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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

For the Children

It is the past that contains the clue to the present, and it is the savage life of the past that contains the key to much of the civilised present. The origins of all fundamental religious ideas have to be sought amid conditions that are to be found to-day only in uncivilised communities, or in civilised ones only so far as they retrace the stages through which their ancestors have passed. But, paradoxical as it may sound, one need not go to the past for the past. It can be found here in the present, expressing itself not only in our institutions, but likewise in the development of each individual. Each child, in the earlier stages of its mental development, is a picture in miniature of what was once the normal condition of the adult man and woman. The fear of a child in face of the strange and unknown, the indistinct sense of causation in children, with the spontaneous ascription of life to inanimate objects and forces, to say nothing of the predominance of the lower and more selfish feelings, all brings us face to face with the mental condition from which religions spring, and to which religion still makes its most fervent appeals.

One may say, therefore, with fair accuracy, that there is in children a tendency to religion—that is, they possess in their earlier years the fetishistic type of mind that was once characteristic of the race; and in this sense only can religion be looked upon as natural. It is an infantile disease, belonging to both periods of childhood, racial and individual. As natural as are other infantile disorders, the child would outgrow its early and inherited supernaturalism, as it becomes immune from scarlet fever or measles, if it were only allowed to pursue an unbroken and unhindered course of development. But this it is not allowed to do. In the hands of parents who entertain mistaken notions of their duty, and of a professional priesthood, who have a keen sense of self-interest, this mental phase is seized, and by artificial stimulation is strengthened and prolonged right through life. That which should be a passing phase only is thus converted into a permanent characteristic; and, having brought about this result, the minister of religion appeals to its existence in the adult as a justification of the procedure adopted.

One need not go much further than these simple considerations to find the grounds for the anxiety of the priesthood to force religion on the childhood. Childhood is the most favourable period—perhaps the *only* period—for the inculcation of religion. It is only when the sense of the mysterious is strong, and is enforced by a feeling of helplessness and a consciousness of ignorance, that religion grips its devotees strongly. At other times it may appeal to one here and there as a plausible speculation, but it does not produce a strong sense of conviction. There is, therefore, every reason for the priest securing the child; and one preacher, at least, as reported in the

current issue of a religious journal, seems fully alive to its importance. His anxiety is not so much for teaching religious beliefs as it is for getting children into church, and thus unconsciously inducing a state of mind favourable to religion. "The influence which a church has upon a child," he ingenuously explains, "does not lie in what he hears or understands—it is the silent influences of the place that tell upon him." And these "silent influences" are all calculated to encourage that feeling of weakness and mystification on which religion lives. "The large spaces, the peculiar furnishings, the silence and isolation from everything that is familiar to him—will fill him with a sense of strangeness and difference—the music of the organ, the voice of the minister, the singing of the choir and the congregation, all carry the impress of the strange and the unexplainable."

So far the candour of the description leaves little to be desired; and when, further, the reasons given for encouraging these feelings are that the child "is where the savage was," that all religion begins in a sense of the "vague and unaccountable," and that he gets "an ingrained, an instinctive respect for the church and the habit of going to it; he gets the feeling of reverence for something which he does not understand, but by which he feels constrained to respect, if not to awe"—when one gets the reasons for taking children to church so plainly put, one begins to feel that at last that *rara avis*, a straightforward cleric, is met with in the flesh. Unquestionably the advice given above is sound—from the standpoint of the priest. All it asserts is that religion, in civilised nations, is not a matter of intellectual instruction; it is a question of awakening certain sentiments, establishing particular prejudices in favour of specific customs, and then trusting to these prejudices will be strong enough to resist the influence of knowledge afterwards acquired. It is a policy that all the Churches have followed so long as circumstances permitted; and one is bound to admit that they were all wise in their generation in not trusting religious opinions to the educated reason of the adult.

Now, I am quite willing to admit that a policy of creating sentiments in favour of certain beliefs not *wholly* understood by the child is legitimate enough in its proper sphere. We do not wait until the child is old enough to appreciate the full bearings of all the virtues to give it some ethical instruction. We do seek to bring out certain latent tendencies for good; and suppress active ones of a disagreeable nature, and thus fashion the child's feelings in a required direction. But it is plain that this policy is only defensible so long as there exists a tolerably uniform agreement concerning the *social* benefits of the course pursued, or, at least, that its social benefit can be established against hostile criticism. We impress upon children the duty of honesty in action and speech, in spite of an oft-manifested tendency in a contrary direction. But this is not only not done to create a feeling of "strangeness and difference," or to excite "reverence

for something which he does not understand," but it is taught distinctly to create a feeling of community of interest, while the child that can receive instruction in such matters can also be brought to understand the reason for the instruction, although perhaps not grasping it in its full measure.

But with religious instruction the case is altogether different. Here not only does the mystery continue in spite of the advance in years in understanding, but it is impossible for the parent to justify its being forced upon the child's mind as he can justify instruction in other matters. However confident people may feel concerning their religious opinions, the educated ones, at least, will admit that they are open to doubt. They *may* be right, but they *may* be wrong, and there is clearly a wide difference between training a child to regard as valuable actions or feelings the validity of which may be demonstrated at any time, and teaching it to regard as certain teachings which all admit cannot be demonstrated to be so. In the one case, we are training a child for its future welfare; in the other, we are forcing upon it our own speculations upon matters concerning which no common agreement exists—surely an altogether unwarrantable exercise of parental power.

But the more serious objection to religious instruction is that it does not constitute a part of real education at all. To confuse the understanding is not to instruct, nor is mystification a good method of enlightenment. A good teacher seeks to make his pupil independent of him, a priest to keep him dependent upon him for guidance. Rational education seeks to convince, religion merely instructs. The former aims chiefly at training the reason and exciting a love of inquiry; the latter lulls reason to sleep and regards inquiry as always more or less reprehensible. The whole process of examination and criticism is hostile to the thoroughly religious mind, and is never entertained save under protest. As a French writer remarks:—

"Whoever endeavours to examine a dogma is close upon the point of contradicting it, and the priest who regards contradiction as a failure in faith is always obliged, in the nature of things, to avoid an examination of it, to interdict a certain number of questions, to take refuge in mystery. When a priest has filled a brain with faith, he seals it. Doubt and investigation, which are the life of philosophy, the priest regards as a mark of distrust and suspicion, as a sin, as an impiety; he lifts his eyes to heaven at the bare notion of anybody's thinking for himself."

After all, the principal part of a sound education is not *what* a child learns, it is the temper of mind induced by his training, the habits formed, the custom of finding sound reasons for beliefs, of accepting no statement upon mere authority, and of cultivating the habits of criticising freely, and without prejudice, all with which he comes into contact. Given these habits of mind, and the future is assured; without them the child becomes the easy dupe of all who are acute enough to play upon his nature.

The child is the raw material out of which the churches and chapels manufacture their future patrons. He carries with him to these places developed habits, the seeds of which were sown in his impressionable childhood. Hence the struggle of the priests of all religions to get control first of the child. Having secured this as a start, the rest is tolerably easy. The tenacity of early impressions is notorious: the man dying in delirium babbles of his childhood's days; the criminal dying on the gallows has his mind carried back to the simple lessons received at his mother's knee; and, similarly, the religious lessons received during extreme youth seldom,

perhaps never, entirely disappear. We may not always be conscious of their force, but they are there, like the scar of a wound long since received.

But the child is also the raw material out of which our future citizen is fashioned, and therefore the struggle between the religious instructor and the scientific teacher is more than a mere contest of opinion—it is a struggle for the direction of civilisation. The question at issue is a simple, but a profoundly important one. It is whether the developing mind of the child is to be directed by agencies which, however imperfect, have raised man from barbarism to civilisation, and placed him a monarch where he once cringed as a slave, or by a priesthood whose sole consistency has been in striving by every means in its power to retard the development of all that is most dignified and lovable in human nature.

CHAPMAN COHEN

THE REIGN OF PETER THE GREAT

PETER THE GREAT (1682-1725), with all his demerits, remains a remarkable innovator and administrator who materially moulded, for good and ill, the structure of the Russian State. Indeed, Russia, as he transformed it, retained its leading features until the Revolution of 1917.

When Fedor II died, Peter was a boy of ten and several members of the royal family strove for supremacy, but the Patriarch Joachim announced Peter's claim to a crowd collected in the Red Square in Moscow, and the boy was proclaimed Tsar. This followed the conflicting claims of the contending aspirants to act as Regents during Peter's minority while in the then semi-barbarous State plot and conspiracy might have terminated Peter's career had he not enjoyed the protection of the Crown's most trustworthy adherents.

Peter displayed an early passion for mechanical toys and his intense interest in applied science, he retained to the last. Having suppressed a rising among the *streltsy*—the Moscow Guard—which he subsequently disbanded as a constant menace to the occupant of the throne, Peter travelled abroad in search of knowledge then not available in Russia. He studied the secrets of the Swedish fortress at Riga and was rebuffed for his temerity, but in Prussia he was more cordially received. A giant in stature, his eccentric conduct, his coarse manners and his extraordinary powers of perception greatly impressed all who met him.

He went to Holland where he worked as an ordinary shipwright on the wharves. But his incognito was detected, so he left Zaandam for Amsterdam. As Professor Pares states in his excellent *History of Russia* (Revised Edition, 1917, Jonathan Cape, 30s.): "From this centre, he visited works and factories, picture galleries, anatomical theatres, commercial and other institutions, with the result that he enlisted nearly a thousand experts of various kinds for the service of Russia. Being told that the theory of shipbuilding was better understood in England he passed over to London. He was assigned quarters in Deptford, which he and his companions left in a terrible condition as the result of their stormy revels. In London, as in Holland, his object was to see and learn everything and engage experts in those subjects which the given country could best teach."

In Peter's day, Sweden was one of the great military Powers and conflict with Russia was inevitable. Again.

in Muscovy, Peter was soon involved in war with Charles XII of Sweden and met defeat in the battle of Narva. Then, after many trials and tribulations, Peter won a resounding victory at Poltava and Charles fled to Turkey. Still, the war continued for a further twelve years, during which the Swedes lost all their conquests on the southern shores of the Baltic. Then with the Swedes driven from the European Continent, Peter had gained the ground for his window to the sea and Petersburg arose over the marsh near the Neva.

Probably no modern ruler was more familiar with his subjects than Peter. In his wanderings through his dominions, he was content to dwell in the humblest peasants' huts. As the larger part of his reign of 43 years was consumed in warfare, the chief internal changes he initiated were mainly those of his later life. Even then, constant attention was devoted to the army so essential to the country in case of invasion. For the army, as Peter found it, was quite incapable of overcoming an onslaught from Western Europe. So the military forces were reorganised and became much more professional in character. But the crushing burdens thus placed on the community, especially the peasants, who bore the brunt of taxation, led to wide-spread misery and crime, even if the elements of a regular army, trained on practical principles, emerged into being.

Under Peter's rule, birth was disregarded when appointments were made in the public services and rank was made entirely dependent on merit. The service of the State became obligatory on all, and the landed gentry were to be subjected to a system of compulsory education. The teaching in the schools Peter established, embraced the three R's, geometry and fortification, but despite the Tsar's insistence, his orders were frequently evaded, although for marriages among landholders a certificate showing literacy was imperative. The importance of industry and commerce was also stressed by Peter, who fully realised that if heavy taxes were to be successfully imposed, the country's productivity must be encouraged and increased.

Reforms in governmental and judicial methods were introduced, but few of these survived their creator. Nor were Peter's activities restricted to secular affairs when he transformed Church administration. Outwardly Peter appears to have conformed to the orthodox faith on all public occasions, even if he made the Church completely dependent on the State. Naturally his innovations were deeply deplored by the clergy and he found few whole-hearted supporters. While still a youth, Peter had been prevented from vetoing the appointment of the reactionary Adrian as Patriarch, as he had denounced the Tsar's order for shaving the beard as flagrantly heretical. But, with Adrian's death in 1700, Peter decided that the selection of a successor was so important that it should be postponed for careful consideration. But no appointment was made and in 1721 the Church administration was placed in commission. Henceforth, the hierarchy was to be controlled by a Holy Synod composed of the leading clergy. To this body a layman appointed by the Crown was attached—the Tsar's eye—who was to report any action likely to incur the Crown's displeasure. The Church, which was then in a lethargic state, proved incapable of serious resistance and even Peter's open contempt for ecclesiastical mummary had to be endured. As Pares testifies: "Peter in his drunken bouts openly made mockery of Church ritual; at the marriage of the Court fool Zaitov he and his courtiers went in procession through the streets of Moscow attired in Church vestments and drawn over the snow in sledges harnessed to bears, goats and pigs."

Ordinarily accustomed to a simple and frugal life himself, Peter sought to secure honesty and plain living among his officials, unfortunately too notorious for corruption. So a system of espionage was instituted under which an informer "was entitled to a quarter of the property of the person against whom he informed," while those who brought false charges escaped scot free. This calling in Satan to cast out sin made subservience a shining virtue while corruption proved irremediable. For that matter, Peter himself frequently employed the arts of bribery for diplomatic purposes in his dealings abroad, thus increasing the burdens of the Russian taxpayer.

To further his reforms, the Tsar had established a despotism greater than any of his predecessors, and the onerous duties demanded, and the burdens imposed, induced many thousands of his subjects to flee abroad. So the right to travel was severely restricted and man-hunts were organised to recover fugitives, while armed bandit bands grew apace, especially in the turbulent south-eastern regions of Russia. It seemed inevitable that this draconian system would expire with Peter's death. Yet, much of it persisted and, as a distinguished Russian writer said, "that if Peter had not bullied Russia into civilisation the work which he did would have taken a hundred years, and would almost certainly have led to such civil strife as would have put the country at the mercy of some invading power." Still, few men, least of all the average Russian, could approve the whirlwind violence of Peter the Great.

Nonetheless, Professor Pares's appraisal of Peter's achievements seems just when he concludes that the Tsar's work "was complete as far as one life could make it so. There was no department in which he did not make the beginnings of Russian civilisation. He himself corrected and simplified the Russian alphabet which was in use after him. He was himself the first editor of the first public newspaper in Russia. He prescribed the translation of all books into Russian. . . . under his direction was brought out the first text book of social behaviour in which his subjects were ordered to be amiable, modest and respectful, to learn languages, to look people in the face, to take off their hats, not to dance in boots, or to spit on the floor, or sing too loud, put the finger in the nose . . . lick the fingers, gnaw a bone when at dinner, scratch one's head, talk with one's mouth full; and his assemblies and social gatherings, at which he made attendance compulsory were the first crude school of European conventions."

As usual in instances of outstanding personalities, a crop of legends concerning him arose after Peter's demise. By many he was declared to be Antichrist, while others asserted that he personated the true Tsar who was imprisoned in a Swedish dungeon. In any case, Petersburg now Leningrad, displaced Moscow as Russia's capital and, as already intimated, the State structure Peter erected survived until the monarchy came to a tragic end.

T. F. PALMER.

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ACID DROPS

One hundred nurses were told by the Roman Catholic Bishop Grimshaw that they "have it in their hands to convert England." We wonder if they believe it? But why cannot a hundred Catholic Bishops convert England? Surely a live bishop can do more than a simple nurse, whose time is taken up with hospital work. The Bishop continued by saying that the nurses could do more for "healing the gaping wounds of this poor country than almost anybody else." When one examines this kind of hopeless tom-foolery churned out by the mile by priests, the more one realises why the fool of the family is so often ready to take up the Church as a career.

The Bishop had more to say. He deplored the fact that the religious training given to children to-day was nothing like the training their grandparents received, and said he actually had met children "who could not tell him the meaning of the word God." Well, the ignorance is shared by every Theist—including Bishop Grimshaw. Can he give us the meaning of the word God—that is, a meaning that is intelligible? We could give hundreds of "meanings," but what they mean God only knows—we don't.

The word "liar" seems to be one of the most used in theological controversy, especially between Romanists and Protestants, but to have it hurled about at a meeting of the Church Assembly really should not be done. Canon Whytehead (amid applause) said that on the cover of the Shorter Prayer Book were the words "according to the use of the Church of England"—and "this was not true, as it contained portions of the 1928 book which possessed no authority." Thus some Christian had deliberately lied, a most shocking thing to do; or rather it ought to be shocking, for we are often told that only Christians can be truly righteous.

Our contemporary, the "Picture Post," has just had a taste of Roman Catholic censorship in Eire and does not appear to like it. Recently, it published an article on "Family Planning," and on the copies reaching Eire the offending article was immediately torn out, not, as a matter of fact, by the Irish Government censor, but by the firm that distributes "Picture Post" to newsagents. For intolerant impudence this seems to us to be about the limit, but all the distributing firm got was a mild rebuke that "if they are faced again" with a similar article it would be preferred to have the journal dealt with by the proper authorities—a rebuke that will no doubt be received with roars of laughter.

Professor W. C. Nixon told the B.M.A. that the Biblical quotation "In sorrow thou shalt bring forth thy children" has brought about untold misery throughout the centuries. It is a pity that the Professor did not discuss the matter more fully. He would have found that the responsibility for the "untold misery" rests on those interested in propagating Christianity. Medieval Christianity saw in childbirth the result of a carnal sin which could only be expiated by pain (Gen. III, 6). During the "Ages of Faith" the main concern seemed to be that the child should be baptised, the mother was hardly considered. In our opinion the height—or depth—of callousness was reached by the invention of a Baptismal syringe, used to baptise unborn infants.

The care of the child-bearing woman is a true index of civilisation. At the height of the Egyptian, Roman

and Grecian civilisations the art of caring for the child-bearing woman was, within the limits of their knowledge, well developed. But at the fall of the ancient civilisation and the rise of Christianity the whole atmosphere and outlook deteriorated. Baptismal syringes, religious ceremonies, the exclusion of male physicians, the regarding of child-birth as something "unclean," the general ignorance, filth, was accepted as the *sine qua non* of the Dark Ages. Even to-day the Church still retains the ceremony of the purification of women. We feel sure that if mothers took the trouble to understand the significance of this insulting ceremony, it would be relegated to the refuse heap of outworn superstitions.

We imagine that there will be great rejoicing in the Diocese of Trier (Germany). The "Universe" reports that a Dispensation from the Hierarchy will allow Catholics to take non-alcoholic drinks, or a raw or lightly boiled egg before Holy Communion. We are curious to know how the body and blood of our Lord will mix with a lightly boiled egg. Of course, to reasonable people the idea is fantastic, yet we do not question the sincerity—or credulity—of believers, but what an indication of the perverted mentality of Christians who can solemnly mix-up lemonade, boiled eggs and the "Host." Appropos, can the Germans get eggs?

Bishop Marshall, of Salford, in opening a new church in Rochdale, warned the congregation "not to miss Mass, or miss sending their children to Church schools." He added, "that out of 100 children attending elementary schools, 95 per cent. lose their faith." But surely the "Faith of our Fathers," which has survived "dungeon, fire and sword," can stand up to the curriculum of an elementary school; or can it be that the Bishop realises that once a Catholic is free of the suffocating hand of the Church he begins to think for himself, and to see how he has been misled?

More than 300 bishops will attend the Lambeth Conference, and among the "problems" to be discussed will be "What is man?" "Why was he born?" "What does God mean man to be?" and "Is man meant to be a machine, a servant of the State?" etc., etc. In the absence of God, these questions cannot be answered, but some useful information could be given if the bishops would answer "What is a bishop?" "Why was he born?" and "What does God mean a bishop to be?" If the Lambeth Conference will invite a few Freethinkers we feel sure that a very frank discussion will be forthcoming.

The British Colonial Office informed the United Nations that the Chief of Bikon (Cameroons) "does not keep a seraglio of 200 women, he has only 110, and of these, 44 were inherited; in any case the Chief has a right through Divine Kingship to all first-born females." We think the Chief is a Christian of the old school. If he has certainly read his Bible thoroughly, he will have found many examples.

Despite our much vaunted education, the idea of the "divine attributes" of kings is still widely held, and even today, kings—a declining race—are still considered super-human. Consider the pomp and circumstance that surrounds royalty from their birth to their weddings, coronations and deaths. How their everyday activities are surrounded with blatant advertisement. Need we remind readers of the kind of scenes at the wedding of Philip and Elizabeth? The Chief of Bikon in his "divine right" is not so far removed from his royal brothers even if he may be a different colour.

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SUGAR PLUMS

Every now and again Dean Inge lets loose something that is certain to make his Christian brothers uncomfortable. Here is a sample which we think will make most Christian leaders squirm:—

"The Humanitarian movement began to be important in the eighteenth century. In France the movement had nothing to do with religion, unless by a great though not impossible stretch of language we call Voltaire a Christian. The French Humanitarians were often avowed Atheists, and I do not think the Church did anything to support the movement. . . Was Humanitarianism part of the creed of the Reformers—of Luther, Calvin, and Knox? I speak under correction, but I think it was not."

That is excellent coming from an ex-clergyman and one who insists on calling himself a Christian.

When Dean Inge spoke as he did we have not the slightest doubt that he had in mind the shaking loose of Europe from the control of Christianity, and Dean Inge knows that the awakening of science and Humanism, its product, were mainly due to non-Christian influences. Humanism springs from the non-religious side of life. It meant, and means, the calling attention to a new philosophy, a new development, a new science, in other words the bringing of life to where death had ruled.

The Rationalist Press Association will hold their third Annual Conference from July 23 to July 27 at Magdalen College, Oxford. The Presidential Address will be given by the Rt. Honourable The Lord Chorley, M.A., J.P. The list of speakers will include Profs. A. E. Heath, G. Ryle and Gilbert Murray, Mr. Kingsley Martin, and Drs. Joan Malleson, J. A. C. Brown, J. Bronowski and E. R. Popper. Full details can be had from the R.P.A., 56, Johnsons Court, London, E.C. 4.

That *enfant terrible* of the Church of England, Bishop Barnes, is likely to find the going difficult, as his brothers in Christ are objecting to him taking his place at the Lambeth Conference. The Chairman and Secretary of the Anglo-Catholic Council maintain that Bishop Barnes should resign the See of Birmingham because of the opinions expressed in his book "The Rise of

Christianity." We are doubtful whether the Bishop will have the courage of, say, Joseph McCabe or Abbé Loisy, who left the Church when they could no longer subscribe to its tenets. True, the worthy Bishop may not have rejected all the dogmas, but his book leaves precious little left for the pious Christian.

SOME NOTES ON EVOLUTION

III

ONE of the questions which is asked in "Evolution," the pamphlet now being sold by the International Christian Crusade against the theory of Evolution, and entirely in favour of Genesis and Special Creation, is "Why has evolution stopped?"—which reminds me of the famous question asked of some man: "When did you last stop beating your wife?"

Evolution has not, as far as science knows, stopped at all. It is going on, not only in this world of ours, but throughout the Universe. To ask such a question shows not only abysmal ignorance but an artful way of asking the evolutionist to show with mathematical proof all sorts of organisms changing, or various bodily organs withering away, before our very eyes. It is, of course, useless to deal with such people, and it is a pity that so many, deluded by the Oriental nonsense of the Christian religion, should believe questions of this sort have any validity. Fools have always been able to ask questions which should never be asked; and on this particular one the compiler plaintively whines, "No textbook on biology ever mentions the subject." Of course not.

Also artfully introduced between quotations from various men of science—many of whom, anyway, are thorough believers in Evolution—are statements like this: "The premature surrender (of biologists and scientists) to evolution seems absolutely to have degraded their scientific morals." The author of this gem is a "Dr. Merson Davies"—a pretentious nobody, and it will be found in "The Bible and Modern Science." Thousands of similar books from obscure Christians have been written and are still being written, but who reads them? What possible influence have they on the development of science? Would anybody quote Dr. Davies before the Royal Society or the British Association even as an "authority" on the Bible, let alone on science?

And when the anti-Evolutionist protests that our pictorial "reconstructions" of the Piltdown, the Neanderthal, or Heidelberg Man may be quite wrong—what does this prove? Given some fragmentary remains, a bit of a skull or a few teeth only, what is the poor artist to do? He uses his imagination, but only an anti-Evolutionist insists that these drawings are deliberately designed to deceive the poor unfortunate public—who are thus credited with infantile intelligence.

The compiler of "Evolution" quotes Prof. Marcel Boule, of the Museum of Natural History in Paris, as emphasising the impossibility of portraits of Neanderthal Man as being anything like the original, and I am sure all Evolutionists will heartily concur. But we are not told anything about Prof. Boule, and once again the devout Christian reader will imagine that he is on the side of Special Creation.

In sober truth, Prof. Boule has nothing but the greatest contempt for people like Mr. Douglas Dewar, Dr. Merson Davies, or Sir Ambrose Fleming. Here is what he says in his "Historical Summary" on Fossil Man:—

The Neanderthal skull, by reason of characters obviously of a low type, and a conformation resembling

bling that of the skulls of certain large Apes, supported the Evolutionist theory . . . it appeared to be a sort of primitive form lessening the depth of the gulf which now separates the Apes from Men. But this interpretation was not to the liking of anti-evolutionists of the old school . . . Eminent anthropologists, among them Virchow, regarded it as a pathological specimen of the skull of an idiot. I shall say nothing of the zealous and often foolish intervention of the defenders of religion, in a debate to which religion could only contribute arguments animated by sentiment, by tradition or by prejudice. It was an intervention of this kind which provoked the famous epigram of Huxley, that it was better to be a perfect Ape than a degenerate Adam.

I need hardly add that this passage is not quoted by the anti-Evolutionists, nor indeed do they point to the fact that Prof. Boule is entirely on the side of Evolution.

There is one statement in "Evolution" which is really laughable—"The tragedy is that to-day the theory of evolution is not so much taught as taken for granted." The truth is, of course, that, leaving aside early writers like Lucretius who had some glimmer of understanding of the evolutionary process—from the days of Lamarck, those scientists who, through study and observation, clearly saw that only Evolution could explain the riddle of the Universe had the greatest difficulty in making the theory known at all. They were attacked by the Christian Churches with all the foul vituperation which has always characterised the men of God as well as by those scientists who still believed in the first two chapters of Genesis. Hundreds of books have been written to teach Evolution and they are open to everybody to study for themselves; Evolution need not be taken for granted, but once a reader has mastered its principles, it certainly will be taken for granted for there is nothing else which can satisfy an intelligent enquirer into Man's origin.

You get this practically admitted in the "Conclusion" to this pamphlet on "Evolution." Here are the actual words:—

Evolution may be regarded as perhaps the best explanation of life that is possible if we believe that there is no God. But the fact of existence, the existence of life, of mind, and matter postulates the need of a Creator. After all, the biological aspect of evolution is only a part of the larger aspect of the evolution of the universe, and it is impossible to conceive of the universe coming into existence from nothing apart from supernatural intervention. There must, therefore, have been a Creator. The evidence in favour of creation, both positive and negative, is irresistible. In the early chapters of Genesis we find the record of a perfect creation, followed by the (perfect?) curse. No other explanation can satisfactorily account for the natural world as we observe it.

Thus, as Huxley once said, "The doctrine of evolution is directly antagonistic to that of creation," and the fight is still on between believers in Genesis and the followers of those men of science who have devoted their lives to the study of geology, paleontology, anthropology, and biology. There is not a scrap of evidence for a God or gods and, of course, there has never been any for such a hopeless piece of balderdash as Special Creation. Before attempting to discredit Evolution therefore, the Godites should produce some evidence that God lives; for if they cannot, then on their own admission Evolution may be "the best explanation of life."

It is quite impossible here to deal with the many "statements of authorities" given in the pamphlet—among whom is given prominence to Charles Darwin—so that Christians can see for themselves how little that great scientist believed in Evolution! They are all worth reading, however, if only to learn the kind of opposition Evolutionists have in the main, and also because it is always good to know your opponents' case. I have chuckled often at some of the quotations taken from right reverend believers, most of whom are quite unknown, or known only to a small and no doubt specially selected Bible class which is generally preceded by a Bright Sunday Service.

It is a pity that some of the eminent scientists who supply the quotations and who are Evolutionists may never see how their admissions are quoted. But it would be too much to expect that the Churches and their henchmen would give up the ghost without a struggle. And certainly the struggle is not over yet.

H. CUTNER.

MARXISM, FATALISM AND DETERMINISM

MR. ROWLAND in his article of June 27th raises two points to which I feel I owe an answer.

By way of preamble, may I say that "Man His Own Master" is not either in intention or in fact a "Marxist analysis of the facts of human history?" Had I meant it to be so, I should have had to cover the whole field of economic, social and political history, nearly all of which I omit; and I should not have had it published by the R.P.A. I deal with the history of thought, and with other fields only so far as they have to be brought in.

Mr. Rowland asks first whether the criterion I apply to the Anglican Church does not destroy the "claim" of the Soviet Government to "continuity" with Lenin. The cases are not parallel. The rightness or wrongness of present Soviet policy does not depend on the relatively unimportant question whether Stalin's Government is continuous with Lenin's, but on whether it is practically successful in building and defending Socialism. But in the case of the Anglican Church the whole Anglo-Catholic claim to authority in faith and morals depends on the assertion that the present Church of England is not only continuous, but identical with the medieval Church. The one is a question of practical politics, the other of supernatural authority. In the one case continuity does not matter; in the other it does. However, Mr. Rowland says this is a minor point, and we can let it go at that. It is certainly not a point of substance.

His second quarrel is with my treatment of determinism. Strange as it may seem to Mr. Rowland, I wrote the passage he selects for criticism without any political motive whatever. I do not even know whether other Marxists would endorse it—I haven't asked them! I arrived at my conclusion quite otherwise.

For a long time I accepted the fatalist view that everything which happens is completely predetermined from all time. Now the trouble with this view is that we have no possible means of knowing it to be true. To know it to be true we should need some apparatus for inspecting the whole universe; and we have not got it. The best way to approach the question is to ask, not whether everything is predetermined (about which we might argue for ever) but how we come to assume that every-

thing is predetermined. We come to assume it simply by experience of cause and effect in particular cases—fire burning, food nourishing, motives influencing behaviour, and so on. In all these cases an event in time leads to another event, and we find that by producing one we can produce the other. So we generalise back to the beginning and arrive at the predetermined, clockwork universe of Omar Khayyam, Holbach and Laplace.

But this is a generalisation from limited data, and no more. When we have rigorously thought out fatalism to its conclusion, the trouble begins. For if everything is predetermined from the beginning, in what sense is it true that one event causes another, that heat causes oxidation, that nutrition causes growth, that inflation causes high prices? In a predetermined universe no one thing more than another thing can be said to cause anything else; for the word "cause" loses its meaning. They were all bound to happen from the start, and nothing made or can make any difference. Thus the fatalist view, which we arrived at by generalising from particular cases of cause and effect, ends by destroying the foundation on which it was built.

Now we cannot get on without the notion of cause and effect. But we can get on without fatalism. Therefore, if the two prove inconsistent it is fatalism we must chuck. That is how I came to chuck it. Marxism did not come into it, except in so far as Marxism taught me what I ought to have seen from the first, namely that human knowledge rests not on eternal truths grasped by some innate power of the mind, but on beliefs formed provisionally and built up by the test of practice. In case anyone thinks there is something peculiar to Marxists in this, I refer him to W. K. Clifford, who says that scientific truth is "not that which we can ideally contemplate without error, but that which we may act upon without fear."

Mr. Rowland is therefore wrong in seeing in my argument an insidious attempt to inveigle people into co-operation with the Communist Party. I offer it as a bona fide attempt to get round the difficulty of fatalism. I am of course a Marxist, and have been one according to my lights for 40 years. Judging from current ecclesiastical pronouncements, Marxism is the twentieth century movement that really terrifies the churches; so my opinion gets confirmed as I go on. But I should be sorry if none but Marxists approved the conclusions of my book, which I hold to be just common sense.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

WOMAN IN THE HOME

The "Observer" reports Dr. Stoltenhof, head of the Evangelical Church of the North Rhine, Westphalian Province, Germany, as saying "We hold it to be the Divine Law that women remain in the home," when discussing woman's place in industry. Shades of Hitler! When will these Christians learn? The equalitarian status of women has been discussed, and fought for, over many years, their usefulness and competence in industry has been recognised and accepted. Our "spiritual leaders" still lag behind contemporary thought, now as always. Freethinkers will know the Christian attitude towards women, but as a refresher we recommend consulting Ephesians, v. 22; Tim. II, 22; St. Chrysostom, St. Clement and, of course, St. Paul.

CORRESPONDENCE

DO THEY BELIEVE?

SIR.—Before the military revolt in Spain I lived in the suburbs in Barcelona. In July, 1933, two retired school teachers from England visited me. One Sunday afternoon during their stay, a Catholic priest came to tea, a friend of ours. Over a friendly cup of tea the two ladies (both ardent Protestants) started an argument against Catholicism. The priest tried to waive it off, by speaking about other things, but one of the women was out for a victory for Protestantism. She asked the priest in a sharp definite manner: "But please tell us, sir, the young men who study the Roman Catholic Religion, do they believe in it?" The priest smiled and said, "No madam, those who study Catholicism do not believe in it." The woman turned to her companion, still believing that his answer was only meant for the Catholic Religion, "Did you hear that?" she said. Then my wife said, "Neither the Protestant?" The priest answered only, "Just so."—Yours, etc.,

W. GUELKE.

A PROTEST.

SIR.—Will you allow a reader of more than two decades' standing to protest against the insufferable "superior" pedantry of Mr. Archibald Robertson, in his objection to Mr. Wood's use of italics.

Mr. Wood is entitled to use any form of expression he chooses in order to get his exact meaning across; and his argument is entitled to be dealt with on its merits, and not its form of expression.

Personally, I find Mr. Wood quite clear, concise and understandable—and surely that is sufficient for all readers—as it seems so to the editor.—Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

[This correspondence must now cease.—EDITOR.]

OBITUARY

JOHN KATZ, M.A.

We announce with deep regret that John Katz died on June 23rd, after a short illness. There will be a memorial meeting at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, on Sunday, July 25th at 3 o'clock.

No tickets are being sent out. All who wish are invited to attend.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon; Highbury Corner, 7 p.m.: Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: MESSRS. E. C. SAPIEN, JAMES HART, G. WOOD, E. PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Work of the Webbs," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Accrington (Market).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY.

Enfield.—Friday, 16th July, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Glasgow (Brunswick Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. S. BRYDEN, E. LAWAS and J. HUMPHREY.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

Morseyside Branch N.S.S. (on Blitzed Site, Ranelagh Street, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Messrs. G. THOMPSON, W. PARRY, W. C. PARRY.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

Padiham.—Wednesday, 21st July, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers' Pool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Messrs. A. SAMMS, G. L. GREAVES.

SCIENCE

- (1) Science seems to have originally meant any systematised knowledge; but in time its meaning changed.
- (2) In modern times it is generally referred to as though it were restricted to the study of physics.
- (3) Such a restriction seems arbitrary and, in the absence of a definition, unjustifiable.
- (4) The word, although frequently used, is very seldom defined, even by professional exponents of science.
- (5) Here a definition is suggested which at least defines both its sphere and limitations.
- (6) Science is a method for the systematic and orderly collocation of such human knowledge as is capable of unrestricted objective reverification, correction and amendment.
- (7) First, science is essentially a method; it is not statements, but the method, which constitutes science.
- (8) Statements are made by scientists and these may be observable details or tentative hypotheses.
- (9) Where they are not the former, they are colligations of them from which general principles are suggested.
- (10) Second, to be science these statements should be orderly, systematic and reasonably definite.
- (11) That is to say, they are not mere collections of evidence, but they have coherence and relationship.
- (12) Third, scientific data must be objective; that is, they must be verifiable by other people.
- (13) That is to say, purely personal subjective evidence is not scientific because it is not verifiable.
- (14) Fourth, statements must be capable of unrestricted verification, correction, and amendment.
- (15) The evidence of a few people is not scientific justification; statements must be capable of verification.
- (16) Fifth, science must be correlated and integral; i.e., one scientific statement must not contradict another.
- (17) If one statement contradicts, or is totally incompatible with, another, then one or both are incorrect.
- (18) Statements on, say, astronomy must not conflict with those on physics; or those on biology with chemistry.
- (19) From these qualifications it follows that scientific statements are open to unlimited scepticism.
- (20) While the technique of much scientific application is complicated and elaborate, it is not esoteric.
- (21) Any persons who are competent and have the necessary facilities can investigate for themselves.
- (22) No human can investigate more than a small part of the whole scientific sphere.
- (23) Therefore some scientists investigate one part, others other parts, and these are collocated.
- (24) Scientific statements and theories are hypotheses based on cumulative scientific evidence.
- (25) Scientific methods are open and free to anyone to adopt, anywhere, anyhow.
- (26) It is sometimes said that science is a matter of faith in statements not verified personally.
- (27) This is an unjustifiable use of the word faith since scientific belief is in cumulative evidence.
- (28) Once, long ago, probably every human believed that the sun went round the earth.
- (29) Few do so now, not because they have personally verified contrary statements by astronomers.
- (30) But because they know that the cumulative evidence presented has been verified and reverified.
- (31) This essentially scientific method is progressing at ever increasing rate in all natural subjects.
- (32) Investigation and research by thousands of scientists are continuing in almost every direction.
- (33) The one or the few pioneers lead, others follow and in time the sceptical majority follows also.
- (34) Thus the sphere of knowledge of nature ever increases, while the sphere of the extra-natural contracts.
- (35) Animism in modern form is still prevalent among humans, but it is slowly passing away.
- (36) Science can be applied to any subject where the methods stated above can be applied.
- (37) It can be applied in part to such subjects as history, political economy, or religion.
- (38) It is often said there is a conflict of science with religion, but the converse is more correct.
- (39) There is a conflict of religion with science as the latter extends constantly into the sphere of the former.
- (40) Science is concerned with the objective natural; it is neutral as regards the extra-natural.
- (41) It is often stated that science has frequently been wrong; this indicates confusion of thought.
- (42) The essence of science is its method and this is open to constant revision and amendment.
- (43) No scientist has scientific justification for general statements beyond known scientific data.
- (44) The methods of scientific investigation are correct; human conclusions from them may be incorrect.
- (45) Science is cumulative progressive human knowledge within its own sphere of objective evidence.
- (46) It is an endeavour, by these methods, to learn the constantly operating dynamic processes of nature.
- (47) Considered cumulatively as a human accomplishment, progress in it has been enormous.
- (48) Very many scientific hypotheses are open to further confirmation, correction or amendment.
- (49) Yet much has been constantly reverified and there is a vast field of verified data.
- (50) It is thus that the sphere of natural science expands while that of the extra-natural contracts.

W. EDWARD MEADS.

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