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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

ALL sorts of reasons are offered by way of accounting for the growing rapidity of the decline of religion in general and in Christianity in particular. I say religion rather than Christianity because the field of disbelief is growing wherever religion exists. On that point we may agree with ex-Dean Inge when he says that "Religion is a powerful antiseptic which preserves mummified customs that have long lost their power." And on that he adds his commonsense by remarking that there is no need to go to Australia or Africa to find the creeds of savages, "we have them in our pulpits." There is no superstition too absurd to find credence in modern England, fetishes dominate London drawing rooms. No educated Freethinker could say more. The full scientific situation is there in a few plain words.

But to those who are not blinded by religious prejudice it would seem that the one certain thing is the decisive disproof of religion as a civil force. This remains true even though we granted many of the apologies that Christians had never really adopted Christianity. That only exhibits another fault. Christianity is not a thing of yesterday. It has a very long history, and it has had unexampled opportunities of asserting its claims. To say, therefore, that it is still unfriended is an expression that is just a term for dead failure. The first business of a religion is to get itself adopted. If it cannot do that in the course of a thousand years it is time that Christianity should throw up the game.

The case becomes still worse if it is argued that Christianity has never had a proper chance to overcome the selfishness of man. On that, one may ask, "What is there in Christianity that it falls so readily into evil conditions, and has always failed in its aims?" What we do know is that with any genuine form of social life Christianity played a great part in destroying much of the valuable social things belonging to the social world of antiquity. There is no doubt that from the time of Constantine the greatness of the ancient world began to decay, and the power of Christianity grew with the worst features of civic and social life. In the old world, so far as it was possible, Christianity converted an Emperor to a Sultan. It gave his rule the authority of divinity and made disobedience a religious offence. It cannot be said with truth that prior to the establishment of Christianity, the rule of the Emperor was ever completely divorced from the popular will. It was Christianity that made this separation as complete as possible. One of our best authorities put the matter thus.

"Constantine extended his patronage to the Church. By so doing he may be said to have purchased an indefensible title by a charter. He gained a sanction for the oriental theory of government. In return he accepted the law of the Church. He became irresponsible with respect to his subjects on condition of becoming responsible to Christ."

Nothing could be more favourable to tyranny in every form. He believed in God, but he also believed that God believed in him. Nothing could be more just. The Christianised Roman Monarch willingly admitted responsibility to Christ, but it was understood that nothing would be lost in the shape of power and wealth.

But in spite of what history has to say concerning the evil consequences that have always followed control of human life, we get appeals to God from all our crowd of scientific men and women; we find appeals to God as though the qualities of gods are not well known. Here is one item that comes from a well known weekly newspaper. It runs:—

"If only there had been enough Christianity in the world; no man, prince, potentate, or private citizen, could have hated or envied, or over-reached or dreaded his neighbours enough to bring war to pass."

Consider it. If only there had been enough Christians. Let any one look back for, say, the last two and a-half centuries, note how many wars, large and small we have engaged in, and say whether there was any shortage. Whose Christianity is it then, that makes war and hatred possible? Which of these have ever protested against war? The only one thing they seem to be interested in is to ask God to kill some of his children. What a great power he possesses, not to stop wars but to keep them going. And here the position of all the churches is different. In every country and no matter the character of the war in which the country has been engaged, the influences of the churches have been on the side of war. They have encouraged, they have blessed it. They have given it the moral and religious sanction without which the true nature of warfare might be more apparent. There are still enough Christians in the world to make war a practical impossibility, if only the churches were genuinely on the side of peace.

The plain fact is that there is nothing that so easily divides people as religion. Men of all shades of religious opinion will eat together, work together, sleep together. The one thing they will not do is to pray together. There is no need to multiply instances. The one plain outstanding truth is that while the general tendency of humans is to unite, religion is the great power that drives humans apart. That is a fact that all intelligent men and women will endorse. It is true that these sects do co-operate to some extent, but that is not based on religion. Their union is due either to social considerations, or to hostility directed against a common enemy. Union for social purposes is not without its dangers. For they bring often to the consideration of several questions, a narrowness of view and a bitterness of temper that is almost fatal to a genuinely helpful settlement of any problem that may arise.

Europe needs neither more Christianity nor more religion, it has plenty of both, it has never lacked either. As a mere force, Christianity has failed utterly to unite

two nations in any part of the world in bonds of genuine friendship. It is Christian groups that lie apart from their fellow citizens on differences of religious belief.

It was not a Freethinker, but a very scholarly Churchman who said the following:—

"The Roman Empire far more nearly succeeded in giving unity of life, culture, government and intercourse to the entire body of civilised men; European, Asiatic and African than we in our wildest dreams could ever imagine possible to-day. A common unity for Christian Europe is infinitely less conceivable now—nineteen hundred years after Christ—than it was in pre-Christian Europe. It is Christian Europe which gives us the spectacle of race divided against race by implacable enmities. Racial differences grow more intense, and let us note it is Christianity itself which tends to sharpen them."

More than two thousand years ago a Roman citizen might travel from Rome to Britain under the safe protection of Roman Law and Roman civilisation. To-day, could that pagan traveller be resurrected and perform the journey, he would find some fifteen millions of soldiers, belonging to the Christian powers of Europe, invoking their Deity to aid them in their work of mutual destruction. What clearer proof of Christianity's failure could be needed?

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAPACY

I.

THE ORIGIN OF THE PAPACY

"*Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it.*" Matt. XVIII, 16.

In the year 49 prior to the origin of the Christian Era, Julius Cæsar, the military governor of Gaul crossed the boundary into Italy, the River Rubicon, and staged his March on Rome, an event which was destined effectively to instal the Roman Empire of the Cæsars, the "Fascist" era of the ancient world, to employ a modern terminology which is, in this instance, not only dramatic, but which also conveys an impressive, and up to a point, accurate historical analogy.

A year later, Cæsar broke the power of the effete senatorial oligarchy which misgoverned the Roman Republic, in the decisive Battle of Pharsalia (48 B.C.).

The secular Roman Empire, whose historical ghost, according to the classical definition of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), the ecclesiastical Roman Empire of the Papacy was destined to become, had definitely arrived upon the stage of history.

Julius Cæsar, its effective founder, did not long survive his historical creation. Upon the ill-fated Ides of March (44 B.C.), he fell before the daggers of the beaten senatorial oligarchy. But his nephew and successor, Augustus (Octavian) Cæsar, a far abler political brain than the great soldier; Julius, again defeated both the oligarchy and his own rival, Mark Anthony, and built up the imperial edifice on permanent foundations (44 B.C.-A.D. 14).

The Empire of the Cæsars, starting with a demagogic dictatorship like its modern Fascist antitypes, had become the totalitarian Empire "over all persons and causes supreme" which it remained down to the end of classical antiquity, and in its Eastern Byzantine form, down to the end of the Middle Ages (A.D. 1453).

In the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, the immediate successor of the great Augustus, a new religion arose in the oriental province of Palestine, not, to be sure, a very surprising occurrence in an age of cultural and religious syncreticism, when new religions were apt to shoot up like mushrooms after rain. This new religion started as a Judaic heresy, and its founder, at least if we are to credit the Gospel narratives with an historical basis, was a Galilean wandering preacher named Jesus, accepted by his followers under the title of "The Christ" ("The Anointed One"), the promised Messiah, or Deliverer, whom the Jewish scriptures had long foretold.

According to his evangelical biographers the would-be Messiah received his earthly reward in a painful execution by means of crucifixion at the hands of the Roman administration. In which there is nothing improbable or surprising in the then troubled state of what was Rome's most turbulent province. Even though the Evangelists were certainly not mirrors of Boswellian accuracy when they sat down to write the story of the origins of Christianity.

However, whatever may be the truth with regard to its titular founder, the Christian Church, at least is a historical fact, of portentous dimensions, and it soon spread far, if at first, not particularly fast, nor did it neglect Rome, the capital of the Universal Empire, to which every known form of credulity and superstition gravitated irresistibly, as Tacitus was soon to testify.

The Church of Rome can hardly be later in its inception than the first century of the Christian propaganda, it is not improbable that its foundation can be ascribed to the earliest decades of that propaganda. For Rome, "The Eternal City," the unchallenged mistress of the Mediterranean world, drew all cults and creeds towards her like an irresistible magnet. To make one's way in the Roman world, one had first to make one's way in, and to Rome, for in those days it was literally true that "all roads led to Rome."

The approximate dating of the foundation of the "Church of Rome," depends actually upon our critical assessment of two early documents, one religious, and one of a secular nature — Paul's "Epistle to the Romans," and Tacitus' "Annals." For if the former or any part of it was actually written by Paul, then there was a Christian congregation in Rome prior to A.D. 60. Whilst Tacitus described how Nero (A.D. 54-68) persecuted the Christians in A.D. 64, which leads to the same conclusion.

But no one can say with certainty whether Paul wrote any of the voluminous literature which a later generation ascribed to him, and the Roman historian, Tacitus, writing half a century later from hearsay, may have confused some early Jewish messianic sect with the Christians, of whom he must have heard in the second century when he actually wrote. We cannot say.

Similarly with regard to the foundation by Peter of the Roman Church, an assumption founded upon legend only; an ancient legend it is true, but one obviously motivated by self-interest, and in any case, entirely unsupported by any evidence beyond tradition.

It is only in the second century, wherein Christianity first appeared in a form recognisably similar to its later forms, that we first emerge from the realm of conjecture, and meet the Church of Rome in the flesh. About A.D. 130, the "Church of God which is in Rome," had occasion to write a business letter to the "Church of God which is in Corinth." The letter is actually unsigned, but a very ancient tradition ascribes it to the Elder (Presbyter) Clement, whom his contemporary, the

Prophet Hermas* declared was in charge of the foreign correspondence of the Roman Church.

This information, meagre as it is, sheds a good deal of light on the internal administration of the now certainly existing Church of Rome. For Clement, who wrote perhaps the first non-biblical document of Early Christianity which we possess, his "Epistle to the Corinthians," was not apparently, Bishop of Rome, but a simple Elder. Moreover, another early Christian writer, the author of the "Muratorian Fragment" (late second century), tells us that not Clement, but Pius, was Roman bishop in the days of Hermas, who, according to our authority, was himself the brother of Bishop Pius.

Evidently, the earliest form of Church government possessed by the Roman Church, like that of the other Christian Churches of the earliest period, was (in modern phraseology) Presbyterian rather than episcopal in form. Indeed, the scientific study of Early Church History undoubtedly demonstrates the mythical character of the Doctrine of the Apostolic Succession.

The earliest Roman "bishops" are shadowy figures, chairmen of Church Boards of Elders, rather than bishops in the modern sense of the word. It is a far cry from the shadowy Pope Pius I, who was not even allowed to write the letters of his own church, to his "infallible" successor, Pius XII.

The latter half of the second century witnessed great changes in the organisation of Christianity. As Alfred Loisy has conclusively demonstrated in the concluding chapters of his remarkable book, "The Birth of the Christian Religion," the second half of the second century witnessed the effective consolidation of Church organisation and dogma in reply to the contemporary growth of gnostic heresies. In particular, there was a rapid growth of the power of the bishops as part of the centralising process, the loose Presbyterian organisation of Early Christianity gave way to rigid episcopal control. It is arguable that Christianity itself might have disappeared without the change.

The Church of Rome shared in this evolution. There, as elsewhere, the Elders gave way to the bishop and the bishops of the World-Capital Rome, were obviously no ordinary bishops. They began to assert themselves. In the later second century, one Roman bishop tried, not very successfully, to lay down for the benefit of the Eastern Churches, hard and fast rules for the date and observance of Easter. In the following (third) century another incurred the anger of his African colleague, the masterful Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, by his arrogant claims.

By the beginning of the fourth century, the era of the religious conflict which ended in the triumph of Christianity, the Bishops of Rome had "arrived." It only required a further development of contemporary history for the Papacy, for the Universal Bishopric, to make its appearance.

Between 150 and 200 of the Christian Era, the Church which had now finally broken with Judaism, evolved its own distinctive Bible, its New Testament, in contrast to the "Old Testament" of the Jewish Synagogue. No qualified critic now supposes that what we have in the New Testament is unbiassed history. Contrarily, what we actually have, is the history of an institution, the Christian Church, written and re-written in the evolving interests of that institution.

In this "editorial" work, the powerful Church of Rome took a prominent part. Two notable additions to the original text of the Gospels must be ascribed to its direct agency.

The Fourth Gospel had asserted the primacy of John, "The Beloved Disciple," its titular author, amongst the Apostles. So a new, admittedly forged chapter, the 21st in the current text, had to be added to prove the primacy of Peter, the legendary founder of the Roman Church.

"Appetite comes with eating." As the power and claims of the metropolitan Roman Church grew, they required a direct divine authority. An unknown forger of genius proved equal to the daring task. Probably early in the third century, the famous commission of Christ to Peter, "Thou art Peter," etc., which gave Peter and his successors, the keys of Heaven and Hell, was inserted in the original text of Matthew,* then regarded as the oldest and most authoritative of the Gospels. In a sense one could state that the unknown forger was the Founder as well as the Prophet of the Papacy.

F. A. RIDLEY.

SCANDINAVIAN INCURSIONS IN ANGLO-SAXON TIMES

THE invasion of the British Isles by the Norsemen in the ninth and tenth centuries of our era materially modified social life. With the recall of the Roman legions when the Eternal City itself was besieged by the barbarians, the Saxons and Jutes entered and colonised the southern island which then became England. Later, the Nordic seafarers not only subjugated extensive areas of the country, but made permanent settlements in the land.

The Danish expeditions were originally intended as freebooting voyages and soon the coasts were never safe from their depredations. Their attacks were swiftly and silently conducted. As Professor Sayles states in his learned study, *The Medieval Foundations of England* (Methuen, 1948, 18s.): "Their long narrow boats, 16-oared and masted, and holding 40 fighting-men apiece, were strongly enough built to sail the open seas and yet were very fast, easily beached or navigated far up the rivers, and if occasion arose, could be easily carried overland to another waterway. An exact model of one of their boats, fortunately preserved as it was constructed in 900 A.D., crossed the Atlantic comfortably in 1893 in four weeks."

No European countries were safe from spoliation, and the intruding Scandinavians made lasting settlements in Sicily, Normandy and elsewhere. Unfortunately, they selected the summer and autumn seasons for their raids, when the cereals and other fruits of the soil could be stolen from the husbandmen who had cultivated these crops upon which their winter subsistence entirely depended. Thus the misery and destitution following these raids proved appalling. Naturally, the pirates who, unlike the Saxons, were still unbaptised, plundered the churches and monasteries to their hearts' content, for their treasures became a great attraction. So widespread was the devastation that the industries and commerce of the European maritime districts were nullified, and a new verse was added to the Church Litany, "From the fury of the Northmen, O Lord, deliver us."

Vague traditions only remain of early Nordic history. That the Baltic peoples were traders in furs

* No historic Jesus could possibly have used the words added to the text of Matthew. For the term "church" only came into use after the new religion had broken with the Jewish Synagogue (A.D. 70) after the destruction of the Temple, at the very earliest, and probably much later.

* Author of the nearly canonised "Shepherd."

and that they were expert wood carvers and metal workers, as well as highly skilled shipbuilders is unquestionable. Their sagas appear to have been long transmitted by word of mouth, but in their present form they do not antedate the thirteenth century. The causes of the Viking raids can only be conjectured, but presumably the love of adventure and the possession of plundered property and perhaps the pressure of population all served as incentives.

During the ninth century, migrating Norsemen settled in the Orkneys and Shetlands and wandered along the coasts of Scotland. On the east they colonised Fife and settled southwards in Northumbria and along the coast to Lincolnshire. In the west, the Hebrides, the Isle of Man and Ireland witnessed their devastations, the land of Erin suffering worst of all. The rich Irish monasteries were ruthlessly pillaged and, in a climate much more genial than their own, conditions proved so attractive that a complete conquest of the country was projected.

The Norsemen settled in Ulster and created coastal colonies at Limerick, Wexford, Waterford and Dublin, in which city, Olaf in 853 established his Irish kingdom. These were all important settlements and as Professor Sayles observes: "The Norwegians dominated Ireland for 150 years until the victory of Clontarf guaranteed the native Irish the preservation of their racial distinctiveness, although the power of the 'Ostmen' was not effectively broken until the Anglo-Normans in their turn set off to conquer Ireland in Henry II's time." The Hebrides and the Isle of Man remained in Norse possession until 1266, the Shetlands to 1462 and the Orkneys till 1468, while until the close of the eighteenth century, Norwegian was still a spoken language in the Shetland Isles.

The east and south-eastern districts of England were pitilessly ravaged by the Danes. They infested the Channel and plundered both the French coast and our own. Then they sailed through the Bay of Biscay and passed through the Straits of Gibraltar to ravage the coasts of France, Spain and Italy. No navigable river was neglected. They rowed along the Thames to sack London and besieged Paris four times from the Seine. They pillaged Nantes and Bordeaux. These piratical expeditions were well organised and were apparently financed by Danish traders.

While on their predatory voyages in the ninth century, the Swedes discovered the important waterways adjoining the Gulf of Finland and utilised these splendid river courses to reach the Black Sea and to connect Baltic commerce with the products of south-eastern Europe. A Russian dynasty founded by the Swedes, that of Rurik, survived until the thirteenth century. Moreover, the bold buccaneering Scandinavians extended knowledge of our globe. In 860 they rediscovered Iceland and soon established a colony of 20,000 of their countrymen there. In that island the celebrated Althing was founded, and there the famous sagas preserved the exploits and traditional tales concerning the Scandinavian heroes. In the tenth century of our era, they colonised the coasts of Greenland. Also, the discovery of America by these Norsemen in pre-Columbian days seems authentic, for these dauntless voyagers ignored the perils of the sea. On a first adventure Nova Scotia and Labrador were reached, and it is said that encampments were made at the mouth of the Hudson and even as far south as Virginia. Professor Sayles opines that, "A second voyage was made in 1004, and a third, this time by a merchant in 1020, but no practical use was made of the

tiny settlements and therefore they had no permanence. Nevertheless, it was never forgotten in Scandinavia that land did exist in the far west, though Western Europe paid so little attention to these traditions that, when Columbus discovered America, he believed that it was India."

According to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the earliest Scandinavian descent on our coasts was in 787 A.D. Then came a period of comparative quietude, but later the raids were resumed with constantly increasing severity. They were occasionally repulsed but in the 840's the invaders sacked London and devastated Lincolnshire and Northumbria. Ethelwulf of Wessex only just held his throne by repulsing the pirates and then, "sincerely believing in the efficacy of prayer as well as deed, he sought to avert the peril by going off for a year on a pilgrimage to Rome."

Large assemblies of armed men from the Baltic began to settle in England, but the piracies continued. So, to relieve their subjects from these inflictions, some of the Saxon rulers decided to pay tribute to their enemies to ensure better behaviour or to induce them to depart.

Alfred, however, regained much of his lost territory, but even so, a little later Yorkshire was more or less under the dominion of a Scandinavian ruler until 954. Furthermore, three Danish kings successively occupied the English throne. In the light of these happenings it is no marvel that so large a Scandinavian element enters into the composition of the true-born Englishman.

T. F. PALMER

ZULU CHARACTERISTICS

"U'PIKOKWAZINWAYO" is a Zulu word meaning "the denial of things that are known, or literally, to argue about a thing that is known." So next time you meet a flat-earther or anti-evolutionist, confound him by retorting in Zulu!

Mrs. Reyher, whose book "Zulu Woman" I have just read has, unlike the usual touring American journalist, produced a really informative book. She spent several months in Zululand and the book is the result of many interviews with Christina, who was once favourite wife of the Zulu King, Solomon ka Dinizulu. To freethinkers its chief interest lies in the strange shapes Christianity takes in converts. Christina was taught at a Mission School, but this did not prevent her from accepting the King's advances, in defiance of the warnings of her Christianised mother. The King was also a nominal Christian, and Christina tells the story of their strange union with great frankness. Romantic love hardly entered into their relationship. At Zulu marriage ceremonies a representative of the Whites asks the bride and groom if they love each other. "When the government first decreed this question would have to be asked at all native weddings, it was greeted with roars of laughter, as according to their traditions a bride and groom are not supposed to show the slightest interest in each other. The bride is marrying a clan, not an individual man." For the sake of the story, however, Mrs. Reyher suggests that Christina and Solomon did show mutual interest.

Christina dutifully condoned her lover's infidelities and even the physical presence of her rivals in their sleeping hut. "Solomon received girls in pairs, perhaps because he feared to be left alone with one of them, but possibly because he could only create the excitement that had become so necessary to him by pitting one against the other in jealousy and anger."

There is considerable latitude in the question of virginity. "The Zulus will accept a woman as a virgin if she has not conceived a child. If the bride brandishes an assegai, or a metal-bladed knife, she is indeed a virgin. The bride may have had children by the groom; but, once a pregnancy has occurred, immediate negotiations for formal marriage are begun and the man responsible is expected to marry her. Not in the memory of any living Zulu," continues Mrs. Reyher, "had there been a King so possessed with passion for women, or so involved with multitudes of them. Never before had a Royal Kraal had so many unattached girls."

Ancient tribal customs were secretly indulged. Smelling out ceremonies are held in the strictest secrecy, as the principals are subject to fine and imprisonment by the white authorities. Nevertheless, on all important occasions, rumour has it that even Christian natives believe it as well not to ignore the indicated testimony of their own wise men."

What with "wine and women" it is not surprising that Solomon died at the early age of 40. The Bishop of Zululand officiated at the funeral on behalf of his church and the hymns Solomon had liked, for he had been educated by the daughters of the famous Bishop Colenso, were sung at the graveside. Solomon tired of Christmas long before he died, but, despite this she prayed that he "would be welcomed into the protection of his Lord."

Solomon liked motoring but, as few native mechanics understand automobile machinery, "if a car was out of order the King would buy a new one, as his patience could not survive the repairs delay." And here is a Zulu witch doctor's prescription to make a man love you:—

"First you must have a dried piece of the heart of a vulture. While you are mixing the medicine, scrape the dirt from your own skin into it and grind together with the dried heart. Put some of the powder into the food to be eaten by the person you want to love you."

"Zulu Woman," published by Columbia University Press, New York, 1948.

E. A. McDONALD.

CHURCHILL, CRIPPS OR CHRIST—WHO SHALL SAVE US ?

THOSE who would openly deny the universal right to Freedom, should be shunned as were the lepers of old. This right is a basic fact of existence, a "call of the wild," and when transcended to a moral and intellectual plane, is the only philosophy applicable to the needs of Man. Still, there are those who sprinkle lavishly their speech and essay with the magic words of Freedom and Democracy.

We are told of four Freedoms, which is merely an amplification. There is but one—the freedom to live. All else are adjustments to this necessity. We hear of Democratic Constitution and Practice; a blind contradiction in terms.

Churchill, relic of an age that is passed or passing, "hero" of South Africa, Sydney Street, Gallipoli and of Archangel, publicist with a pale approach to the full colour of a Barnum or a Buffalo Bill, clutches the straw of an Industrial Charter. Even so, this master of adjective, superlative and invective is not free—to paint for a living, or lay bricks. He must sacrifice himself to the ideal (or chimera) for which they died—"to the glory of God." Prophets and philosophers of all times could

do nothing to prevent the disintegration and decay of empires. They claimed the freedom to die, for themselves, and to-day we can only choose the method and the moment.

The State, the Law and the Church are in essence and practice the antithesis of those liberties they mouth so persistently. If this be so, can we hope for anything from a Labour caucus, or the canting humbug of a Cripps? Political and pious phraseology have much in common, especially in the evasion of scientific and historical fact. By this and other means they gained a votive support by the more credulous, and some class-conscious workers, but disillusion is here. They have no remedy for War—no recipe for Peace. Primary and bedrock move in national recovery, the socialisation of land, has never been mentioned in the political precincts—and why not? Because it involves the Crown, the Church and the Combines.

The "Communist Menace" emanating from Russia is a bogey, swallowed by the Labour and Trade Union leaders alike. The impetus of the Revolution has died down to a planned national economy capable of resisting imperialist aggression, and of exploiting its vast resources of industrial wealth. This is impossible under the constitutions of Britain and U.S.A. Organised labour in America is singularly backward and even inept in a political sense. There is no way out in sectional strikes—the remedy waits on education on a realistic plane. Whoever looks for Heaven in the guise of U.N.O or World Government is lost—in contemplation of a mirage.

"What think ye of Christ?" Well, not a great deal. Popes, priests and prophets of all creeds and cults have, since the miraculous birth and death of the Gods, stressed the spiritual content of human endeavour. What they have never done is to understand and assist the physical and intellectual strivings of the common people towards the abolition of economic subjection, and the conquest of preventable disease.

There is no way out but by a keen realisation of our own responsibility. Man made his gods, and they have failed him. Where he is not confused he is spiritless, seeking escape in all kinds of senseless and superficial entertainment. He is still ready and willing to throw himself and his progeny into the welter of war at the behest of his "Leaders" and under the banner of the old Shibboleths—for God and King—for Country and Freedom. He is bemedalled for bravery on the field. His family are blasted for reward at home. Mankind in its present mood is heading for the Crematorium. Civilisation has brewed a cup of death, and as Hardy says, "the Gods have the last laugh." The alternative is a purely anarchial one. Assume freedom in our mental outlook—not fight for a parochial platitude. Truth is invariably in bad taste—that is why we are so damned respectable.

B. JOHNSON.

THERE WAS ONCE . . .

A PROFITEER. He grew fat and rich on the sweat of others. His victims either starved in the gutter or committed suicide.

One day a desperate man whose wife and family were ill through lack of proper nourishment, was goaded to fury, and struck the man dead. For ridding the world of a creature who was unfit to live he was duly and ceremoniously hanged by the neck—in the name of JUSTICE!

W. H. WOOD.

ACID DROPS

That well known actor, David Niven, has fallen into hot water. His offence is that in playing his part in "The Bishop's Wife" he wore a moustache, and a parson in the theatre disliked it. Or it might have been that the parson thought that a priest ought not to be on the stage at all. Still, again, the visiting parson did not like to see his brother priest playing on the stage. But in the end took his revenge by complaining that the play was a "poor picture." Well, we have seen Mr. Niven, and we do not think that he will be seriously disturbed by the critical attitude of the parson, who thought that the parson on the stage was not sufficiently life-like. But we expect Mr. Niven will survive.

We take the following from the "Psychic News":—

The Federal Communications Commission in America has been asked by the Religious Radio Association to clarify a 1946 ruling that "The holders of a belief should not be denied the right to answer attacks upon them or their belief solely because they are few in number."

An Atheist claimed that a church service was an "indirect" attack on Atheism and demanded radio time to reply to this attack — which the station refused.

The Religious Radio Association is afraid the 1946 ruling might require stations to give as much time to Atheism as is occupied by religious broadcasts, for Federal radio laws say that all controversial subjects must be given equal time.

We are very pleased to see that many of the Freethinkers are insisting "that while religion is permitted on the air" the same freedom must be given to other forms of belief. In England what has happened is what we said would happen. For a little while Freethinkers were allowed to say something of a very, very mild cast, while the crowds of Christianites — in its most common style — went on as usual. Our leaders are now shouting out our love of fair play. We are still waiting for that to appear with the B.B.C. and Freethought.

The Bishop of Lincoln told the Diocesan Conference that he was "horrified by a couple about to be married who had never read the Church services." Well, why should they read the Church service? The Church in England has nothing to do with marriages. That power was taken away from the Church long ago. It was the conduct of the clergy that led to such scandals that the secular State had to intervene. For those who wish to understand the situation, it will be found in Lecky's "History of England." It was a scandal that was too great to permit further religious marriages.

Whatever else we may think of the Bishop of London it is good to see that he is under no delusion about large numbers of our young people. He knows quite well that while they may hesitate to call themselves outright Agnostics or even Rationalists, they have actually no more religion than the average Atheist. Speaking to one of the many meetings organised to bring to Christ the erring lambs, he urged his audience "to get back to the original Gospel." We are heartily in agreement. These modernist ideas of calling Heaven and Hell "a state of the mind," for example, should be kicked out of a good Christian's creed. Hell is exactly what Jesus and his

followers, including Dr. Wand, believed it was—a huge lake of fire, eternally burning up yelling infidels who had thus to be taught a Divine lesson.

Then the original Gospel believed in a Devil with innumerable little Devils called, if we remember rightly, in the Holy Word a Legion. Most of these Devils are sent by their Big Boss to tempt human beings, and it is with sorrow we have to record that some weaklings, like Dr. Faust, even sold their Eternal Souls for 25 years to have as good a time as possible before disappearing for ever into the burning abyss. When these little Devils were not tempting Mankind, they were shovelling up the furnaces. Heaven, of course, was just the opposite—it is called the Kingdom of God by Dr. Wand and therein will be found peace, perfect peace, all love and holiness. Dr. Wand will naturally go there. Yes, we are all out for the original Gospel.

A critic in the "Universe" does not like most of the reviews of a recently published work on James II who, we are told, "gave up three kingdoms for the faith." "Gave up" is rich. The truth is that he was literally kicked out of England by an angry nation. His treatment of the unlucky Protestants who joined Monmouth was almost as bad as anything perpetrated by the Nazis—and it will never be forgotten as long as history lasts. But James II was a good Roman Catholic.

Have parsons a right to be angry when they are offered pennies for the use of their church and services? The Rev. C. Braithwaite thinks they have, and who are we to quarrel, even parsons must live, or must they? We do, however, quarrel with his assertion that the "Church is in no way financed by the State." Would the Rev. Mr. Braithwaite suggest that the minute congregations that are the rule to-day, are the only financial support he has? Or does he suggest that old Queen Anne's Bounty is "a gift from heaven?" Even the fact that Churches are exempted from payment of rates is a form of State support. The views of some people whose goods have been distrained for non-payment of tithes would be interesting.

The same parson, still complaining, says that people regard the Churching ceremony as a lucky charm to ward off the evil eye, and he adds that the ceremony is a thanksgiving. Other times, other manners, and as we get a little more civilised we tend to get squeamish over some of the beliefs held by our forefathers; but try as the parson will, he cannot get away from the fact that this ancient "ceremony" was in effect a warding-off of the evil eye. It was one of purification after the most important biological function, as woman was regarded unclean.

The attempts to gloss over the fact of declining church attendance and the consequent declining belief in God by various religious leaders are really amusing. They would be more convincing if all the speakers spoke with one tongue, but while we have the American Methodists claiming over 170,000 new members, a Nottingham vicar claims that in a recent poll, 60 per cent. of the people described themselves as Anglicans, and General A. Orshorn declares that attendance at Salvation Army meetings is increasing. At the same time our old friend, Mr. H. H. Martin, of the Lord's Day Observance Society, runs a quarter page advertisement in the "Recorder" urging all to join a crusade to resist the secularisation, commercialisation and continentalisation of the Lord's Day.

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

41, Gray's Inn Road,
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TO CORRESPONDENTS

R. Mason (Cheshire), P. Ellis Lyons (Devon).—Thanks for cuttings, extremely useful.

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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.

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Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning

SUGAR PLUMS

We wish to call special attention to the new series of articles commencing this week by F. A. Ridley. They are being published at an opportune moment, for there was never a time when it was more important for Freethinkers to be acquainted with the machinations and progress of the Roman Catholic Church. Mr. F. A. Ridley has made a special study of the subject, and we feel sure that the author will add something to our knowledge of the history of the Vatican.

Until a suitable hall can be found for its own meetings, members of the Blackpool Branch N.S.S. are taking an active part in the discussions of the Blackpool Debating Society which meets every Tuesday evening at 46, Adelaide Street, Blackpool. Up to the end of the year, no speaker is on the syllabus twice, and the subjects for discussion are equally varied. Our notice gives no time for commencing but it would appear to be about 7-30 p.m.

The Lord's Day Observance Society, those champions of freedom—for Christians only—having scored a few recent Sabbatarian successes, is becoming bolder. The Sussex table-tennis finals are down for the decision on a Sunday and the L.D.O.S. warriors are on the warpath. Freethinkers, unorganised as well as organised, must see that this revival of Sabbatarianism does not take root again. The message of Freethought can be very usefully spread by the judicious distribution of N.S.S. leaflets which may be had from our offices, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, at 1s. per hundred, assorted.

Religious arguments usually begin with folly and end in confusion. To-day the world has become too vast for the gods to rule, and when they cannot rule they decay. A god who does nothing is bad enough, but to-day whenever he tries to do something he finds himself in the lands of nowhere. The gods are beyond improvement. They came from nothing, and they will return to their suitable home.

THE MYTH PROBLEM AGAIN

III

IN his pamphlet, "Did Jesus Really Live?" the Rev. G. M. Elliott gives the usual "historical" evidence—just as if this evidence had never been minutely examined by the Mythicists. He brings forward Pliny, Suetonius, and Tacitus, with the air of one who, claiming that the case for Jesus had been badly put to the unbeliever, now does it properly with overwhelming force. I can hardly believe, however, that even such an untried parson as Mr. Elliott and his enthusiastic sponsor, the Chancellor of Chichester Cathedral, believe that these Roman writers have escaped the notice of Robertson, Dujardin, and the others. The truth is that all the believers in Jesus, whether as a God or as a Man, Jew, Rationalist, and Christian alike, always trot out Pliny, Suetonius, and Tacitus, and take the greatest care almost to ignore the very trenchant comments of the writers who claim that Jesus is a myth.

What does the "evidence" of Pliny amount to? Simply that he met Christians who sang hymns to "Christ" as a God. Even if this statement of Pliny is absolutely authentic, it has no more bearing on the existence of Jesus than if he had met Egyptians singing hymns to Horus. Does that prove that Horus was God Almighty on earth, or even that he had lived as a Man? Does hymn singing to Ra prove that Ra really lived as a Man? Pliny actually called this singing a "superstition" just as Mr. Elliott calls singing to Ra and Horus superstition—unless he himself believes that they are both God Almighty and therefore the Fathers of Jesus.

As for the "evidence" of Suetonius—it is what I call funny. Here is Mr. Elliott bringing in somebody he calls "Christus" (though Suetonius calls him "Chrestus") heading Jewish riots in Rome about the year 45 A.D., as a proof that a God called Jesus really lived in Palestine and was crucified about the year 30 A.D. Exactly what is the connection, the Lord only knows—I do not. But why does Mr. Elliott call this leader "Christus"—I would dearly like to know?

The "testimony" of the historian Tacitus is on a different level, of course, but all it amounts to is that he records the conflagration in Rome in 64 A.D., for which Nero blamed the "Christians." These Christians, he says, belonged to a sect, "the founder of which was Christus, who, in the reign of Tiberius, was punished as a criminal by the procurator, Pontius Pilate." And Tacitus goes on to record the cruelties practised upon them for what Nero called their share in the burning of Rome.

All this proves that when Tacitus was writing in the second century he simply repeated what he heard about the Christians—who were for him one of the numerous sects which came out of Palestine and the surrounding countries. He had probably met Christians and he just followed their story.

But the authenticity of this passage about Jesus and the Christians being tortured in Rome has been severely questioned. And not only this passage. The English writer, W. J. Ross, wrote a powerful work maintaining that the whole of the Annals of Tacitus was a fifteenth century forgery and he was followed by the Frenchman, Hochart. As far as I have read their works, I am in complete agreement, but now is not the time to discuss this very complicated question. Except for one criticism, Ross, as far as I know, has never been answered; I hope one day to deal with this criticism in full.

The point to note here is that the description of the awful tortures the Christians suffered under Nero reads

exactly like the account given by Sulpicius Severus, who wrote in the fifth century and, I have little doubt, was used by the forger. It should be added also that Suetonius who "went for" Nero without mercy claims that, in his public entertainments, Nero insisted that no human, not even criminal, lives should be sacrificed; but the problems set up by Tacitus are far too big to be discussed in a few lines. I doubt whether Mr. Elliott knows anything whatever about them or even if he has read a single work on Tacitus.

Of course, writers in the second century like Lucian—and Tacitus—might well write about Jesus as if he had lived; the story, had taken shape by then. What we have not got is any *contemporary* evidence, the only evidence that matters. There were dozens of famous writers who lived about the time Jesus is supposed to have performed miracles—and not one of them knows anything whatever of any miraculous happenings, not even, in fact, that there was a Jesus. It was this fact which drew from Gibbon one of his most famous ironical passages.

The most amusing part of Mr. Elliott's pamphlet is, however, when he gives the "testimony" of Dr. Conybeare and Sir Oliver Lodge. Jesus "really" lived because Lodge says "Christ revealed to us the human aspect of God." The "Historical Christ" really lived because Conybeare says that you will find him mentioned in Mark, in the "Teaching Document—used by the first and third Evangelists" (incidentally there is no evidence whatever for this document) in Acts and the "letters of Paul," in the Epistles of Ignatius and in John's Gospel and Epistles. Why Conybeare did not say the New Testament outright and certain Apocrypha I do not know. Does Mr. Elliott "really" believe that this furago of nonsense will make Mythicists immediately go over to Christianity? I can hardly believe that even a raw and untrained parson can be quite so silly.

What Mr. Elliott should do is to show that the "biographers" Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were not only so accurate that they agreed in every particular, but that the miracles which they said Jesus performed took place; and he should commence by convincing Dr. Barnes and the Modern Churchmen before crossing swords with men like John M. Robertson. He should convince Unitarians like Professor Estlin Carpenter (whom he quotes as saying that "J. M. Robertson was guilty of constant inaccuracy," "Suppression of evidence," etc., an impudent lie if ever there was one) that Jesus was God Almighty. If Jesus did not come from heaven to be worshipped, says Mr. Elliott, he "becomes the worst teacher the world has ever known for he failed to convey his meaning to any of his followers, least of all to his Apostles." Moreover, "the disciples, the early Church, the Fathers, the great Scholars, and the multitudes, must all have been deluded," if Jesus was not God Almighty. Mr. Elliott might have added also that Wells, John Stuart Mill, Lucian, Tacitus, Klausner, Eisler, and dozens of others who believe or believed that Jesus was a mere man, were also deluded, though they are confidently dragged in to support his claim that Jesus really lived.

One more word. Mr. Elliott says that "no Jew ever wasted his breath in denying the existence of Jesus as an historic figure." Such childish dogmatism could come only from someone who knew and knows all the Jews that ever lived. It is nothing but mere assertion. As a matter of fact—as many readers know—in the Christian Justin's "Dialogue with Trypho," written about the year 150 A.D., the Jew roundly declares that "if Christ has indeed been born"—which he obviously doubted—he is

quite unknown, and that Christians accept "a groundless report" and "invent a Christ" for themselves. If that is not a Jew denying that Christ ever existed, words have no meaning. Still, no one expects a Rev. Mr. Elliott to have read Justin—or indeed anything but a few "refutations" of the Myth theory.

The Freethinker the Christian "commandoes" feared two years ago, was the one who looked upon the story of Jesus as entirely mythical. This pamphlet shows how strong still is that fear.

H. CUTNER.

FREETHINKERS SHOULD SUPPORT UNESCO

WHEN that outstanding scientist and rationalist Julian Huxley was attacked by the American Legion in Texas, as Europe's Number One Atheist, who should be ousted as Director General of Unesco, I for one humanist was extremely annoyed. Of course, this same American Legion has repeatedly been exposed by such distinguished writers as George Seldes—in his courageous weekly, "In Fact," which has the largest liberal circulation in America—as a very reactionary outfit, so we really can't expect anything better.

But this attack does demonstrate ignorant pressure against Julian Huxley's fine and outspoken humanism. It shows that all humanists should give their whole-hearted interest and support to Julian Huxley and to the great organisation he heads. For all of us are interested in seeing intelligence and reason and the human mind take over the guidance of human behaviour, rather than primitive theological superstitions. We realise that Unesco, as the supreme global intellectual organisation of our time, can be a great force here. And so it is a keen pleasure to learn of "The Unesco Council."

Here, monthly in this fine new paper the editor, S. M. Koffler, presents real evidence of Unesco's great world-wide fight to extend the reasoning power of the mind over societal conduct: Unesco's co-ordination of scientific groups and their vital knowledge services, illiteracy's challenge to film education in Africa, China's mass education, how the compelling beauty of music becomes a weapon for world peace and international understanding, Unesco's aid to war-devastated scientific centres in Europe and Asia, the four emergency regions for fundamental education in our world to-day, the necessity for the popularisation of scientific knowledge, society's neglect of inexpensive books as a medium for popular communication of facts and ideas, all this and so much more.

The type of high adventure that really matters is fascinatingly depicted: in illustrated accounts of a French expedition exploring the Upper Amazon, of an anthropological field survey of the culture of the Marbial Valley peoples of Haiti amidst all the lush tropic beauty of the West Indies, South America's Iquitos Conference creating the International Institute of the Hylean Amazon to explore and develop this strange and unknown region, and so on.

The pathetic appeal of the war orphans is particularised in the story of the little children of Pestalozzi Village in Switzerland.

Of special interest to us is the article in the May issue calling for a "New Humanism" for our civilisation, by Dr. Pedro Bosch-Gimpera, the head of Unesco's Philosophy and Humanities Section.

Julian Huxley wisely observes of the whole dangerous world situation in our time: "Man cannot exist half illiterate and half literate." How reminiscent of H. G.

Wells' celebrated "race between education and catastrophe." Yes, Unesco is keenly awake to the social urgency of our age.

A full year's subscription to "The Unesco Courier" is but 2s. 6d., from Unesco House, 19 Avenue Kleber, Paris 16-e. France.

GORDON CAULFIELD.

GOD THE CO-OPERATOR

EVERY autumn, all over the world, religious people congregate to thank God for the harvest. They are the modern representatives of those whom Tennyson called—

"an ill-used race of men that cleave the soil,

Sow the seed, and reap the harvest with enduring toil,

Storing yearly little dues of wheat and wine and oil;

Till they perish . . ."

In spite of their labour, and however wretched its product, the present-day farmer and his labourers nevertheless meet to thank God, even though the former must apply to the tax authorities for income tax relief in respect of losses. It may be suspected of course, that the thanks would be less frequent were it not for a class of people whose function it is, not without payment, to summon the harvesters to render them, for every land worker sees, long before he grows old, years of failure and blight, when nature seems to conspire against man's hopes, when drought, flood, wind and frost, singly or in unison, scrape, drown, wither and blacken, the field or the crop, at the time of sowing, growing, or of fruit.

Such experience, being so very general, would be expected to cause prayer to cease. Alas! To inertia in favour of old custom is linked the power and social prestige of the priest. In belief he may be as superstitious as his flock, but in action he is more rational, for at least he has a reward, and it is a material one. The lowlier members of his community give thanks for nothing, and even pay to do it.

There is in a little book, "The Story of a Grain of Wheat," by Mr. W. C. Edgar, a picturesque description of a modern field of wheat, with its 5,000 acres stretching in every direction as far as sight, one unbroken, waving mass of grain. This so glorious and impressive scene, recalled to Mr. Edgar's mind, the small patch of dubious grain, brought from the soil by the arduous, intermittent, and unintelligent labour of the grower in the black-bread period of wheat cultivation. The soul, he said, was lifted up, and the glorious story of a grain of wheat was told without words in a picture painted by the hand of a gracious Almighty, who, through ages of oppression and fear, brought forth his people to be witnesses of his greatness through the hand of man and the bounty of nature.

Noisense is here in plenty, but apart from that, what a mark of stupendous egoism appears, in that of a man who sees himself as a special recipient of his God's bounty, provided with a plentitude of good grain, and counting as but dust the poor toilers of thousands of years, with their dwarfed, insignificant, harried and threatened grain, all that the same God thought their due reward.

The tale of wheat, he continued, was ever the story of man's achievement, with God's help; each chapter marking an upward step in human progress, an advance in science and civilisation, to the final prospective triumph in a brotherhood of man, where in the east man might be hungry, but the west would not let him starve. Interdependent, the nations would feed each

other, and wheat would continue its beautiful mission of peace and goodwill; and there would be no more hunger in the world.

We will not laugh at this Utopia, for it has some rational basis, but when did God co-operate with man toward the harvest? The picture is of the twentieth century position, but the cultivation of wheat goes back probably to more than 4,600 years ago. During such a period man in respect of his food supply, has suffered many calamities.

The story of wheat is an epitome of man's long continued struggle to master his environment. God once, they say, intervened in the struggle. He drowned the world; an odd instance of co-operation.

Apart, however, from fairy stories, savage man, pressed by hunger, and regardless of anything but its immediate pacification, plucked the berry from the stalk of wheat's primitive parent, and using his teeth for millstones, ground grist for a vehement customer—his own stomach.

Thence he learned forethought by painful experience, planted and reaped his slender crop with crude implements, ground his poor stock in a simple mortar of stones, with a rugged pestle, and husbanded his rudimentary flour against the scarcity to come.

Then came larger fields, more generously planted, cultivated with better tools; and greater crops followed the more intelligent methods. These old fields tell a pathetic story, as we look back upon them from the position of to-day; sometimes of slaves driven to labour by blows, sweating and groaning at unending tasks, sometimes, more happily, of honest yeomen who first wrested their ground from the wilderness, forest or jungle, and then defended their crops from prowling beasts, marauding soldiery, the thief by night, and the oppressor by day. They tell of early tithes exacted by God; yes, exacted by God, but consumed by his priests; and of taxes so amply taken that the farmer starved.

Where in this picture do we find the Great Co-operator, God? All was done with God's help, said the author. The facts written down by him contradict his theory.

What, for example, was God doing in 1891-92, when there was a great Russian wheat famine?

That famine is graphically described by Mr. Edgar. He writes of it as unparalleled for severity and extent, the result of crop failures affecting about 18 governments, from Perm in the north-east to Orel in the central west, over a region comprising some of the best and most productive districts of the Empire. Horses and cows were sold off at ridiculous prices, the former sometimes for three roubles. The peasant was reduced to eating "hunger-bread," a horrible mixture of the lebeda weed, a small amount of rye, and chopped straw, bark or even sand. The use of this noxious compound caused dire stomach disorders; and scurvy, typhus and smallpox followed in the wake of famine.

The Russians, pursuing the usual religious practice, thanked God for their harvest.

The gods, one or more, do, however, nothing for men. Tennyson, in the poem already quoted, described them as beings that:—

"smile in secret looking over wasted lands,
Blight and famine, plague and earthquake,
roaring deeps and fiery sands,
Changing fights, and flaming towns and sinking
ships, and praying hands."

The gods, however, do not even sneer at man; indeed, they do nothing at all, nothing at all, and what does nothing is nothing.

J. G. LUPTON.

FATE AND CAUSATION

NEITHER Mr. Robertson nor I believe in Fatalism, yet we differ as to what it means, or, to be more exact, as to how it would operate. In his letter ("Freethinker," September 26) he says, "If fatalism is true it destroys all causes but one . . . everything is fixed from eternity, and nothing that happens makes a difference;" and he illustrates his argument thus: "We find that by striking a match we can make a fire, and so on. But this view contradicts fatalism. For if the fire is predetermined from eternity, then I do not make it: the idea of causation in matches and other finite things becomes invalid. I make no difference in striking the match, nor does the match by contact with the fuel; for in a predetermined universe nothing finite makes anything."

Now, I contend that, if fatalism is true, it does not supersede causation, and I will adopt Mr. Robertson's own illustration to prove it.

If the fire is predetermined from eternity then the matches, fuel, etc. (seeing that they exist) must also be predetermined; and, if not as causal agents in producing the fire, for what other purpose? If the application of the match to the fuel does not cause the fire, what does cause it, and why were matches fated to be invented? Is it thinkable that the fire would ignite of itself? Mr. Robertson's theory of absolute fatalism breaks down when we consider that the fire in question is not an isolated unconditional fact, but the result of countless contributory facts, each a preformed link in the causal chain which terminates in the fire-place.

We are told that in a predetermined universe, nothing finite makes anything, and that everything is fixed from eternity; but may not the *making* of things be pre-ordained? I see no reason why the action of fate should be restricted to producing bricks without straw or effects without causes. Mr. Robertson says that my argument for causation is arbitrary. But what could be more arbitrary than to suppose, as he does, that everything happens without other assignable cause than the fist of some inconceivable entity? Such a supposition transports us into the region of "The Arabian Nights" where things happen, not by a nexus of cause and effect, but in virtue of some such potently operative formula as "Open Sesame!"

In short. In a universe where *everything* is the result of fate, it must follow that means are no less predetermined than ends.

A. YATES.

NEW APOLOGETICS

THE genuinely converted Atheist is a rare bird in these modern days. That there are a few Agnostics who have eventually seen the light of Christianity, the figure of Dr. Joad is a perpetual reminder; but Atheists (except Mr. C. S. Lewis, who is shy of declaring the period of his life during which he regarded himself as an Atheist) rarely return to religion. For that reason I think that Mr. Chad Walsh, author of "Stop Looking and Listen" (S.C.M. Press; 6s.), deserves the attention of all Freethinkers. Mr. Walsh is lecturer in English in an American university, and, unlike many university lecturers in English, he is able to write a taut, nervous prose which is easy to read and to understand. And his statement of the case against both Atheism and Agnosticism is something which can be read with respect. He is no tub-thumping, crude evangelist; nor is he the fundamentalist type of Christian. He is, in other words, a man whose ideas are intellectually respectable, even though many of them will not command the assent of all readers.

And on what grounds does Mr. Walsh refuse to accept the Atheist or Agnostic explanation of things? Mainly because he holds that what he calls secular optimism has been disproved by the logic of events. "Secular optimism" he defines, roughly, as a belief that the world is improving, that the process of evolution is leading man slowly in an upward direction, and that all that is necessary for a perpetual progress towards human happiness is for men to realise the general direction of things, helping them along whenever possible. It may be that in condensing his argument I have to some extent misrepresented it; but I do not think so. In any event, most of us have met Secularists and Freethinkers whose minds work that way. During the nineties of the last century something of that sort was generally thought to be acceptable. But during the present century, with the advent of totalitarianism of one kind and another, with, moreover, two world wars (and a third on the horizon), any such belief in progress has become progressively more difficult. Many people, indeed, would say that it is impossible to think that man has in any way improved since the beginning of recorded history. H. G. Wells, that "secular optimist" par excellence, certainly changed his mind when he was almost on his death-bed, and his last book was almost a shout of despair at there being any possibility of man's escape from the dilemma which the development of science was setting him.

All this Mr. Walsh sets out admirably, showing that it is by no means easy to continue to believe in secular progress. Where he is less successful, to my mind, is in suggesting that the orthodox brand of religion provides the solution of this very real problem. That a few people find in religion a satisfactory answer to all the questions which the universe sets them is undeniable; but that this will ever be so of people as a whole seems still to be very doubtful. However, I think that Mr. Walsh deserves to be read. How many of his readers will find him a hundred per cent. convincing is, of course, another matter. But I think that he is a symptom which we shall ignore at our peril.

JOHN ROWLAND

B.B.C.

(Belief-Brewing-Christians)

THE other day I checked the radio programme to find out how much time was devoted to devotional broadcasts. The outcome was 495 minutes or eight hours and a quarter, not included are all those little occasions used for pious reflections.

That is to say that in the weekly programme a whole working-day is being wasted on stuff the majority of the listeners—who have to pay for it all the same—are not interested in. For if they were interested, there would be no point in the priests complaining of poor church attendances. However, that seems to be the reason why the B.B.C. deem it necessary to deliver God into our homes.

Church is the indispensable servant of governments and with all means of "opinion production" in the hands of governments. Yet the proportion of "heart-lifting" can be reduced, and that is where the N.S.S. comes in.

In the past, the efforts of the Secularists counted for a great deal in the broadening of intellectual freedom. Through countless public meetings, lobbying of M.P.s, by pamphlets and by articles in papers and periodicals, their influence on English life was out of all proportion to the numbers of their supporters. Once again we must face actual problems; but this can only be attained if we take up the fight for a popular idea.

One such task could be the struggle against the "soft-soapers" of the B.B.C., so far unhampered by any resistance from this side of their "customers." He who pays the piper calls the tune, as the saying goes. Well, let us call it, and be it even through a prolonged licence strike; let us refuse to pay our licences. There is not much sense in clamouring for secular broadcasts as a balance, for so long as those in power are interested in the furtherance of religion, whatever the outlook of the listeners, they will be able to sidetrack all the issues and treat us to a farce. No doubt they will always employ their various "heart-lift" boys, but the blatant broadcasting of church services *can* be resisted. Even in Catholic-dominated countries, the broadcasting systems are much more restricted in this respect than is the B.B.C.

Be it understood, however, the main thing is to pick out a tactical aim, to mobilize public opinion, and to get the movement moving. This will give us a new impetus and revivify our strength.

P. G. ROY.

CORRESPONDENCE
THE DANCE OF DEATH

Sir,—Recent writers on the subject in "The Freethinker" may like to know of a useful book under this title. It has an introduction by James M. Clark, and was published by the Phaidon Press in 1947. It can now be obtained from Allen and Unwin Ltd., for 6s.—Yours, etc.,

W. KENT.

SOCIALISM

Sir,—Helen Marshall has asked a question (October 3). However, as authors of "Money Must Go!" we have a special interest in *one* definition of that blessed word "Socialism", and hence, although more concerned with explanations rather than definitions, we beg leave to intrude the following:—

Socialism is that world organisation of people in which money no longer is used since goods would be produced for use only and for free distribution.

This definition will satisfy neither the logicians nor the Marxists, but we believe it has some advantages over the more precise one usually offered. It is pictorial and conveys to the listeners some of the more important implications and features of a Socialist Society. The moneyless aspect, by its novelty, gives a jolt to the imagination, and thus provokes questions—a boon to the teacher. Finally, it does sharply demarcate Socialism from all pseudo varieties and would be difficult to manipulate and distort by political tricksters.

"What is a good definition?" asked Henri Poincaré, and his answer is one which we are sure every Freethinker and teacher would endorse.

"For the philosopher or the scientist, it is a definition which applies to all the objects to be defined and applies only to them; it is that which satisfies the rules of logic. But in education it is not that; it is one that can be understood by the pupils."—"Science and Method," page 117.)—Yours, etc.,

"PHILOREN."

MR. ROBERTSON AND MR. ROWLAND

Sir,—Mr. Robertson says that he is not concerned with my political philosophy. He is, however, since he has done his best to suggest that I am animated by an anti-Soviet complex, which (he thinks) has arisen in the last two years. This is not so. Still, he that as it may, his statement that he did not consult a "single Communist body or individual" in writing it is surely beside the point. Does he think that there is a single word in his book which is not in accordance with the strictest party line of the orthodox Communist Party, or that his philosophical approach (nowhere explicitly stated) is that of the Communist Party's obligatory dialectical materialism? One does not, in my opinion, write a scientific treatise on the development of thought by writing a Marxist handbook, and then, going through the MS, crossing out "Marxism" or "Communism" and substituting "Scientific Humanism", which, frankly, is what he appears to me to have done. Mr. Robertson may say that my statement about

causal laws holding good in physics but not in psychology or sociology is "rubbish"; but I feel quite confident that our long-suffering readers will find it difficult briefly to express his central thesis on determinism in any other way.—Yours, etc.,
JOHN ROWLAND.

NATIONALISATION

Sir,—We are hearing a great deal about Nationalisation. Is it not time that Social Settlements were taken over by the State? As I want my children to get on in the world, and encourage them to join a Church Settlement near here in the East End, I was disgusted to find that there were very little cultural or educational activities, but that the beautiful club rooms were nothing more than games saloons.

On enquiring further, a number of allegations were made—and in order to avoid further scandal, would it not be wise to nationalise these Settlements? It would protect the public who give the money, and provide something worth while for those who use them.—Yours, etc.,
F. K.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, November 2nd, 7 p.m.: a lecture.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W. 1).—Monday, November 1st, 7 p.m.: "Reconstructing the Remote Past," 5th lecture: "The Development of Vertebrates," W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., F.R.S.E.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Values and Veracity," Prof. A. E. HEATH, M.A.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Yugoslavia—Behind the Stalin-Tito Clash." Mr. JOCK HASTON, R.C.P.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

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

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

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

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street, Room 13).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Church in Politics," Mr. F. A. HORSBROOK.

Blackpool Debating Society (46, Adelaide Street).—Tuesday, November 2nd, 7 p.m.: "Some Aspects of Liberal Policy," Mr. J. W. WYERS.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Catholic Statistics," Mr. H. A. J. PEARMAIN, A.L.C.D.

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: a lecture.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Anti-Semitism — A Menace to Society," Mr. S. SUGARMAN.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "The Failure of the Left," Mr. B. A. BACON.

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