftsman' against Moses and St. Paul are published, have discovered that he was the worst man and the worst writer in the world."

An avowed deist, he attacks with equal and impartial energy metaphysicians and theologians. They were all so

many "pneumatical madmen," eking out a scanty knowledge of facts with an extravagance of theory. "What these wild or dreaming philosophers could not do by any hypothesis about body they attempted to do by the hypothesis of a soul," and in thus acting they are "just as mad as the architect would be who should undertake to build the roof of the house on the ground and to lay the foundations in the air." They are simply "building a world with categories."

Most of the "inspired" writers fare but badly at his hands, St. Paul worst of all. He is "a loose paraphraser, a cabalistical commentator"; he "rather doubles mystery than simplifies it, and adds everywhere a mystery of words to a mystery of things." His whole teaching formed "an intricate and dark system, with here and there an intelligible phrase that casts no light on the rest, but is rather lost in the gloom of the whole. By faith I may believe, but by faith I cannot understand. A proposition the terms of which are unintelligible is an absolute mystery; to say that we are bound to believe mysteries in this sense is itself nonsense; to say that we do believe them is a lie." And the final result of all such teachings is that "The Church has been in every age an hydra, such a monster as the poet feign with many heads. All these heads hissed and barked and tore one another with fury. As fast as some were cut off others sprouted out, and all the art and all the violence employed to create an apparent could never create a real uniformity. The scene of Christianity has been always a scene of dissension, of hatred, of persecution, and of blood."

It was probably a love of ease that prevented Bolingbroke publishing these writings during his lifetime. They were published, however, and played their part in the history of Freethought. Today their attack has lost much of its force owing to the modifications Christianity has undergone. But Bolingbroke will still repay reading, particularly when Mallet's quartos can be picked up often cheaply at sales.

Yes, it is good now and again to go back and read what our forbears had to say. We may then find that the wisdom of today would not be as great as it is but for those who came before us, and who trod the ground that enabled us to walk with more certain feet.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE RELIGION OF WINSTON CHURCHILL

MEN of blood are generally men of religion. King David was a "man of blood" and "a man after God's own heart," a self-expressionist both in words and deeds, and of all the Biblical characters most resembles our Winston Churchill.

It is difficult not to admire such men of action as the Biblical David and the British Winston, in spite of the fact that they set us a good example by admiring themselves. Neither was guilty of profound thought—men of action seldom are—but both were swift, decisive, and ruthless in action and copious in rhetorical expression. If Winston had been King of Israel in David's day, and David a Marlborough descendant in Winston's day, I do not think the history of either epoch would be different, except that Mr. Churchill (unlike his ancestor, John, in his pre-Sarah days over Barbara might have resisted the charms of Bathsheba, if he will forgive my suggesting this, and might have failed to beget the wisdom of Solomon.

Once Winston Churchill was an Atheist. But that youthful phase did not last long. Many religious folk are fond of

telling others, generally with unction, that "I was once an Atheist, but I learned wisdom later," and Mr. Churchill has not escaped that common temptation. His atheism was due—again as many others' atheism is—to a realisation of how his childhood was deceived and cheated by religious folk relating fictions when they knew the truth. His "anti-religious phase" was, he tells us, "violent and aggressive" (he might have used one word instead of three, namely, "characteristic," but parsimony in words is not a Churchillian failing). He adds that if it had lasted, it might have made him "a nuisance." How fortunate that he has since never been a nuisance to anybody, not even himself!

It was such authors as Winwood Reade, the historian Gibbon and Lecky who established in young Churchill "a predominantly secular view," and challenged the religious education of Harrow. How he was converted back to the straight and narrow path that leads to Eternal Life from the broad way that leads to destruction, is interesting. He says—and I do not doubt him—"My poise was restored during the next few years by frequent contact with danger."

Danger, indeed—in fact every unpleasantness—is extremely provocative of religion. A man about to be hanged not only concentrates his thoughts wonderfully, as that dreadful old Dr. Johnson observed, but he catches frantically at such straws as God and an After-Life even if he does not believe in either. It is the weakness of cowardice; and courage itself is not exempt from cowardice.

Whatever the young atheistic Churchill might think or argue, he found himself asking for special protection under fire and felt grateful when he got home safe for tea. He even asked—"prayed" is a better word—for lesser things than not to be killed, and marvellous to relate!—"nearly always in these years and indeed throughout my life I got what I wanted." The practice seemed "perfectly natural," just as "strong and real as the reasoning process which contradicted it so sharply." Besides, it was "comforting," and the reasoning process led young Churchill "nowhere." So he believed with the heart and disbelieved with his head—he adopted a "system of believing whatever he wanted to believe while at the same time leaving reason to pursue whatever paths she was capable of treading."

That is a subaltern's thinking. It is not quite the Faith, wholehearted and unquestioning, that is said to remove mountains, to save our souls, and give us the Kingdom of Heaven. No matter. Ultimately, Churchill, the soldier, the journalist, the politician, the Dictator, the Elder Statesman, allowed (as he might say) the heart to conquer the head; sentimentality to conquer reason; a pragmatic and practical religion to conquer doubt and even to suggest Christianity as a plank in a Conservative Party platform, quite recently.

You might think Mr. Churchill would be, by nature, either a Roman or an Anglo-Catholic. But he was too susceptible to early influences for that. His childhood's nurse, the admirable Mrs. Everest, was "all for Kent and Low Church," and all against the Supreme Pontiff and all religious practices associated with him. Hence Mr. Churchill became from childhood "strongly prejudiced" in favour of Kent and against the Pope. The prejudice seems to have been long and lasting.

Like all Churchillian prejudices, for he is either a man of Kent or a Kentish man (a mere Devonian cannot follow such fine distinctions) to this day, and shows a leaning to the "Low" section of the Anglican Church even at 70 when he is really old enough to know better. No doubt, too, his idolatrous worship of the first Duke of Marlborough and his termagant Sarah (which worship must be read to be believed) with their Protestantism also influenced Winston in the same direction.

Other religious influences also touched him. It is difficult for a Harrow boy not to imagine a Headmaster in Heaven; difficult for a Sandhurst cadet not to credit a College-Commandant Celestial; difficult for a soldier-in-grain to see an

Army of Angels not officered by Archangels and ruled by a Super-Commander-in-Chief. Winston, like his senior officers, knew the value of the Christian Religion first to women ("It helps to keep them straight") and second, to the lower orders ("It makes them more contented to think they will get a good time hereafter"). A little religion is excellent; too much, especially amongst natives where fanaticism rouses murder, mutiny and rebellion, is bad.

"Such," says Mr. Churchill, "is a fair gauging of the climate of opinion in which I dwelt." That was in youth. But has his spiritual climate altered? If there were no God, would he not desire one invented, like Voltaire, for necessity's sake amongst a race so barbarous as mankind?

In matters of religion, childhood's influences are the most lasting. The Jesuits well understood that. Mr. Churchill is a perfect illustration of that sad fact. To be "cheered" and "fortified" and "promised" by religion is more important than to face depressing and discouraging and unpromising truths by reality. How frightful to go out for ever like a candle! How repulsive the spectacle of thousands of millions of universes (populated or not) "all knocking about together for ever without any rational or good purpose behind them". How repugnant that even the most active, aggressive, violent, turbulent, spirit must lie quiet as an exhausted fretful baby at last and for ever!

Let me restore my poise! Bring me a bottle of brandy and a Bible that I may believe, exclaiming in French: "The heart has his reasons that the reason knows nothing of." Bring me my rifle and my religion, for both are so useful in the face of the enemy and if I leave either behind he may kill me instead of my killing him—and can I doubt what is the better of these two beneficences of a well-ordered world! Or shall I merely decide to admire Churchillian action wholeheartedly; Churchillian expression half-heartedly; and despise the shocking superficiality of Churchillian thought as it deserves? If I read the views of Sir Winston Churchill the First of the time of King Charles, and then read the views of Mr. Winston Churchill the Second of our day, how little progress in thought has been accomplished in 300 years! However, there is a boy on service in Palestine, age 17, who will doubtless admire Churchillian thought as much as Churchillian action deserves. And so to the Post Office with Mr. Churchill's religion.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

JUSTICE — AND THE COMMON PEOPLE

WE, the common people, are always supposed to be proud of what is called British Justice. Exactly why, I have never yet discovered. Can we be quite sure that this rather smug, taken-for-granted attitude is not, after all, just another sample of that nauseating sop with which we have been spoon-fed from infancy and coming from the same can as "An Englishman's word is his bond"—and all the rest of it.

I rather fancy, if we take the trouble to examine more closely our vaunted legal machinery, we shall find that its wheels are creaking with the rust of ages, that the cogs are worn and missing and that the gears could do with an application of some good, clean lubricating oil.

Let us begin with the local Magistrate's Court. This comic side-show is a disgrace to any civilised community. If we must have judges at least let us have professional judges who know their jobs, not unpaid amateurs. It is beyond our comprehension that presumably sane and quasi-intelligent people continue to tolerate an institution which enables illiterate pork-butchers or other pompous little tradesmen to sit in judgment on their fellow men. They know nothing of the law and even less of human nature, but because they are arrogant and aggressive busy-bodies unable to mind their own affairs they

can, by pulling the right strings and licking the right boots, become Justices of the Peace. As for women magistrates, more often than not elderly, frustrated females who sublimate their inhibitions by taking a morbid interest in crime and punishment, they would be more usefully employed scrubbing their own floors.

So much for the amateur performers. Now, what about the professionals? Why in the name of all that's wonderful do we continue to tolerate the flap-doodle and flummery of judicial fancy dress, wigs and gowns, antique legal verbiage and all the nonsensical pantomime of worm-eaten tradition? Is it essential to the proper execution of justice? If America and other semi-civilised countries can dispense near-justice without these artificial aids surely we can do the same. Why make a puppet-show of the Law? Why the pompous processions to the Law Courts which only make small boys titter and dogs bark?

And why not abolish (or liquidate) all judges over sixty-five? It is a well-known medical fact that the human brain deteriorates after middle-age, yet it is only when men reach their dotage that they are considered capable of holding high legal office. Surely, the symbol of Justice should no longer be a blind-folded female with a pair of grocer's scales but a senile and toothless old gent with an ear-trumpet!

While we are on this rather unpleasant subject of judges is it not time the public was educated to a proper sense of values? The newspapers are chiefly to blame in this respect. We are getting heartily sick of reading this sort of thing when we open our "Daily Drive": "Mr. Justice Cackleberry was unable to attend the Divorce Court yesterday owing to a slight chill."

Well, who cares? If my charlady was unable to attend my domicile owing to a carbuncle on her big toe it would not be mentioned in the papers; nor when I am sneezing my own head off do they publish the fact in the press—and why should they? Do we pay our money to be told that someone has a running nose or for news that is of real interest to the community? I may be dense, but I fail to see why a judge's state of health is any more important than my own. His mental condition might possibly be of some interest—but that, of course, is never mentioned.

And now, what about some slight alterations to the penal code? After all, though we may have been lucky enough to dodge the law ourselves others have not been so fortunate perhaps. While we are all agreed that such crimes as destroying mothers-in-law, robbing banks and liquidating nasty old ladies who take snuffling pekes and poms to bed with them should be taken off the list, there are other crimes and punishments that most certainly should be added.

First of all, I would re-introduce the ducking-stool and the pillory for all nagging wives, scolds, gossips and scandal-mongers. Nagging is the most insidious form of slow torture known to man. It can easily transform a strong and healthy male into a cringing, spineless creature afraid of his own shadow, his existence only being tolerated so long as he brings home the "doings" every week and takes the dog out every night. Mischief-making, quizzing and back-biting are rampant in every street, but nobody does anything about it. A front door slams, a garden gate clicks, a car stops in the Avenue and every woman within hearing-radius drops her dust-pan, rushes into the front parlour and peeks through the curtains. Malicious gossip has caused innocent girls to take their own lives, yet these evil-minded sows cannot be touched by the law.

And isn't it time something was done about that hoary old principle of taking a life for a life, thus making the State a legalised murderer? I remember a case that was reported in the Press of two sons and their aged mother. One was a good, loving and dutiful son, the other a blackguard who bled his old mother of her small savings. Because the good son hit his evil brother on the head with a hammer he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment—for doing an act of filial kindness. Had he killed his brother he would have been hanged. That is a sample of British justice as it is to-day. To take a good life

in exchange for an evil life is considered *just* in English Law. The *value* of the lives concerned does not matter in the least.

Finally, as I am not paid a thousand a year for sitting on my back-side in Parliament, I do think some legal steps should be taken to guarantee that the tax-payers' money is not being frittered away. Why not empower the Speaker to inflict fines or even imprisonment for such offences as snoring during a debate on "Education in the Ju-Ju Islands". Sleeping is bad enough, but snoring is quite inexcusable. Crown-and-anchor or card-playing among the Back-benchers is another little matter that should not be overlooked. But what affects the tax-payers' pocket most is the prevailing epidemic of asking foolish questions.

An outbreak of Foot and Mouth disease among cattle is rightly regarded as a serious matter, but when it is confined to politicians who *talk* with their *feet* nothing is done about it. The Speaker of the House of Commons should be provided with a large gong upon which he would strike mightily, name the offender and call the penalty—anything from a round of drinks to six months' hard labour.

The following example as reported in the Press will explain what I mean and unless it is drastically checked other countries will become extremely doubtful concerning the mentality, if not the sanity, of our rulers.

"M.P. (who shall be nameless): 'Does free railway travel for M.P.s between their homes and constituencies include bus travel?'

Chancellor of the Exchequer: 'No. A bus is not a railway.'

Well . . . I mean to say . . . !

W. H. WOOD.

A BISHOP COMPLAINS

It has been my lot to read religious journals since I was a boy, and only rarely have I come across a real live Bishop ready to cross swords with an equally live Atheist. Most of our religious leaders prefer to pretend that there is no such thing as an Atheist, that if he calls himself an Atheist, he is a fool, for his proper designation should be Agnostic. And as a rule, this Agnosticism hides an aching heart for "true" Christianity. The argument runs that Agnosticism is a dreary creed at best, and the Agnostic knows it. Hence his support for the wonderful message of "our Lord"—a message which the Agnostic accepts if stripped of the miraculous. Few Agnostics have the temerity to reject Christ's teachings but, of course, if any do, they are quite beyond the pale of reason or even civilisation. I think this is not an unfair description of the kind of fairy tale sponsored by most bishops if, or when, they do condescend to admit that there are, not Atheists in the world, but Agnostics.

In a recent number of the "Church Times," Bishop Carey, D.D., puts out two columns on the "Stupidity of Unbelief," and finishes up with a "complaint" that "atheists and agnostics" are not so much bad as they are "stupid." And "it is a pity to be stupid, don't you think so?" It would prove most illuminating to learn how many of the Bishop's colleagues agree that the Atheists they have met are stupid. A far finer writer than Bishop Carey will ever be, the late Prof. Flint, was good enough to admit the very high intellectual character of the famous Atheists of his day, men like Bradlaugh and Holyoake, but the valiant and truthful Bishop no doubt has never read Flint. And after all, a lie or two in defence of religion is nothing grave; a Bishop will always be forgiven by the grace of our Lord.

Bishop Carey's article deals with the "proofs" in religion, and to show how to meet the stupid Atheist, he takes the Virgin Birth, "the most difficult to some," for his demonstration. First of all, he is careful to point out that the "absolute" proof is quite impossible. He quotes Plato who, in his "Republic," declares that "no sensible man can ask for exact

proof or truth of detail but that it all fits into the intuitions and experiences of a spiritual man." That is to say, anyone can come forward with a piece of drivel, and then complain if you do not believe it that it is not fair to ask for "exact" proof, and the drivel in question is vouched for by somebody else's "intuition." When I was a small boy, I fervently believed in Aladdin's lamp, my intuition told me that there must be the lamp still in existence somewhere, and therefore it was most unfair to ask me for "exact" proof. The story of Aladdin's lamp, the story of the Virgin Birth, the story of Jesus being carried about by a Devil, and thousands of similar yarns are in themselves just balderdash, and can never be proven either by "exactness" or by intuition. The story of Aladdin has, at least, some entertainment value, but most of the others can raise nothing but a wry smile at the credulity, superstition, and stupidity of a believer.

Bishop Carey is, as one would suspect, a wholehearted believer, a Fundamentalist with the mind of a Salvation Army lassie, and naturally, gifted in this way, he believes anything vouched for by God's Holy Word. Like the late Dean Burgon, he probably believes that every comma and dot in the Authorised Version is divinely inspired; and so Christ must have had a God for father. He calls Mary "the Holy Virgin, our Blessed Lady"—but what he ought to call her considering that she distinctly told Jesus that Joseph was his father—and she ought to know—I dare not think. However, you must not ask the Bishop for "practical proof," you must go by results. The final evidence for the Virgin Birth, for God (or a God) being the father of Jesus, for miracles in general, will be found in "the lives of saintly Christian people." I expect that there are some—for example, Bishop Carey himself; but even with "exact" proof I can hardly believe that they are so because of the Virgin Birth. I think this kind of "proof" is a precious example of a stupid Bishop.

But he goes further. Only the Christian religion he insists—I nearly said yells, but Bishops don't yell—could produce such wonderful people, among others, as "our Lady." Now this is news to me. If there is one thing insisted upon over and over again in every Christian work that I have ever read, it is that "our Lady" was a Jewess. It was Judaism that produced her. In fact, nearly all Jews everywhere also claim that Jesus was a Jew; and they are delighted to think that while they themselves refuse to recognise a God in him, all Christians worship him—a Jew—as a God. Did not Disraeli say that half Christendom worships a Jew, and the other half a Jewess? How Bishop Carey makes out that Mary was a Christian I cannot understand; but that may be, first, because I expect "exact" proof, and, second, because I am stupid.

The Bishop gives many names of people who were (I understand) transformed because they believed in the Virgin Birth and other miracles; though why he thinks this constitutes proof for me, I am not at all clear. He mentions St. Paul, and I hope my memory is not playing tricks with me but I cannot remember any reference to the Virgin Birth and Mary in the Epistles; and the Bishop adds, there are "a multitude no man can number of saints, known and unknown, including the larger number of simple people who read their Bible, tend their home, and treat their neighbour with affectionate goodwill." I like that word "simple" and I am sure that they must be very simple if they really believe the story of the Virgin Birth. All the same the number of simple people who do read their Bible these days appears to be getting less and less; and most Bishops regularly moan that even simple people do not read their Bibles as their fathers, or rather, as their grandparents did. Out of the eight millions of men in the Forces, hardly one had ever heard of Habbakuk; and quite a number of them seemed positively bewildered when asked who Christ was.

In the ultimate, Bishop Carey plumps for "the lives of Christians," the "final compelling factors," as proof of the Virgin Birth. It must be true if one is simple, one reads the

Bible, and one treats a neighbour with affectionate goodwill. And that settles the Virgin Birth.

You do get a little more "evidence" or "exact proof" however when it comes to the Resurrection. Did not hundreds of people see Jesus after he had "arisen"? And remember, warns the Bishop, "we have no proof whatsoever that they were untrustworthy" for they suffered for their convictions. Naturally, it never occurs to him that if the Gospel writers invented the story of the Resurrection, they also invented the witnesses and their suffering; it would not have been exactly proof if the invented witnesses had been untrustworthy. Bishop Carey would indeed be horrified to learn that there are even some blatant infidels who claim that the whole story of the early Church is pure invention—a farrago of nonsense; and that the story of Jesus with his miracles and devils and heavenly choir of angels and his apostles had no more reality than the story of Mr. Pickwick and his devoted band of followers.

Horrified or not, Bishop Carey bluntly tells us that he has no patience with "atheists and agnostics." And one of his bitter complaints against us is that we cannot see "purpose" in the Universe. It is all so plain and so clear to him, and therefore, why should it not be to us? Alas, we are so "stupid."

I think I would not be wrong in saying that the good Bishop has never met a genuine Atheist in his life, and fears one like the very Devil. I don't blame him. I think at his age and at his level of intellect, it would be dangerous. It is not such as he who will have to battle with the unbeliever, but the younger men who are now entering the Church. They at least know that it is a fight for survival, and that the cards are laid for the Atheist. If he is stupid and yet can so easily defeat the Christian, how much more stupid must be the religion of Christianity!

H. CUTNER.

SYMBOLS IN RELIGION

FISH AND FIG

Apart from the explanations of superstitions, symbol language is also valuable to the psycho-analyst, for whatever is suppressed in everyday life is apt to reappear in the guise of symbols—particularly in dreams, as Freud has proved. And the customary liking or disliking of fish during pregnancy is connected with sexual experiences.

The shape of fish recalls the eye, and both are v-symbols. Fish are consecrated to the Goddesses of Love whose day is Friday (fr. the Teut. goddess Frija, in Latin dies Veneris, etc.), cf. Ovid, Met. V. 331; hence fish ought to be the Friday meal. Eating of fish is said to further love and conception.

The Phoenicians had a fish-shaped god, called Dagon=corn; yet dag mean fish and the verb dagah=procreate, reproduce.

The most striking v-symbol, however, is the fig (with the date as its opposite).

With the Arabian tribe of Banu Hanifa the idol was made of a dough of butter, milk and dates. The seventh day after an Arab mother has given birth to a baby, guests are invited and treated to cobnuts, almonds, figs, dates and the like; and as soon as she is able to get up, salt, lentils, etc., are strewn around against evil spirits.

Buddha—personification of an ancient Moon god—terminates his meditations under a holy fig tree (ficus religiosa). Romulus and Remus, the Roman twins, having been exposed in an ark like Moses (Ex. ii. 5), were washed against another fig tree, the ficus ruminalis. There they were fed by a she-wolf.

Tradition will have it that the tree of knowledge, from which Adam and Eve ate, was not an apple tree but a fig tree, for they became cognisant of their nakedness after that. From the wood of a fig tree the image of Osiris was carved, so was that of the Greek Priapos, son of Aphrodite and Dionysos. In this connection the sign of a fig was taken as a means of warding off evil.

P. G. R.

ACID DROPS

A writer in the "Universe" gives us to understand that the English and the Roman Catholics are devoting their powers to the conversion of England—England it may be remembered means England, Scotland and Wales. Of course, in the struggle some of the Anglicans will go over to the Roman Church. To all Freethinkers there is no difference in kind. If every Protestant joined the Roman Church the situation would remain as it is. The battle—Atheism versus Catholicism—will be just where it was. Perhaps it would make the struggle better understood. The Protestants are truthful enough in this case. The Roman Church, lying to the end, works on the principle that once a Roman always a Roman, unless one has been excommunicated, a very rare thing now. A Roman member may proclaim the fact that he is an Atheist, the R.C. pays no attention.

The writer we have mentioned says definitely, "It is hard enough to convert an Agnostic, but it is far more difficult to convert a Protestant." We can believe that to be the truth. An Agnostic may stand for almost anything. The thing he does not like about religion is to say "Yes" or "No." Religiously, and to Christians, he may get anywhere. So far we have been guided by the Roman Catholic press—in England, because it is to some degree different in a Roman centre. But we are not surprised that the editor of the paper has permitted a little publicity to some rather unusual facts. A Catholic who signs "G.E." says that:—

The Catholic record of intolerance, harshness and persecution, memories of bloody Mary, etc. . . the intolerant rule of various Catholic sovereigns and their governments, such as some of the Bourbons, are not forgotten. Moreover, in our own time Fascists and Phalangists have grown up and flourished in Catholic soils. . . Many outside of the Church doubt our sincerity when we stand forth as champions of liberty.

It is not often that a Roman Catholic is permitted to talk so openly. We might also note that the Church and Mussolini worked together quite pleasantly until things looked black. Then the Pope began to hedge.

Apropos of all this, we may repeat from Rhys David's "Buddhism," just a small judgment of "Buddha," the Godless: "Through the long history of Buddhism, which is the history of more than half the people in the world for more than two thousand years, the Buddhists have been uniformly tolerant, have appealed, not to the sword, but to intellectual and moral persuasion. We have not seen a single instance through the whole period even, of one of those religious persecutions which loom so largely in the history of the Christian Church. Peacefully the Reformation began, and in peace, so far as its own action is concerned, the Buddhist Church has continued till to-day."

Religion moves, at least it appears to do so, perhaps because all things must move more or less. But a recent issue of the "Times" notices that Church leaders find themselves in want of £14,000 a year to make people realise what Christianity really is. But the curious part of all this is that after many, many centuries there is no general agreement as to what is Christianity. The first notice we get displays numbers of followers of Jesus without general agreement as to what constitutes real Christianity. It is not a case of development, it is purely and simply a matter of puzzlement, and a case of if Christians cannot hang together they will hang separately. It is not a matter of evolution, it is sheer quarrelling as to what is meant by Christian doctrines. Even those who believe them are not certain as to what they mean. The plain fact is that in spite of all that can be done and said, Christianity is steadily dying.

Most readers will remember that only a few years ago most of our leading priests were counting on considerable help from the press. But the main consideration of newspaper owners is whether what is printed will please the general public. The expected big burst of religion in the press has not taken place.

The comment from the paper owners to Christian advocates is that religion is not lively enough. The great Christian gamble has not arrived. It is true that one of our leading politicians is fond of going to church and also of preaching, and he thinks that religion will save the country. It would be interesting to see him apply his religion in the House of Commons. That would really be something worth seeing. Even some of the Church leaders are beginning to say that Christianity should have something better than a gamble on press advertising. All things considered, it looks as if God and his saints are simply dying out.

Another similar warning comes from the Editor of the "Northamptonshire Telegraph." He says that "morals have broken down," for every war put social life backwards. Whether a war is inevitable or not, the one thing certain is that morality sinks to a lower level. You cannot take millions of soldiers, whose main aim is to destroy, without lowering the play of life. There has never yet been a war that has not left human nature on a lower level. If we have had a worse result following from this war, it is because social freedom has been curtailed, and the destruction of life and freedom has been worse than usual. Murder will out, whether it is murder in the interests of better aims or the consequence of lowering the general level of life. But not only will war show its real character sooner or later, it will also demonstrate the weakness of religion in civilised human society.

The Bishop of Southwell seems to feel that he has the welfare of mankind in his hands. Of course, he does not say that in so many words, but if what he says does not mean that, his declarations have no meaning. For example, he says that we must make up our minds "whether the nations will fight for a war of extermination, in which case there can be no hope of human recovery, or will, by God's help, rebuild the world in peace. It has to be one or the other." Well, if we work hard to be as foolish as possible, and gabble about gods, then we see no promise of the world becoming better. But fortunately these bishops and priests are steadily losing their hold on the people, and, given time, we may become sensible enough to use brains instead of slops and put in proper occupation the powers of man.

We do not know who is the Editor of the "Evening Chronicle"—Newcastle-on-Tyne. But he has more courage than the average editor possesses where religion is concerned. For example, noting the fall of Christianity among ordinary people, he says, quite truly, that one reason for the emptiness of the churches is that the poor are not so dependent on the parsons for help. It was the prime duty of those who "looked after the poor" to see that the people were kept quiet. To-day, the poorer people are not dependent on the Churches for food, which used to keep the people on good terms with the Church. The Editor of the Newcastle paper well sums up the situation by saying:—

The Church is very largely left with purely spiritual matters, and even there the competing interests of mass entertainments and sport must be taken into account.

That we are not speaking in the air we may call as a witness the late Bishop of London, Winnington-Ingram. As a young man he was appointed to Bethnal Green, a very poor district, and Ingram was fond of telling his listeners that he did not take a shilling for his labour in the East End. That was quite true, but by some lapse of memory he never told the public that he was receiving £2,000 annually, and giving nothing in return. That might surely count as something. But on one occasion, when he was collecting for the East End, he reminded the audience that if it were not for the money distributed to the poor in the East, the West would not find things so comfortable. We agree with the Editor of the "Evening Chronicle." The function of the Churches was to protect the rich against the outbreaks of the poor. That kept the Churches busy. To-day the care of the poor, etc., is being attended to by the Government. "The poor" no longer are so dependent upon the bribery of the Churches. Things are changing, and not wholly in the interests of the Churches.

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SUGAR PLUMS

It is not often that it is given to us to achieve our ambition, but Mr. Joseph Lewis—Editor of the "Freethinker" (U.S.A.) and Secretary of the Thomas Paine Memorial Committee—may be proud of his work in connection with the statue erected in memory of Thomas Paine in Paris, and unveiled on January 29 at the Cité Universitaire in the presence of French and American officials, and representatives of the French Freethought Societies and students of the Universities. Mr. Joseph Lewis, in dedicating and presenting the statue (designed by Berglum) said, "Although the statue is not an official gift from the American Government, it is nevertheless, a gift from liberty-loving Americans." It was accepted on behalf of the French people by M. A. Watelet, Vice-President of the Paris Municipal Council. The statue stands facing the University for American and foreign students, and the inscription is a characteristic description of the World citizen, Thomas Paine, "An Englishman by birth, French citizen by decree, and American by adoption." Not many men have left their mark so deeply implanted on England, France and America.

It is to the credit of the Christian Church that the one thing it has never forgotten to preach is the gospel of truth, love and brotherhood. The Church may have commenced its career with forging numbers of documents, and continued by tampering with the writings of such classical works as suited its purpose; it may have made itself notorious among the Pagans for the hatred with which its followers assailed each other, and for the lies they told about each other; it may have made torture a settled and customary feature of legal procedure, substituted miracles for medicine, relic-worship for sanitation, and blazed its way across the world over the bodies of tortured and murdered Jews and heretics. It may have done its utmost to suppress liberty of thought and speech wherever it had planted itself, threatened the security of the family with the obscene doctrine of celibacy, and desolated whole districts in its attempt to weed out heresy. It may have given to war a religious sanction, and to intolerance a religious justification; it may have slandered unbelievers living and dead—all these things it may have done, and done consistently and persistently, but let us be just. It has never ceased to preach the gospel of truth, love and brotherhood.

Newcastle-on-Tyne readers are reminded that Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture for the local N.S.S. branch to-day (Sunday) in the Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street, at 7 p.m., on "Nature, Man and God." The speaker is looking forward to meeting many old friends in the area, and the subject should be attractive to new ones.

It is reported that there is a great development of Atheism in Germany with our men, but more so among the Germans. We are not surprised in either case. The English are having their eyes opened, and Germans may well want to know what have they to thank God for. We should never forget that Hitler, with all his faults, really believed that he was an instrument in the hands of God.

The "Catholic Herald" is not quite so ready to copy the absurdities of other Catholic papers in describing the capers of "Our Lady of Fatima." But the "Catholic Herald" advises those who wish to see these "miracles" that they must get their tickets—from Dublin—very soon. We have been wondering whether they would sell us a ticket, on the condition that if none of the miracles occurs money will be returned. We think that this would be a good thing for the Roman Church. It would create a sensation all over the Christian world. We would be specially desirous to see the Sun get from its orbit and dance up and down. The pamphlets advertising these strange doings used to be much on sale in London. But they were removed. They were getting too much even for Catholics.

SCHOPENHAUER'S VIEWS ON RELIGION

WITH their one volume edition of the complete "Essays of Schopenhauer" translated by Bailey Saunders, the New York publishers, the Willey Book Company have furnished the student with fine reading matter. Unlike most German prose writers, our essayist was both a stylist and epigrammatist. Thus, his works are always attractive and their clarity is most marked. He hated compromise; was most outspoken in his references to religion, and regarded all tampering with truth with scorn and contempt.

Schopenhauer was born in 1788 and died in 1860, shortly after the Darwinian revolution began. This explains his somewhat antiquated views concerning the earth's antiquity and the comparatively short period he assigned for man's existence as a distinct species. Still, he was fully aware of man's close resemblance to the higher apes and expressed his belief in their kinship.

As Saunders observes in a prefatory note, Schopenhauer in tracing all modes of existence to natural forces, anticipated modern scientific conclusions "To this may be added," he proceeds, "that in combating the methods of Fichte and Hegel, who spun a system out of abstract ideas, and in discarding it for one based on observation and experience, Schopenhauer can be said to have brought down philosophy from heaven to earth."

Some of Schopenhauer's most pungent criticisms of theology occur in the celebrated dialogue in which Demopheles represents the religious apologist who bases most of his claims on the political services of religion and the consolations which people in general derive from their creeds, especially in times of trouble and distress.

Philalethes, on the other hand, is a convinced Freethinker who is concerned with truth alone, and this he exalts above all expediency or time-serving piety. But Demopheles contends that creeds, rites and ceremonies must be adapted to the inferior understanding of the masses. For, while the majority necessarily spend their lives in drudgery, religion gives a glow to their journey, from birth to death.

His opponent, however, points out that the sacerdotal system devised by authority for popular consumption is the only one permitted. All other views are, or were, ruthlessly repressed. The religion of love shamelessly disregarded its own teachings. Well may Philalethes ask: "Is not a little too much to have tolerance and forbearance preached by what is intolerance and cruelty itself? Think of the heretical tribunals, inquisitions, religious wars, crusades, Socrates' cup of poison, Bruno's and Vanini's death in the flames. Is all this to-day quite a thing of the past? How can genuine philosophical effort, sincere

search for truth, the noblest calling of the noblest men be let and hindered more completely than by a conventional system of metaphysics enjoying a State monopoly, the principles of which are impressed into every head in earliest youth, so earnestly, so deeply, and so firmly, that, unless the mind is miraculously elastic they remain indelible? In this way the groundwork of all healthy reason is once for all deranged; that is to say, the capacity for original thought and unbiased judgment, which is weak enough in itself, is, in regard to those subjects to which it might be applied, for ever paralysed and ruined."

Demopheles merely remarks that this plainly implies that people won't dismiss their traditional beliefs in order to embrace those of his critic.

Philalethes retorts that these cherished prepossessions lack insight. No wonder, when the most solemn nonsense is paraded before children as if it were ascertained truth and, indeed, with greater assurance than anything else. As for ourselves, Schopenhauer, perhaps not without a spice of irony, writes: "Look at the English. Here is a nation favoured above all others by nature, endowed more than all others with discernment, power of judgment . . . made ridiculous by their stupid ecclesiastical superstition . . . For this they have to thank the circumstance that education is in the hands of the clergy." This was penned a century since, but the moral remains the same.

In answer to this, Demopheles contends that the multitude must be kept in order and that, for this purpose, allegories and even downright fictions are essential. Practical methods are far superior to theoretical.

But in replying to this special pleading, Philalethes declares: "It is *false* that state, justice, law, cannot be upheld without the assistance of religion and its dogmas; and that justice and public order need religion as a necessary complement if legislative enactments are to be carried out. It is *false* were it repeated a hundred times. An effective and striking argument to the contrary is afforded by the ancients, especially the Greeks. They had nothing at all of what we understand by religion. They had no sacred documents, no dogmas to be learned, its principles to be inculcated to the young . . . Merely in the case of an open denial of the existence of the gods was a penalty imposed, and that on account of an insult offered to the State."

Then Demopheles urges that the uncultured masses are like blind men who must be led, but Philalethes hails the coming day when the people will become too enlightened to tolerate pious frauds. Demopheles demurs to this and remarks that his critic has no conception of the invincible stupidity of the crowd.

Still, Philalethes reaffirms his faith in progress when, with the growth of enlightenment, religion will die a natural death. Then he is told that he speaks as if philosophers had truth in a cupboard all ready to hand out. But Philalethes retorts that if truth is still to seek, this is chiefly owing to the obstructions placed in her path by priestly obscurantism in every age and clime.

In answer to the contention that theology has important utilitarian advantages, Philalethes asserts that this implies the principle that the end justifies the means. "A system of deception," he avers, "a pack of lies would be a strange method of inculcating virtue. The flag to which I have taken the oath is truth; I shall remain true to it whether I succeed or not."

Truth, his opponent declares, is secondary in religion. We must consider its "furtherance of good and kindly feelings, its guidance in conduct, the support and consolation it gives to suffering humanity in life and death." Philalethes remarks that that kind of argument would have frustrated Luther when he denounced the sale of indulgences. "How many a one got consolation from the letters of indulgence, a consolation that nothing else could give, a complete tranquillity; so he departed

with the fullest confidence in the packet of them which he held in his hand in the hour of death, convinced that they were ^{so} many cards of admission to all the nine heavens."

Demopheles reminds his adversary that before you remove religion you must find something superior to replace it. But Philalethes replies that to destroy falsehood is to give and not to take. "Knowledge that a thing is false is a truth. Error always does harm; sooner or later it will bring mischief to the man who harbours it."

With damnable iteration, Demopheles contends that faith is essential to social stability even if it is unreasonable. That princes employ superstition as a support for their thrones, his opponent takes for granted. Now that the old methods of penalising dissent have gone out of fashion, other methods must be adopted in our more tolerant age. "A certain amount of general ignorance is the condition of all religions, the element alone in which they can exist. For, as you know, religions are like glow-worms; they shine only when it is dark."

Many other themes relating to religion are discussed, but the Freethought protagonist remains victorious all along the line and the disputants then part on friendly terms.

In his essay, "The Christian System," Schopenhauer is at times even more drastic than in his Dialogue. When discussing predestination he describes this doctrine as *revolting*. With reference to the alleged Fall of Man and its appalling consequences he comments: "This is a result that must have been foreseen by him who made mankind, and, who, in the first place, made them no better than they are, and, secondly, set a trap for them into which he must have known they would fall; for he made the whole world, and nothing is hidden from him. According to this doctrine, then, God created out of nothing a weak race prone to sin, in order to give them over to endless torment. And as a last characteristic, we are told that this God, who prescribes forbearance and forgiveness for every fault, exercises none himself, but does the exact opposite. . . . So that, on this view, the whole race is destined to eternal torture, and created expressly for this end, the only exception being those few persons who are rescued by election of grace from what motive one does not know."

To mollify this atrocious teaching of St. Augustine, Pope Gregory I in the sixth century elaborated the theory of purgatory which, according to the scholarly Pierre Bayle, had already been enunciated by the Gnostic, Origen. This doctrine is, of course, now incorporated with the Roman faith and has presumably proved extremely profitable to the priesthood.

T. F. PALMER.

EASTERSONG

Now, the season clicks the switch,
the automatic conscience pricks
the mind. The mind,
in turn, surveys the merchandise,
inspects the neighbours, neighbours' wives.
The sweet, the swelling chords upraise
the raptured, soulful faces. They gaze
to God, to God
well garnished with haloes and lilies,
well screened by mysteries and holies.

Christ is risen in the Sunday supplements.
Blast the trumpets, beat the Drums. Incense
will rise—and prayers ascend that weather will not fail
to favour the march of the part-time knights of the
Holy Grail.

C. J. STEVENS.

THE SWORD MAY DESCEND !

A FAR-SEEING man was Charles Bradlaugh. He voiced his thoughts as they occurred, and tried his utmost to make them familiar to all men. Since his day, many have sought to elaborate according to the times, and much reform has thus been accomplished. That a citizen shall be free to think and form his opinion, voice his thoughts, and read what he likes, without fear and trembling at the thought of incurring penalties for annoying others who fear to accept such liberty. Bradlaugh and his like fought superstition with knowledge, Freethinkers to-day follow that trail. But many Freethinkers to-day fight with nicely padded gloves, and pull punches, and the opposition has awakened to the fact.

A Bill is about to be brought before Parliament to be known as the "Criminal Justice Bill." There are many branches dealt with, many clauses and amendments, but at least one of the latter, by Mr. Hector Hughes, K.C., should appear in black letters in every Freethinker's diary. Bradlaugh foresaw that the final battle would be staged between Atheism and Roman Catholicism. The writing is on the wall. Here it is, Atheists, read it, memorise it, *fight it!*

"Every person who, with deliberate and malicious intention of outraging the Religious feelings of any class of his Majesty's subjects by words, written or spoken, or by visible representation, insults or attempts to insult the religion or religious beliefs of that class, shall be guilty of an offence, and on conviction thereof liable to imprisonment for any term not exceeding five years, or to a fine not exceeding one hundred pounds or to both such imprisonment and fine."

Halfway through the twentieth century A.D., this makes one *gasp!* Observant Freethinkers have long noted the gradual trend that Christian denominations, which, although at loggerheads on doctrinal matters, are combining to defend the Master Superstition against the forces of knowledge and enlightenment. Popes, Cardinals, Archbishops, Moderators, Salvation Army Commissioners, all voicing the same parrot-cry, "Religious Liberty!"

The Vatican plays a dual role. The Roman Church being the most universal, the Pope has adopted the rôle of Generalissimo to direct the combined effort. But His Holiness has probably an additional aim. He sees, or thinks he sees, an opportunity to absorb the other sects of the Christian world, and thus eliminate opposition to his rule from those who are "infidel" excepting where they are of use in the suppression of Atheistic teaching. In this country, Mr. Hughes' amendment would give the Roman Church a legal backing which, as history proves, it would use with tyrannous completeness. Generally applied, just think what such a law would entail!

Some of the finest and sanest literature would be removed from our midst. Science, which outrages many religious feelings, would be practically controlled, and many of its benefits in theory and practice, lost. Freethought societies of course would be taboo, and their funds, printing plants, etc., confiscated. Not to mention Gestapo activities against leaders and members. In a word, back to the fifteenth century!

Sounds drastic, certainly, but the intention of the clause is obvious. There is no mention of outraging the feelings of the non-religious, so its full force is intended against them.

Hearken back a little. Mussolini survived on the same dope. Hitler on coming to power made similar laws against all critics of his creed, and Franco, right now, is operating criminal laws with an almost identical background.

Yes! The amendment of Mr. Hector Hughes, K.C., bears every hall mark of the Great Lying Church!

For some time now, the Vatican has been identifying Atheism solely as Communism, despite the fact that it by no means

follows that all Atheists are Communists by political persuasion. However, Communism has a bad name politically in most countries, therefore according to the Pope's vision a suitable vehicle for Atheism. Thus, the holy gentleman feels sure of great support in the political field, by making Atheism and Communism synonymous. And that, one might assume, is where Mr. Hughes steps in!

This is not the place for political discussion as such, but one must face the fact that without political influences laws can neither be made nor revoked. The doctrine of bolstered-up monarchies, sawdust Caesars, rule by birth, white over colour, is but a mere chapter in the Book of Subjection. Masses must be retained as tools to be used for the purposes designed by Hierarchies, Aristocracies, and Plutocrats to the end of consolidating their rule and joint ownership of the Earth!

"Theirs not to reason why!"

Thanks, however, to the efforts of men like Paine, Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, J. M. Robertson, Foote, our present editor, and a host of other great progressives, masses are now beginning to "reason why." They are reasoning the congregations out of the Churches, the Lord's Day Kill-joys into ridicule, and the common man is demanding his "Kingdom come on Earth" with an ever-increasing vehemence! He is prepared to make it with his own hands, and, indeed, has the courage and ability to do so. During the last decade alone, the ordinary citizen has suffered intolerably, that he may at last qualify himself for facilities to produce his own world *here*.

In our land this ability is now being proved, but, at the present time, when the moulding of his future is imminent, he is being handicapped and restricted by lay reading rulers who seem to be more interested in prayer-mongering. Compared with this, those who govern certain countries abroad have seen to it that their peoples are able to gain the full fruits of their work and some recompense for their hardships in the years recently passed. It is significant that in these few countries religious institutions have been deprived of their privileges. Whilst they still function, equal facility is given for the other point of view. Feelings or no feelings, people are being taught what lies behind religion, and secular knowledge grows apace. This is real religious freedom, equality of right for religious and non-religious alike, but superstition can never stand up to knowledge on a basis of equality. These will be the first countries in which it will die out.

Religion has always sought to impede progress, and led by the Vatican a world-wide campaign to stem, by force if necessary, this tide of human progress in several lands is well advanced. Every unit has its job. Cinemas, theatres, trade unions, professions, police, etc., have all their "Catholic Associations" working within the whole. The core of corruption together with Bible-punching allies of various non-Catholic creeds. Mr. Hector Hughes, K.C., is doing his job to fit in with the whole vast programme.

Now, make no mistake, there are enough Biblicals in Parliament to pass this clause easily even should the non-religious members strike hard, and they may even put party before progress!

The Tories want to "Set the People Free!" The Liberals, profess to be anti-Fascist. The Communists are too short-sighted to see the menace, and thus the stage is well set for a Labour Party, backed by its opposition, to lay the foundation stone of a real Fascist Britain!

Most of the displaced persons imported since hostilities ceased as also the inmates of P.O.W. camps, plus the Rehabilitation Corps, are Roman Catholics.

With the help of these and the law the ghost of Judge Jeffries is about to walk again.

And so from atomic research we go back to a flat earth with the sun moving round it.

Thinkers, lovers of liberty, the answer rests with you!

Get those gloves off, and fight!

G. L. C.

WEDDING CUSTOMS AND SEXUAL TABOO

MR. J. HUMPHREY'S letter in the first January issue, though correct in its general outline, wants a few explanations in particular.

Sex relations underwent changes along with social relations. Roughly speaking, these were the main features:

Savage Horde: Mating within the Gens (Endogamy).

Barbaric Tribe: Marriage outside the Gens (Exogamy) according to highly intricate systems.

In no way can it be said: "Originally, marriage was a capture." The war booty, including women, belonged to the community as a whole. He who was anxious to own a particular woman from among the captured ones individually, had to compensate the tribe, viz., he had to give presents to the tribal chief as the representative of the community for the cession of the property rights on that particular female slave.

With the rise of husbandry the gentile bonds broke down and gave way to local organisations, i.e., totemist kinship was replaced by relations to the field.

When with barbarians and at the threshold of civilisation, baby girls were exposed to death, this seems to bear out that girls represented an economic burden. (Likewise, too plentiful crops are being destroyed for the maintenance of prices.) With a scarcity in girls, the young men could be induced to pay in some way or other.

Where woman means an additional labour power, it is acquired through payment in kind or service; this compensation was paid (a) to the family who was to cede that labour power, (b) to its patriarch and at last (c) to the individual bride's father. With wives a luxury, the bride's father in his turn must pay the dowry to the prospective husband as a contribution to the maintenance of his daughter.

Rape (not capture), i.e., robbing of brides, was a way to dodge bridal purchase which frequently was beyond the economic capacity of the young men. The "best man" is the survival of the friend—or friends—of the youngster who aided him in his venture, and there are still customs alive where the bridegroom has to fight mock battles with the village youth when carrying away his bride. Another survival is the honeymoon-trip. Usually, the offended tribe from whom the girl was kidnapped, was appeased by token presents.

Under capitalism, things are being settled between individuals. Under condition of exploitation, woman has turned a privately owned object for sexual exploitation. Hence monogamy. As democracy, in the first place, means nothing else but freedom among and for the ruling classes, monogamy, too, is, in its first place, applied to the male exploiter and against the exploited partner, woman. It is a form, not substance of sexual union.

That our kind of marriage is a means for the protection of private property is borne out by the fact that, at several times, the propertied classes only were allowed to enter into legal wedlock (for instance, the patricians in early Rome). With the oppression of woman, the sexes are opposing each other in a kind of class struggle, overt or covert. To blunt the edge of class feelings, justice is said to be a mere matter of heavenly reward. In the same way, the Church maintains that marriages are being concluded in Heaven (they are practically indissoluble in Catholic countries). Women, doubly exploited, therefore are bent to excel in religious matters.

Offspring, in a natural way, meant additional labour power, hence wealth. Production capacity increased in society, yet with individual appropriation remaining so, children cease to be a factor of wealth; they grow an economic burden rather and a reason for the splitting up of property. This results in the growth of religions of a pessimistic outlook inimical to natural life and sex. With illegitimate children a particular burden

to the community, marriage is declared "holy" and restricted to the production of "legal" offspring. Tacitly, the well-to-do's restrict their progeny, whilst the poor cannot afford the means for birth control and provide—as "proletarians" = the prolific ones—the mass of sweaters and cannon fodder.

In our opinion, sexual intercourse is the main characteristic of marriage in one way or other. With higher barbarians, on the other hand, where food provision is less stabilised, there is free intercourse before marriage, and common consumption of meals is considered the proper ritual of marriage; this means that a given couple, eating together in public, profess to have a common pursuit of interests and, therefore, are decided to share all means of subsistence in common. This aspect of our wedding dinner became obscured, so have all old customs connected with wedding, which are nothing else but symbols of former fertility rites.

PERCY G. ROY.

JACQUES MARITAIN

IN reading Catholic literature it should be remembered that although we are faced with usual or familiar words or phrases never by any chance have these usual or familiar meanings. The difficulty is always that of trying to make out what it is all about. An interesting example is "Science and Wisdom" by Jacques Maritain. The title might lead one to expect something very different.

It might at first appear that he is concerned with modern problems and that he is suggesting a speculative metaphysical moral philosophy in search of a solution. But one gets a better understanding if the book is read *backwards*. For he commences with his conclusions, his reasons are found at the end, and his method comes in between. If he appears to be considering the limitations of modern science and its failure to find a satisfactory morality, that is really part of his method and is not the first stage in his reasoning. There is no need for a detailed consideration of the "mystical notions" of Einstein and Lorenz, nor the mathematical symbolism of Poincaré, Whitehead and Russell. These have only a bare mention. His approach is eclectic.

We have said the book should be read backwards. For instance, towards the end will be found quotations from St. Thomas Aquinas on definition and conceptualism, with comments. This explains why he is so very, very careful in his terminology and phraseology. He does not refer to natural philosophy or natural science, but to "the philosophy of nature" and the "sciences of phenomena." It would not do to allow reference to any thing that might suggest natural or scientific law. Maybe Catholic readers might inquire further. But there is another reason; this is the first stage in his method. The use of such terminology is important, for it identifies nature with existence and suggests also that science has failed to discover existence, the "thing in itself," so that the problem is an existential one.

This enables him to bring together philosophy and theology in an ontological scheme, thus rectifying the post-cartesian separation of philosophy and theology which were closely associated in the scholasticism of the middle ages. The separation in the modern world, of science, philosophy and theology, must be replaced by union in the Mystery of the Incarnation; in the union of the Church. So, for him, the word science simply means knowledge, and of this there are three kinds; ordinary knowledge; metaphysical, speculative or moral knowledge, that is, knowledge of right and wrong; and knowledge of the divine or divine knowledge. There are also three corresponding kinds of wisdom. All being considered existentially.

In applying metaphysics, that is "speculative analogy," he builds up a system, with solid body at the base, above which

we have, such as, colour; though this can be calculated in terms of frequency, it still is, for us, colour; above this, we have, such as, movement; although this is found only with bodies that move, movement itself is abstract. And so upwards we come to soul, also found in connection with bodies, yet transcendental. Here we have a glimpse of pure being, which is seen at the apex as Pure Being, Pure Act, etc., etc. So we have a "hierarchy" of being, varying in degrees of "perfection." And, though man may strive upwards, he is powerless without the descending grace. With this system we have Absolute Truth at the top and pragmatic truth at the bottom, and it enables us to judge the "purity and chastity of science." As we are dealing with human beings we have the difference between theological humanism and the common or garden variety. And the Pure, etc., etc., at the top, is a *person*.

It is clear from this farrago of nonsense that anything is possible with "speculative analogy." And all seems plain sailing until we come to consider "philosophy in faith." It is not simply that science has no room for faith; that there is a gap to be filled. The real problem is whether there is room for philosophy in *the* faith. Can there be such a thing as Christian philosophy? To allow speculative analogy is to admit a doubt as to absolute truth. Yet plainly theology has been unable to prevent philosophic and scientific development, and clearly there is a need for reconciliation. But how is this to be achieved? How can speculation and doubt be reconciled with certainty?

As theology is in possession of absolute truth, what degree of freedom is to be allowed to philosophy? Is philosophy to be subservient to theology? Perhaps, subordinated to, or subordinated to, or infra-positional to; some word should be found. For although "speculative analogy" is needed, theology cannot be subservient to philosophy. The problem is even more awkward in "reflections on morality." For theology has knowledge of mortal sin, venial sin, original sin, and the rest. Perhaps theology should act in an advisory capacity. But that does not seem satisfactory, for we are here concerned with "moral theology."

Despite the philosophical terminology, we can see how ticklish the problem is if we remember that we have an ontological question. Concerning "pure being," the primary term is not being but pure. The degrees of perfection are degrees of purity. We must remember that the antithesis is not that of being and non-being, but of purity and impurity, that is, of corruption. It is not a question of fine and subtle degrees of truth, it concerns the faith. We are not concerned with a theoretical, but with a supremely practical problem. In spite of the unreserved rejection of philosophical pragmatism, we find ourselves tied up in the question of what is to be considered "speculatively practical," and what, "practically practical."

The book certainly is concerned with a modern problem. And our philosopher is suggesting that there is a need for a modern Angelic Doctor to square modern science with Catholic theology, just as St. Thomas Aquinas did with Aristotle in the Middle Ages. The book is interesting, not only for subtle reasoning from conflicting doctrines, as from St. Thomas Aquinas and St. John of the Cross, but also as an indication of Catholic mentality and organisation. It is noticeable that ideas of impurity and corruption are only there by implication; though there is mention of angels, there is none of either the Devil or Hell.

But perhaps the most interesting point is that about three-parts of the case is directed to theology, and, as shown in the annex at the end of the book, objections to it come from reverend Fathers in God. We begin with science and end with theology. It seems difficult to see where wisdom comes in.

H. H. PREECE.

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OBITUARY

JOHN HENRY MINETT

By the death of John Henry Minett, the N.S.S. loses a very loyal member and generous supporter. His membership of the Society goes back many years. On retirement from business life, he took up residence at Seaton, in Devonshire, but he never lost interest in the Freethought Movement. With a well-balanced judgment, fine character, and cheerful outlook, he was a very desirable companion. His married life was particularly happy, and his widow, also an esteemed member of the N.S.S., has suffered a grievous loss. The remains were cremated at Woking Crematorium, Surrey, on February 5, and a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary before an assembly of relatives and friends.

R. H. R.

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, February 17, 7 p.m.: "The Social Basis of Primitive Religion," MEYER FORTES, M.A., Ph.D.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Reason as the Psychological Ideal," Mrs. A. BLANCO-WHITE, O.B.E.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Trade Unionism," Mr. PRICE WILLIAMS (A.E.U.).

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Have We Liberty in England?" Mr. J. BARTHOLOMEW, B.A.

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St.).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Palestine—The Arab Case," Mr. SAMMIR TABER.

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (Boar's Head Hotel, Southgate).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Why I Became a Roman Catholic," Mr. H. A. J. PEARMAIN, A.L.C.D.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Has Britain Turned Danger Corner?" Mr. GEORGE GREEN.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Some Aspects of the Education Act," Miss A. L. BULLEY (Neston).

Newcastle Branch N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, Arcade, Pilgrim St.).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Nature, Man and God," Mr. R. H. ROSETH (General Secretary, N.S.S.).

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "A Visit to Germany's Russian Zone," Mr. GORDON SHAFFER.

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