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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Truth and Falsehood

ALL of us have been told in our youth that honesty is the best policy. In a large and general sense, the maxim expresses a truth. Given time, truth will triumph over falsehood; honesty over dishonesty. Ultimately, there must be a coincidence between actions which produce pleasure and those which promote life, since in no other way could life be perpetuated. But meanwhile, exceptions to the rule are not difficult to find, and they give one "furiously to think." If we do not always see the wicked flourishing like the "green bay tree," we do see a number of them getting through life with a tolerable measure of comfort. The wicked often wear fine raiment while the virtuous sit in rags. The successful swindler flaunts his success in the light of day while his victim hides himself from the public gaze. Triumphant rascality, having acquired wealth, retires on its laurels, and ends life in an atmosphere of unctuous respectability. Parsons preach lengthy sermons over the body of the pious millionaire, and hurry the corpse of the poor man away with a stereotyped service that betrays an obvious desire to be done with it as quickly as possible. If it is as difficult for a rich man to get into heaven as it is for a camel to get through the eye of a needle, one can only suppose that the camels must be of a microscopic size, or the needles of a kind that could be used as flagstaves should occasion arise.

But when people talk about honesty being the best policy, they appear to have, in a Christian country, little more in mind than the cheaper, commoner forms of dishonesty, which, when all is said and done, are not of a very serious description. They have in mind the dishonesty that consists in the stealing of a watch or the non-payment of a debt, and with that their concern seems to stop. It never appears to dawn upon them that beyond this religion of malpractice, there exists another of a far more serious nature. Measured by results, the profession of beliefs that one knows to be false, the refraining from speaking the truth as one sees it concerning certain institutions, are far more disastrous than what one may call commercial dishonesty. The wrong inflicted by the stealing of a watch or a purse stops with the action, or at least, it does not extend beyond a very limited circle. But the man who tampers with truth, who conforms to established beliefs because he wishes to stand well with his fellows, is helping to lower the whole moral tone of society. It must indeed be always true that the worst forms of wrong-doing are beyond reach of the law. Against the thief or murderer society can always protect itself. The attack is open and invites reprisals. The greatest social danger must always come from those who, while breaking no written law, are daily and hourly outraging those principles upon which the higher life of society depends.

"Happiness," said Spinoza, "is not the reward of virtue, it is virtue itself." To one of Spinoza's serene detachment of mind, the consciousness of doing right would be enough. But all are not cast in his heroic mould, and with the mass, the knowledge that the world looked down upon certain opinions, and even punishes their profession, is enough to sap character in many ways. From the time of Socrates to our own day, it has been so much the custom for mentally honest people to suffer for their opinions, that the majority see nothing wrong in it. Indeed, if one may judge from the way in which it is quietly assumed that the minority *must* suffer, or that genius must expect to be misunderstood, it might almost seem a beneficent act of Providence that it should be so. Meanwhile, the majority smile at those who are inclined to stand by their opinions with contemptuous pity, and a hardly disguised admiration for their own superior astuteness in pulling with the tide. Society is always more tolerant towards its intellectual cowards than it is towards its intellectual heroes. It is even fixed as a canon of good taste that established beliefs should not be rudely disturbed, and one need not search far for instances that to do so is clearly regarded as the very worst of judgment. That the believer will risk material well-being for an opinion is something that the average Christian cannot in the least understand. He could understand it easily enough if the Freethinker believed in a future life where he would reap the consequences of his profession here; but to believe in this life only, and to risk comfort and position in propagating certain beliefs seems to him the very acme of midsummer madness. In sheer despair of understanding so un-Christian a phenomenon, the Christian falls back upon the policy of depicting Freethinkers as a compound of fool and knave with the latter predominating.

In all this, we are only reaping what centuries of Christian rule has sown. Its whole tendency has been to breed an inferior mental type. Christians have written hundreds of volumes, full of more or less truthful records of their own alleged martyrs, but the contemplation of these records has never yet led them to appreciate the value of an independent opinion. The facts seem wholly in the other direction. In the whole of Christendom there is not a single Church that really loves the independent thinker. Present conditions are such that some degree of heresy must be tolerated, but the principle of child-like faith is still held up as an ideal, and an unintelligent conformity still largely illustrated in practice. And that reacts with disastrous consequences on our public life. The Christian world does not ask to-day that a public man shall not have opinions against Christianity, that would be too much to ask. But it does say that he shall keep them to himself. It raises no objection to the hypocrite, its thunders are reserved for the honest man. And yet it is the avowed Freethinker who is giving the world an earnest of his honesty. No one can be sure that when a man calls himself a Christian he is honest. He may be,

but the profession carries no proof. Christianity tries to make the path to preferment lead through the Church, and it is confident that with the type of character it has helped to cultivate, the road will be attractive to most.

The whole policy of Christianity, carried out by bribing, threatening, burning, imprisoning, or boycotting, has resulted in putting a tax upon honesty, and a premium on mental cowardice. Whether this has been aimed at consciously or not matters very little, the result has been the same. For every saint that Christianity has developed, the Christian Church has made a score of hypocrites. Its one aim has been to secure conformity, its one fear is independence of thought. And by striving, through the means adopted, to secure conformity in religion, it has helped to demoralise the whole of our social life. The figure of the mind being split up into a number of watertight compartments is very misleading. The brain functions as a whole, and the qualities of courage and honesty, when discouraged in one direction are more or less discouraged in all. No man is likely to be more honest in politics because he has been dishonest in religion; he is far more likely to display the same characteristics on both fields. Mankind in the average will be honest as they will be anything else—if the difficulties in the way are not too formidable. Society reaps as it has sown, and it cannot take to itself a religion such as Christianity without paying the price. Hitherto society has gone upon the plan of making it unpleasant for the man who valued intellectual honesty before all things. And if we are to combat that vicious practice it can only be done by reducing to impotence a religion that has always treated intellectual independence as the greatest of crimes.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE AGE OF MIRACLES

THIRTY-ONE years ago, the Virgin, so the story goes, appeared to three children at Fatima in Portugal, and this was promptly hailed as a miracle by the Catholic Church.

Ever since, on the anniversary of the appearance of the apparition, pilgrimages have gone to Fatima to worship and take their sick to be cured.

The "Catholic Herald" of May 21st records that the latest pilgrimage was attended by 400,000 people. This is what it says: "Fatima pilgrimages are hard pilgrimages, they are the pilgrimages of the people—of the poor. I recall the bleeding knees of the poor black-mantled woman who walked on her knees in the stones and dust from the church to the chapel where Our Lady appeared. Her husband or son was supporting her, and she could hardly put her poor knees to the ground. What she did, hundreds of other peasant women, in their strange, almost Arabic clothes, did It was there, amidst the throng of men and women, old and young, boys and girls, babies in arms, all seeking to have their rosaries touch the foot of the statue, that the women were crawling on their knees, then painfully pushing their way through the dense crowd."

And this ghastly mumbo-jumbo is held up as something to admire. The poor black-mantled woman with her bleeding knees is cited as an object of piety to the faithful. What sort of God do these Christians worship, who could be pleased to see a poor ignorant woman walking on her knees to do him reverence? If some Eastern Potentate treated one of the poorest of his subjects so, he would be denounced as a sadist. Women crawling on their knees and trying to touch the foot of the statue with their rosaries! These people are back in the African

jungle; back to the witches in Macbeth—"eye of newt, toe of frog."

The aim of this church is to try to drag humanity back to savagery; back to the abysmal ignorance of the dark ages when religion, dirt and ignorance were the real trinity. It is this Church that claims to be the champion of democracy and pours out a never-ending stream of propaganda in Press, pulpit and radio, that the only hope for humanity is to return to the fold of the one, true and only Church—to return to crawling on our knees instead of teaching men to stand erect and face the future with courage and hope instead of behaving as gibbering idiots.

Fatima is not the only place marked on the Catholic itinerary where marvellous cures are accomplished. The old firm of Lourdes still does a brisk and profitable business amongst the mugs; thus we read, again in the "Catholic Herald" of June 4th, that you can leave London on July 25th, return on July 31st and visit Lourdes at a cost of £24 10s., and you can book tickets at the Assumption Priory in London. There will be at least 500 pilgrims at £24 10s. per head, which will bring in £12,500. Allow even £5 profit on each pilgrim and the great lying Church claims a rake-off of at least £2,500.

Spain, as is to be expected, also has a sacred shrine. Reuter reports on June 4th that nine "miraculous" cures have been effected in Madrid during the blessing of the sick. We need not go to Spain, France or Portugal for miraculous cures at sacred shrines—the Church has a serious rival in the patent medicine companies. Our daily papers tell us in the advertisements how certain conditions of long-standing illness were cured by taking some patent medicine. Thus, we read that Mrs. B. who suffered from indigestion, flatulence and constipation for years, was cured after taking one bottle of Bunkum's Blue Bugs for bilious people. We further read that a lady had a sour stomach, bad breath, sick headaches, dizziness and biliousness—in fact, she was in a devil of a mess. Now she can eat everything with comfort, has forgotten how to belch, never gets bad tempered and beats her children as she used to do, and all this has been accomplished without visiting Fatima, Lourdes or Spain, and after taking only one bottle. Now who can deny that a cure such as this is a challenge to any shrine—any foreign shrines, you just pop into the first drug store, buy a bottle of Bunkum's for a few shillings, and—Presto! A cure effected which knocks the church bunkum into a cocked hat.

If you are suffering from rheumatism, you can either go to your doctor and, as T. F. Dunne, the creator of Mr. Dookey once remarked "get a prescription in Latin that you can't read and a bill in English that you can't understand; or go to a shrine and listen to prayers in Latin which you can't understand; or buy a bottle of patent dope; or wear a slice of potato under your shirt." Here are four cures, but none of them will work without faith.

Elijah of old was fed by ravens; the modern Elijahs are catered for by the gulls who maintain the Fathers In Christ without their having the trouble to work for a living.

F. A. HORNTBROOK.

THE SEA

Of all things I have ever seen, only the sea is like a human being; the sky is not, nor the earth. But the sea is always moving; always something deep in itself is stirring it. It never rests; it is always wanting, wanting, wanting. It hurries on; and then creeps back slowly, without having reached, moaning. It is always asking a question, and it never gets an answer.

OLIVE SCHREIBER.

THE RELIGIOUS CRISIS IN WALES

RELIGION continues to languish in Wales—"the stronghold of non-conformity." And, in addition to the non-conformist denominations, the "Church in Wales" (the disestablished Church of England) is feeling the draught.

A perusal of the Welsh religious weekly newspapers makes dismal reading from a believer's point of view. Three main complaints are voiced: (1) That the churches and chapels are empty; (2) That many non-conformist churches are without ministers—that there is a reluctance on their part to "call" ministers to "shepherd" them; (3) That candidates for the ministry are getting fewer and fewer—that there is a shortage of ministers already. Complaints (2) and (3) appear, to a Philistine like me, to cancel each other out: how can churches "call" ministers who are not there? But logic is not an indispensable attribute of a religious apologist. The Church in Wales has one particular grievance of her own: many of her younger clergy emigrate to England to minister to the heathenish English—at a higher stipend.

As regards complaint (3), a remarkable and outspoken article appeared recently in "Y Tyst" ("The Witness"), the official weekly organ of the Welsh Congregationalists. Among other things, the writer of the article—presumably the editor—states: "We know of churches belonging to two denominations who are often without a preacher on Sunday, and where Holy Communion is not administered for months on end."

He then gives a copy of a questionnaire sent out by an official to Congregational Churches in six districts in South Wales, and the replies received. Here they are:—

QUESTIONS.

1. What is the number of students (candidates for the Ministry) who are now at Preparatory Schools, and at which schools are they?
2. What is the number of students who are preparing themselves at home for entry to colleges, by the assistance of ministers, by lessons through the post, etc.
3. Are there, at present, young men in your area who show an inclination to prepare themselves for the Ministry? How many?
4. Have you any suggestion to make which would be of assistance to the Committee?

REPLIES.

Pembrokeshire.
 1. Nobody, so far as I know. 2. None. 3. I believe that some will do so in the near future. 4. A preparatory school should be started for young men who have not had the advantage of secondary education.

Cardiganshire.
 1. Two: passed to Carmarthen College in 1947. 2. I know of nobody in this area. 3. I know of nobody. 4. No special suggestion, except that a further inquiry be made.

Carmarthenshire.
 1. Two: both at Trevecca College. 2. I know of nobody. 3. I know of nobody. 4. To send a word to "Y Tyst" ("The Witness") asking for a reply by a specified date from some who may be considering the matter here and there.

West Glamorgan.
 1. None. 2. Two. 3. None. 4. None.

South Glamorgan.
 1. None. 2. None. 3. None. 4. Nothing to suggest, but wishing success to the venture.

EAST GLAMORGAN.

1. I do not know of anyone. 2. Nobody, so far as I know. 3. Nobody showing any inclination. 4. I believe that the day of the private school is over. It is the day of the full education system. Let each student be graded according to his ability.

Any further remarks of mine would only spoil the effect of the gloomy picture. But I might suggest that if the supply of priests and preachers is to fail the future for religion is dark indeed.

THOS. OWEN.

THE PROBLEM OF EXISTENCE

METAPHYSICS, we are told, is concerned with belief as to the meaning of existence; with ultimate reality; beyond physical appearances. and we are advised to use logic. Let us try.

A primary rule in logic concerns definition. What is meant by "physical" appearances? If it means that branch of science known as physics, what about biological science, or even that which has been covered by the application of the scientific method in sociology, anthropology and psychology? What is meant by beyond? The term physical is derived from a Greek word for scientific or natural law; does metaphysics refer to what is not or cannot be so explained; to what is not known; to what is outside the range of natural law; to the supernatural? If physical appearances refer to what is objective, does metaphysics refer to "appearances" that are not objective, such as the pink elephants of the dipsomaniac?

What is meant by "ultimate reality"? Does "ultimate" mean when we come to the end of our tether, in the grave? Or when we become exhausted or tired of playing with words, or when we come to questions we cannot answer? It looks very much like Spinoza's "asylum of ignorance." And what is meant by "reality"? The word is derived from the Latin for thing. But, anything is a thing, everything is a thing. We are told that reality is another word for existence. But again, the word is all-inclusive, illimitable. If it means everything, with what are we to compare it, with nothing? How are we to define existence, in terms of non-existence?

Our inability to define a word is merely evidence of the limit of our knowledge or understanding. To substitute one word for another is running around in circles, and it is then a question of how large a circle we can cover. But logic is a method of deducing the source of error. If our conclusions are unsatisfactory, the logic is that there is something wrong in our premises. How then can we deal with the problem? To assert that existence must be "given," or that it is a question of belief, only shelves the question; and amounts to an admission that the problem cannot be solved; that nothing can be known about it; that it is Kant's "thing in itself."

There is plainly something wrong, and we get no further by diving into volumes on epistemology; into such questions as "how do we know?"; and whether the senses are reliable. One can appreciate degrees of knowledge ranging from possibility, through probability, to certainty, but are there degrees of existence? How can we reason from sensation to existence? And how could we recognise it, even if found? In tracing epistemology back we come to the scholastics; to ontology and teleology; to the study of "pure being"; to the controversy over intuitionism or voluntarism,

nominalism or realism; whether abstract ideas exist except as names or words, and whether these are entelechies or causes.

Going back so many centuries it needs but little logic to see a vast difference between their approach and our own. We see a simplicity and even childish crudity in their analogies. And we might appreciate what is meant in Miss Emmet's argument in her book "The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking"; that metaphysical thinking is analogical thinking. We can also see the falsity of what is called formal logic, and the absurdity of the formal cause. We also see a vast difference in the extent of their knowledge and that of our own day. And we can realise that although we are using the same words, it does not follow that these have the same meanings for us or to them.

Throughout the controversy we see the development of an elaborate technical terminology but the basic terms remain, yet with different meanings. There is a difference between Berkeley's idealism and that of Plato; a difference in the conception of an idea. Leonardo da Vinci with his camera obscura, reversed the theory of vision. Today, we think of light reflected from the object to the eye of the observer, but to the ancients, the theory of vision was that of Democritus; that an idea (Greek for vision) proceeded from the observer to the object. To us, an idea may be verbalisation, or verbal visualisation, to them an idea was a vision. There is a change in the meaning of the word idea.

These visions were the essence of "pure being," and we can see a difference in ideas concerning these words as well. But we have to go much further back to find the meaning of them; in philology and etymology. To say that being is the essence of existence is a mere tautology, for each of these words has the same etymology. Being, existence and spirit had the same meaning. The verb to be, in Latin esse, is derived from the Sanskrit *bhū*, meaning to breathe, breath or air. To say that something is, was to say that it breathed; existence was a living thing; "pure being" was breath or air; to breathe was to live. In this case, we not only decline to accept the original meaning but we give no alternative meaning to these words.

We are using words "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing." Or are we? Are we really so foolish as to use words with no meaning? We put the question, earlier, are we to compare existence with non-existence; in terms of what are we to describe existence? Having related our problem to being; to the verb to be; we can see the meaning in the usage of that verb. To say that a thing is, is to say that it exists. To say that a thing was, is to say that it exists no longer; that it is non-existent. The difference between existence and non-existence is the difference between being and been; between the present and the past, and of course, the future, for that has yet to be. The problem is one of time and not of space.

Although the metaphysician claims the problem to be beyond physics, he yet seeks a solution in space, in what occupies space. But it is not a physical but a psychological question, involving memory, consciousness, and anticipation. Existence is the ever-present now. To explain it we need knowledge of the past, but that is only present in memory, tradition, and other surviving evidence, and our understanding is conditioned by these. Our heritage of misunderstanding from the past clouds our understanding of the present. The non-existent past is imaginary, the non-existent future is visionary, but existence is a matter of observation.

That we have forgotten the old meaning indicates that the problem is one of the reliability of memory, the adequacy of observation, and of the methods of reasoning from the evidence. Existence is not the Great Unknown or Unknowable, it is the only source of knowledge. Only in the existent now can the checks and tests of scientific observation be made. Only in ever-present existence can computation and calculation be made. Science endeavours to explain the unknown in terms of the known and only existence is knowable; and we might also realise a change in meaning of another word, substance; sub means under and stance means stand. We seek the substance of existence. Understanding is a relationship of past, present and future.

H. H. PREECE.

TAMERLANE AND GOD

HAPPENING one evening to meet Professor Understatement I recounted to him the legend relative to the birth of Timur Beg, Emperor of the Moghuls, more commonly known to European readers under the name of Tamerlane. The story is that the mother of that warlike prince appeared pregnant before her marriage, which phenomenon so exasperated her worthy male parent that he determined to put her to death, as it were to wipe out the stain upon the family honour. The princess, aware of her own purity, and no one was in a better situation to assess the facts than she, flung herself at the feet of her excited father and revealed to him the miraculous cause of her condition. She assured him that, while she was lying on her couch, a sunbeam, piercing through an opening in the window of her apartment, over which the curtain had been left undrawn, covered her with a mantle of light, and at the same time seemed affectionately to caress her. "Such," said the young lady, "is the cause of the condition in which you now behold me. The bountiful source of light and fecundity, who fills the wide world with his glories, is the parent of that child to which I shall shortly give birth." Her father, after some consideration of the case, became convinced that the expected infant was indebted for its conception to an interference with the usual course of nature, effected by the great singular Author of all existence other than his own.

The professor, who had an appointment that evening at the Blue Pig, with a connoisseur of glass containers and of what they contained, observed that virgin births were rare occurrences among mammiferous animals, if they were indeed occurrences at all. He added that the prematurely pregnant female might have been a liar. The propensity of persons to lying was, he considered, increased in direct proportion to any difficulty into which they fell, if, as was sometimes the case, a bold fib might be expected at least not to worsen their predicament.

At this point the learned gentleman left me rather hurriedly; it was past opening time at the Blue Pig.

As regards any evidence as to the truth of this matter it is asserted that no trace of any footprints were ever discovered outside the window of the princess's room. Sceptical cavillers have, however, observed that footprints have a habit of being obliterated within a few days of impression, and the appearance of the pregnancy arose no doubt several months after conception. Some, more impertinent than others, have pointed out that only a sunbeam entered the room, but the girl did sometimes go farther afield, disporting herself, probably, with more than sunbeams.

Be the solution of the problem a vindication of the house of Teragay or of the prowess of an eastern youth, the fact remains that the legend was received with great faith by the Orientals, as an imperishable testimony of the super-excellence of their favourite hero. Of this we are assured by the Rev. Hobart Caunter, who in the Oriental Annual of 1837, wrote the history of Timur.

That author informs us that the tale probably owed its existence to the name of Timur's father, which I have given above—Teragay—which signifies the source of light. Caunter, obviously, considered the story mere superstition, for, had he thought it true, he would have been of the opinion that Tamerlane was as great as Jesus.

According to Calvin, God in His mysterious way sends at times a lying spirit upon earth to punish liars and fools, for in his treatise on Relics he assures us that, owing to the credulity of the people in accepting the silly tales disseminated by priests unent the bones and rings of the saints and of Christ, our Saviour brought it about that they should continue, in the path upon which they had advanced, even to further grossness. Therefore, by their voluntary and divinely induced delusions, the Cross of the Lord, light enough to be borne by one man, became multiplied in its splinterdom to exceed the magnitude of a great ship, and the spear that had drunk the Son of God's blood gave birth, as it were, to three other spears.

Calvin could have drawn a moral of God's mysterious care from the history of Timur, he who was fashioned by the Reformer's deity to scourge the human race. It is related of the Moghul emperor that one day, while hunting deer, he abruptly reached the edge of a ditch both wide and deep. Its unexpected appearance did not enable him to succeed in turning his horse aside, but the sudden check made the leap a matter of heightened difficulty. The prince, however, spurred forward his steed, which made a desperate but insufficient bound. Clinging for an instant to the bank, the horse enabled Timur to spring from the saddle, but itself, after a few struggles, fell back into the chasm. The prince's friends, hastening up, congratulated their leader upon his escape; but he replied, "It was God, the bestower of my fortune, who preserved me."

Timur, writes Caunter, was an unrelenting man, an implacable and cruel prince, for in the emperor's own memoirs, written to give posterity a most favourable impression of his character and actions, we see the thin crust of palliation too transparent to conceal the dark results of ferocious passion and bloody ambition, lying in black and thick masses below.

When the royal conqueror was proceeding to the capture of Delhi, he was informed that the prisoners taken since he had crossed the Indus, amounting to over 100,000, had shown exultation on seeing him attacked by the Delhi troops, and fearing that they might join his enemy, he ordered the whole of them above the age of 15 to be put to death.

This emperor made, however, a delightful end, dying in an odour of sanctity and self-conceit, mingled with apparent penitence; for feeling death near, he sent for the empresses and principal amirs, and bade them not to weep but pray for him. God would pardon his numberless sins. Despite these he had the consolation of knowing that he had never suffered the strong to injure the weak. The skull pyramids of his slaughtered enemies made no audible protest.

When I met the professor at 10-30 p.m. on the same evening on which I had discoursed with him concerning Timur's virgin birth, he appeared incapable of serious

conversation. He, nevertheless, assured me that this world was the best of all possible worlds, because everything was what it was, and could not be otherwise. Few people, he added, knew how limited God's power was.

J. G. LUPTON.

A NEW LIFE OF JESUS

IN the history of literature there have been countless attempts at writing the life of Jesus. One can instantly recall such classic efforts as that of Renan; while in recent days such famous writers as Llewelyn Powys, Francois Mauriac and Emil Ludwig have produced books on the same theme. Most of them, however, have been in some degree unsatisfactory, mainly, I think, because of the vagueness of much of the Biblical record. Personally, I have never been able to accept the myth theory to which so many Freethinkers and Rationalists would be found to adhere. I feel that it produces as many difficulties as it settles. But at the same time to write anything like an orthodox biography of the founder of Christianity is a task presenting such formidable difficulties that only the bravest or the most unrepentently Fundamentalist could possibly be induced to make the effort.

Many readers will be acquainted with the work of Dr. C. J. Cadoux, whose death last year was regretted by many, both of his own and of conflicting schools of thought. His effort at telling the biography of Jesus has just made its appearance, in the eighteenpenny Pelican books. It is a book which will be found interesting even by Freethinkers. True, Dr. Cadoux accepts much of the Biblical narratives which are unacceptable by non-Christians. But at the same time he presents an interesting approach—roughly, that of the liberal Christian—which provides the reader with a good idea of what modern Christianity, aware of the work of the textual critics, would regard as the absolute minimum of belief which a Christian should hold. For example, Dr. Cadoux does not regard the Virgin Birth as a dogma to be considered as an essential part of Christian belief. He considers that probably a later accretion, added to the gospel narrative by some enthusiastic writers of a generation after Jesus, in order to make the story more impressive and exciting. He points out, indeed, that there is a definite tendency in the East to "embroider" stories in this way, and adds that it is not thought wrong (or was not) to place partly or wholly fictitious speeches in the mouths of historical characters. Viewed in this way the gospel lives of Jesus would become rather like historical novels of our time—with a definite basis in fact, but with fictitious additions difficult for any but the expert to disentangle.

I do not know if what I have written will strike the impartial reader as being faint and rather neutral praise; I know that I found the book very interesting reading. And, even though there is much in Dr. Cadoux's approach which I do not share, I nevertheless feel deeply grateful to him for the way in which he has made plain to me much which was not clear before. For instance, he suggests that the story of the fig tree struck dead because it did not bear fruit is in reality not a statement of fact, but a parable, which has somehow been wrongly recorded as an actual event. That suggestion is the sort of remark which I personally find stimulating. It may not, of course, be provable in any scientific way; but it is literary criticism of a high order, and deserves respect from all who are interested in the Bible from a literary point of view. Treated purely as a work of literature and not one of theology Dr. Cadoux's book therefore will command a wide audience.

JOHN ROWLAND.

ACID DROPS

The old adage that we are never too old to learn is exemplified in the case of Dean Inge, who is 88. In his latest book, he is "very reluctantly driven to the opinion that all marriages should be settled in a registrar's office," leaving it, of course, to people who really believe in Christianity to get married in church if they want to. Dean Inge must know, however, that in any case, a church is a registrar's office for the purpose of marriage—that, in fact, it has to be registered as such. Still, it will be interesting to see the reaction of some of his colleagues who still hold that marriage is a "sacrament" and not just a secular contract. But then the Dean has always been looked upon as the *enfant terrible* of the Church.

It has always seemed strange to some people that so many of our generals and admirals, who can contemplate the destruction of bodies of men—their own and their enemies—with equanimity, are always proud to call themselves Christians. And their Christianity is not hedged with doubts either. It is the full-blooded, primitive type which might well disgrace even the simple Salvation Army lassie. The one-time defender of Malta, Sir William Dobbie, is one of the founders of a new society, which he hopes, no doubt, will help to make all people share his naive and infantile beliefs.

The society, the "Facts and Faith Films Society," is out to rival the terrific success of secular films which have long been viewed by our religious hierarchy with qualms of dismay. No one is allowed to become a member unless he believes in the divine inspiration of the Bible "as originally given" and in its absolute infallibility, in the Trinity and Unity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and in the Lord Jesus Christ as the "only Saviour for the individual and the world." The object of the society is to revive in schools, universities and factories "an interest in the word of God," etc. This is to be done by films, so long as Jesus himself is not portrayed. We can imagine that Sir William Dobbie himself would kick at Bing Crosby appearing as "the Christ" flying about with the Devil in Jerusalem, or Betty Grable as the Virgin enticing old man Joseph with her charms. But what a queer mental world all these people must live in.

The Rev. Wallace Hadrill, Vicar of Holy Cross, Hornchurch, is reported as saying, that of the 1,200 children in the area, 600 do not go to Sunday School, and know nothing of Christ. It may be true that the figure given do not attend Sunday School, but seeing that the Education Act lays it down that every county and voluntary school shall begin their day's curriculum with collective worship and that religious instruction shall be given in every one of those schools, the Rev. Hadrill's statement that half the children know nothing of Christ looks suspiciously like a "Christian truth."

An advertisement in the "Romford Times" begins with a bold headline, "The Church in Danger," and continues, "The Church of England faces hard times, its funds are desperately low, and hundreds of its clergy are living in extreme poverty—their wives are forced out to work," etc. It certainly is a sorry outlook, worse still, the prospects of improvement seem to be nil. The Supreme Head does nothing, there are good salesmen on the staff, but the goods are nearly 2,000 years old, stale and soiled with much handling.

This is hardly the season to discuss football, but we think the following important enough for consideration by the Football Association. According to the "Ashanti Times" African football teams are having trouble because witch doctors insist on hanging "snakes and old bones on goal posts" and in fact indulging in all the usual magical practices in order to ensure a win for, we suspect, the football team that pays the most. We also commend the idea to some of our religious leaders. What a draw for the Cup Final if the Archbishop of Canterbury and Cardinal Griffin were advertised to perform their respective mumbo jumbo at each end of the playing field. What a test to find which brand of Christianity is most pleasing in the sight of the Lord. We think the idea would be more effective than all the United Church Councils and Conferences. We offer the idea to the F.A. free of charge.

But seriously, can the whites really pretend to look down on their black "brothers," who in this instance are logical enough to introduce their religion into the everyday things of life, and in essence what is the difference between the witch doctor and his incantations for the success of a football team and his Christian counterpart, who prays for the success of a village fet, or a Parliamentary session? We suggest the difference is one of degree only; both have a distinctive dress, both profess to be in direct touch with the supernatural, and both rely on the credulity and ignorance of their followers.

The former Matron of the Queen Charlotte Hospital, complains of the "sense of reticence and 'niceness' that prevents us from facing up to the problem of venereal disease." No one will deny that the question is avoidable, but the blame can be laid fairly and squarely at the door of Christian bigotry and prejudice. The Churches' opposition to the spread of knowledge of the means of prevention of the "Disease of Venus" is due to the ideas of Christians throughout the ages that V.D. is imposed by God in vengeance for "sin." The fact that civilisation has not yet advanced beyond that idea is due to religious ignorance and bigotry.

Should there be any doubt, the "Daily Telegraph" informs us that "Queen Anne is dead." She was, however, given three cheers on the occasion of the ceremony terminating her "Bounty" which was formed 244 years ago for the benefit of the poor clergy. The £7,000,000 of the Bounty will be joined to the £140,000,000 of the Ecclesiastical Commission to form the funds of the new financial body. It will interest readers to know that the biggest deal of this body was the purchase of Berkeley Square House for a mere £1,250,000. Nevertheless, farmers' property is still distrained for tithes. Let it not be imagined that the Church of England is not Catholic in, at least, its choice of property, for besides Berkeley House, the Commissioners own slums in Paddington.

A Canadian newspaper credits the survival of six out of nine members of the crew of a plane that crashed over the Antarctic to the "skill of the pilot, luck, and courage." As that stands, it is good reporting, but it was somewhat spoiled by the pilot when he said "God was with us," with which sentiment the other five survivors agreed. The retort that immediately jumps to mind is, wasn't God with the three dead members? Perhaps this is another instance of the wondrous way of God.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

To "The Freethinker": Mr. M. FELDMAN, 38,

G. F. LAWS, Canada.—Thanks for cuttings. Excavations in order to bolster up the Old Testament are interesting particularly when a ruined wall is supposed to prove that a trumpet blast blew down the walls of Jericho.

P. COULTER.—Many great men of science who in their own sphere are supreme, fall back on religious foolishness in other spheres.

V. WHITE, B.A.O.R.—Thanks for compliments on the "Freethinker," we do our best.

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 connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 7s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three-months, 4s. 4d.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

At the Annual Conference of the Educational Institute of Scotland, the President Mr. W. Barry said a fight was on with Secularists over the question "God in the Schools or Not." Mr. Barry is quite wrong. Secularists are not concerned with God, inside or outside the schools. What we are concerned with is the cowardly practice of presenting a widely discredited religion as true to unsuspecting school children under the pretence of alleged character-building. The Educational Institute is obviously aware of the Jesuit saying, "Give me the child for the first seven years, and it is mine for life."

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus died to save the people. Today, the people are called upon to save Jesus, and the clergy are the self-appointed leaders of the rescue party. Of course it won't surprise readers to know that funds are needed for this salvage stunt. The Rev. H. P. Young, Vicar of Christ Church, Crewe, suggests that sixpence in every £1 a man earns should go to the Church. The suggestion is an impudent one, and we doubt whether it will get much of a response in these difficult days. In any case, surely the population of Heaven is sufficient to guarantee one god at least on the active list, without any financial help.

In spite of the unsettled weather, Mr. J. Clayton has been able to carry out some good open-air work in his Lancashire circuit. Opposition has added to the interest of the meetings, and friends and sympathisers are very welcome. Forward details of the meetings appear in the Lecture Notices column. Local friends are asked to support, and make themselves known to Mr. Clayton.

Mr. J. T. Brighton marked his return to action, following his recent mine accident, with a very successful debate with the Rev. Patrick Knox on "Will Christianity Save Us?" We understand that a return contest between the two is to be arranged, with a different subject, and we will announce details when available if a return match is agreed upon.

A copy of Mr. F. J. Corina's latest attack on the N.S.S. has just reached me. It is reminiscent of the lowest type of a Christian Evidence lecturer and would be treated with the contempt it deserves but for the fact that the author calls himself a Freethinker. The attack is one that any Freethinker should be ashamed to have written. We have sufficient trust in the judgment and common sense of Freethinkers that they would agree it does not merit further discussion.

The substance of the Bradford Court case is contained in the last two Annual Reports of the N.S.S. and can be had, free, from the Society's offices, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

CHAPMAN COHEN,
President of the N.S.S.

The "Eastern Province Herald" reports that a party is preparing an expedition to explore the lost continent of Atlantis, and what will be of particular interest to readers of this journal, among the many problems the expedition hope to solve is whether "Noah was really a fugitive from submerged Atlantis." The possibility of trying to prove the authenticity of the drunkard who saved mankind from a watery grave is on par with trying to prove that the walls of Jericho fell at the blast of trumpets from priests.

The "Universe" has been trying to explain for the 1,000th time the real meaning of "Transubstantiation" and after getting into a Holy Mess, was obliged to fall back on the words of the Master, Cardinal Newman. "We do not know *how*, we have no parallel to the 'how' in our experience." Still, as the Cardinal believed without further discussion, why should not all the readers of the "Universe" similarly believe? What could be clearer than "Our Lord in his glorified body—which is still a body—is present in Heaven with a 'local' presence, and present in the Blessed Eucharist with a 'sacramental' and 'substantial' presence." A Catholic after reading that, surely feels the Holy Presence around him, will grovel on his knees, and give praise that he belongs to God's own Church.

At a Biennial Convention of United Synagogues in Chicago, Samuel Rothstein informed 1,000 leaders of American Jewry that "implicit in religion is a spirit of unselfishness and sacrifice for the common good; the current need for today is to put religion into action." We think it high time. Judaism has a longer history than Christianity, and has had more time to put its principles "into action." Yet we get the same pious platitudes from them as from their spiritual brothers whose god they supplied.

There seems to be a growing demand for Freethought literature and we draw the attention of Freethinkers in the Nottingham and District area to the Progressive Bookshop, 24, North Sherwood Street, Nottingham. Mr. Stathan will be pleased to accept orders for all Pioneer Press Publications, including the "Freethinker." Visitors will find a wide range of Freethought literature on view. The Bookshop is near the Central Library.

THE FALLACY OF PHILOSOPHY

THE "Freethinker" has been lately full of the pros and cons of Philosophy, some contributors contending that Philosophy is out of date, some that it is a mental exercise only, and one contributor quotes Mr. H. Fyfe to the effect that Philosophy is of no practical value whatever. This may or may not be the case, the fact is that nowadays we have learned to see things in their two-fold aspects. Philosophy, however, takes things as stable fact, not as motion, and puts forward theories of what seem to be an unshakable truth. This leads to a firm doctrine being established similar to the way of religion. The result of both is a brake to progress, since all our up-to-date notions have to fit into a ready-made mould.

Take, for instance, "Freedom." There is no freedom without restrictions, and there are no restrictions without certain freedom. The wage-earner is free in that he can decide whether to sell his labour-power or rather prefer to die from starvation. But as soon as he has accepted that deal, he is no longer free to do what he likes, but is a kind of slave—at least, during his working hours. Truth, in itself, is subject to changes. From the viewpoint of relativity, the question about pure, absolute Truth cannot but draw a relative answer—affirmative as well as in the negative. There are only such Truths as are absolutely true at a certain period, but in the long run they become distorted, untrue. Vice-versa, these Truths as temporary knowledge are untrue, but in the course of development we reach the point of appreciating reality. The geocentric theory prior to Copernicus was absolutely correct at that time, but relatively wrong; vice-versa, the theory of the Earth revolving around the Sun, was temporarily wrong, but, when corroborated by practical experiences, it became Truth.

Any form of a corrupt and moribund society accentuates idealism and bigotry, gives birth to a wave of occultism and offers the consolation that everything on earth must need be imperfect and defective; perfect is the pure "idea" only, the Thing-in-itself. Thus, any form of idealistic philosophy must, in one way or another, lead to Religion.

Idealistic philosophy failed; but so did purely materialistic philosophy. There is, however, a third trend: Agnosticism (Hume, Kant, Darwin), the refuge of those who are scared of the consequences of their thinking. They, therefore, pretend that Man is unable to know anything (agnōstos=not cognizant). This is the philosophy of the coward who, whilst knowing better, prefers pleading ignorant rather than losing his position in society.

Materialist philosophy, too, is bent to conceive things—not in a process of development—but in a fictitious state of rest. Hence, only if we go beyond that state of mind can we recognize that *Motion* is the mode of existence of matter. Nuclear energy is the latest proof of the fact that nowhere has there been matter without motion, nor can there be. Matter without motion is just as unreal as motion without matter.

The old metaphysics which accepted things as finished objects arose from a natural science which investigated dead and living things as finished objects. Hence, up to the end of the last century, natural science was predominantly a collecting science. In our century it is essentially a classifying science, a science of the processes, of the origin and development of these things and of the interconnection which binds all these natural processes into one great entity. As a result, philosophy has become obsolete; just as religion, philosophy was an

attempt at finding some plausible explanation of our world, according to the reach of means and knowledge at that time.

What we need in a progressive society, however, is not another interpretation, but the means to *change* that world of ours according to what is possible, and in order to improve the living conditions for all.

So Mr. Fyfe was completely right in asserting that philosophy nowadays is nothing more but a mental pastime, like chess or bridge. As far as knowledge proper is concerned, we were definitely in a position to transform the world from a "Thing-in-itself" into a "Thing-for-us"; yet this means material *action* and, therefore, lies beyond the scope and substance of philosophy.

PERCY G. ROY.

CLASS DISTINCTION

TO be a really, successful first class snob it is necessary to be the owner of a very unsuccessful third class brain. That horror known to us all as Class Distinction can only survive and thrive on snobbery. It is an amazing fact that a so-called Socialist country, preaching the doctrine of Equality, still worships and grovels at the shrine of that hoary old humbug Class Distinction—and clings to it as though it was the only means of saving us from the cluteling claws of Communism.

"Just look at Russia!" you hear the woeful cry of the alarmist. "See what has happened there—and how are the mighty fallen!" But *have* they fallen? True, the former aristocrats are now beggars; but the former beggars are now aristocrats! Class Distinction has been abolished—the scale has been reversed, that is all. The gap between the peasant and the Party Leaders is as great as the gulf was in Tsarist days. Just try to contact Mr. Molotov and see how far you get!

Is Man such a *vulgar fraction* that he cannot, under any circumstances, be reduced to one common denomination or class? By what strange process of reasoning does any one man consider himself superior to any other man? We are all worms who have wriggled our way to the upper surface; but that merely gives us the right to look down on those worms still burrowing in the darkness—and on other animal forms lower than ourselves in the scale of evolution. It does not give us the right to look down on our own brother humans.

We believe, however, there must be some connection between breeding and snobbery. The well-bred are seldom snobs; it is the ill-bred and unintelligent who invest themselves with a superiority they know they do not possess. In short, snobbery is the hall-mark of an inferiority complex; expressing itself in loud and blustering arrogance, pompous conceit, and a selfish indifference to the lot of one's fellow-men. It is a mask hiding ignorance and inability.

There are, of course, various kinds of snobs, although the Social Snob is the best-known of the species. We must not, however, overlook the Book Snob, the Art Snob, the Professional Snob, and the Clerical Snob. Indeed, snobbery among clerical workers is particularly flourishing at the moment. For instance, the Bank clerk considers himself a grade higher than the Insurance clerk; the Civil Service clerk places himself above all clerks—and *all* clerks place themselves above shop assistants who, in turn, look down on the Manual Worker. Even manual workers have their class distinctions and grade themselves accordingly.

How absurd and childish it all is! Can anyone tell us just *why* one human being votes himself superior to another? Is his blood any purer or his flesh more valuable? Neither occupation nor monetary earnings are the test. The miner may well earn more than the office clerk; the racketeer more than an Archbishop—and a tramp may well be morally superior to many a business magnate, yet he is still termed a worthless vagabond!

No, it just doesn't make sense. But who bothers about sense to-day? You don't get paid for *thinking*, so obviously it's a waste of time. But it makes even my anaemic blood boil when some conceited pen-pushing pup has the effrontery to disparage people who work on the land. With hair well-greased, starched collar, and natty suiting, he will consider himself defiled and contaminated if he should accidentally brush against some soiled dungarees in a bus or tube. That sort of snobbery is the cheapest and most vulgar brand of all. Without the land worker the country would starve, but what vital work does the pen-pusher do?

Surely, if Class Distinction had any meaning at all it would be based on the *usefulness* of one's occupation. That would place the land worker, the miner, and the ship's stoker at the top of the scale and not, as they now are, at the bottom.

A young, able-bodied man who elects to sit on his back-side all day in an office, an obsequious "Yes"-man—fawning on his boss like a cringing puppy-dog—is surely the lowest form of life in the human kingdom. That such a creature should have the impertinence to consider himself superior to the man or woman who sweats on the land is, to me, an offence against decency.

How much longer, then, are we going to tolerate this incubus of Class Distinction? And why, in the name of common sense, must we cling desperately to the foolish fetish of Privilege and Title? Knights, Barons, Dukes, and Earls are relics of the feudal ages and should have no place in any modern democratic constitution. If Americans, from pauper to President, are satisfied to be called plain "Mister", then it should be good enough for us, too.

Snobbery is a social evil that must be exterminated if the Brotherhood of Man is to be anything more than a meaningless and empty phrase.

W. H. WOOD.

HANGING AND THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE

II

PERSONALLY, I do not believe that would-be murderers are now saying to themselves, "I've always wanted to bump off the old woman and get the insurance money, and now they've abolished hanging, what's to stop me?"—a mere twenty years in gaol! Pah!" But the most worthy Prelate of Truro does, or says he does, believe murderers think like that. For he declares that, should he ever take to capital crime, he would not take "very seriously" the warning of the Home Secretary, that he was up for a twenty years' stretch; but death—"death by hanging is too horrible and loathsome." At least that is what his "feeling" tells him again, and he is sure "the whole of the criminal world agrees with him."

Well, I wouldn't know, but perhaps the Bishop does! The right reverend then went on to say that "another argument often brought forward" was that murderers are "exhibitionists." In fact, they get quite a kick out of being hanged, because the papers make such a fuss of them. This satisfaction of theirs should be frustrated and the Press's tendency to splash themselves on murder

trials should be sternly censored. I have never heard this argument advanced myself and I am quite sure it has not been *often* brought forward. I have read that many men, throughout the ages, have died courageously on the scaffold, and sometimes with a smile or joke on their lips; but I don't think that is what the Bishop was referring to.

Lord Templewood, better known as Sir Samuel Hoare, has often been assailed by the Left as a pillar of reaction, but he is personally a kindly and well-meaning gentleman. His was one of the best contributions to the debate; though he came down more or less on the side of the retentionists, it was on the grounds that he thought the moment inopportune for the change, though he is apparently in favour of abolition in principle. In the course of his speech he ventured the remark that 999 out of 1,000 people refrain from crime, not out of fear of the penalty but from "the general atmosphere of the country at the time." Truro seized on this to retort that one in a thousand of our population totted up to 40,000 "dangerous and violent men." See the Prelate's endeavour to prejudice the whole question and to raise fear and hatred against every poor devil who comes within the arm of the law! For Templewood's figure of one in a thousand included *all* criminals, the petty pick-pocket, the boy who steals bicycles, the out-of-work who sneaks a loaf of bread for his needy family. "These dangerous and violent men," indeed! Have you lost all sense of proportion, as well as of humanity, my Lord Bishop of Truro?

Having worked himself up to this pitch, of regarding urehins who steal apples from a barrow as "dangerous and violent," it will not surprise readers to learn that this Prelate of the Sermon on the Mount, far from desiring the suspension of the death penalty for five years, wanted to *extend* it to cover other crimes not now regarded as capital ones. He had started with the principle of retributive justice; he had averred that "the appropriate punishment for cold-blooded murder is death—a very ancient idea," capping his remark with a Biblical text, taken from the Old Testament, of course. (Most of the speakers found texts easily enough to support their various points of view.)

As most murders are done in emotional states of fear or passion, the Bishop's remark would seem at first glance to let the greater number of murderers escape the noose. But it is sadly to misjudge my Lord Bishop of Truro, if we draw any such conclusion. For him, the retributive idea of any eye for an eye, one tooth for one tooth, *was not enough*. "Does not brute violence deserve death," he exclaimed rhetorically, even if the victim does not die? No wonder the Lord Chief Justice (Goddard), who followed him, repudiated what he called the Bishop's "bloodthirsty suggestions."!

When the debate was resumed, a month later, in the Committee Stage of proceedings, his Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury, hitched up his cassock and advanced cautiously into the fray. Apparently, he had heard some whispered comments on the performances of his colleagues at the Second Reading; for he began with a reproof for those critics "of what had been loosely called the attitude of the Church." Since not even this super-prelate can gainsay the statistics, demonstrating the decrease of murders in all those countries where capital punishment has been abolished, his grace simply swept them aside as "completely unreliable" and proceeded to say, with a sublime disregard for logic, that since no one could say what was the deterrent effect of hanging, "one can hardly doubt that in some cases it is a deterrent."

Then he was seriously disturbed at the bad habit Home Secretaries have of granting reprieves, with the result that "the finality of that terrible warning does, in the public mind, lose something of its force . . . of its proper effect." He made the quite unfounded assertion that the late newspaper "polls" indicated "a general belief" that law and order couldn't stand "the shock of a diminution in the severity of the punishment," instead of attributing it, as some others did, to the brutalising effect of the war on the people.

This gracious recipient of £18,000 a year had a good deal to say about love, divine and terrestrial; but he pointed out that the sentimental reformists do not realise "the essential costliness of love," especially that of the godly pattern. I always thought the churches were particularly strong on the view that love was not a marketable thing of price. Evidently it is, but a luxury article and no utility line. Or perhaps it's just that it needs too many coupons!

It is only fair to mention the contribution of my Lord Bishop of Chichester, who was a noble exception in this pack of ghouls. His speech, full of facts, and his uncompromising stand for abolition must have caused some embarrassment to his colleagues. He pointed out the "phony" nature of the newspaper polls and quoted in detail the statistics of declining capital crime in those countries which have done away with the extreme penalty. He gave an imposing list of judges, lawyers, prison doctors and governors, and others, who deplored the death penalty and all its horrid theatricality. Incidentally, he corrected the text oft quoted in the debate, ". . . An eye for an eye . . ." etc., by pointing out that the New Testament text added: ". . . but I say unto you . . ." Let us pay a tribute to this kindly cleric, for assuredly his brother bishops will not.

The spiritual peers have a bad record of opposition to efforts for humanising justice. In 1834, when the House of Commons had passed a bill abolishing the death penalty for stealing sheep, it was the clerics of the Church of England in the Upper Chamber who prevented it becoming law. Winchester, Truro and Canterbury have shown themselves worthy disciples in this tradition.

P. C. KING.

[All quotations are taken from the official Hansard reports, Nos. 66, 67, 79, 80 of the 27th and 28th April, and the 1st and 2nd June, 1948.]

THE BLASPHEMY LAWS IN THE U.S.A.

AS your readers might be interested in the blasphemy laws of the United States, I am giving you a few samples of such laws. It must be remembered that in the United States every separate state still has its own laws and they differ widely from state to state.

Thirty-two of the 48 states have no blasphemy laws at all, Vermont having repealed its old law a few years ago. The still existing blasphemy laws obtain mostly in the so-called old New England states and the other original colonies, Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, Delaware, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania.

Here are a few examples of blasphemy laws still in the statute books of some states:—

STATE OF MAINE.—Whoever blasphemes the holy name of God by cursing, or contumeliously reproaching God, his creation, government, final judgment of the world, Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost, or the Holy Scriptures as contained in the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, or by exposing them to contempt or ridicule,

shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$200, or by imprisonment of not more than two years.

STATE OF MARYLAND.—If any person by writing or speaking, shall blaspheme or curse God, or shall write or utter any profane words of and concerning our saviour Jesus Christ, or of and concerning the Holy Trinity, or any of the persons thereof, he shall on conviction be fined not more than \$100, or imprisoned not more than six months, at the discretion of the court.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE.—If any person shall openly deny the being of a God, or wilfully blaspheme the name of God, Jesus Christ or the Holy Ghost, or shall curse or reproach the word of God contained in the canonical books of the Old and New Testament, he shall be fined not more than \$200, and may be holden to recognise with sureties for his behaviour for a term not exceeding one year.

STATE OF NEBRASKA.—Whoever, being of the age of 14 or upward, profanely curses and damns, or profanely swears by the name of God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Ghost, shall be fined in a sum not exceeding \$1 nor less than 25 cents for each offence.

STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA.—If any person of the age of 16 or upwards shall profanely curse and swear by the name of God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Ghost, every person so offending, being therefore convicted, shall forfeit and pay a sum of 67 cents for every such profane curse or oath; and in case he or she shall refuse or neglect to pay the said forfeiture, and goods and chattels cannot be found, whereof to levy the same by distress, he or she shall be committed to the house of correction of the proper county, not exceeding 24 hours, for every such offence, of which such person shall be convicted, and who-soever of the age of 16 or upwards shall curse and swear by any other name or thing as aforesaid, and shall be convicted thereof, shall forfeit and pay the sum of 10 cents for every such curse or oath; and in the case such offender shall neglect or refuse to satisfy such forfeiture, or any goods or chattels cannot be found whereof to levy the same by distress, he or she shall be committed to the house of correction of the proper county, not exceeding 12 hours for every such offence. Provided always that every such prosecution be commenced within 72 hours after the offence shall have been committed.

The State of Delaware has the following additional provision: Exhibition of unlawful pictures ridiculing religion or the exhibit of any minister of the gospel as a ridiculous person is punishable by a fine not exceeding \$300.

In order to give a faint measure of protection to non-believers in the Christian brand of religion, the blasphemy laws of North Dakota, South Dakota and Oklahoma have been amended with the following provision: "A serious discussion of religion is not to be considered blasphemy." But the old New England states do not even give the Devil his dues.

Washington, U.S.A.

HENRY GERBER.

LUCIFER WROTE TO THE ALMIGHTY—

If with ambition you're really burnt up,
You must be small fry, yours truly, *verb sap.*

AND SATAN WAS CAST INTO THE FIRE!

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

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CORRESPONDENCE

BELIEF IN HUMANITY

Sir.—Really, Mr. Robertson, you surprise me! Not your politics, because even Reds are entitled to their own opinions in this backward country—and they are not shot for airing them!

No. It is your apparent inability to understand what you read that amazes me. When I said that democracy had never been forced on any country surely it was obvious that I was referring to the enforcement of democracy on the masses by a minority. But you choose to dispute this by giving instances of the enforcement of democracy on a minority by the masses—which is hardly the same thing; although it is a good example of muddled and incompetent thinking, the very accusation you made against me! You also accuse me of incompetent writing because I have resorted to the use of italics in my articles. It seems to me that so long as there are certain types of people who are always ready to misconstrue one's meaning it is definitely necessary to emphasise certain points in this way. You see what I mean, don't you, Mr. Robertson?

I have never had any literary pretensions but I can't help thinking that the use of such terms as "Bosh!" and "Rats!" is not in the best literary style.

However, to return to Mr. Robertson's frantic defence of Communism and Mr. Roy. True enough, in the French Revolution the masses rose and exterminated the rich and decadent minority. In England, too, the masses rose and down went the Hyde Park railings. But both were instances of the majority rebelling against minority rule. Surely Mr. Robertson does not suggest that in the Seventeenth century the workers were not in the majority? Were not the hungry and downtrodden millions sweated and exploited by a mere handful of despotic overlords? Of course they were, until they revolted and forced the system of government by Parliamentary majorities on those who objected to it—the landed minority.

So you see Mr. Robertson quite unintentionally bears out my contention that democracy did not have to be forced on the masses because the masses wanted it, demanded it, and even resorted to violence in order to get it. But Communism, on the other hand has been forced on the masses by a ruthless, but powerful, minority. And I do not happen to believe in minority rule because it does not express the will of the masses.

It was quite interesting to hear all about Mr. Robertson's friend, the Czech professor, but unfortunately we are not told anything about his politics—so the story is hardly convincing. Obviously, if he is a Communist he would be very much happier under Soviet domination than under the late Adolf Hitler's!

It would also be interesting to know what Messrs. Robertson and Roy think about the Soviet's refusal to allow Russian wives to join their British husbands in this poor enlightened country. Forcibly keeping husbands and wives apart is so very, very human, isn't it? And, of course, each of those gentlemen believes in humanity! Somehow, I don't think it is the sort of humanity that I care to believe in—but that must be because I am, as Mr. Robertson says, such an incompetent thinker.

No doubt, too, the Czech airmen who recently escaped from their own country by flying to England did so in a spirit of boyish fun! All the same I still prefer to believe their statement regarding present conditions in Czechoslovakia to the assurances of Mr. Robertson's professor that everything in the garden is lovely behind the Iron Curtain.

Strangely enough I always thought flowers flourished better under glass!

W. H. Wood.

THE FUTURE OF CHURCHES AND CHAPELS

Sir.—Assuming that eventually Secularism triumphs over the Christian Religion and worshippers of the latter are no more, the question will arise, what shall be done with the Churches and Chapels? I am moved to raise this subject because a recent "Acid Drop" asserts that these buildings should be just allowed to lapse into decay as monuments of a sort of sweet revenge. Now this is an example of very bad thinking, and certainly it would be wrong to act upon such a foolish notion. I have seen in many towns buildings which were once used as chapels, and they are now used as

factories and workshops. I know of one chapel which at the present time is an electricity generating station. I think the right answer to the question is that when these buildings become redundant for religious worship they will be used for secular purposes such as those I have mentioned. Many of them would make good housing sites. Cathedrals and churches of noble architecture would be preserved and used for public purposes. St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey would make admirable schools and lecture halls. A Secularist philosophy includes the excellent maxim, "Do good, for good is good to do."

ALFRED D. CORRICK.

BUDDHISM AND FREETHOUGHT

Sir.—It is a pity that Mr. Jackson should have so readily resorted to Christian methods of argument. It appears that all I did "for the purpose of refutation," was to give a "hasty glance at Buddhist teaching and history," to turn aside from Rhys Davids to "take refuge" in the "now discredited theory" that Gotama and Jesus are "merely Sun myths," and in addition I am wrong when I say that 100 B.C. is the earliest date for Buddhist writing, and that when I quote a Buddhist teaching, my "critical method here is an insult to Freethought."

First of all, I should like to point out that I have been reading about Buddha and Buddhism for over 40 years—it was impossible for anyone interested in the study of religions not to come across Buddhism considering its tremendous spread in Asia. Next, I have never said that Buddha was a sun myth—nor for that matter that Jesus altogether was. Christianity is based partly on sun worship, but many other things went to its making. As for my "errors," every statement I made is based on authority, and if Mr. Jackson challenges this again I will give him chapter and verse. But, of course, I am well aware that if I quote Prof. Bumpious, it is possible to quote against him Dr. Knoxshious, and the great Hindu authority, Alaraudrakahasti, against them both. I prefer such "authorities" to fight it out among themselves. My "insult to Freethought" is, however, the quotation I gave from Buddha's teaching. "A wise man should avoid married life as if it were a burning pit of live coals," which Mr. Jackson says is something quite different. The reader will not be surprised, I am sure, when I say that I quoted Rhys Davids' "Buddhism," page 138. As Mr. Jackson says that he is "the distinguished Indologist," surely it is Rhys Davids who is the veritable insult. There seems nothing else in his article to which a reply is needed.

H. CUTNER.

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