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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Pot Calling the Kettle Black

ON the eve of the publication of the judgment of the Hungarian Court on the Prince Primate Cardinal Mindszenty, English Catholics held an indignation meeting at the Albert Hall to protest against the Cardinal's trial, and, in advance, against the sentence. At this gathering some very remarkable statements were made, which recalled a vanished medieval world. In fact the atmosphere of the Albert Hall that night must have been charged with the air of the Middle Ages.

That dual pillar of the Church, the Duke of Norfolk, incidentally, Master of Ceremonies to a Protestant Monarch, carried his audience back to the days of Hildebrand by declaring that it was "almost sacrilege" for the secular state to put a cardinal, a prince of the Church, on trial. Shades of Henry II and Thomas a Becket! Whilst a highly-placed Catholic ecclesiastic, Dr. Heenan, sent, no doubt, a thrill of horror down the spines of his Christian audience by announcing that Communism intended to "stamp out the name of Christ from the face of the earth." A rather poor compliment, one would have thought, to the ability of the Almighty, and the Second Person of the Trinity, to safeguard their own interests.

However, the high water mark of the oratorical gems of that memorable evening was furnished by Miss Barbara Ward, described as "National President of the Catholic Women's League" who went on record with the amazing declaration that, "The Cardinal had reminded the world that those who struggle with totalitarian power have no alternative but political martyrdom."*

This is a truly remarkable statement for a Roman Catholic to make about a Roman Cardinal, coming from such a source, one can only gasp. As a plain statement of fact in, say "The Freethinker," it might pass, but from a member of the great Totalitarian Church, the Church of the Inquisition, and the Keeper of the Index of Prohibited Books, the Church of Franco in 1949, one can only record Miss Ward's declaration as beyond any question, one of the finest examples of—let us be polite and employ parliamentary language of Churchillian vagueness—a terminological inexactitude.

We understand that Miss Ward is in professional life a publicist of repute and a member of that respected journal, "The Economist." Which only proves once more how people can keep their religion and their secular activities in different departments of their brains.

However, coming as it does from an educated Catholic, who can hardly hold the position she does upon such an exceptionally well-informed paper as "The Economist" without knowing something about European history and the not unimportant part played therein by the Church of which she is a member, we will recall for Miss Barbara Ward's benefit some relevant facts about the

Roman Church and the theory and practice of totalitarianism in both the present and past ages.

Firstly, we would like to ask what lawyers (we believe) term a "leading question." Who else but the Church of Rome invented the theory and practice of totalitarianism in the first place? Certainly not the ancient world, Greek or Roman, for freedom of thought was the very life blood of the Ancient Greeks, and was, indeed, the then unique foundation of "The glory that was Greece." Nor was the Roman Empire ever a totalitarian state prior to its persecuting Christian Emperors who introduced religious persecution and cultural uniformity after the triumph of Christianity in the religious revolution of the fourth century.

A cultural *laissez faire* and the completest religious and philosophical tolerance was the normal practice, and the supreme glory of the secular civilisation of Classic Antiquity for a thousand years (600 B.C. to A.D. 400). The few exceptions, such as the judicial murder of Socrates, were merely the proverbial exceptions that "prove the rule." Cicero, acting as editor and publisher of the great poem of Lucretius, the Epicurean views of whom and of which the Platonist Cicero must have detested, and the State endowment in the University of Athens of rival schools of philosophy by the Stoic Emperor, Marcus Aurelius, represent characteristic examples of this age long noble toleration of classical antiquity.

The victory of Catholic Christianity put an end to all this. For twelve centuries at least, the thought and culture of Europe were held in chains in the totalitarian dungeons of the Church. From the end of the fourth century, when the Christian and Catholic Roman Empire introduced, what even a contemporary Christian ecclesiastic described as a "new and inexpiable crime upon earth"—that is, the death penalty for heresy, a new and terrible word—down to the eve of the French Revolution when the secular state finally put out the fires of the Spanish Inquisition, Europe groaned under a totalitarian reign of abject terror. We repeat, it was the Christian Church, and in particular, the Roman Catholic Church, which carried the theory and practice of totalitarianism farthest, that invented the totalitarian regime itself.

As for martyrdom under a totalitarian regime, to which Miss Ward referred in the course of her Albert Hall speech, Rome should be able to speak from experience upon this question, the experience of the innumerable martyrs, far surpassing those of both Fascism and Communism combined, martyrs both of Freethought and of "Non-Roman" forms of Christianity, who have perished down the centuries under the persecuting regime of the Vatican.

One may relevantly ask where else does the Fascist "Total" State of modern times derive its Gestapos except from the older inquisitorial tribunals of Rome? And if Russian Communism to-day reproduces the totalitarian pestilence, where else does she inherit it

* News Chronicle, February 8, 1949.

except from Rome's "step-sister" (for there is no love lost between them) the "Orthodox" Moscow theocracy of the Czars?

Writing in the "Freethinker" it is hardly necessary to cite details of the age-long medieval totalitarianism of the Popes and their Church. Examples positively crowd in on the mind. The Albigenes, the two Inquisitions, the English Marian persecutions, St. Bartholemew's Eve, the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands, and an imposing list of etceteras. In the realm of theory we need only allude to the "Index of Prohibited Books" still in force, and to the explicit declaration of Rome's still lead-theologian, the "Angelic Doctor" St. Thomas Aquinas, and repeated by innumerable Roman authorities, "the heretic must not be argued with, but must be put to death."

Nor does this religious authoritarianism refer only to the past, for in the modern world the Church of Rome abates not one iota of its claims. Unrepentantly, it declares its superior and exclusive jurisdiction over the secular state and secular culture. It still proclaims the intolerant doctrine of exclusive salvation, and where still powerful enough to do so, as for instance in Spain, prohibits all other religions, Christian included.

The above is perhaps enough to indicate the incredible perversion—for it can hardly be bona fide ignorance—of history, that lies behind Miss Ward's remark. For the Church of Rome to complain of totalitarian persecution is surely a case of a piebald sheep reproaching a black one on account of its peculiar colour, or to vary the metaphor even more appropriately, one of the finest examples on record of the pot calling the kettle black.

F. A. RIDLEY.

SARTRE'S PHILOSOPHY

A NEW philosophy is always difficult to grasp. One needs to appreciate just in what way it differs from previous philosophies. With Existentialism there is also the fact that it seems only to have appeared in novels and plays. No clear-cut philosophical statement appears to be available and attempted commentaries seem confused. The term "Existentialism" plainly derives from the word "existence," but it is not at all clear just what is said to exist, to be existential, or why.

A radio version of "Crime Passionel" by Jean Paul Sartre was of interest as it expresses this philosophy. It is a drama of the Resistance Movement in a mythical country bordering on Russia, at the close of the war. But our main interest here is to analyse the characters portrayed, and the dialogue, in the play; the psychological studies and the reasoning; as philosophical indications. These two aspects of the play are complementary and follow from the findings of modern psychology and philosophy, with particular interest in dialectic.

There appears to be no reason or purpose in the set-up or plot of the play, for its ending leaves us where we were. The "moral" is in the realism of the play itself. The tendency of modern philosophy to discard reason is plainly shown, and the reasoning of the dialogue is of the kind known in psychology as rationalisation; with intellectuals justifying themselves in elaborate excuses and unintellectuals, as Jessica, showing shrewd common-sense. Unintellectual party members are praised for their courage; and Hugo, a masterly intellectual, is shown to be a coward, who, failing to adapt himself, rationalises even his final supreme act of cowardice—suicide—going to certain death in a glorious heroic gesture.

Intellectualism seems to be disparaged and reason is almost lampooned in the juggling with dialectic argument. Every reason is countered by its opposite. There is no argument without its contradiction. And the dialectic controversy is full of interest, for as examples of rationalisation, it exposes the different motives of the various individuals under different circumstances. This is crudely expressed by un-intellectuals who joined the Party because they "were hungry" and who mistrust Hugo because "he is different" and "I don't like him." But it is more heavily disguised in the intellectuals, as with the Party leader, who "does himself well" and who "likes a good drop of coffee and knows where to get it."

The contradictions of social and political life are also seen in the compensation of the combination of opposites in the psychological studies of the individual characters. The docile obedience of the unintellectual members is compensated by dogged courage. Subservience to Party discipline is counterbalanced by sullen suspicion of the autocratic intellectuals. In the same way devotion to, and adaptation of, means to ends, in the direct action of the strong man Party leader, is offset by compromise and expediency in policy; involving a charge of lying to, and treachery to, the Party; with internal Party intrigue and conspiracy.

The complex emotions are well brought out in the dialectic argument between the Party leader and Hugo, his secretary. To the forceful leader, vigorous action is dangerous, discretion is the better part of valour; but to Hugo this is betrayal to the Conservatives and he is committed to get rid of the Party Boss. The courageous leader, with a contempt for moral principles and no shame of bloodstained hands, is masterful with men but weak in the hands of a woman. The idealist Hugo lacks the moral courage to kill him, but eventually does so in a passion on finding him with Jessica, his wife, and then finds himself helplessly marked as a dangerous man.

In all this contrariness, we see the realism of the convincing psychological appeal of the play; and also how it is that attempts at expounding this philosophy always seem to involve self-contradictory statements. And in the emotional aspect we get a line on what is new in this philosophy. Sartre seems to have gone much further than Schopenhauer's will or Bergson's intuition, to instinctive emotion, with feeling intensified into sentiment and passion. These are moral characteristics but it is a new slant on morality, for this is considered in terms of feeling and not of reason, which is shown as rationalisation.

These outstanding features of the play in character and dialogue, are plainly a matter of morality. This psychological compensation in social contradictions; this combination of contraries; concerns divided loyalties and ideals in duty and discipline. But, it points the fallacy of idealism as against realism in morality. There is no reason in this morality, nor is there any objective or external reason; each has his own reason. Nor is there any demonic or divine reason. In the ends and means, pain or suffering is the driving force, expressed in desperation or passion. There is no reason in these complex sentiments or passions, except insofar as they involve self-justification and adaptation in social contradiction, for these are matters of emotion and not reason.

We see then, what is new in this philosophy, it is a new idea concerning morality. The old idea of morality was based on reason. We tried to find reasons for it. We believed or accepted for reasons given. Finding reasons for our behaviour is rationalisation, but acceptance

of old ideas is not adaptation to changing social conditions. We need to appreciate how much of our reason is rationalisation and to realise that these emotions are aspects of our social existence. These feelings, sentiments and passions are basic realities, and so moral matters are said to be existential.

H. H. PREECE.

REPENTANCE

Indeed, indeed, Repentance oft before
I swore—but was I sober when I swore?

And then, and then came Spring, and Rose in hand
My threadbare Penitence apieces tore.

I.

THAT gaunt, grim, legendary figure, John the Baptist, is reported to have stalked the wilderness crying: "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" Likewise, numerous prophets before and since cried: "Repent!" The Churches continuously so, till repentance has come to be regarded as a religious, and particularly Christian, emotion or attitude.

Yet repentance is not specifically Christian or religious. It is a common human feeling, allied to the fact of existence, one of many facets of consciousness. Repentance is peculiarly human. We find no sign of it in animals; cannot imagine any bird or beast or other creature repenting; but in people it is so general a reaction that one is tempted to utter the sweeping assertion that all who live repent something often, if not every day.

In its simplest form repentance seems inseparable from memory; the more uncomfortable and disturbing part of remembering.

"We look before and after,
And pine for what is not.

Our sincerest laughter

With some pain is fraught.

Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thought."

Not for nothing did the Greeks make forgetfulness one of the great gifts of the gods. Sleep has been sung by poets and welcomed by millions, not only because of its refreshing restfulness, but because it makes intermission between spells of awareness.

Repentance can be treated too seriously. Not always does it involve sorrow, grief, remorse, anguish, distress, or despair. Extreme case is suicide, where the self-immolated victim escapes from further recollection of what has passed by, making it impossible for anything to happen to him in future, his present act being his final one, irrevocable effacement, deliverance from gibbering memories mouthing at him as they do at all of us.

The majority never reach that tragic stage. Those who get near it suffer in silence. The milder forms of repentance express themselves in words. Commonest and vaguest statement begins: "If I could have my life over again", followed by generalisations how the speaker would order his life differently.

One wonders. He would have to be a different person to live a different life, with different character and temperament. Individuals liable to repentance are of introspective type. They ponder everything which happens to them; all they have done, examining alternatives, trying to decide what their lives would be had they chosen different courses of action.

Whatever we know of scientific determinism, in practice we subscribe to the theory of freewill, presuming

things we did offered at the time a choice, and we made the wrong one.

Utter fallacy, or illusion. The problem of determinism or freewill is too big for treatment here, but briefly the untrodden road appears better after we have taken the other. Few go so far as the man who said: "My life has consisted of being compelled to do things I dislike and being prevented doing things I desire."

II

Many would agree with him to a large extent. Freedom is tenuous and tentative; liberty more comparative than positive. So nearly everyone has regrets, varying in intensity to his whose remembrances are poignant, melancholy and inescapable, making him cry with the poet: Sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.

The reality is that repentance is an attempt to choose an alternative course, but too late to be effective.

The Moving Finger writes: and having writ,
Moves on; nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a word of it.

Oscar Wilde condemns repentance as denying the validity of one's experiences. The argument is sound. Presumably everything which happens in our lives is part of a mosaic, to look back on as a pattern or picture, though the two latter are often difficult to see with legibility or intelligibility.

Noticeable it is that when trouble came to Oscar Wilde he made an art form of his penitence, devoting a book to it, *De Profundis*. Unkind people say he wallowed in his repentance, made a pose of penitence. Perhaps that is better than keeping it secret, gnawing at the heart, the worm in the bud or canker in the rose, poisoning our attitude toward what is yet to happen.

Another aspect of repentance must be considered. Although finite the human mind is not fixed. Our mental processes are fluid. In commonplace terms we all claim the right to change our minds. Such a truism is this that law makes provision for it. Every contract contains clauses making it possible to end the agreement. Marriage vows are not held so rigidly immutable as formerly.

This changeability of opinion and ideas is the basis of democratic rule, which presupposes variation in the people's choice of government, so establishes methods for registering those changes without violence or bloodshed. Denial of this necessity for change is fascism or dictatorship, authoritarianism or totalitarianism. World-wide and historical experience makes one doubtful of its lasting capacity.

Emigration of families or groups of persons often happens for the declared purpose of cutting off old ways and making a fresh start in new surroundings. Repentance may occur on a large scale affecting masses of people as much as in the private cogitations of thinking or suffering individuals.

True it may be that too much repentance demoralises, perhaps paralysing the will for further effort, but conversely lack of repentance creates self-satisfaction which makes its victims little short of monsters of egotism. Repentance in moderation may be regarded as healthy corrective of complacency and other superior failings.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

A miracle is no miracle at second hand. . . Upon the whole, then, it appears that no testimony for any kind of miracle has ever amounted to a probability, much less to a proof.

HUME.

ACID DROPS

A wonderful chance for a miracle, alas, was thrown away by God Almighty the other week. A ten-year-old boy threw a burning cigarette into a holy crib at St. Joseph's, Preston, and caused damage to the tune of £347. We simply cannot understand how God could have allowed such damage in a crib designed specially to do him honour. If he had put the fire out with an angelic fireman, infidels would have been confounded, and even perhaps converted. Instead, the poor boy is being sent to a home to be medically examined. We are quite sure that if he had set fire to a Freethought bookshop instead he would have been duly honoured and hailed, and instead of being medically examined he would have received a Vatican medal. Poor boy!

Let us give credit where credit is due. The Rev. A. Lee, a witness at the Old Bailey, "affirmed," instead of taking the customary oath on the Bible. This is, however, a dangerous example to set, for after all, the Bible is part of the Reverend's stock-in-trade, and his action casts a reflection on the magical properties of the Holy Book. Or can it be that he has realised that people are no more likely to tell the truth whether swearing on the Bible, or the Koran, or with or without their hats on, than they are without all these magical aids?

It can be that the Rev. A. Lee has realised how undignified this Bible Oath swearing can be. The suggestion that a witness needs a bogey to frighten him into telling the truth is an insult. Incidentally, the "reverent" atmosphere which surrounds the taking of the oath in a magistrate's Court, has to be experienced to be believed. Witnesses repeat the words of oath in such a gabble that the last sentence sounds like "s'wop me bob."

Surely the gods on Olympus must have chuckled at the action of Mme Sainte, who entered the Church of St. Lambert, Paris, and at the shrine of St. Therese implored the intercession of the saint, and thrust a 100-franc note into the offertory box. Some time later, however, Mme. Sainte was arrested and charged with stealing the 100-franc note from the offertory box, and she replied in answer to the charge, "The saint never granted my favour so I took the money back." The magistrate was evidently not impressed with her logic, for he sentenced her to three months.

We can be reasonably certain that the Rev. Dr. G. McLeod, of the Iona Community, will not be welcomed with open arms by his professional colleagues if he insists on following his suggestion that they should bother "less about heaven, and a little more about men." He said that the Church should not confine itself to spiritualities, but with housing and social conditions. We certainly agree with him, but his assertions would have been regarded as heresy at one time. The more civilised Christianity becomes, the fainter the image of the "founder of Christianity," who is alleged to have said: "In my father's house there are many mansions." Most people would prefer the houses here and now!

Most people also are aware that the word "quiverful" used to refer to the large families clergymen often had in the palmy days of Victorianism, and it may come as a surprise to learn that there is grave anxiety in clerical circles at the very small families clergymen now seem to have. So much so indeed that the Archbishop of

Canterbury, the other day, "deplored the fact that the modern parsonage family is so small." Of course, Dr. Fisher knows perfectly well the difficulties raising a large family means for the average parson or curate—but, thank God, it is quite easy to advise *other* people to have a quiverful when one's own salary runs into thousands; only the Archbishop did not say how is a poorly paid servant of the Lord going to find a house for many children, domestic help for the harassed wife, and a salary sufficient to cover all needs. We can fancy some parsons grimly laughing at this kind of futile advice.

Catholics are having once again to "abstain" on Fridays—it was abolished during the war. This abstinence does not, we understand, mean fasting—it only means going without meat, a "hardship" most of us suffer from these days. In addition, Catholics have to "cast out Devils," and Christ Jesus says this can only be done "by prayer and fasting"; so the sheep now have also to spend one hour a week in prayer. No doubt they believe that wonderful things will follow, such as the complete conversion of England and Russia. It seems incredible but there it is; yet there are Rationalists who insist that in attacking this kind of thing we are flogging a dead horse.

All the same, some well-known Catholics are not afraid of letting out the truth sometimes. There is Father A. Andrew, for example. He has broadcast quite a lot, but he is under no delusion about this conversion business. At the Catholic Social Guild the other day, he declared that Catholic "converts numbered 10,000 last year. What was 12,000 or 14,000 out of a population of 48 millions? It is an incredibly slow rate of progress. And if that is the case with England, what about Russia with its 200 millions?"

It is not often that we are on the side of the angels, but "Ilico," in the "British Weekly," states that even if Spiritualism could ever prove survival after death, so that rational men and scientists would have to reconsider and reconstruct their theory of the universe, the result would provide new difficulties rather than help for the Christians for "the messages that purport to come through from 'the other side' in the Spiritualist annuals are for the most part so banal, earthly, obvious as to disquiet rather than to fortify our faith." A fitting comment. The Lord save us from our friends.

Dr. Wilson, Bishop of Chelmsford, predicts that within 25 years the Roman Church may be the largest numerically, and most influential, politically, of all the Christian communions. We are not disposed to give a time limit when that state of affairs will be an accomplished fact, but we agree with Dr. Wilson generally, particularly in regard to his comment on the political sphere. The slight set-back in Hungary is not likely to deter the Church. The comparative ambiguity of the Anglican attitude towards doctrines and ritual cannot possibly ensure the slavish obedience that the Catholic Church commands of its adherents.

Now that Banstead Urban District Council (Surrey) has given permission to Kingswood Cricket Club to play Sunday cricket after Church hours, we tremble to think of the awful consequences which may ensue if games are played *during* Church hours. Will all subsequent crime in Banstead be attributed to the fact that somebody made a century or took ten wickets? Or will a player scoring a duck attribute it to the machinations of the Lord's Day Observance Society?

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

J. QUINN and E. H. S.—Thanks, will appear in the near future.

H. FIDDIAN.—Thanks for good wishes. Help the "Freethinker" by passing on your copy to a likely reader.

J. W. FIRTH (S.A.).—Bound volume of 1948 "Freethinker" has been sent. Mr. Firth would be pleased to hear from local Saints. Write or phone: "Bornima," 3, Pine Tree Road, Claremont, Cape Town, South Africa. Phone 7.6336.

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Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

To keep the God industry flourishing, Christians go to no end of pains. For instance, if the "Canonical" Gospels fail to run home a Gospel truth, the "Apocryphal" Gospels are at once appealed to as containing, if not the whole of the truth, enough to be going on with. In the same way, "holy" relics are dragged in as if there was not the slightest possible doubt of their authenticity. A recent proof of this is the way "The Times," in one of its leaders, referred to the "Holy Thorn." The "holy" thorn tree we are told blooms at Christmas—and this no doubt proves, to pious Christians, that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God or God Almighty Himself.

It is true that "The Times" says that "there are few traditions in which folklore and scientific fact are more poetically blended" than in the legend of the Holy Thorn—but no doubt the writer would prefer people to believe that the "folklore" part was as true as the scientific. In any case, confirmation that the Holy Thorn did bloom "on the old Christmas Eve" immediately came from a "Herefordshire Farmer" and we are only surprised that "miracles" as well were not reported. The story of the "Crown of Thorns" is of course a thundering lie, for even the Catholic Encyclopedia has to admit that Jerome, who mentions the Cross, the Title, and the nails, in connection with the Crucifixion, says nothing whatever about the Crown of Thorns—or the Lance which pierced Jesus. His omission was dutifully repaired later, and even the C.E. sorrowfully has to admit that not all the 700 Thorns in existence now can be genuine.

Birmingham readers should note that Mr. T. M. Mosley, of Nottingham, will speak for the local N.S.S. Branch to-day (February 27) at 38, John Bright Street, Birmingham, on "The Challenge of Secularism." The secularism of a Secularist is quite different from the false clerical idea, and Christians should be advised of Mr. Mosley's visit and subject. The lecture begins at 7 p.m.

TWO PROTESTANTISMS

RATIONALISTS had cause to be disappointed when the passing of the Education Act (Northern Ireland) made compulsory the giving of religious instruction in all county and voluntary schools. Recent events have proved, however, that "the trend of modernism" cannot be kept back. In my review of the situation then, I stated that there were two kinds of Protestantism in Ulster, one suitable for educated people and their children, the other, the cult of the literal interpretation of the Bible, the proper religion for the "lower classes" of the elementary schools. Now there is open conflict between the two sects. Huge meetings have been held by the fundamentalists and the following resolution passed unanimously at a large gathering explains itself:—

"We strongly object to our children being taught that the Bible is an unreliable book, with contradictions, fables, and 'layers of folk-tales' in its pages, and we are resolved to carry on a campaign against this syllabus all over our Province till it is withdrawn."

On my desk as I write, are the December and January issues of a paper called "The Irish Evangelical," the official organ of the Fundamentalists; there is little else in these journals except this rupture with the Modernists, and their case is very well and cleverly stated. I cannot do better than to quote very freely from their own pages.

"Just over a month ago there was issued a 'Northern Ireland Grammar School Syllabus in Religious Instruction and Handbook for Teachers' (price 1s.). This syllabus, as its title shows, is for use in our secondary schools. Its title page informs us that the syllabus is 'prepared under the direction of a Conference representing the Church Boards of Education and the Secondary Teachers' Associations,' and is 'published by the Conference with the approval of the Joint Board of the Churches and with the assistance of grants from the Northern Ireland Local Education Authorities.' The Church Boards of Education referred to are the Church Boards of Education of the Church of Ireland, Presbyterian and Methodist Churches—the three largest Protestant bodies in Ulster.

"Unfortunately, it becomes immediately apparent that the Bible of this syllabus is not the Bible of the historic Christian Church. In the Bible of the historic Christian Church the books of Moses are the foundation of all the rest. That Moses wrote these five books was the practically universal view of Jews and Christians until recent times. But on page 21 of the syllabus there appears in large black type the heading: 'The Prophets influence the writing of the Law.' The reference is to the Eighth Century prophets who lived some 500 years after Moses. So the Law (or the first five books of the Bible) was not by Moses, according to the syllabus.

"Genesis 1 and 2 contradict each other (p. 67); there are contradictions in the account of the Flood (p. 71); 'the story of the forbidden fruit is an attempt at an answer' to the question why, in a world made by God, there is so much evil (p. 69); 'the serpent (in Gen. 3) can be taken as the symbol of whispers to do a forbidden thing' (p. 69); the story of Cain and Abel is regarded as a parable, it is not to be taken 'literally'; and the syllabus trots out the old question of the street corner interrupter, 'Who was his (Cain's) wife?'

An expression frequently used in the columns of the *Irish Evangelical* is that the syllabus "gives a boost" to other ideas. To condense matters, I quote a few of those

ideas which apparently are "given a boost" by the Modernists. Romanism, Unitarianism, Spiritism, and other cults, if not exactly approved of, are not condemned.

"This syllabus is a brazen attack on the Bible—on its infallible truth and divine authority. To its reference to Moses and the Garden of Eden we could produce parallels from Tom Paine's 'Age of Reason.'

"Communists call religion 'the opium of the people.' We would call the religion of this syllabus 'poison for young minds.'

"In the new syllabus to which reference is made on page one of this issue, one of the books put down as a class textbook is 'A Theology for Youth' by H. D. Gray. This book is already in use in one of the largest secondary schools in Belfast as a class textbook in religious instruction.

"In a chapter on 'The Faiths by which men live' the author deals with the world's great religions—Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam. He states:—

'All trails may lead to the mountain top. But all trails do not unfold the same wide horizons, all trails are not equally safe, and all trails are not equally direct. So it is with religions' (page 17).

"Is it so that Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Confucianism lead to the mountain top? Is it so that they differ from Christianity only in degree? If so, why send missionaries?"

"'A Bible Handbook' by Dean Alington is twice recommended as a class textbook in the new Syllabus in Religious Instruction for our Secondary Schools (pages 61 and 64). Dean Alington in this book makes the following statements:—

"'The whole story (of Jonah) is a parable' (p. 21).

"'It is wrong to suppose that the author of Genesis 3 believed himself to be writing literal history' (p. 23).

"'The great stories in the first part of the book of Daniel . . . do not profess to be true history. They are really like other works of fiction . . . The "lions" and the "fiery furnace" may never have existed in fact . . .' (p. 29).

"Dean Alington also says in this book that the Gospel writers were 'liable to error' (p. 33), that Paul sometimes 'indulged in arguments which seem to be extremely far-fetched' (p. 46), and that Paul gives no support to 'the literal view of the resurrection of the actual body which is buried' (p. 49).

"' . . . There was no actual man called Noah from whom the whole human race took its rise a second time. The Garden of Eden is not to be located in any actual part of the world, Mesopotamia or elsewhere, and there never was, sitting at its gates, an angel with a flaming sword. Cain was not an actual man who married a wife at a time when there were no other women on earth except his mother, nor was he an actual man who was afraid of being murdered when the only other man on earth was his father. There never was a serpent who spoke to a woman in words of human speech . . . These people about whom we read in the early chapters of Genesis are not people who ever had any real existence . . . These people in the beginning of our Bible are purely mythical people."

And so on and so forth. It is manifest that the scholars of the Grammar Schools are not taught the crude old blood and fire stuff and that in "orthodox" quarters there is deep resentment at this syllabus and all that it implies.

To the Rationalist there is a wealth of humour in the situation. On the one hand it is said that the Grammar

Schools are becoming the seed beds of Rationalism. It would seem as if Freethinkers had planned this wicked syllabus and all that it implies; in a sense we ought to approve of this form of "religious instruction." But on the other hand the Fundamentalists are now making a vigorous campaign for parents to exercise their legal right and withdraw their children from this religious teaching. Yet that is exactly what we, the Freethinkers, have been doing for some time. So now, when the Grammar School boys are being instructed in the relative importance of Buddhism, Jesusism and something-somewhereism, the little Atheists and the little Original Sinners can play football together in the playground.

J. EFFEL.

THE MINDSZENTY TRIAL

MR. F. A. RIDLEY'S article "Political Catholicism on Trial" ("The Freethinker," Sunday, February 6th) is a model of shortsightedness masquerading as rationalism.

One would think from his thesis that the Mindszenty Trial was merely a minor occurrence, completely isolated from the clash of great ideological forces to which it is actually so closely bound. Yet, since the War we have seen dozens of these outrageous events taking place in Europe. Milhailovitch, Mainu and Petkov were murdered by the Courts. Masaryk, I am firmly convinced, was murdered outside them because they could find no convenient excuse for getting him inside.

Everyone knows—even Mr. Ridley—long before the accused so much as reaches the Courtroom, precisely what the charges will be, what form the Trial will take, and what the final verdict and sentence will be. Mindszenty (I write on February 6) will be found guilty and sentenced either to life imprisonment or to death.

I do not like to accuse Mr. Ridley of using this horrible affair as an excuse for throwing brickbats at the Church, but if that is not what he has done, at any rate, it looks uncommonly like it.

I hold no brief for the Catholic charge that the Trial is part of an organised campaign against Christianity. There are far more important things in this world than either Communism or Christianity, and justice—which is foreign to both and, if we are to judge from Mr. Ridley—also to Freethought, is one of them.

This trial is not part of anti-clerical campaign. It is not a Communist attempt to avenge itself on Hungarian history. It does not matter why the Cardinal is on trial because if they could not get rid of him in this manner, they could always push him out of a second-floor window. What does matter is the manner in which he is being tried.

Nothing justifies, nothing ever can justify, injustice. Two wrongs may make the Left, but they can never make a right. Mr. Ridley neatly sidesteps this by remarking that he cannot comment on the technicalities of a case still before the courts, and there are a great many Communists in England who would like to have thought of that one!

This "trial"—may I be forgiven for such misuse of the English language—is taking place for the sole purpose of getting rid of a political opponent. That is all there is to it. No one denies the validity of Mr. Ridley's charges against Hungarian history—too few people any way know enough about it to challenge him—but when he speaks of Communism standing up to intolerance, this, of a surety, is the last straw in a haystack of literary and political nonsense.

It may well be foolish to be a Christian but it is not a crime. Mr. Ridley might well remember that nobody

is always right, and that Communism—which is, in the final analysis, only militant Christianity brought to its logical conclusion—might well be in the wrong.

FRANCIS I. GOULD.

V.D. FOR NOVICES

(The priest is speaking to his bishop.)

My lord, this is no gross deflection,
But after prayers of mystic union
With all the saints in blessed communion,
I must confess—astral infection."

OSWELL BLAKESTONE.

CORRESPONDENCE

"A CHRISTIAN HANGING"

Sir,—Some of the most enjoyable and informative articles that I have ever read are those in "The Freethinker" by Mr. C. G. L. DuCann. The outstanding one was, I think, the one "A Truly Religious Spirit," about his dog "Chicot," in "The Freethinker" of 6th February, 1944, which I have before me as I write. Having handed out that bouquet, herewith the other. In his article "On a Christian Hanging" (13th February), he says (in regard to the hanging of Margaret Allen)—"The wickedest Atheist cannot be so stupid as to think that there is a Christian case for murdering fellow-Christians, either in war or peace, if he knows anything about the Christian religion as explained in the Gospels." Further: "Imagine Jesus Christ deciding to hang anyone! There is no imagination about it! Christ sentenced and relegated to eternal torment all those who did not accept him! "Depart from me . . .!" Indeed the best answer to Mr. Du Cann's article is an incisive pamphlet which I recommend to all Freethinkers—"The Faults and Failings of Jesus Christ," published for the Secular Society Limited by the Pioneer Press"! The writer of the article—I am not mentioning his name!—strangely enough, however, omits to mention one of the most disgraceful things any son could ever say to his mother! "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" This just because she asked quite a natural question about the wine for the feast at Cana. But, apart from all personalities, the fact remains that the basic doctrinal teaching of Christianity is redemption through blood. In the pamphlet alluded to it is very rightly termed "the blood-creed," founded as it is not only on murder but murder by a process of slow torture! And Mr. Du Cann invokes it on behalf of abolition of hanging! Or is his article just a "log-pull"? Well, anyhow, I've "bought" it; but I forgive him for the sake of his delightful canine friend "Chicot"!—Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR HANSON.

"PILATUS"

Sir,—Why cannot Mr. Cutner, who can be so pleasant in private intercourse, controvert like a gentleman? To suggest that the late Dr. F. C. Conybeare, who was an Honorary Fellow of University College, Oxford, was ignorant of Latin is to play the fool, and to offer as an alternative suggestion that he was deliberately tricking his readers, for no discoverable purpose, since his main argument was quite independent of the "pilatus" thesis, is a mean libel on the dead. I am put by Mr. Cutner in the same category as Dr. Conybeare. Whether I am a controversial trickster I must leave my readers to judge; but since I attained third class honours in the Classical Tripos at Cambridge in 1902 and bear the title of B.A., I can hardly be ignorant of Latin. I have looked up Lewis and Short's Latin-English Dictionary, and discover that, though on the strength of two texts, the learned authors hold that "pilatus" can mean "armed with a javelin"; the other meaning given is "close-pressed, thick, dense." Dr. Conybeare questioned, as he had a right to do, the first meaning given. In *The Historical Christ*, he writes (p. 28): "Many lexicographers interpret it in Virgil in the sense of *packed together* or *dense*, and in most authors it bears the sense of *bald* or *despoiled*." I must confess to a slight carelessness in what I wrote in "*Jesus Not A Myth*" (p. 9), through following Dr. Conybeare without consulting a Latin dictionary. It is *pilatus* (with a long "i") that means "packed together" or "dense," and *pilatulus* (with a short "i") that means "bald" or "despoiled." The meaning "armed with a javelin" assigned to the first is open to debate. But, if Mr. Cutner is ready to indict Dr. Conybeare and myself for a small and irrelevant oversight, how shall we characterise his translation of "pilatus" as "javelin"?

Presumably he meant to write "armed with a javelin."—Yours, etc.,

A. D. HOWELL SMITH.

THE "PARTY LINE"

Sir,—In the course of over thirty years work for Free-thought, quite a lot of things have "occurred" to me that Mr. W. E. Nicholson may not suspect. It is, for example, no news to me that many Freethinkers, especially of the older generation, are content to stick in the well-worn rut ploughed by Bradlaugh sixty years ago. The world, however, does not stand still for them.

If they like to perch on their chosen pedestal and "watch it rain on the damned people," no one can stop them. They will pay the natural penalty by dying out and leaving no successors; for they do not and will not draw the young. As Dante said of the do-nothings of his day, "Let us not talk of them, but look, and pass!"—Yours, etc.,

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

OBITUARY

ANNE TURNER

Our very sincere sympathy goes out to Wilfred Turner, of Pinner, in the death of his wife, Anne Turner, at the early age of 37 years. Although neither were members of the N.S.S. the Free-thought views of both were sincere. The husband and one child now mourn the loss of a faithful wife and affectionate mother. The cremation took place at Golders Green Crematorium on February 17 where, before an assembly of sorrowing relatives and friends, the organist played some impressive music and a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary N.S.S.

R. H. R.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, March 1, 7 p.m.: "The West African Colonies," Mrs. M. CLARK.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W. 1).—Monday, February 28, 7 p.m.: "The Body-Mind Relationship." Course of three lectures by J. A. C. BROWN, M.B., Ch.B. (tickets 6s., R.P.A. members 4s.); first lecture, "Early Theories of Body-Mind Relationship."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Individual in the Social Welfare State," Mr. H. L. BEALES, M.A.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Towards New Social Values," Mr. A. JOINER.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAIMS and others.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "Science and Christianity," Mr. W. G. K. FORD, M.Sc.

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street (Room 13)).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Challenge of Secularism," Mr. T. M. MOSLEY (Nottingham).

Glasgow Secular Society (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Men Who Made Gods," Mrs. M. WHITEFIELD.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Shape of Things to Come," Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Coopers Hall, 12, Shaw Street, Liverpool, 6).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Message of Humanism," Mr. W. OWEN (Manchester Humanist Fellowship).

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Hands Off the Small Shopkeeper," Mr. T. LYNCH.

A SHAM FIGHT

AS an example of the question-begging which passes for religious discussion as sponsored by the Religious Education Department of the B.B.C., the recent Tuesday evening series of six half-hour discussions (?) between Professor H. A. Hodges and Vernon Mallinson, Esq., is well up to standard and strictly according to traditional B.B.C. policy.

Styled "Clearing the Ground" and sub-titled "Can Christianity satisfy the need of modern man for a faith to live by?" and with a "real live Professor" taking the affirmative and a "plain Mr." taking the negative, it appears well calculated to put off most believers from listening. It is not intended as a slight to Mr. Mallinson to suggest that the fight might have appeared less of a sham battle, had another professor been matched against Professor Hodges.

The first encounter between the two parties left at least one listener wondering when the studiously courteous and friendly disputants were really going to get down to "brass tacks" and discuss the subject matter as advertised. Even now, after the end of the so-called discussion, the ground seems to be no less encumbered than before the pleasant exchanges began. One understands that Professor Hodges and Mr. Mallinson are friendly colleagues on the staff of the same educational establishment and that whilst the Professor claims to be a Christian and lays claim to what are usually claimed by Christians as the purely Christian virtues, Mr. Mallinson disavows Christian beliefs, and whilst negating the positive claims of the Professor, does not appear to have clearly stated his own position.

Convinced by the trend of the discussion up to the present that Mr. Mallinson is tied to an approved script, which will permit the Christian apologist to win all the points and that the Christian may not be challenged by the non-Christian to define his terms, or to defend particular and stated beliefs, the writer of this article communicated with Mr. Mallinson, asking certain questions and offering certain suggestions. Mr. Mallinson's brief reply to this indicates that his answer will be given in the last discussion of the series. It is to be hoped that such answer will show whether Mr. Mallinson is a *willing*, or an *unwilling*, "stooge" of the B.B.C. Religious Education (Propaganda) Department.

Meanwhile, having now listened to the second exchange of courteous and refined English between the two contenders, one has to confess to the most utter bewilderment that a genuine unbeliever placed in the very enviable position of Mr. Mallinson should neglect so very many and glaring opportunities of piercing wide open the chinks in the believer's armour. Of one thing there can be little doubt; if the wordy warfare were really intended to be a battle of honestly held opinions, Mr. Mallinson's choice as the contender for the negative could very easily have been improved upon. Either the R.P.A. or the N.S.S. could have supplied on request a much more effective opponent for the believing Professor.

Whilst confessing himself a non-Christian believer, Mr. Mallinson has not as yet identified himself either as an Atheist, or as some other variety of non-Christian theist. He must surely be one, or the other. He has already allowed his opponent to get away handsomely with several cheap cracks about non-Christians in general and Atheists in particular, without coming back at him.

One wonders if, before the series is finished in favour

of the orthodox and official Christian traditional beliefs, the non-Christian exponent will be permitted to challenge the Professor to define a few of his terms. For example, what *is*, and what *is not* Christianity? What *is*, and what *is not* a Christian? In precisely what way and to precisely what extent, is a Christian different from, and/or superior to, a non-Christian? Where, when and how is a Christian as such any better than a non-Christian, as such? What are the particular and peculiar virtues, attributes, principles, morals and ethics which are peculiarly Christian and what are the vices which are non-Christian? Is there any slightest evidence that any individual is by reason of Christian belief any better as a member of society, any more useful as a citizen, any more efficient as a worker for the common good, any more as a parent, as a spouse, as a friend, any more industrious, any more law-abiding, any more generous, honest, truthful, reliable, moral or ethical than an unbeliever. Is there, on the other hand, any slightest evidence that non-Christians are in any sense or degree inferior in these respects to Christians? Can it be denied that most of the inmates of our prisons, reformatories, houses of correction and penal and even mental institutions, make claim to being Christian believers? Is it not the fact that all citizens in this so-called Christian land, who come into the hands of the representatives of the law, or who enter public institutions, are required to register under one religious denomination or another; and is it not also the fact, that all but a very insignificant minority do so as members, or followers, of one or other of the multifarious sects, cliques, factions and denominations of the Christian Church? The Professor might be challenged to show what proportion of our malefactors, law-breakers and undesirables are avowed unbelievers, freethinkers, atheists, or even agnostics.

When it can be shown by Professor Hodges, or any other religious apologist, that all or even most of the criminals or misfits in society are non-Christian, it may be seen wherein lies the title, if any, to the smugly complacent claims of the Christian believer, to superior virtue or worth. Until this can be demonstrated, the Christian might well practice the humility which the creed of his profession is supposed to teach.

If the disputants in this so-called discussion will each define from his own point of view what is Christianity, what is a Christian, what is a modern man, what is a faith to live by, and what is the nature and degree of any man's need for such a faith, the present discussion may prove of some value; it may clear the ground somewhat and it may, on the other hand, demonstrate that the two participants do not and cannot talk the same language.

The claim, stated and constantly implied by Christian apologists—mostly professional advocates—that only Christianity, whatever it is, or may be, can solve humanity's problems, or save civilisation, is belied by the record of the Christian Church, of Christian nations and Christian individuals. It is utterly unfounded and at best is grossly insulting to all other philosophies and cultures, religious or non-religious. Such intolerance has been throughout human history, and still is, a disruptive rather than a unifying influence.

Christianity has not and cannot have any monopoly of truth, or of virtue. It is merely one of many religions or philosophies which men have built up and like all the others has been prostituted by those to whom it is a more or less lucrative business.

H. DAY.