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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Sex and the Church

It is one of the ironies of religion that while Christianity has always avowed, as one of its aims the purification of sexual relations, the Church has from the earliest times been smothered with various forms of sexual extravagances. Something of this may be due to a reaction from a teaching of asceticism, but much of it must have been due to the great development of certain other features that were latent in Christian philosophy. At any rate, those whose minds are with the notion that sexual extravagances, which have from time to time broken out in the ranks of Christianity, were due to the intrusion of foreign elements, would do well to reconsider the whole question. They will find that Christianity is not the "shining" figure of everything that was tender and beautiful. They would also find that the problem of sex embodies a very important part of Christianity, and it is operative even to-day.

If our readers will throw their minds back they will remember that in Italy, America, Germany, and even in England, about 30 years ago there was an outburst over the great scandal of "The Abode of Love." As we expected, the scandal was silenced as quickly as possible, but that does not show understanding of these religious developments. As a matter of fact, those who have initiated such cults as "The Abode of Love" knew just what they were doing, and they did not fail to propound a religious philosophy to justify their conduct and, however much we may dissent from it, no good is served by refusing to acknowledge the fact that in the whole history of Christianity this element of sex has always played a great part, more than we may say now. In my "Religion and Sex" I have dwelt at length to show to what extent sex operates in the Christian religion. To-day I am just giving a few notes that may lead others to follow a line that the Churches of to-day do their best to keep dark. Yet the presence of sex is there.

In the first Epistle to the Corinthians, and in the Epistle of Jude, there are indications that Paul in his travels was accompanied by women, variously described as "a sister," "a wife" or "a Christian woman." At any rate, Paul claimed the right to keep a woman with him. What his relation was to them we cannot say with certainty. Nor was this practice of taking "sisters" confined to Paul. But it was a custom that formed the subject of decrees in several Church gatherings, and many discussions in Church Councils. Nor did its practice cease with the earliest centuries of that Christian era. The doctrine of what is called "spiritual wifehood" persisted, and has formed many strange sects for many centuries.

Under a more secular form this doctrine "spiritual" wives became known in modern times as "free love," but religiously it has a two-fold basis. On the one side it was argued that "apart from the life of the flesh, one might consider the spirit." On the other hand, it was held that a Christian who had been freed from the trammels of the religious law was raised above all law—marriage included. A "holy" man, because of his holiness, is no longer under the categories of right and wrong. It is worth noting that the Roman Catholic Church even to-day would hold that no offence of a secular character could be brought to justice and tried by a State, but must be handed over to the Church for trial. "This grew so dangerous," said Baring Gould, a very well-read Churchman, "the Church trembled on the verge of becoming an immoral sect." The same writer sums up the matter by saying: "This *teaching* of immorality in the Church is a startling feature, and it seems to have been pursued by some who called themselves apostles as well as by those who assumed to be prophets. In the Corinthian Church even the elders encouraged incest. Now it is not possible to explain this phenomenon except on the ground that Paul's argument as to the Law being over-ridden had been laid hold of and elevated into a principle. These teachers did not wink at lapses into immorality, but defiantly urged on the converts to the Gospel to commit adultery, fornication and all uncleanness . . . as a protest against those who contended that the moral law as given on the tables was still binding upon the Church."

One of the earliest Christian institutions around which scandals gathered was that of the Agapae, which was carried on till midnight, even to daybreak, and it was but natural that assemblages of men and women should attract notice and give rise to scandal. Among excitable people, the wine, the heat, the exaltation of emotions, led to orgiastic ravings, to the jabbering of disconnected, unintelligible words, to fits, convulsions, pious exclamations and incoherent excitement.

The Agapae was not essentially a Christian institution. Similar assemblies existed amongst the Pagans, and were connected with orgiastic worship of various deities. The charges brought against the Agapae were of the most serious character. In the first place, they were made by Roman writers, and the Roman Government had been at considerable pains to suppress similar sects of Eastern origin. But afterwards, they were brought by Christians themselves. Tertullian and others accused other Christians with practising incestuous intercourse at the Agapae, and Ambrose compared the Agapae to the Pagan Parentalia. Justin Martyr, more cautiously, said in referring to certain sects, "Whether or not these people commit these shameful acts, the putting out of lights and indulging in promiscuous intercourse, I know not." Others of the early Christian writers are more precise and definite in their charges. And it is certain that the scandals of the Agapae were so well known and so prolonged that they became the subject of legislation at several Church Councils, and were finally suppressed because of their licentious character. The whole subject is a little obscure, but the one certain and significant thing is that accusations of sexual irregularity were connected with the Agapae from the outset. These may

have been exaggerated, and at first unfounded, but they were certainly made on good grounds at a later stage in its history. And it is quite probable that just as Christianity continued Pagan ceremonies and ideas in other directions, so there were also a carrying over of the sexual rites and ceremonies connected with earlier forms of religious worship.

We may close these notes with a few samples of the kind of love young girls have for Jesus. I am taking my notes from the "Early English Text Society, 1868." The books should be found in the London Museum. The speakers are two young girls:—

> "Jesus my holy love, my sweetest Jesus, my darling, my joy, my soul. Oh that I were in Thy arms. My heart's balm, Thou art lovesome. If I love any man for beauty, I will love Thee. My dear, my love, Thou art so lovesome."

There is plenty more, but the quality of it is quite clear. But there was just the same religious quality with Wesley's followers. Here is just one sample—of a woman:—

> "Jesus my beloved, He is mine and I am His. He has all the charms. He has ravished my heart. I am sick with love. He is lovely."

One could fill books with these gems. In anything but religion it would be called indecent, but it is sound religion.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE "TOTALITARIAN" PAPACY AND THE MIDDLE AGES

"There are in particular, illustrious Emperor, two powers by whom the world is governed, the authority of the bishops and the Imperial power."—Pope Gelasius, to the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius—end of fifth century.

ONE of the fundamental mistakes made by popular history is to confuse the "Dark Age" with the "Middle Age" that followed it. The "Dark Age" was nothing much except dark. As that acute Christian Rationalist Dr. W. R. Inge once aptly remarked, had the centuries of the Dark Age not existed, it would have made hardly any difference to the cultural history of the world.

True enough! But the Middle Ages, properly so-called, were a good deal more than that. For medieval Europe evolved an ecclesiastical civilisation somewhat similar to that of modern Tibet, and alien as it is to modern secular thought one must in fairness admit that this civilisation had great works of art to its credit, one has only to think of Dante and the medieval cathedrals. Whilst intellectually, medieval, unlike modern theology, displayed at least a remarkable if perverse ingenuity and even at times an inverted rationalism.

Like all the distinctive eras of human civilisation, the Middle Age and its ecclesiastical civilisation had its successive epochs of rise, meridian and decline. These may be dated respectively as follows: between 800, the foundation of the Holy Roman Empire, and 1100, the beginning of the era of the Crusades; between about 1100 and 1300, soon after which date the Papacy was transported from Rome to French Avignon. Lastly, the medieval era of decay, which ended about 1500 with the vast and simultaneous intellectual, geographical and religious revolution that expressed itself in the Renaissance and in the Reformation, and which ushered in the modern secular age.

Thus, the total duration of the Middle Ages was from about A.D. 800 to 1500, some seven centuries in all.

The "Middle" Age, that is the ecclesiastical age between the secular epochs of classical and modern times, was the high-water mark, the golden age of the Papacy. It then attained its zenith of prestige and power, for, particularly during the High Middle Age—c. 1100-1300—the Papacy was the effective ruler of Europe; and its unique combination of spiritual, economic and even political power, made it the effective and (in current phraseology) the totalitarian ruler of Medieval Europe.

What the Dalai Lama, the God-King, is to modern Tibet, that was the Pope to medieval Europe. And since every social institution looks back longingly to its heyday, our contemporary Catholic reactionaries turn nostalgic eyes towards the Catholic and Papal Rome of the High Middle Ages. Indeed, as a recent historian (Dr. Delisle Burns) has aptly phrased it, our modern contemporary Papacy is merely the ghost of the real medieval Papacy.

In the eighth century, on the threshold of the Middle Ages, the Papacy made two significant moves. Firstly, when threatened by Mohammedan invaders, who penetrated to the actual gates of Rome itself, the Papacy laid the foundations of its temporal power which was destined to last until 1870. For the now-distant "Roman" Emperor at Constantinople could no longer afford effective protection.

And just as the foundation of the power of the Roman Bishops had been laid by a forgery, so also, was that of the Temporal Power of the Popes. For about this time another brilliant and historically opportune forgery was perpetrated at the Roman Court; "The Donation of Constantine" which boldly ascribed the gift of the Papal States to the See of Rome to none other than the first Christian Emperor, Constantine himself. This forgery, which was not exposed until the Renaissance (1434), was one of the pillars of Papal Power throughout the Middle Ages.

Secondly, and even more ultimately important, the Papacy, as I have indicated in the previous article, created the ecclesiastical "Holy" Roman Empire in the West (800) as its political instrument to defend it against the infidel Arabs and heretical Greeks. These two events may be said to mark the beginning of the ecclesiastical civilisation of the Middle Ages.

At first, however, this was not evident, for the medieval age got under way slowly. The ninth and tenth centuries were for Rome, centuries of disorder and corruption, during which Papal mistresses frequently directed affairs, giving rise to the picturesque legend of "Pope Joan."

In the eleventh century, however, a reforming movement, which originated in the French monastery of Cluny, assumed the direction of the Church. Its leader, Hildebrand, afterwards Pope Gregory VII, and the greatest of all the Popes, launched the Papacy upon new and brilliant paths, which made it for two centuries the effective ruler of Europe.

By this time the Holy Roman, actually German, Empire, had revolted against its creator, the Papacy; the name "Roman" had still too many traditions of secular independence to be a sufficiently subservient instrument of ecclesiastical rule. Gregory and his successors waged remorseless war against their creation, the Emperor waiting in the snow to make his submission at the Castle of Canossa (1077) Gregory kept the Indeed, the word "Canossa" has itself become the synonym for the humiliating victory of the ecclesiastical over the secular power. In the course of their struggle with the German Emperors the Papacy then made pre-

quent use of the terrible weapons of excommunication and interdict, that is, the Papacy, the successor of the heavenly doorkeeper, St. Peter, locked the gates of the next world against its enemies in this one.

But excommunication, a "spiritual" weapon, was obviously useless against infidels and heretics, who did not accept the supremacy of the Popes as successors of St. Peter. To deal with such people a political instrument, a secular "sword" was necessary. Sometimes the Popes still used the Holy Roman Empire for this purpose. But more often, the Emperors were not dependable instruments of the Church's will. The greatest of them, the Hohenstaufen Emperor, Frederick II, "the Anti-Christ", was an advanced Freethinker, who derided Christianity, and worse, used Mohammedan troops to fight the Pope (1194-1250).

So the Papacy had to find another instrument to fight its battles. By a Napoleonic strategy Hildebrand enlisted the Normans, the converted Norse pirates who had conquered and settled down in Normandy, to fight the battles of the Church.

With the Normans as their soldiers, the Papacy launched the greatest enterprise of its whole career, the Crusades, which continued for two centuries; indeed, in Northern Europe for longer still. The primary object of the Crusades was to reconquer the Holy Land, Palestine, for the Church. This, the First Crusade actually did at the end of the eleventh century. For a century a Latin "Kingdom of Jerusalem" continued in the East, and several more Crusades were undertaken to recover or extend it. The idea of the Crusade was either taken from the Mohammedan "Holy War" or else from the warlike Pagan traditions of the converted Normans.

But the Crusades were not confined to Palestine, they were a universal phenomenon, and their greatest effects were actually to be found, not in Palestine, which was soon recovered by the Turks, but Northern Europe, in Pagan Prussia, which was permanently conquered by the crusading Teutonic Knights (1), and in Spain and Portugal, where the Crusaders gradually expelled the Mohammedan Arabs and Moors. Another Crusade temporarily conquered the heretical Greek Empire of Constantinople, Christian, but not subject to Rome. Whilst yet another, under the Norman William, permanently conquered England, then not sufficiently submissive to the authority of Rome (2).

More immediately useful to the Popes, perhaps than any of the above, the Normans finally drove the Mohammedan Arabs out of Italy itself, and conquered the powerful Arab kingdom of Sicily. An unsuccessful Crusade was even directed against Egypt.

The Crusades unified Christian Europe and they constituted the Popes, the recognised leaders of the Crusades, as the effective rulers of Europe, or "Christendom." The twelfth and thirteenth centuries represented the high-water mark of the Papal power, which it has never since been able to recover. But the Crusades had also dangerous and unintended results. For European culture now began to revive as a result of its contact with the more civilised East, and along with it, as was inevitable, there was a rebirth of heresy and even of downright Freethought, which directly menaced the power of the Papacy.

Against this new menace the Papacy mobilised two weapons, one old, and the other new. Its old weapon was the Crusade; early in the thirteenth century the great Pope Innocent III, launched a war of extermination against the heretical Albigenses (or Manichean Dualists) in the South of France, and later in the century another ruthless Crusade wiped out the Hohenstaufen dynasty of the Freethinking Emperor Frederick "The Anti-Christ".

The new weapon was the (Roman) Inquisition, the ecclesiastical "Gestapo" of the Papacy, its special weapon to preserve its totalitarian rule and to prevent what the modern Japanese called "dangerous thoughts." For the rest of the Middle Ages a permanent reign of terror, based on the universal espionage of the Inquisition and enforced by torture and death by fire at the stake, haunted Europe and retarded its social and intellectual development.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the medieval theocracy began to decline, and the Papacy itself, rent by internal rivalries, began to lose ground and at the end of this period a combination of new revolutionary forces made their appearance which effectively undermined the totalitarian Papacy of the Middle Ages.

F. A. RIDLEY.

(1) Originally founded to fight in Palestine.
(2) Hildebrand blessed William's "Crusade" at Hastings.

FRENCH ENGLISH LITERATURE

A WITTY critic remarked the other day that the best English novel of 1948 was a French novel written in 1909. This, of course, is the English translation of an early book by André Gide which Messrs. Secker and Warburg have recently published under the title *Strait is the Gate*. But the fact that this delicately-written love story was received in this country in such a chorus of praise, considered together with the point that it is the first volume of a collected edition of Gide's work, gives added emphasis to the growing interest in modern French literature in English translation.

Not since the days of Balzac has English fiction given way so obviously to the novel from Paris. The vogue of Sartre, for instance, shows no sign of weakening, and his *The Age of Reason* and *The Reprieve*, in spite of some faulty construction here and there, have been acclaimed as works of genuine stimulus to the imagination. Then there is Albert Camus, whose *The Outsider* was one of the most successful novels of a year or two back, and whose new book *The Plague*, is the first allegorical novel in the grand manner to impress the British public since it became aware of the importance of Kafka.

Messrs. Eyre and Spottiswoode have embarked in recent years on a collected edition of Francois Mauriac—perhaps the most important of the French Roman Catholic writers; the works of another Catholic, Georges Bernanos, have been familiar to English readers since his *The Diary of a Country Priest* first impinged on our consciousness several years ago.

And the French classics are in no way neglected. Messrs. Hamish Hamilton's "Novel Library," one of the most ambitious enterprises in recent publishing, has included such volumes as Maupassant's *Bel-Ami* and Balzac's *Cousin Bette* among the large number of English classics which make up the bulk of its numbers.

What is the reason for this renaissance of French fiction in English? Have the French novelists got something (to use the typical modern phrase) which their English contemporaries lack? That is a question not at all easy to answer. What is certain is that only the very greatest among English novelists of to-day can stand up to the French masters whose work is becoming so familiar to

us. Mr. Somerset Maugham, for example, can certainly hold his own, even with Maupassant, who is his avowed exemplar, at any rate in the field of the short story. Mr. Maugham himself admitted this debt in a recent lecture to the Royal Society of Literature. But, apart from such old masters, there are few English writers who can justly rank with Sartre and Camus, Gide and Mauriac.

I have said that it is not easy to put one's finger on the exact way in which the French writers excel. It may be, as far as the younger men, like Sartre and Camus go, that they have had experiences which no English writer has had to endure. It was Mr. George Orwell who said, in his fascinating *Critical Essays*, that no English writer could make a genuine picture of our troubled times, since no English writer had lived in the atmosphere of concentration camps and secret police which seems to be the typical atmosphere of our time. That explains the success of Mr. Arthur Koestler and of Spanish writers like Lorca and Barea. It may also explain French writers like Sartre and Camus. After all, the days of the French Resistance, in which most of the younger intellectuals took part, are not far behind us. And, even though the English writers of our day fought in the war, and endured the horrors and excitements of the bombing of London and many provincial cities, that was not quite the same as having to organise, within one's own country, the opposition to a foreign tyranny, imposing itself upon the general population.

Whether this is solely responsible for the way in which a generation of French writers, coming to maturity within the past ten years, has impressed itself deeply both on the critics of this country and upon the reading public it is impossible to declare with any certainty. But the fact remains that many Frenchmen occupy a prominent position in the world of English literature. And as a phenomenon of some literary and social importance that is something which is worth noting.

JOHN ROWLAND.

THE WESTERN WORLD'S POLITICAL CONCEPTS

WITH his "Western Political Thought" (Cape, 1948, 21s.), Mr. John Bowle has furnished a very fine survey of political opinion and its influences from early times to the days of Rousseau and Burke. Mr. Bowle is Lecturer in Modern History at Wadham College, Oxford, and tends to overstress the beneficent influences of Christian ethics in the evolution of modern humanism. Still, the evils inseparable from institutional religion are frankly admitted, and our historian adopts the Pagan Aristotle's definition of the ideal State as that which secures the greatest benefits to the community. "With trenchant clarity," Bowle avers, "the greatest master of political thought recalls the values without which power is meaningless, and defines the purpose of civilised society."

Primitive societies of the Stone and Bronze Ages are considered, and then a chapter is devoted to Egypt and Mesopotamia in whose river valleys civilisation was born. But in these States, speculative thought was never encouraged and, despite the fact that writing, numeration, mathematics and astronomy all arose in the Near East, these civilisations stagnated and decayed. In truth, it was the Greeks who who later bore aloft the torch of enlightenment and created in their tiny City States the foundations of the science and philosophy to which the modern world is so deeply indebted.

That the Greeks profited by the attainments of their predecessors, particularly the Cretans, is undeniable. As Bowle notes: "The foundations had been made in the river valleys of the fundamental inventions, without which the Greek city would have been impossible—writing, the wheel, the ship, the calendar—these had all been achieved, but it was not until the Greek intelligence had raised the essential problems of thought that political theory in the full sense can be said to begin."

In consequence of Alexander's campaigns, Greek culture spread far and near, although his Empire disintegrated at his death. Yet, when the later Greek communities were conquered by the Romans, Greek science, art, philosophy and letters, inspired the higher civilisation of the Republic and Empire. In military affairs and law alone, the practical Romans excelled the Greeks, although they were the most successful colonisers in antiquity. As Bowle states: "The Empire at its greatest stretched from Mesopotamia to Scotland; the disciplined tramp of the heavy armed legionaries imposed the habit of peace in the remotest confines of Brittany and Spain, the Balkans and Roumania, in Palestine and Egypt, and the boundaries of Iran. The structure of the Byzantine and Western medieval world was created by the Romans, the framework of political and ecclesiastical law."

Our author justly regards the downfall of ancient Rome as the greatest social calamity that has ever befallen humankind. Yet, he urges that the Pagans were callous and sensual in character, while conceding that Hellenism has strengthened Christianity in providing modern political thought with its "characteristic outlook," whatever that may mean. We are told that the Church introduced a new hope as well as a new fear which led to the submission of Roman and barbarian alike. Again, with Rome's economic decline, discontented crowds sought security in the new cult. As Bowle testifies: "The breakdown of the civilisation of antiquity, the biggest cultural disaster the world has so far seen, led to a predominance of emotional motives and a degradation of intellectual standards." Also, by the time of Constantine "credulity and fear are the note of the decadent world."

Amid the Dark Ages in their welter of cruelty and crime, with the monks the sole custodians of surviving manuscripts and the chroniclers of recent events, literacy became a rare accomplishment.

Still, the Bishop of Rome so persistently extended his sway over Christendom that he finally emerged as the head of the Church. It is true that in Italy the prevalent anarchy weakened Papal authority until the powerful personality of Gregory the Great saved the situation. This Pope displayed astuteness in advising Augustine, in his mission to convert the Saxons, to temporise and adapt heathen customs to Christian uses which he accordingly did.

The tardy revival of civilisation is ascribed to the influences of Feudalism and the long conflict between the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire for supremacy. But with the restoration of learning, the contempt aroused by the notorious corruption of the clergy, the growth of commerce and other secular influences, the Church suffered a severe disruption. Earlier reformers had mostly been blotted out, but by the 15th century heretics found powerful supporters. Political and economic conditions conspired to favour the Protestants in the lands where their doctrines won favour. As Bowle observes: "For the Catholic Church the effect

was devastating: the Teutonic, Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon peoples were largely lost to the Papacy."

Among other illustrious men, Descartes, Locke, Hobbes and Spinoza, are dispassionately studied. The political influences of English Puritanism are appraised, and an instructive chapter on the XVIIth century appears in the book before us. Then we reach the Age of Reason, when three French philosophers, Montesquieu, Diderot and Voltaire appear as representatives of 18th century Rationalism. With their realistic outlook, they exalted the powers of reason. There was full scope for their evangel, for the clerical obscurantism, the Court extravagances and the wars of Louis XIV had brought France to the verge of ruin. Montesquieu and Voltaire had resided in England, and were profoundly impressed by our political system and they proclaimed its merits to their countrymen. The idea of progress, so alien to medieval thought, found full expression in the writings of all the apostles of the Enlightenment.

These views were given wide currency in the French Encyclopædia, edited by Diderot himself. As Bowle avers, this work "which took twenty years to produce, and which ran to seventeen volumes, with three supplementaries, proved one of the foundations of a new secularised French mentality, and, with that, of a new point of view for the polite world of Europe."

Voltaire's campaign against intolerance and his other services to humanity have made his name immortal. Yet, he was much less sanguine than his colleagues in his estimation of human reason as a guide in life. "So many frauds," he writes, "so many errors, so many disgusting absurdities . . . Our religion . . . is unquestionably divine, since seventeen centuries of imposture and imbecility have not destroyed it."

T. F. PALMER.

MORALS AND ETHICS

So whilst waiting for an opportunity to read Miss Lan Freed's book, "Social Pragmatism," we now have a masterly review by John Rowland. And it would seem that the expected has again transpired, in that in common with all earlier attempts to construct a satisfactory system of ethics, since Bentham and Mill, the whole question of what may be generally described as the "Imperatives" has not been fully accounted for.

John Rowland reminds us of a recent broadcast in which Bertrand Russell was matched against a Jesuit, and even his inability to give full account of the pragmatic basis underlying the virtue of kindness when by cruelty, some agreed end is achieved. From which one assumes that a utilitarian ethic must ever be at the mercy of immediate expedience, and thus incapable of crystallising into the great principles which are held by all to be the good. From this it is but a step to the "Imperative" of Kant and the idealists.

I cannot myself see any reason why an ethic based on utilitarianism and/or the "greatest number" principle of Bentham and Mill should not—and I suggest it does—throw up and consolidate a code of basic moral precepts indistinguishable and no less effective than the old imperatives and theological statutes. Nor, if this is established, is there any reason to suspect them of an origin outside human experience, and especially that of enlightened self-interest. Cruelty is a good platform. For on it, there is almost universal agreement and it is free of the confused prejudices which cloud other issues, for example, sexual behaviour.

Joad had a habit some years ago, after having dealt traditionally with the eternal "philosopher's writing table" of starting on his tour of values with the assumption that Beauty, Truth and Goodness, were universally acclaimed as desirable, and in fact something "given." He would go on to affirm that everyone agrees that health is better than sickness, and kindness than cruelty. If kindness in fact is an attribute inherent in some manner in human nature, it took some little time in my own case to germinate, since I can well recall the parental horror with which I was discovered removing one by one the legs of a living Daddy Long Legs. And even to-day, there are boys who indulge the enlightened pastime of blowing up frogs with air for the pleasure of watching them burst!

After all, rudimentary conceptions of a rather one-sided kindness are present in most animals—closely related of course with the grief of which the monkey, the dog, and even the cat are capable at times. The primitive basis of kindness, later to be raised and purified by the emotions to what it has become to the highest minds, starts out as simple expedience. "If you were a cat, how would *you* like to have your tail pulled, or sent down the road tied to a milk tin?"

The principle of cruelty as a means to an end is accepted under special circumstances by everyone, though one ounce of *unnecessary* cruelty must always contravene the code. The facts relating to the Concentration Camps fall surely under this head. Assuming the war and Germany's necessity to subdue internal hostile influences—a large assumption—and allowing for necessary overcrowding, the shortages of food, careless planning of the camps, pressure of numbers and so forth, much terrible suffering was to be expected. The specific bestiality of such monsters as Irma Gruizer, who indulged in sadistic lust under the protection of the system has really little moral significance. Freed from the fear of punishment, the old Adam (or Eve) is only too ready to disport himself.

For however one looks at the matter, ethics comprise a code of unwritten laws. And as far as I can see the fact that they have been slowly evolved through the ages on an ultimate basis of tribal expediency, as they undoubtedly have, should not reduce one whit either their value or their beauty. Clearly, by common consent, certain ethical precepts stand higher and appear more inviolable than others. About some of them there is little or no dispute, whilst the rapidly changing social systems render others not only obsolete but positively harmful.

Kindness, generosity and greatness of heart have an undoubted survival value for the race, and it is in the best interests of mankind that by education, these great attributes have slowly but surely acquired an æsthetic value in themselves. The union of expediency and beauty is by no means unknown in biology even on the material plane. Surely the cunningly evolved flower which attracts us as greatly even as it does the fertilising bee, may have its reflection at the spiritual level achieved by man?

J. STURGE WHITING.

GOD

To say that God is stupid is blasphemy. To say that God is wise is reverence. So the difference between reverence and blasphemy is the difference between flattery and intelligent criticism. C.C.

ACID DROPS

Once again the Russian Orthodox Church has sent out a declaration ostensibly based on Christianity. It charges America and the Vatican with imperilling peace and, speaking with the authority of God Almighty behind it, an authority which the Vatican has always claimed exclusively for itself, contemptuously tells the Pope—" Let contemporary Rome with penitence humble herself before Rome of the first centuries of the Apostles Peter and Paul . . . and let her exert herself and begin a new life in the spirit of Christ's command." The Vatican is, in fact, chastised like a naughty little boy, a rather new experience for the haughty Church of Rome. How these Christians do love one another!

According to the " Church Times " there has been a very successful mission in Kidderminster extending over three weeks; 1,500 people made their Communion, services were held in and out of church, and discussion groups were formed. What the report does not say, however, is anything about the number of " infidels " who were converted. That crowds of Christians went to the services we can understand—but surely the real test is how many thorough unbelievers were brought in, were captured for Christ? Was there a single one? Merely to get some more or less indifferent Christians to come to church—perhaps only while the Mission is there—seems to us very little to shout about. But one has to be thankful for the smallest possible mercies these days.

Dr. Wand, the Bishop of London, seems very hurt at the criticisms of his plans for converting the whole of London next year. " There are people," he complains, " who think we have been too vague about the Mission; they complain we are wishy-washy in our plans. I am astonished to hear it." Dr. Wand looks like getting a fuller share of astonishment yet. He is out to bring in all " those who are lapsed Christians," and convert all " those with whom we come into contact who are not members of our church." Well, he should commence with the members of the National Secular Society who love nothing better than an encounter with converters. But perhaps the only people Dr. Wand wants to convert are already Christians—and such a Mission should be dead easy.

The Headmaster of Aldenham School has been giving the " Church Times " some piquant observations on religion in his and other schools among boys and they must be very disturbing reading for all the faithful. He ridicules the way boys " who have had sheltered lives," confess that they have " provoked most justly the wrath and indignation " of God Almighty against them, and " maintaining that the burden of their sins is 'grievous and intolerable.' " Of course, this kind of " confession " is not only pure humbug but pure balderdash—but it is very good Christianity, a point the headmaster seems to forget. That he wants to give it up is something to his credit, but no credit at all to the religion in which he still—perhaps—fervently believes. Why does he not come out, if he is quite sincere, entirely for Secular education?

To prove that domestic housework is not " degrading " and should be joyfully undertaken by all women, that bright luminary among cardinals, Cardinal Griffin, gave as a supreme example " our Lady " who cheerfully washed up after meals, swept the house down from attic to basement every day, took her place in the queue for the daily or weekly rations, and cooked all the meals for the household as well as washing all the shirts, nighties, hankies and collars, for her family. If it was good enough for " our Lady," surely it should be good enough for the missus—who, in any case, had not the honour of being the Mother of God Almighty. It's a marvellous piece of dialectic, and just what one expects from Cardinal Griffin.

Once again the ways of the Lord are inscrutable. A church at Treviso, Italy, collapsed during a storm, and five people were killed. Nothing could be easier to understand had the building been a pub, a cinema, or a gaming house—but why a church? No wonder the sheep are sometimes shaken and turn to the sinful—but laughing—infidel.

Two hundred thousand people recited the Rosary at Fatima, on the occasion of the 31st anniversary of " our Lady's " appearance there, and Bishop Silva of Lieria blessed all the Fatima statues everywhere. Possibly he had in mind what good business it all was, and a few blessings more or less could at least do no harm. We do not know whether any miracles followed, but it was rather unfortunate that an American pilgrim, one of 25 who flew from the United States, should die after all this religious hooey. Still he will have the consolation of flying direct to Jesus—perhaps.

Even in the " Universe " the cat is allowed to get out of the bag sometimes. A correspondent who was in the A.T.S. gives her experiences of other Catholic girls in the Forces, and admits what a hard job it was for the priests " trying to get our Catholic boys and girls to practise their faith." She " definitely " puts it all down to their " upbringing at home " and she thinks that a few more barrack room debates would " solve the problem." Well so it might—by killing the faith completely. We only wish facilities could be given for such debates, a well-known Freethinker to oppose the padre. But such a suggestion would horrify the powers that be.

The Service of Holy Communion is to be broadcast in the near future, and the broadcast is to be " arranged in such a way as to reduce to a minimum *irreverent listening*." What that means, only God and the B.B.C. will know, unless it means that football pools should not be studied whilst the service is on. A previous altar boy who assisted at many Roman Catholic communions, confessed that he was hard-pressed to preserve, at least, outward decorum when viewing a line of kneeling communicants with eyes shut and mouths agape, for all the world as participants in the children's game of " Shut your eyes and open your mouth." We shall remember this when we hear the broadcast. Gods and priests prefer their followers in that position, they are more easily fleeced.

In view of the recent spate of Encyclical letters and messages from Conferences of Christians in which the predominant feature was " God's Will " and "purpose," it would be salutary to these mouthers of platitudes to consult Epicurus on God—" Either God wishes to hinder evil and cannot; or he can and does not wish to; or he cannot nor does he wish to; or he does wish to and can. If he wishes to and cannot, he is impotent, if he can and does not wish to, he is perverse. If he cannot nor does he wish to, he is impotent and perverse. If he does wish to and can, why does he not?"

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

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Mr. W. Nelmes (Glam.).—Thanks for cuttings.

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Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

We are pleased to note that the "Teachers' World" reads the "Freethinker" and has taken exception to our criticism of the teaching of religion in schools. We are not surprised, of course, that this organ of education blindly follows its mentors. The Education Act says, teach religion, and the "Teachers' World" follows meekly in its wake. But what would the "Teachers' World" say if some enterprising teacher decided to teach the religion of Dr. Barnes?

In the Congregational Church Hall, Bellingham Green, London, S.E.6, on Friday evening, November 19, Mr. R. H. Rosetti will give an address on "Atheism" before members and friends of the Bellingham Local Fabian Society. Freethinkers who are interested are invited by the Society to attend. Proceedings begin at 8-15, and admission is free. The nearest station is Bellingham on the Southern electric line.

The value of a well-organised and well-contributed Debating Society was apparent in the large Lecture Theatre of the Technical College, Nottingham, last Sunday when Mr. R. H. Rosetti addressed the Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society on "Can Christianity Save Us?" The theatre was well filled, the address was closely followed, and a notable feature was the tolerant tone of the questioners and speakers in the discussion. It was very apparent that the audience was a self-disciplined one, and the efficient chairman, Mr. Taylor, played his part with courtesy and consideration to all. Everybody seemed to have had a good afternoon.

The Merseyside Branch N.S.S. holds a meeting at the Picton Hall, All Saints, to-day, November 14, when Mr. G. Thompson will speak on "Youth and Religion." The lecture begins at 7 p.m., admission is free, with some reserved seats 1s. each. The support of sympathisers will be welcomed.

On "Public Health and Marriage Law." three lectures will be given in the Lecture Hall, 4a, Inverness Place, W.2. at 7-30 p.m., on November 15, January 17, and March 7. Tube stations: Bayswater, Inner Circle, and Queensway, Central Line. The lecturer, Dr. Edward A. Wilson, approaching the subject from the angle of mental and physical health, advocates a reconstruction of marriage law along more biological lines, including bachelor motherhood for spinsters and plural mating or marriage for those of both sexes who want it. For leaflet, send S.A.E. to B.M./Druid, W.C.1.

A DOCTOR ON RELIGION

I.

DOCTORS used to have, I believe, a reputation for at least some scepticism on religious matters, but every now and then I come across some, personally or in books, who are ready to outshine any average Christian when it comes to sheer credulity. Before me, for example, is "Why Believe?" by A. Rendle Short, M.D., B.Sc., F.R.C.S., 1941 (sent to me through the kindness of a Nottingham friend) a tissue of such credulity that it is hard to believe the author is really serious.

At the outset, he is replying to an imaginary "Sporting Man" who wants to know what he is missing by not accepting Christianity. And in the ridiculous answer which follows, we get the following:—

> "Can you think of anything worse for you than to come to the last hours of your life and to know that you have had no worth while programme, and no serious purpose, and have done no particular good? A sincere practising Christian will never come to that. David Kirkwood, the socialist M.P., in his autobiography, tells of twenty-four friends in his youth; twelve of them had a serious purpose in life, and twelve were just like you. Every one of the first twelve made good and rose to influence and prosperity. Of the other twelve, who belonged to the "Convivial Club," every single one came to a bad end, and several of them by suicide."

One can perhaps understand a Christian Socialist like Mr. Kirkwood actually believing that people who go to a Convivial Club or haven't a serious purpose in life (which generally means not believing in Christianity) come to a sticky end; but the spectacle of a man who is intelligent enough to obtain an M.D. degree bringing up such an argument for Christianity is just heartbreaking, even though it is a variant of what Christians used to teach in a more Golden Age, that if you don't accept Jesus, you will burn for ever and ever, and then some, in the Flaming Fires and the Bottomless Pit of Hell.

Other imaginary people are also brought into the discussion, and it is always amusing to me to see that, however much they argue against the religion of Christianity, they nearly always fall over themselves to express their admiration for Jesus as a good "Revolutionary" or a good "sport," though "the people who profess to follow Him (these unbelievers invariably use a capital letter) have always stood in the way of progress." To which the devout doctor replies, as Christians ever do, that it was Christian teaching which abolished the slave trade, which instituted the care of the sick, which abolished cruel sports and cruel punishments, and carried out "enormous social service." And if "of late years, many who make no religious profession have had their consciences touched and are showing some milk of human kindness to those in need, it is owing to the example and teaching of Christians." Words fail me—but if Christians can put forward such arguments (in A.D. 1941) in the face of historic fact, it does prove that Freethought has still its mission to fulfil.

Dr. Short then proceeds to demonstrate the existence of God—a job which thousands of Christians for centuries have essayed to do before him; and the fact that it still has to be done is the measure of their failure. In his hands, it is quite simple, however. All he does is to point to the "mind" of man, to the sun, the planets, volcanoes, animals and plants—they all show the marks "of a vast Intelligence" (capital "I," of course), and the problem is settled. God exists because there is the

Mind and there is the Intelligence, " a mind which works like ours," we are told. It is a " perfectly reasonable conclusion," Dr. Short adds, " that the universe, and the world, and Nature, were thought out and brought into being by a Person (capital " P ") whose power and intelligence immensely transcend our own. That person we call God." If the reader now does not believe that the universe, the world and Nature were created by God, he will certainly join Mr. Kirkwood's unfortunate suicides. All the same, the doctor is not sure that he has clinched the matter, so he goes into many other " arguments " which he evidently believes are unanswerable.

As a good Christian, Dr. Short is delighted that Evolution is no longer believed in by all scientists, and cites Mr. Douglas Dewar and Sir Ambrose Fleming, those two stalwart champions of a literal interpretation of Genesis, in his support. As he himself believes in Genesis—he must do as a good Christian—one cannot altogether blame him quoting these outworn fossils who are so valiantly fighting a losing battle in the best traditions of Victorian Fundamentalism. But how he expects to convince anyone who reads Darwin for himself first, and then the latest works by Evolutionists, is a puzzle to me. Many factors in the theory are of course difficult to explain because the evidence, in the nature of things, was bound to be destroyed; but the other alternative, that " God did it," is nothing but a jumble of three words utterly devoid of meaning.

When Dr. Short comes to Jesus he is at once faced with the question, " Did He Ever Live?" and answers it in the words of Sir James Frazer, who certainly believed in his existence "as a great religious and moral teacher." But the reader should note the real difficulty of a Christian quoting this testimony. For Dr. Short, Jesus is not just a religious and moral teacher at all. He is a God—God Almighty—and God Almighty's own Son. All we know of Jesus, the Jesus of the Christians, is contained in the New Testament, and therein he is depicted as a God, a Worker of Miracles, who could live again after being put to death. This is the " He " (capital " H ") of Dr. Short's question—not a mere man or a religious and moral teacher.

To prove that this God really lived Dr. Short goes to Sir James Frazer's *belief* that a *man* called Jesus really lived. What is Sir James' belief in this matter worth? Not very much more than the belief of any man of science; but in any case, he did not believe in the God Jesus, or that it was the God Jesus that lived. And as far as I have been able to find out, Sir James later refused to discuss the question as to whether he was not wrong even about the man Jesus.

When it comes to proving the authenticity and credibility of the Gospels, Dr. Short follows the well known path of showing how " unbelievers " during the nineteenth century made " strenuous efforts " to prove that they were products of the middle of the second century, and that has now been shown to be quite wrong. Modern scholarship has shown that they were much earlier, he contends, and the unbeliever should now retire with baffled rage.

For myself, I marvel at all this attempt to make the Gospels products of the first century and thus prove that they are both authentic and credible. How in the world is the story of Jesus being carried about by a Devil made more credible if written, say, in the year 90 A.D., rather than in 150 A.D.? Why am I expected to believe that Jesus really did order a tempest to cease howling because the account was written in 75 A.D., rather than 170 A.D.? How can anyone prove that Jesus walked on water as easily as I do on dry land because somebody has discovered a bit of papyrus which contains something like a verse of John and which has been proclaimed by some " authority "—who is, in most cases, almost a Fundamentalist anyway—to date from the first century. I see no more reason to believe the " authority " than the Gospel, whatever the date. Not that I believe for a moment in all this nonsense about an early dating for our *present* Gospels. I believe, and can show, that they are products of the second half of the second century—but I no longer attach too much importance to this. Early or late, the New Testament is Myth and Legend—or in other words, *not true*.

H. CUTNER.

THE GOD OF DOCTOR JOAD

PROFESSOR JOAD'S reply to a question put to him in the " Sunday Dispatch " on Russia's objection to the proposition included in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, that " Men are created in the image and likeness of God," is highly illuminating.

After telling those of us, who did not already know, exactly how gods came to be invented, and stating a number of sound and logical reasons for non-belief in God, he proceeds to define his own belief in God—*a God made in Man's image*!

Really, Doctor Joad, this won't suit the dear old ladies in the next pew. Nor is it quite in keeping with the disputed passage in the Declaration on Human Rights—presumably inserted by our good bishops who just cannot help pushing religion into politics. Of course the Russians have every right to object to that passage, and we have no right whatever to assume that all peoples of all nations believe what some of us believe. If Man is to have any Human Rights at all, surely he must have the right to believe or disbelieve any or all of the world's religions.

Doctor Joad's precise words are these: " . . . if we are to try to picture God, we have to think of Him as a person embodying all the best elements in ourselves raised to the *n*th degree." If God possesses a mind obviously that mind must be contained in a *person*—Joad does not think we should compare God with an earwig or an earthworm. And, because *we* are whites, God must also be a white man!

Doctor Joad's only excuse for believing in God at all is that he cannot visualise Creation without a preceding creative mind. But he does not attempt to explain *how* that preceding mind came into being without itself having been created! Who, then, created the creative mind behind Creation! Of course, neither Joad nor anyone else can answer that question—therefore, belief in a deity is contrary to common reason and natural experience. No one has yet seen, heard, or felt God, and yet credulous people still believe in God's existence for no other reason than that they have been told to do so from infancy. Why, then, do not they still believe that Father Christmas comes down the chimney?

All *reasoning* men have outgrown their childish beliefs and superstitions, and so Doctor Joad's conclusions are not likely to convince any *thinking* person.

The Professor's final fling is perhaps the most enlightening of all in this curious confession of Faith. He condemns the Russians as being socially backward and still living in the 19th century, because they believe in modern science instead of primitive superstition! Such conclusions by a 20th century philosopher make one doubt the value of philosophy—and the wisdom of its teachers.

W. H. WOOD.

SOCRATIC LULLABY

CHRISTOPHER HAMILTON: Daddy, is Mr. Bevin a foreigner?

H.S.B.: No, old man.

C.H.: Then why is he called the Foreign Minister?

H.S.B.: He's the British Foreign Minister.

C.H.: How can he be British if he's foreign?

H.S.B.: He's *not* foreign.

C.H.: Ooh, Daddy, you just said he was.

H.S.B.: I didn't; he's called the Foreign Minister because he looks after foreign affairs.

C.H.: Why are they called *foreign* affairs, Daddy?

H.S.B.: Because they concern people from other countries. Our Foreign Minister has to meet other people's Foreign Ministers to decide what to do about the world.

C.H.: And do they?

H.S.B.: Do they what?

C.H. Decide.

H.S.B.: Not very often.

C.H.: Why not?

H.S.B.: Because of human nature.

C.H.: Does human nature mean not being able to decide?

H.S.B.: I didn't mean that. I meant, human beings are different from each other, and often disagree.

C.H.: Hm. . . Daddy, have you got a Minister for your affairs?

H.S.B.: How do you mean?

C.H.: Have you got somebody to meet other people to decide what to do about us?

H.S.B.: Yes, in a way. I have a Member of Parliament to represent me at Westminster, to help run the country's affairs.

C.H.: And does *he* decide?

H.S.B.: He helps in getting things decided.

C.H.: Does that mean he isn't human?

H.S.B.: Of course, he's human.

C.H.: But you said it's human nature not to be able to decide, and *he* can!

H.S.B.: What I said was that human nature makes people disagree when there are several of them trying to decide.

C.H.: Is your Member of Parliament the only human being at Westminster. Daddy?

H.S.B.: Goodness me, no, there are hundreds more.

C.H.: Then how can they *all* decide?

H.S.B.: They vote.

C.H.: Why can't the Foreign Ministers vote?

H.S.B.: They can, and do vote.

C.H.: Then why can't they decide?

H.S.B.: They *could* decide things by voting, but it is seldom much use because the ones who don't agree to the decision will not do what the others want them to do.

C.H.: Hm. . . I s'pose lots of the people at Westminster don't agree to the voting there, and don't do what the others want them to do, so why do they bother to vote, anyway?

H.S.B.: But they do. They *do* do what the majority want them to do, or rather the Government does it, and nobody stops them.

C.H.: Not even the Members who voted against it?

H.S.B.: No.

C.H.: Then why haven't the Foreign Ministers got a government of their own?

H.S.B.: They have, or rather, each of them has his own Government. We have ours, the French Foreign Minister has the French Government, and so on.

C.H.: Then why don't the governments make the Foreign Ministers all do what the voting tells them to do?

H.S.B.: Because it is usually the governments which tell their Foreign Ministers which way to vote, and those governments which told their Foreign Ministers to vote against a thing won't want to obey if that particular thing is decided upon.

C.H.: Then why don't the Foreign Ministers have a government of their very own, to make the other governments do what is decided?

H.S.B.. Because, old man, you can't make governments do what they don't want to do, except by making war on their countries, and we don't want any more war, do we?

C.H.: Do the people at Westminster have to make war on some of the people to make them obey the voting?

H.S.B. No, Christoff.

C.H.: Why not?

H.S.B.: I suppose it is chiefly because the separate Members of Parliament haven't got armies or air forces of their own.

C.H.: Then why don't the Foreign Ministers take the armies and things away from the different governments?

H.S.B.: Because they haven't the authority, or the power, to do so.

C.H.: Hasn't anybody got the power to do that?

H.S.B.: No.

C.H.: Not *anybody!* Not even the people who *gave* the governments their soldiers and guns and bombs and things?

H.S.B.: Well, yes; perhaps the people could do it.

C.H.: Then why don't they?

H.S.B.: They could only be strong enough if they were organised.

C.H.: Then why don't they join the World Movement for World Federal Government?

H.S.B.: That's quite enough talking for this evening. It's high time you were asleep. . . Bless me! He is!

HAROLD S. BIDMEAD.

RICHARD PORSON

HERE is a brief biography of a marvellous man with extraordinary characteristics; a rustic, born in a village home, 1759, who attained the Regius Professorship of Greek in the University of Cambridge, 1785.

During Porson's residence in the University there arose an exciting and memorable controversy between Archdeacon Travis and Edward Gibbon concerning the interpolation of "the Three Heavenly Witnesses" in St. John's Gospel, and Porson, with his knowledge of ancient Greek, joined the discussion and proved the "Heavenly Witnesses" to be a religious fraud.

The Christian bigots immediately attacked Porson for his onslaught; as he said, "to slay these heavenly witnesses," and for this masterly exposure Porson suffered severely, because the Bishop and Clergy were hoping that he would take "Holy Orders"; instead of which, Porson resigned his Professorship and left the University; stating, "it requires more than fifty years to know divinity, and men mount the pulpit assuming everything, but knowing nothing."

Porson came to London, 1791, walked the whole distance and arrived, as he said, "a gentleman with sixpence in his pocket," and dined on bread, cheese and beer.

The Master of Trinity College, Cambs, treated Porson very scurvily; the salary for the Professorship being £40 per annum. Luckily, Dr.Baine, of Charterhouse, with other scholars, presented an annuity of £100 to Porson in recognition of his classical abilities. This annuity was supplemented by earnings for article writing, one of which, "The Orgies of Bacchus," appeared in "The Morning Chronicle" with the nom-de-plume of "Mythologus," causing much fun by the satirical similarity connecting pagan rites with Christian worship.

Another of Porson's pungent pieces in imitation of "Horace," described fear, religion and ignorance as "The Trinity."

He was offered £5,000 for an edition of "Aristophanes," with Notes, but he refused the work because of his desire to assist with the Greek lettering translation from the inscription on the Rosetta Stone in the British Museum.

Porson's skill and philological knowledge triumphed and thus enabled others to obtain the spelling and meaning of the ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics.

The results of this examination and interpretation were presented to the Learned Societies, January, 1803, but they were not printed for publicity until three years after Porson's death.

There are many jovial reminiscences of "Dick," as he was familiarly named, for he was a favourite in polite and learned circles. His notebooks and MSS. were beautifully written in English, Greek or Latin, and his anecdotal conversations were spiced with wit and wisdom and delightful for their instruction with hosts and visitors such as Dr. Parr, Horne Tooke and Dr. Goodall, the Provost of Eton College.

Porson was invited by Dr. Routh, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, to preside at a meeting, and when "Dick" arrived, he saw Archdeacon Paley in the Chair; Porson stared at Paley, and said, "I am entitled to that chair as President of the Truth Society, and you are not even a member of it."

Dr. Thomas Young, Professor of Medicine, Glasgow University, and egyptologist, obtained for Porson the appointment as Principal Librarian in the London Institute, with a salary of £200 a year, and the Institute Members were delighted by convivial meetings with professional scholars who discussed arts, science and religion, and it was remarked, in Latin, "where there are three doctors, two are atheists!"

During 1808, Professor Porson's health failed. He fell into the roadway at Charing Cross and temporarily lost his speech. He was removed to St. Martin's Lane Workhouse for treatment and identification. A notice in "The British Press" described him as a tall man with blue coat and black breeches, having silver in the pockets and a gold watch; also, small books filled with Greek and Latin writing. Mr. Savage, Porson's assistant librarian, saw the advertisement and hurried to the workhouse, and brought Porson to his home where he was attended by Dr. Adam Clarke who wrote an account of Porson's illness and death, which occurred September 25, 1808, aged 49. His funeral was attended by celebrities, including the Heads of Cambridge University, where his body was buried near Sir Isaac Newton's statue.

From Porson's estate were founded the "Cambridge Porson Prize" and the Porson Scholarship, greatly coveted by classical students.

A marble statue of Professor Porson is near that of Sir Isaac Newton's, as a permanent memorial of this famous scholar and erudite freethinking critic.

Wm. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

IN A BALMY GARDEN

HOW little the one half of the world knows how the other half lives!

During both world wars I spent many weary days and nights on inventions to help win the war; and for my pains I came nearly getting locked up.

A fat-headed Inspector from Washington called one day, looked over my plans, blue-prints, and wall designs, finally pronounced me sane, eventually asking what I knew about *atoms*.

"Atoms," I replied, "are two small and insignificant for me to fool with. I am a swivel-engineer."

After which he seemed relieved and even allowed me to explain my soft-rubber submarine.

Soft rubber, with rubber bolts and nuts, any portion of which would "give," following a depth charge explosion; but Brass Hats and Red Tape never gave my submarine a chance!

I recollect the day this gentleman with the retrousse nose left my garden gate and how I heaved a sigh of relief and went right on inventing. For my mind is never still.

Mocking birds sang in the trees, wood doves played about my feet, sparrows chattered; and as I sat drinking a cup of coca-cola and hot water, a *strange cat* appeared!

It was then I devised the Kornwall Kourteous Kat Trap. I love birds; and cats too for that matter. It is only the cat's instinct to kill birds which I detest. And it is this part of the so-called omnipotent plan of creation I thoroughly hate. Not having the creator handy to argue my point and intercede for the birds, I've declared "open season" on cats.

I'm determined they shall be taught respect for their fellow creatures. They must live and learn.

My invention is here at *Breezemere*, my own estate, so no one can do anything about it. A replica of a gabled English cottage, labelled KAT HOUSE—WELCOME! It stands about 3 feet by 4 feet, an open front screen-door, with a dancing, chirping, imitation canary inside, enticing the venturesome feline.

As cat enters parlour, the bird vanishes, and the front door closes preventing cat's escape.

At this moment a bell rings in my study, after which I exit on to piazzi from which I may recline in easy-chair and study the psychological effect of surprises in store for Mr. Smart Alec Cat.

There *are* surprises not a few.

Spasmodic electric shocks rather jolt the cat's vanity; when his body interferes with a certain cathode ray a stream of water hits him between the eyes; at a certain particular position a circular section of the floor rises and whirls him around dizzily; after which he is somewhat nonplussed.

Suddenly the trick canary appears on a trapeze outside an open window. As cat cautiously sticks head out the window closes just behind his ears and a small iron boot works intermittently in his rear.

From my easy-chair I note the humiliating mortification on cat's face as he gets the boot. His chagrin and crestfallen looks fully repay me for my trouble inventing such a trifle. A bell in the tower of the Kat House rings Ding! Ding! every time the boot dings him in the dong.

Teaching animals good manners is a serious business. In reality, a tragic affair, though some of my friends who witness it have laughed outright! For shame.

To laugh at other's griefs, nay even tragedies, is not being civilized. I am merely swivelized perhaps, but I laugh not, neither do I weep.

No doubt some of you, who walk on your heels, will find a certain inhuman amusement in the disciplinary action with my stray cat transients.

Plans, with full directions, priced at 35s. for this week only. Considered from one angle, as an accessory to the Study of Feline facial expressions, I'm forced to admit it's a "Bargin," gentlemen—a "Bargin"!

EARLE CORNWALL.

CORRESPONDENCE

ARE WE ADVANCING?

SIR,—In view of Mr. T. D. Smith's statement in his letter to you under the above head that I described a believer in Marx as "half-mad," I ask the favour of a little of your valuable space in self defence to tell Mr. Smith categorically that I made no such statement and implied no such sentiment in the letter to which he referred, and that I hold no such opinion.

As the expression "half-mad" did not in fact occur in my letter I would like to suggest to Mr. Smith that if the result of being Marx-mesmerised for 30 years is slight hysteria plus optical delusions on seeing "Marx" coupled with "Moses" he would be well advised to become more of a Freethinker and less of a Marxist.

Finally, as I abused no one in my original letter I can only presume, when Mr. Smith tells me that abuse is no argument, that he is confusing me with somebody else—Mr. Vyshinsky perhaps.—Yours, etc.,

W. E. NICHOLSON.

CRITICS CRITICISED.

SIR,—I have just read, "A Critique of Hinduism." I can understand why Mr. Singh did not emphasise Marxist doctrine in his review of that book in the "The Freethinker; and would like to protest against Percy G. Roy's tactics. The quotations he gave come in paragraphs where the author states the Marxist case as part of the general position of religious criticism. But an equal amount of space is also given to others, for instance, to Tyler's or Frazer's case. The author is stating all the various aspects of modern religious criticism. The book is, in fact, an extremely able balanced and painstaking survey of religious criticism as a whole, and every aspect of it has to be considered. That this is the case is shown by the fact that the author uses two-thirds of his space before going into his subject of Hinduism.

Hinduism is a vast and complex subject on its own, and our author's case could only be appreciated by those who have given some time to it. But the book is well worth reading if only for the survey of religious criticism as such. To consider it as exclusively or intrinsically Marxist is absurd. A list of the names of men involved is impressive; besides Tyler and Frazer there is the anthropology of Elliot Smith, Marett and Malinowsky, and psychology as of Freud, of more orthodox work of men like Robertson Smith and Andrew Lang; Herbert Spencer, Max Muller, William James, Feurbach and others; together with a consideration of the work of numerous Hindu scholars; of theory and movements in India. Our author has the fullest appreciation of the breadth and depth of his subject.

In his article "Background of Religious Criticism," Percy G. Roy emphasised the Marxist case. But in taking passages out of their context, he gave an entirely false impression of the book; which is neither basically nor intrinsically Marxist. The author's conclusions could be wholeheartedly accepted by any non-Marxist democratic freethinker. I consider Percy G. Roy's attempt at pushing his Marxism to be unfair to readers of the "Freethinker," and an injustice to Lackmanshastri Joshi, the author of the book.—Yours, etc.,

H. H. PREECE.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting held November 4, 1948

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Hornibrook, A. C. Rosetti, Seibert, Bryant, Griffiths, Ebury, Woodley, Page, Morris, Taylor, Barker, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, Mrs. Venton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial statement presented.

New members were admitted to Merseyside Branch and to the Parent Society. The Conway Hall meeting arranged by the Executive was a pronounced success, Prof. J. B. S. Haldane's lecture was well received and many questions followed. Lecture arrangements were made for Birmingham, Newcastle, Nottingham and London. Correspondence with Edinburgh Branch was dealt with and instructions given. The question of making the voting rights of members of the Parent Society secure was raised, and a number of suggestions made. The matter was adjourned for further discussion.

The Secretary reported that accommodation for the Annual Dinner had been booked at the Criterion Restaurant, Piccadilly, London, for Saturday evening, January 29 next, the usual musical programme and speeches to follow.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for December 16, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI, General Secretary.

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. JAMES HART, G. WOOD, E. PAGE.

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 16, 7 p.m.: "The Retreat from Reason," Mr. HECTOR HAWTON.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W.1).—Monday, November 15, 7 p.m.: "Current Theories of Personality." Series of six lectures by Dr. Frieda Goldman. 1st lecture: "Approaches to Personality in Present-Day Psychology." Tickets, 12s. (Members R.P.A., 9s.) from R.P.A., 4/6, Johnsons Court, E.C.4.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Law and Religion in Modern Times," Prof. G. W. KRETON, M.A., LL.D.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Atomic Challenge." Mr. STUART MORRIS (Gen. Sec., P.P.U.).

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.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS and others.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Accrington (King's Hall Cinema).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Our Pseudo Christians," Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Blackpool Debating Society (46, Adelaide Street).—Tuesday, November 16, 7 p.m.: "Has the Labour Government Failed?" Mr. G. W. SMITH.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute). Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Political Ideals." Mr. SID ANDREWS.

Burnley (Reform Club).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Evolution and Religion To-day," Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Glasgow Secular Society (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "What to Put in the Place of Religion," Mrs. MURIEL WHITEFIELD.

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (I.L.P. Rooms, St. James Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Love, Life and Liberty," Mr. A. C. DUTTON.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: A lecture.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Materialism and Ethics," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Picton Hall, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Youth and Religion," Mr. G. THOMPSON.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Nottingham's Educational Ladder," Mr. L. MITSON.

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