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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### The Church of England

THE recent Lambeth Conference at which were represented branches of the Anglican Church from all over the world, was an ecclesiastical event of considerable importance. For it undoubtedly marked a definite bid on the part of the Anglican Communion to get itself recognised as an international religious force on an equality with the Roman and Greek ("Orthodox") Churches. For at Lambeth there met bishops from all over the world.

Accordingly a glance may be usefully directed at the current position and at the eventual prospects of the Church of England by Law Established.

First, a glance at the social background of the Church.

The Church of England was the deliberate creation of the Tudor absolute Monarchy in the mid-sixteenth century.

The Tudors wanted a Church that would be orthodox in Catholic doctrine but ecclesiastically independent and separated from the then bitterly warring Churches upon the European Continent: the Church of Rome, and the Reformed (Protestant) Churches of Calvin and Luther, etc. In theological language, they wanted a Church that was schismatic in relation to Rome, but not heretical.

The Tudors, Henry VIII, Elizabeth, and their powerful ministers Thomas Cromwell and William Cecil, wanted such a Church for political reasons—and, on the whole, they got it. The Church of England has always been nationalistic, Erastian and subservient to the State. The Church of England has never known whether it is Catholic or Protestant, but it has always known that it is English.

One must, however, add that contemporary necessity, chiefly of a political nature eventually forced the English Church further to the theological Protestant "Left" than its founders had originally intended it to travel. To be sure, the whole English Reformation was mainly political in character rather than specifically religious.

Historically, the Anglican Church has had its various theological schools of thought, High, Low and Broad, uneasily yoked together. For, unlike Rome and Geneva, Canterbury has never succeeded in imposing a totalitarian discipline in matters of doctrine. In turn, these divisions have represented the dominant factions in the Anglican Church.

In general, High Anglicanism prevailed in the seventeenth century under the Stuarts, the Broad Church had its innings after the Whig Revolution of 1688 had finished off the "Divine Right of Kings." In the early nineteenth century the Low, Evangelical Churchmen were in their heyday. Whilst later in the century, it was the turn of the High Church Tractarians. To-day, it is Anglo-Catholicism which has its own peculiar features markedly distinct from the earlier High Church Schools that is in the ascendant.

Politically and socially, Anglicanism has also passed through successive stages: Tory in the seventeenth century; Whig in the eighteenth; Tory again—indeed, then actually defined as the "Tory Party at Prayer"—in the nineteenth. The politics of Anglicanism are to-day somewhat indeterminate. A Labour Archbishop, and even a Red Dean, were not exactly what the Royal founders of Anglicanism had in mind.

Socially, however, it would be true to state that Anglicanism has always been an "upper class" Church, which has always had more in common with the squire than with his tenants. Indeed, "God bless the squire and his relations, and keep us in our proper stations" was for long its effective social motto. When the eighteenth century Tory bishops expelled the great religious demagogue John Wesley, they lost a golden chance of winning over the masses, a chance which "Christian Socialism" despite all its efforts to democratise the Church of the English "gentlemen," has never yet made good.

To be effective, a National Church must be really representative of the nation. This, the Church of England actually was at its foundation, and indeed, for long after. Despite energetic Puritan minorities, it is probably true that prior to the Industrial Revolution at any rate, Anglicanism commanded the effective support of the population of a then still mainly rural England.

Since then, however, the popular support for Anglicanism has steadily deteriorated, and its present position as a really "national" Church can only be described as grotesque. In a total population, perhaps some ten per cent. attend any form of religious worship, half of whom are probably not Anglicans. Not a very impressive figure. Apart from its endowments and special Parliamentary representation in the House of Lords, there are absolutely no convincing reasons for describing the Church of such an infinitesimal minority as in any real sense a "national" Church.

How long is this farce likely to continue, and what is the future of Anglicanism likely to be? These two questions are really indivisible. For as long as the Church of the five per cent. continues to enjoy a privileged position upon the taxation of the non-Anglican 95 per cent., so long the Established Church may continue to defy logic—the English, in any case, have never been particularly notorious for their possession of that faculty.

However, it hardly seems likely that even our present intensely respectable and god-fearing politicians will put up with, or be allowed by a long-suffering electorate to put up indefinitely with the travesty of Democracy which is implied in the taxation of the 95 per cent. of the English people for the spiritual benefit of the other five, for in concrete terms, this is what the present set-up amounts to. The definitive disendowment and disestablishment of the "Church of England" within—well, we

will be cautious and say the present century, appears to be a safe wager.\*

What then? How then stands the future of Anglicanism? In all probability it would be safe to say, politics made it and politics will finally unmake it. And then?

The matter would appear to stand thus: a disestablished and disendowed Anglicanism would mean the breakdown of the uneasy theological compromise which has hitherto kept High, Low and Broad within the one fold. As things stand to-day this would presumably mean the definite victory of Anglo-Catholicism and the drastic expulsion of, certainly, the Modernists, and perhaps, the Evangelicals. Certainly, Bishop Barnes, Dr. Major, and the other modernists would get short shrift from an Anglo-Catholic ascendancy unchecked by the State.

The final position would probably be reunion with Rome—on Rome's terms. Incidentally, Rome's terms would probably not be too hard. It has long been known that the Vatican would like to re-establish itself at Canterbury and Oxford.

The future fortunes of a diminutive High Anglican sect are not likely to interest Freethinkers, or in the larger sense, History. It seems difficult to escape the conclusion that this is the last generation of the historic Church founded by the first "Defender of the Faith," Henry VIII. And since there is no reason to believe that so peculiarly English an institution could find permanent roots in foreign soil we think that the twentieth century will witness the final division and demise of the historic Church of England.

F. A. RIDLEY.

\*The "News Chronicle" of February 25 reports a demand on the part of Anglican Clergy in the Church Assembly for greater freedom for the Church of England on the specific ground of the probability of its ultimate disestablishment.

## "CHRISTIAN VIEW OF MARRIAGE"

ECCLESIASTICAL persons such as bishops and priests—and even judicial persons who should know better—are fond of talking eulogistically of what they term: "The Christian View of Marriage." They mean, of course, the Church view. This view regards marriage as an indissoluble contract (unlike all other contracts) lasting till the death of one of the parties.

Anything more vile and monstrous than this so-called Christian view can be, in certain circumstances, is hard to conceive.

For instance: one partner may be a blood-lusting maniac creature. No matter—let that marriage hold. Or a partner may be a rotting syphilitic. No matter—let that marriage hold. Or a partner may be barren, impotent or malformed. No matter—let that marriage hold. One or the other may be cruel, hateful, hostile, repellent, un congenial—it matters not to the Church which avowedly strives not to make us happy here, but only hereafter.

Such is the Church's view in its full strictness and naked wickedness.

This view refuses complete relief like divorce and barely tolerates the partial relief of physical separation. It perpetuates, and finds virtue in perpetuating the intolerable. It elevates marriage to the status of a "sacrament"—a sacred thing—even such a marriage as may be in truth, only legalised prostitution and the most infamous of human relationships.

Yet Jesus Christ never held marriage sacred. Quite the contrary in fact. In his time and country the Jewish

religion had not abolished polygamy, and divorce was easy. Indeed, throughout the Old Testament polygamy was rampant and recognised. The Book of Deuteronomy lays down that for mere dislike a Jewish husband could himself write a Bill of Divorcement and send off his wife to re-marry if she could. But adultery should be punished with death. (It was in accord with this law of Israel that the "woman taken in adultery" was being stoned when Jesus intervened: "Let him without sin cast the first stone.") And the prophet Ezra seems to have taken a modern Russian Soviet view by demanding divorce and separation on the ground of foreign nationality.

In fact, the Old Testament is utterly opposed to the English so-called Christian view.

Coming now to Jesus, so far as one can tell, he despised, or at best, deprecated and depreciated the marriage-tie. He himself had more sense than to espouse any of his woman-followers, neither the Magdalene nor the other Mary who sat at his feet. He uttered the caustic observation that there are no marriages in Heaven. (Indeed, how could it be Heaven if there were?)

It is true he attended the nuptials at Cana in Galilee and provided wine for the guests, but one can disapprove of the marriage-institution and yet attend a friend's wedding and stand drinks all round, I hope. Certainly he is reported as saying, "Whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder"—but this is not saying "Whom every parson or Registrar of Marriages for a fee has joined together let no other man put asunder." And if we may trust a dubious, possibly interpolated passage in certain gospels, he recognised putting away a man's wife for fornication in the Mosaic fashion.

At any rate, Jesus never established the absolute indissolubility of the marriage-contract.

Indeed, the views of Jesus on marriage are pitifully inadequate to the problem. They are fragmentary. It looks as if he never properly applied his mind—a fine penetrating mind—to the complexities, difficulties and ramifications of the subject. His partial outlook seems to have been circumscribed by the old Jewish law, by lack of interest on the subject, by lack of personal experience of the marital relationship, and by lack of knowledge of husbands and wives as such. If Jesus expressed an Omniscient view, all one can say is that his reporters in that pre-shorthand era did not get it down or else misreported him, or that some evangelistic editor mis-edited him later.

For generations the Christian Church, literally following Jesus and St. Paul, held marriage inferior to celibacy. Catholic priests, monks and nuns illustrate this view to-day. The laity being what the laity are, especially we moderns, cannot be expected to rise to such sublime heights as making ourselves "eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake." We must populate Heaven and provide the priests, monks and nuns of the future by means of legitimate offspring in marriage or illegitimate outside marriage—which of the methods does not matter, curiously enough, considering the fuss the Church makes about marriage. There are no bastards amongst the children of God and the heirs of Heaven.

What is the real truth about marriage as distinct from the modern so-called "Christian view of marriage"?

Surely it is that marriage is made for man and not man for marriage. Nature proclaims neither its lifelong character nor its indissolubility. On the contrary, nature decrees it not for the infant, nor the aged, but only for the mature in short, temporary phases. Nature is not monogamous. And fornication (on which marriage is based as the English Common Prayer-Book brutally

but sensibly proclaims) is neither a holy, nor an unholy, but a purely natural thing. All our troubles come from pretending that human coupling is either sacred or sinful when, in simple truth, it is neither.

That great Christian Englishman, John Milton, hotly and strenuously protested against the ecclesiastical so-called "Christian view of marriage." For him—and he had sharp personal experience—divorce was a "wholesome doctrine and discipline." Certainly divorce is a vital necessity in any civilised State as, slowly and painfully, English secular law, emancipating itself from ancient ecclesiastical law, has come to recognise in response to the agonised cries of the hellishly-married begging relief from their sufferings.

Yet still ecclesiastical and judicial personages talk of divorce as an evil when it may well be a blessing. They struggle (these good men) to protect the poor and the lower respectable middle-class from it by bullying and what they call "marriage guidance." But do they lift a finger to protect glamorous film-stars, well-born members of the House of Lords, rich company directors, and the moneyed classes in general from this social necessity? Not a bit of it. They would be ridiculed by their independent equals as fools and bigots if they dared to try.

Those who take a right and rational view of human marriage should combat the contrary view. Here true Christians and true Freethinkers can join together in resisting one phase of human enslavement by modern pharisaic ecclesiasticism masquerading as loyalty to Jesus Christ.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

### INCARNATE DEITIES IN INDIA AND ELSEWHERE

AMONG uncivilised peoples the pronounced differences which separate gods from men are scarcely imagined. This distinction which, to the modern cultured Theist, whose idea of the divinity is the outcome of a prolonged period of intellectual development is necessarily almost unthinkable to the savage, whose gods frequently manifest themselves in human form to their worshippers. So, as the tribal medicine man or sorcerer acquires greater ascendancy over his clients with his spells and enchantments, he or his successors, may become divine kings or even deities themselves.

Human gods or men permanently possessed by a divinity have been observed in every part of the world. Many instances have been noted in the Pacific, while incarnate gods were known to the heathen Germans, to the ancient Greeks and Egyptians, and in many parts of savage Africa. Also, there are divine rulers in Burma, Sumatra, Siam and other Eastern lands.

India, however, appears pre-eminent in its possession of human gods and nowhere has devotion been showered more generously on sacred persons of all ranks, from kings down to milkmen. As late as 1873, it seems, that among "the Todas, a pastoral people of the Neilgherry Hills of Southern India, the dairy is a sanctuary and the milkman who attends it has been described as a god." Everyone made obeisance to the milkman and no native save another milkman might molest him. He gave oracles to all who consulted him, for he spoke with the voice of divinity. But, Dr. W. H. R. Rivers, who has lived more recently with the Todas, assures us that the milkman is now no more than an inspired priest, although a tradition survives that one holy milkman is directly descended from a god.

From remote times, the Brahmin or priestly caste in India has exercised enormous sway and the ancient Hindu law book of Manu asserts that every Brahmin, learned or illiterate, is a deity. As Dr. Monier Williams in his "Religious Life and Thought in India" assures us, "the Brahmin's anger is as terrible as that of the gods. His blessing makes rich, his curse withers. Nay, more, he is himself practically worshipped as a god. . . . If the priest were to threaten to bring down the sun from the sky, or arrest it in its daily course in the heavens, no villager would doubt his ability to do so."

It is stated that a sect in Orissa worshipped Queen Victoria during her lifetime. There also existed a sect in the Punjab that adored a divinity they called Nikkal Sen who was no other than the famous British soldier, General Nicholson, who strove to suppress this amazing cult. But the more repressive his measures, the more his devotees adored him. In the "Golden Bough," Sir James Frazer testifies that: "At Benares a few years ago a celebrated deity was incarnate in the person of a Hindu gentleman who rejoiced in the euphonious name of Swami Bhaskaramandaji Saraswati, and looked uncommonly like the late Cardinal Manning, only more ingenuous. His eyes beamed with kindly human interest and he took what is described as an innocent pleasure in the divine honours paid him by his confiding worshippers."

The Lingayats are an Indian sect who discard Brahma and Vishnu, and worship Siva only of the Hindu Trinity. Yet even these Unitarians place their priests in a superior position to the great god Siva. At Poona, in Western India, the elephant-headed deity, Gumputti, is supposed to have appeared to a Brahmin in a dream and assured him that his divine spirit should dwell within the said Brahmin until his seventh generation, but the last of the direct life died out in 1810. The rich revenues of this cult, however, were too precious to relinquish so the priests "sought and found a holy vessel in whom the divine spirit of the master had revealed itself anew, and the revelation has been happily continued in an unbroken succession of vessels from that time to this."

One of these Indian gods was the son of a carpenter who suggests a striking resemblance to the second person in the Christian Trinity. In Bombay and Central India, maharajahs are, or were, worshipped as incarnations of the divine Krishna. One way of adoring this deity is to propel his images in swings, and this mode of worship has been transferred to the maharajahs or spiritual guides who are themselves venerated as gods. Everything associated with a sacred maharajah, even the dust on which he treads, the water in which his clothing has been cleansed or the leavings of his meals were eagerly devoured or swallowed by his suppliants. These saintly men graciously accept all offerings from the faithful, and Krishna is supposed to smile most approvingly on those most lavish in their gifts. Moreover, "the women are taught to believe that the greatest bliss for themselves and their families is to be attained by yielding themselves to the embraces of those beings in whom the divine nature mysteriously co-exists with the form and even the appetites of true humanity."

Our own divine faith, including its founder, furnishes instances of deified mortals. In the second century of our era, Montanus, a native of Phrygia, posed as a unification of the Holy Trinity. Again, from the earliest Christian centuries to the present day various sects have claimed that every fully initiated member of their cult became the incarnate Christ himself. Tertullian tells

us that in the second century the devotees of St. Columba adored him as an incarnation of Jesus while in the eighth century, Elipandus of Toledo and his adherents contended that they were as divine as Jesus Christ himself. Mutual adoration appears to have been customary among the Albigenses, and this custom is still observed by the Paulicians in Armenia and is, or was, customary with the Bogomiles in the Moscow district. Speaking of the Paulicians in Tsarist times, Dr. Mackenzie Wallace, the historian, avers that these Russian sectaries were called Christs. They led strictly puritanical lives, scorned all the amenities of a social character and weakened themselves by long fasting and wild religious dances. Matrimony was deemed a sinful concession to the flesh. "Under the excitement caused by their supposed holiness and inspiration, they call themselves not only teachers and prophets, but also 'Saviours,' 'Redeemers,' 'Christs,' 'Mothers of God.' Generally speaking, they call themselves simply Gods, and pray to each other as to real gods, and living Christs and Madonnas."

The Brethren and Sisters of the Free Spirit arose in the 13th century and taught that by long and earnest contemplation they attained complete assimilation with the divine creator and became as much part of the god-head as Christ. Judging from their recorded conduct, these curious sectaries must be classed as religious lunatics. Their extravagances appear almost incredible, but of their sincerity there can be no question and their conviction of their communion with the divine spirit they maintained to the death. "Sometimes," writes Frazer, "this mystic communion was accelerated by the Inquisition, and they expired in the flames, not merely with unclouded serenity, but with the most triumphant feelings of cheerfulness and joy."

About the same period, Wilhelmina, a crazy Bohemian woman, not only convinced herself that she was the incarnation of the Holy Ghost but also found numerous followers, and died in Milan in 1281, deeply mourned by her adherents. Her reputation for holiness was so great that she became the object of religious worship, both public and private.

As late even as 1830, a religious enthusiast in America announced himself as the Son of God and the Redeemer of Mankind who had returned to earth to recall scoffers, infidels and sinners to the stool of repentance. He declared that if these wicked people did not mend their manners within a prescribed period he would crush the world in ruins about their ears. Apparently, these astounding pretensions were taken seriously even by United States' citizens of high standing. But this imposture was soon exposed, and then it died away. Other cranks and impostors have since arisen and flourished for a time in several parts of our globe, all of which would appear to prove that there is no limit to human folly and credulity.

T. F. PALMER.

#### THERE WAS ONCE—

**A SCHOOLMASTER.** One of his pupils was a diligent and conscientious worker; another was lazy, cunning and dishonest.

When they were both leaving school to enter the world of business, the schoolmaster said to them, "In ten years time I want each of you to come back and tell me how you have progressed."

At the appointed time the two ex-pupils returned to the schoolmaster. The hard-working and conscientious scholar had become a Stockbroker's clerk. The other was—his Employer!

W. B. W.

## THE MARQUIS DE SADE

WILL you allow me the courtesy of your columns to dispel the extraordinary misconceptions of Mr. Murphy, who seems so outraged at your publication of my translation of de Sade's "Dialogue"?

Far from being a "heartless and incorrigible criminal," de Sade spent 27 years in 11 different prisons for his political opinions: arrested under Louis XVI, and imprisoned without charge by "lettre de cachet" through the malevolence of his wife's family, he was finally sent to the Bastille, where, in 1789, he extorted the revolutionary crowds from his cell to liberate the prisoners within. Freed in 1790 as a result of the revolution, he became prominent in the revolutionary movement and in 1793 was elected President of the famous "Section des Picques" (Robespierre's own Section), whence he led a determined fight against the Jacobins and their "terrorist" theories. Imprisoned in 1793 for moderantism, he was freed again on the fall of Robespierre. No sooner did Napoleon's counter-revolution establish him in power, than de Sade wrote and distributed a pamphlet attacking him violently, a copy of which de Sade sent personally to Napoleon. For this he was arrested in 1801, on the order of the First Consul, imprisoned and later transferred to the asylum at Charenton (a fate meted out to many of Napoleon's political opponents).

Aldous Huxley has said of de Sade: "Each age has its psychological revolutionaries. La Mettrie, Hume, Condillac, and finally the Marquis de Sade, latest and most sweeping of the 18th century de-bunkers. Perhaps, indeed, the ultimate and absolute revolutionary. But few have the courage to follow the revolutionary argument to de Sade's conclusions." If I may be permitted to quote one more contemporary thinker who has appreciated the importance of de Sade's work, J. B. S. Haldane has this to say of him in his introduction to Geoffrey Gorst's fine exposition of de Sade's revolutionary philosophy: "When the monster legend is dissipated, it becomes clear that de Sade was a very remarkable and original thinker. To-day we find the philosophical fathers of the French Revolution slightly ridiculous because they generally assumed that with the abolition of a particular set of abuses the golden age would return. De Sade saw a great deal further. He had no illusions about the natural goodness of man, but he believed that with complete economic and sexual equality human conditions could be greatly bettered. He anticipated the views of Malthus on population, and the tolerance of the Danish penal code as regards sexual behaviour. His ideas on sexual morality . . . are interesting because they are logical—less of a compromise with existing morality than those of Plato or More. . . . When human physiology is part of common knowledge, the physiology of sex will find its natural place in our intellectual equipment. . . . The time will then have come when de Sade's novels will be appropriate for the educated public, and it may well be that he will be regarded not as a purveyor of filth, but as a man who was greatly in advance of his age in the range of his interests . . . a very remarkable writer who was the victim both of himself and of his fellow men."

I wish I could support these views of de Sade with further extracts from his own writings, but I will content myself with suggesting that a man who could write "I want equality, I only preach that. Because, seeing on the one side tyranny and on the other side misery and humiliation, I desired neither to shine with the pride of

the rich nor to vegetate in the humility of the poor"—such a man has nothing to do with the "repulsive pervert" against whom Mr. Murphy fulminates.

SIMON WATSON TAYLOR.

### HE MADE THE STARS ALSO

SIR DAVID BREWSTER, in his "Life of Sir Isaac Newton," first published in 1831, informs us that in the century before the birth of that genius, the science of astronomy had advanced with the most rapid strides, and that the human mind had then emerged from the darkness of the middle ages, and, rejoicing in its new vigour, had zealously applied itself to the problems concerning the mechanism of the heavens. He adds that the labours of Hipparchus and Ptolemy had, indeed, furnished many important epochs and other valuable data, but that the cumbersome appendages of cycles and epicycles, with which those philosophers explained the stations and retrogradations of the planets, "and the vulgar prejudices which a false interpretation of Scripture had excited against a belief in the motion of the earth, rendered it difficult, even for great minds, to escape the trammels of authority, and appeal to the simplicity of nature."

Sir David's religious bias made him unable to see that religion, being based on mystery, must, of necessity, be an impediment to an appeal to the simplicity of nature. As for a false interpretation of Scripture, how should verses 16 and 17 of the first of Genesis be interpreted?

This cosmogony could not be reconciled with the Copernican system. The latter presented the sun as immovable in the centre of the system, with the earth annually revolving round it, between the orbits of Venus and Mars, producing by its rotation about its axis in 24 hours all the diurnal phenomena of the celestial sphere. The precession of the equinoxes was thus referred to a slight motion of the earth's axis, and the stations and retrogradation of the planets were the necessary consequence of their own motion, combined with that of the earth about the sun.

The writer of Genesis regards the heavens as a solid expanse, the vault of the earth. He has no conception of the nature of the celestial bodies, and evokes in the impious mind a vision of God going round the sky with a set of carpenter's tools, screwing the sun and moon each into an appropriate place, and then, merely as an afterthought, setting into the arch of the world certain tiny jewels, just to delight his little children, lovers of tinsel; for "he made the stars also."

The misinterpretation of Genesis arose when the latter's incompatibility with the Copernican system became generally manifest. The new astronomy could not be suppressed, so it was necessary to admit the Scriptures to be false, or reinterpret them. It is always difficult for religious people to decide that any of their beliefs about sacred things are false, so Genesis became reinterpreted, or rather, misinterpreted. One clings to the Bible, "though all else be taken." After Galileo, Genesis could not be held to be what it seemed before; a fact cogently expressed by Dean Inge, when he wrote that historic Christianity is dead, and that it died at the time of the establishment of the Copernican theory.

Criticism of the Ptolemaic system had been going on for a long time, a fact we can gather from the record that Alphonso X, sovereign of Castile, had, in the 13th century, remarked, that if the heavens were in fact constructed according to the said theory, he himself could have given the deity good advice. Sir David refers to this observation as being impious; and to the noble mind of the monarch, who had protected certain Moorish

astronomers, employed by him in the drawing up of astronomical tables. (Prescott mentions Alphonso's employment of learned Jews in the compilation of the tables.) Religious antagonism to the Copernican philosophy was, therefore, to be expected at its first formulation. According to Sir David this did not occur.

Copernicus, who was born in 1472, and commenced his career as a Doctor of Medicine, which profession he quitted to devote himself to astronomy, had, through the patronage of an uncle, become appointed a canon of the Chapter of Frauenberg, where, in an atmosphere of peace, and after thirty-six years of study, in which the labours of the observer, and the calculations of the mathematician, were combined with the sagacity of the philosopher, he succeeded in formulating his system. His views were supported by numerous astronomical observations; and in 1530 he brought to an end his immortal work on the "Revolutions of the Heavenly Bodies."

Sir David's explanation of the lack of immediate ecclesiastical opposition is, that it was avoided by the extraordinary prudence of Copernicus himself, which, according to the biographer, we cannot fail to commend; for, says he, Copernicus, aware of the prejudices, and even of the hostility, with which such a system would be received, had resolved neither to startle the one nor provoke the other. He allowed his opinions to circulate in the slow current of personal communication. The points of opposition which they presented to establish doctrines were gradually worn down, and they insinuated themselves into reception among the ecclesiastical circles by the very reluctance of their author to bring them into notice.

In the year 1536, Cardinal Schonberg, Bishop of Capua, and Gyse, Bishop of Culm, exerted all their influence to induce Copernicus to lay his system before the world, but he resisted their solicitations, and it was not until 1539 that he altered his resolution. A zealous disciple, George Rheticus, Professor of Mathematics at Wirtemberg, then prevailed upon his master to permit the publication of his system; and they devised a plan for giving it to the world without alarming the vigilance of the Church, or the prejudices of individuals. Under the disguise of a student of mathematics, Rheticus published in 1540 an account of the manuscript volume of Copernicus. This publication was received without any disapprobation, and its author was encouraged to reprint it at Basle, in 1541, with his own name. The success of these publications, and the flattering manner in which the new astronomy was received by several able writers, induced Copernicus to place his manuscript in the hands of his disciple. It was accordingly printed at the expense of Cardinal Schonberg, and appeared at Nuremberg in 1543, under the title, "On the Revolutions of the Celestial Bodies."

Its illustrious author did not, however, live to peruse it. A complete copy was handed to him on his dying day, and he touched it a few hours before he died. This great work was dedicated to the Holy Pontiff, in order, as Copernicus said, that the authority of the head of the Church might silence the calumnies of the individuals who had attacked his views from arguments drawn from religion. Thus introduced, the Copernican system met with no ecclesiastical opposition, and gradually made its way in spite of the ignorance and prejudices of the age.

Later on Galileo and Bruno were to experience that ecclesiastical opposition which even extraordinary prudence cannot prevent, when the findings of science are seen to be contrary to the system of ideas based on the animistic interpretation of nature.

J. G. LUPTON.

## ACID DROPS

At the Annual Synod of the Glasgow and Galloway Churches the charge was made that there are more "blacklegs" in the clerical profession than trade unionists. The fact that (misguided) people can, if refused at one Church, go to another to get baptised, married or buried, must be causing the clergy many headaches. Protestants must look with envy at the Roman Catholics' "closed shop." "Blacklegs" in the latter communion are no doubt excommunicated and cursed with bell, book, and candle, a rather difficult procedure in the "free" Churches.

"Sunday School has come back," states a headline in the "Daily Dispatch." Longton Central Hall is crowded every Sunday afternoon with 500 "kids." But in case readers may think that a religious revival is just around the corner, the bait to entice the "kids" to Sunday School is talkies, films, carpentry classes, dressmaking, leatherwork, camping, and even "religious comics" are supplied. These comics and "strips" are no doubt based on Biblical stories. We think Jonah swallowing the whale would make a good fairy story, and the serpent in the Garden of Eden balancing on his tail before God cursed him, would be another. We offer the idea free to the publishers of religious comics.

The "deplorable attitude" of so many people in Scotland in connection with Baptism was referred to by the Rev. J. Noel Lyth. He said that baptism is "superstitiously requested, casually administered, and lightly held," and suggests that the only solution would be a 50 years' interdict. Sheer bluff, of course. The Scotch Episcopalians would not dare. It would be seen that the Scots could get on quite well without baptism, or even religion, and what then would happen to Rev. Mr. Lyth and his professional colleagues? We can therefore put this latest pronouncement in the category of the usual parsonic prattle.

We have seen many press photos of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and his benign features make it difficult to suggest that he is either a simpleton or a "twister." But what, in the name of all that's holy, can we make of his utterance at St. Barnabas, Middlesbrough: "If more of us Church people knew *why* we were Church people . . . we could make our Church stronger." This seems very much like a case of the blind leading the blind, or perhaps Cantuar can see dimly with one eye. It will be a sad day for Dr. Fisher when people really understand what prompts them to go to Church.

A "discussion" on the merits of Christianity as a working Gospel for ordinary folk has just been concluded on the radio with the two valiant protagonists slapping each other gently on the back. The Christian, it is true, bemoaned the fact that he was in a small minority in his presentation of his case; and his opponent, who was supposed to be an "unbeliever," admitted that he also was in a minority. The B.B.C. has rarely produced two speakers guilty of sustaining for six debates such unmitigated rubbish as they poured out. An unbeliever who finds in "Christ" the most perfect teaching and example, and who talks about the purpose of God with the same enthusiasm as the believer was a rare and valuable find; but whether he will now carry conviction and bring similar "unbelievers" back to the fold is another matter. But what an exhibition of concentrated ignorance was this stupid discussion!

The Rev. W. G. Hargrave Thomas, Vicar of Needham Market, is a bold if naughty man, and he is coming in for some hard shoeks, if not from God, from his Bishop—or he ought to. He has the temerity to call a revealed Commandment—the Second—"fantastic." He thinks it is ridiculous for our "Heavenly Father" to call himself a "jealous" God ready to visit the iniquity of the fathers on to succeeding generations. "No decent earthly father would do so," he declares; and he is now fighting shy of the whole of the ten Commandments. Lucky that Free-thought has civilised his bosses, or he might have been stewing in boiling oil for his unbelief.

Dr. Bernard J. Kelly has just written a book entitled "The Armour of Christ," and we wondered what the Son of God, who is always, by Christians, called the Prince of Peace, was doing wearing armour? The armour is, however, "theological" armour, that is, no armour at all; just as faith, hope and charity are Christian "weapons," and "the Christian life," a "warfare." How these Christians love military terms—though we thought it was done once for all by "General Booth and his Salvation Army." Dr. Kelly is quite convinced that the saints in Heaven and the Virgin Mary "see what goes on in this world," and what can an Atheist say to such pathetic faith?

The Foreign Secretary, Mr. Ernest Bevin, tells us if the peace-loving nations get together and co-ordinate their defence there will be no war for hundreds of years. But the leading Christian nations are building up armaments, and talking of war as though another world conflict is just round the corner. Rearmament to ensure peace is so much nonsense. The threat to the world's peace to-day comes only from those countries with a mighty war machine. No threat is coming from the small nations with little armaments.

The Bishop of Chelmsford has sounded the tocsin to battle, for he is very worried at the strides made by the Catholics in this country. He urges that the Anglicans should consolidate their position and to realise "what the Anglican Communion stands for" (?). He adds that it may be distasteful for Anglicans to engage in religious controversy, but in view of the avalanche of Catholic tracts and pamphlets, it is the plain duty of Anglicans to refute them, otherwise the Catholics will swamp England. It was not until the end of a very long article in the "Church of England Newspaper" that the *raison d'être* of his effort to chill the blood of his readers was manifested; "The disgraceful poverty of the clergy," "The shortage of money which holds up efforts of advancing," and the suggestion that to make advance possible everyone should leave at least one per cent. of their estates to the Church. Well, now we know.

A death penalty and terms of imprisonment from three to twelve years was demanded by the prosecution at a court martial on eight persons near Madrid for trying to reorganise a banned Socialist Trade Union. We have not heard of any protest from our Government. Six negroes from New Jersey are awaiting execution after a conviction for murder which Paul Robeson describes as the most fantastic he has ever met; but again no protest from our Government. That is in striking contrast to the Government's concern in the Cardinal Mindszenty case. We wonder if the approaching General Election and Roman Catholic votes enter into the explanation.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

JAMES CORBETT.—Thanks for verses—too long for publication.  
R. MASON.—Thanks for cuttings—always useful.  
T. NIMMO.—Donation for "The Freethinker," 3s.  
BENVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of one guinea from Mr. H. A. Lupton.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and not to the Editor.

## SUGAR PLUMS

The Brains Trust staged by the Executive of the N.S.S. in the large Stratford Town Hall, February 24, thoroughly fulfilled its object. With two clergymen and two N.S.S. speakers as the "Brains," an impartial Question Master, and questions submitted by the audience; with no preliminary rehearsing or scrutiny of script, an open and honest forum resulted. There was a good audience, a ready flow of questions, which could not all be dealt with in spite of an extended session. The questions covered Disestablishment of the Church, Social Benefits from Unbelief, Science and Religion, Was a Non-Religious Citizen Inferior to a Religious One? and if so, in what way? Morals and Religion and our old friend, "The Design Argument," were not forgotten. The different angles of opinion expressed by the "Brains" were followed very keenly by the audience, and it was evident that many present were hearing for the first time Freethought opinions and principles expressed by Freethinkers. The "Brains" were represented by the Rev. V. L. Tucker-Harvey of Forest Gate, the Rev. D. S. Wallace Hadrill of Hornchurch, Mr. Archibald Robertson and Mr. R. H. Rosetti. The Question Master was Ald. Cannon of West Ham. The presence of two clergymen who ably put the Christian point of view, undoubtedly added to the attraction and success of the evening. Before the proceedings closed the General Secretary N.S.S. moved a vote of thanks to the two clergymen and to the Question Master who filled his office with marked and appreciated efficiency. Mr. Robertson seconded the vote which was heartily endorsed by the audience. The N.S.S. members present were well pleased with the evening's work and said their "good nights" on a note of "Let's have some more!"

On Thursday evening, March 17, Prof. V. Gordon Childe, D.Litt., B.Sc., F.B.A., etc., will lecture in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, W.C.1, on "The Evolution of Culture in the Light of Archaeology." The lecture commences at 7-30 p.m., admission is free, and questions are invited. The lecture is under the auspices of the National Secular Society.

Mr. W. Potter, of 68, Heygate Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, would like to hear from any local readers of "The Freethinker" willing to help revive the Southend Branch of the N.S.S. or carry on some Freethought activity. Not only in Southend-on-Sea, but all over the country there is Freethought work to be done. Silent and timid Freethinkers are more helpful to the enemy than to us.

## SUNDAY CINEMAS

THE other week I listened in to a broadcast debate taking place somewhere in Wales on the question of Sunday cinemas, and it proved more interesting than it might have done because the audience were asked to join and give their opinions. Sides seemed to be about equal, but, if I remember aright, the upshot was that there would be no Sunday cinemas in that particular town.

The main reasons—in fact, almost the only ones—for this opposition were that the increase in crime all over the country was due nearly entirely to the fact that people went to the cinemas rather than to church; and that God was very angry because young people in particular did not set aside the Sabbath—his Holy Day—altogether for prayer and repentance. The crime wave would disappear like magic if the country kept the Sabbath Day Holy just as they were commanded to in the Precious Word.

To this typical, pious, halderdash, the opposition made what I thought very feeble replies, the consensus of opinion being that the cinema kept young people off the streets and away from pubs on Sundays, and so was a good thing—just as if young people in general had no other choice. The idea that some of them might like a good walk or a cycle ride on a Sunday was not even hinted at. Moreover, the point that no one would be compelled to go to a cinema on the Sabbath day, even if it was open, was not stressed at all. And it was obvious that the reverent defenders of the Church really thought that they were the salt of the earth and that God Almighty would shower His Blessed Favours on them in the Glorious After Life.

One expects this sort of thing from Wales, where religion is still powerful, though modern education must be playing havoc with a good deal of the religious fervour for which that country was always famous. At one time even a discussion on cinema opening on Sundays would have been unthinkable, and the unco' guid—there are still some in Wales as well as in Scotland—were in complete possession of the field; nowadays, they have to appeal with reverent sobs and wet handkerchiefs, and they are never sure of the result. And in dozens of small towns and villages all over the country there is the same tale.

A correspondent recently sent me copies of some Jersey papers wherein one can see exactly the same battle going on—for human souls or the Devil's picture houses. A Mr. S. J. Smurthwaite, who is the President of the Jersey Free Church Council, was particularly active as the Lord's Champion. He and his brothers in Christ are horrified at some of the "trailers" which forecast what might be given on Sundays—"quite out of keeping with the sacred associations of the day." Sacred associations to whom? To Mr. Smurthwaite and his brethren in Christ? Well, no one wants to deprive them of their Holy Joy—but why do they want to interfere with those people who consider the same sacred associations a lot of ignorant piffle? Mr. Smurthwaite ought to find looking after his own soul a sufficient task to last him a lifetime and allow other people to look after theirs.

It is astonishing that these Free Church people should still imagine that the world has stood still. They talk as if one was endangering his immortal soul by playing cards, or going to the theatre, or cinema, or even by smoking. They are quite oblivious of such a science as Anthropology, which classes their ridiculous beliefs with those of primitive savages. When religion grips them, they are in a world of gods, ghosts and goblins, myths and miracles, demons and devils. The day which ancient worshippers dedicated to the Sun, has been adopted by Christians, and can no more claim to be the

Bible Sabbath Day than a Monday or a Friday. These Free Church people boast that their Rule of Faith is the Bible, and the Bible alone, yet overboard it goes when they start defending the Day of the Sun as their particular Sabbath. Any Seventh Day Adventist would make rings round a Free Church President in a discussion on the Sabbath Day.

In Jersey, all the same, films have not been banned on Sundays. What has happened is that, owing to the strong pressure of the local Stigginses, "A" films will not be shown—only "U" films. Gangster and sex plots will be barred.

There would be, however, a very rapid change in things if only visitors to Jersey could get together and roundly declare they would cease coming unless some ideas about cinemas were not immediately adopted. A couple of weeks without visitors would put the Free Churches "on the spot" once for all. And why not? There are plenty of splendid seaside towns all over England where one can enjoy a holiday and Sunday cinemas quite as much as among a gang of Free Churchers who are never so happy as when, in the interests of their stupid kind of "morality," they interfere with other people's pleasures.

Even the cinema proprietors could show a little more pluck, and protest against silly and outworn decisions. I have often wondered why one of them hasn't protested against churches opening just after tea, which was bound to interfere with his takings by keeping away potential customers! But that may mean advancing a little too quickly.

But really, there is no excuse for the sensible people of Jersey. If they wanted Sunday cinemas of the "A" type, could they not get together, insist on having them, and back up the cinema people to the utmost? Even a small minority should insist on being heard. "God helps people who help themselves" is a proverb which puts the whole case in a nutshell, and if properly analysed dispenses with the Almighty altogether. But that may be going too far with a small community such as that is in Jersey. It might well consist of people who believe in Christianity as fervently as the early Christians. They may still be in such a backward stage that they could not bear even a tiny dose of Freethought. It may take another century before Jersey reaches the intellectual stage arrived at by London fifty years ago.

H. CUTNER.

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE ATOM BOMB

ONE of the decisions taken at the Lambeth Conference of the Church of England was to set up a special commission to study the implications of the atom bomb. This body has now issued a report of 50,000 words on their findings.

Briefly stated, the Church of England comes down on the side of the manufacture and stock-piling of atom bombs, with a view to their eventual use in cases of "necessity" or in defence against "an unscrupulous aggressor" (p. 110).

This, of course, begs the whole question since what is necessity and what is aggression, scrupulous or unscrupulous, is ultimately a matter of interpretation, and the possessor of atom bombs will interpret them to his own way of thinking. To Russia, Finland was a threat to her security, to Germany the occupation of Norway was a necessity, to England intervention in Greece was vital while America had no difficulty in stigmatising Japan an unscrupulous aggressor.

The body set up by the Church consisted of 13 prelates, with two laymen commissioned to write appendices on military and scientific aspects of the question and a lawyer to advise on any legal points arising. One of the 13 prelates, namely, the Archdeacon of Stoke-on-Trent, submitted a Minority Report. We should, however, hesitate to compare the Venerable Archdeacon with that other Thirteenth Man who left the table of the Last Supper, since the Minority Report strikes us as both more humane and more consistently reasoned from the given premises than that of the other Twelve. The Report is in four chapters; the second chapter deals mainly with the morality of certain weapons and tactics, the third with the justifiability of war, while the first and last elaborate the Church's claim that all human affairs, moral and technical and political, should be subjected to their final arbitrament.

Though they remind their readers that "Christian thinkers" should be aware that the breakdown of civilisations has always been owing to man's disregard of his Almighty's orders, they invited the views of the lay historian, in the person of Dr. Toybee. The reference to secular history, however, is brief and they follow it with a 5,000-word dissertation on God's "wrath" and His "visitations" on His unfortunate subjects. To the humanist this makes rather horrible and repellent reading. One is forcibly reminded that that favourite weapon of priestcraft, the inculcation of fear, is wielded no less vigorously by Fisher of Canterbury and his brother prelates than it was by Torquemada and the Spanish Inquisition.

This is not the occasion to comment on the Christian ethics of God's vengeance and His love, however irreconcilable these two emotions appear to those not of their creed, except in so far as they enter into the argumentation of the pamphlet. The "visitations" of the Creator on his creations—"whom He loveth, He chasteneth"—are admitted to be thoroughgoing. But the love content in these wholesale destructions of mankind is demonstrated by the fact that He always leaves "a remnant that is saved" (p. 22). His judgments, however, "frequently involve indiscriminateness" (p. 24); in fact, they are "bound to be . . . in proportion as men are organised in large systems" (p. 24), an admission which seems a startling limitation of omnipotence and to put Him in the same class as Bomber Harris and the American exponents of atomic destruction.

The prelates ask themselves "how far inventors and technicians are to be held responsible for the misuse of knowledge" (p. 79) and, albeit with their customary vagueness, they seem to incline to cast stones at them, though their tame scientist, Sir George Thompson, specifically exonerates his colleagues; but then he is only a layman. The answer is simple. Scientists are *never* responsible, since they do not control society nor the use to which their discoveries are put; that is always the responsibility of society itself, expressed through its responsible executives. Any other view would condemn life insurance companies for murder and the inventor of chloroform for the acts of gangsters. It is deplorable that the priesthood should even consider such a view; yet they condemn the internal combustion engine as of doubtful benefit, because it breaks up "community life and makes men "callous" (p. 74). Yet without these means of rapid distribution of food and necessities the "community life" of the modern great concentrations of population would break down. And who, more than the Churches, has been against contraception and the limitation of population?



In the matter of whether war or means of waging war are justified, the Church of England indulges in its usual evasions, though it does assert that the right of retaliation is "automatic" (p. 71) against whatsoever brutalities. It "may be" that this or that weapon ought to be proscribed, but the pamphleteers do little more than refer back to historical instances. Popes and Emperors have, in times past, endeavoured to minimise the effects of warfare by putting a fiat on new weapons. Thus, firearms were prohibited in 1139 and again in 1215 by Popes of the suitable name of Innocent, "except against infidels" (p. 67). Here is a typical case of interpreting "necessity" and "unscrupulousness" to suit oneself, because it was the rising mercantile class who, on the one hand, were best able to afford these expensive novelties and on the other, were the chief backers of the Protestant heresies. The pamphleteers make no comment on this monstrous discrimination against infidels; one must wonder whether they contemplate the outlawing of atom bombs "except against Marxist atheists!"

The Report quotes Vitoria, an obscure cleric attached to the Court of Emperor Charles V, as saying that if the ills resulting from any particular war outweigh any possible good from it, then the war is unjust. Probably everyone will agree with this; but here again it becomes a matter of interpretation as to the precise content of good or evil in any war. Since the prelates regard, with reason, modern weapons as fiendish, any war now waged must bring "intolerable ills and heavy burdens" (p. 58), and the logical conclusion to be drawn from this reference to the medieval scholastic would seem to be uncompromising pacificism. And this, indeed, is the conclusion of the Venerable Archdeacon of Stoke-on-Trent, though expressed somewhat tentatively, in his *Minority Report*.

In their fourth chapter, *Christian Duty in a World of Power*, we are called upon to recoil before the claims of statesmen, economists, and even artists, to "an absolute sovereignty that would brook no parley with theology, philosophy and even ethics" (p. 77). This deplorable state of affairs has been described by Fisher of Canterbury as "the fragmentation of truth" (p. 78), a reference apparently to the destructiveness of atom bombs. Here, indeed, the Commission thunders forth the eternal verities of its creed. The study of "pure" science for its own sake is to be condemned; study must be directed to some end, for "no knowledge save the knowledge of God is its own justification" (p. 78). "Natural Science," we are warned, "cannot integrate all human knowledge because the abstractions with which it goes to work preclude a vision of the whole truth" (p. 81). Science has never made any such claim; do the Bishops? Then we are reproached with forgetting that "we are put into this world to use its resources for the attainment of our final end and in conformity with the law that directs us to that end, but not to treat it as if we owned it and might exploit it at our pleasure. There is the temptation to make the control of Nature an end in itself" (p. 79). And again, "the kind of development proper to man . . . [is] not evolution but a certain participation in the divine nature," whereby man "can find his beatitude in the enjoyment of his Creator, *who is also his final end*" (p. 82) (my italics).

Thus we perceive that the approach to man's problems is identical as between the Church of England and the Marxists, namely, *they both treat man as a means to their ends*. Yet it is precisely this charge that the Lambeth Conference in its Report (Article 25) brings against the Marxists. "Marxian Communism," they declare, "treats the individual as a means and not an

end." Where is the difference? If Communists regard the individual as an implement in the design of their new order, does not the Church regard man as a tool in the consummation of their God's glory? It is, in fact, only the Atheist who, in his denial of a Divine Architect or a Divine Purpose, considers man as an end in himself, and not the thing or a servant of something outside himself. For both these faiths man stands as a means to their "higher" ends.

The totalitarian claim over the spirit of man is reiterated throughout the Report. "Cultural, moral, spiritual, and also economic and political (activities), find their centre of cohesion in religion" (p. 14) is their all-embracing claim. "Politics . . . have been divorced from religion. In this sphere the attitude of Lutheranism in renouncing the sovereignty of God over politics was particularly calamitous" (p. 15) sounds more Catholic than Protestant. "Divine law imposes certain irremovable limitations upon the rights and powers of all political authority" (p. 72) is another sweeping claim over freedom and democracy.

It is without surprise, therefore, that we read that democracy is to be deprecated as "altogether too facile." Christianity "has been at home in so many different polities" that it is really better to have "a mixed polity in which the leaven of the Gospel is able to influence men's lives most effectively" (p. 9), about as brazen a bid for clerical despotism as we have heard. Even the extravagant demand that U.N.E.S.C.O. should be subjected to Christian faith and morals will cause no astonishment; that the views and feelings of millions of Atheists throughout the united nations should be ignored or offended is but to be expected from a Christian body; we mildly wonder, however, what the Chinese and Indians may have to say to the imposition of a faith in conflict with theirs. But the prelates "ask for more" and demand that the U.N. Charter should have been dedicated to their "Almighty God" and cap it with the palpable falsehood that this omission of Christian cachet signifies "the complete absence of any common standard." The Christian, if you please, must "insist upon the authority of the law . . . in the sense that all human power is unalterably subject to higher authority" (p. 98), and with this final totalitarian assumption of dominance, we will leave the subject of atom bombs and what the Church of England thinks about them.

P. C. KING.

### HUMANISTS SHOULD ORGANISE

RECENTLY I had the very real pleasure of meeting and talking with a fellow humanist, G. H. Williams, whose fine rational outlook on life was an intellectual delight. What a keen and eager discussion we had, trying to look at every single human problem without prejudice or bias.

We confronted—in imagination—the modern religious capitalists with the communism of their Jesus. We laughed bitterly yet sadly at these same religious capitalists and their savage and terrible destruction of precious foodstuffs—such as millions of oranges which are so vital to pregnant mothers and little children—while two-whole-thirds of the world's human beings live in a chronic state of want. We spoke of a fellow Canadian in British Columbia being sentenced to jail for refusing to kiss the Bible in court—in this, the middle of the twentieth century—even though legally he had the right to affirm. And we realised how a Canadian humanist organisation, if formed, could help him and others too intelligent to bow and scrape to a book of ancient muddled nonsense and lies and cruelties and obscenities. Oh.

how the intelligent minority have to serve the ignorant will of the majority! This informing of humanists of their legal, though to-day ignored, rights would be only one of the many functions of such an organisation, which could be in the very forefront of the struggle for intelligence.

We both agreed upon the mental loneliness to-day of people who try to look at human behaviour in our time realistically and honestly. As Marjorie Bowen once put it so well in a letter to me, speaking of rationalism: "It is a lonely path." We agreed upon the very real encouragement and stimulation of friendships with fellow humanists of similar mental outlook on life.

As I had contacted G. H. Williams through my recent notice in "The Literary Guide" requesting such Toronto contacts, this made me all the keener about a simple plan I recently formulated for humanists and their organisations.

When we realise that there is now no means whereby readers of "The Freethinker" may know of fellow readers right in their own locality, unless of course they live in one of the fortunate cities with a humanist organisation already existing, it becomes clear that this isolation prevents such refreshing friendly social contact as I've just been writing about. And let it be clearly realised and frankly admitted that the humanist is a person unique in our society to-day. A humanist individual, alone, isolated in our contemporary society, may gradually, despite the obvious benefits of humanism and because of the terrific and universal orthodox pressures to-day, slip back into orthodoxy themselves, himself or herself. But such humanists when members of friendly humanist groups, gather their own strength. Further, such informal contacts often form the embryonic nucleus for large official organisations.

My own experience in Regina out on Canada's vast prairies may show up this situation in all its present inadequacy. Just as I was leaving that city I received, as a result of my notice in "The Literary Guide" about going to Jamaica in the West Indies, a telephone call from the leader of the Regina humanists. Here I'd been in this city for nearly a year and didn't know a thing about their existence; I would have been delighted to attend their meetings. For their part, they were interested to learn of my own frequent humanist articles in "The Freethinker" here in America.

My suggestion is that one reader in each city or town—not yet organised—could volunteer to receive telephone calls from other readers interested in forming a local group and could put each new reader in touch with all the others. Such key readers' names and addresses would be published, perhaps a few each issue, here in "The Freethinker."

If we humanists don't promote our own organisation through our own humanist journals, who will? The orthodox press and periodicals? Again, such organisation would in turn introduce new members as new readers for our journals.

Recalling my meeting with G. H. Williams, I am firmly convinced that such a simple plan as now suggested can bring rich rewards to humanists.

GORDON CAULFIELD.

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## THE ROMAN CATHOLIC STRUGGLE FOR WORLD-EMPIRE

IN the vast output of books nowadays the ordinary reader, anxious to familiarise himself with a particular subject, is often at a loss to know what books are the most likely to help him. This is especially so in relation to books on religion, in the choice of which a reader has always to be on his guard against bias—the author's bias, the publisher's bias, the reviewer's bias, and so on. With the re-emergence of great non-Christian countries, from their own dark ages of imperialist subjugation, to political independence, Christianity can no longer so monopolise the minds of Europeans and Americans as to evoke horror at the thought (which it once did) that the great majority of the world's two thousand million inhabitants are still, in the twentieth century, outside the fold of the Christian Churches.

In Avro Manhattan's "The Catholic Church against the Twentieth Century" (Watts & Co.), we have in 450 pages an excellent account of the foremost and most widespread Christian Church in action over the last fifty years or so. The ramifications of the Roman Catholic Church throughout most of the world and its tremendous influence in all spheres of life—economic, social and political—are very effectively dealt with. The only serious omission is Eire—that West European stronghold of papal authoritarianism, which is certain to play a significant role in the final stages of the struggle for and against a Roman Catholic world-empire.

Captivating reviews might easily be written on the author's various chapters dealing with Catholic activities in almost any part of the world. Because of space limitations, however, we will here confine ourselves to his survey of Catholic activities on the North American continent—this part of the subject being of very special interest and significance to-day.

More and more as Roman Catholicism loses ground in Europe it looks to the Western Hemisphere for a new lease of life. The more settled social conditions there have immensely facilitated its activities, and the influx of refugees from Europe has provided it with priceless co-operative services—so much so, indeed, that it has come to be regarded, even among many members of the other Christian denominations, as the greatest stabilising force in the world to-day. This fact to some extent accounts for the surprising number of new adherents to its ranks—notably, as one would expect, from the propertied classes.

The author shows how the increase in the numerical strength of American Catholics during the last eighty years or more has been mainly due to immigration, the result of which is that to-day the United States' population includes something like 25 million Catholics. There are now, he asserts, no less than 11,000 educational establishments owned, controlled and supervised by the Catholic Church. The intense activity of this Church may be gauged from his statement that the average number of Americans recruited yearly into its fold is about 85,000, and that during the years of the Second World War the Church gained a total of 513,970 converts.

There is an illuminating account given of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (N.C.W.C.)—the organisation which, under the American Catholic Hierarchy, directs the activities of other Catholic bodies throughout the States. Among these activities during the last

twenty years figures the attempt, by the tactic of preaching racial equality, to win over the negro minority (some 13 million, or one-tenth of the American population) to their Faith. In this attempt they are helped by the hostility to the negroes manifested by Protestant groups. With the weight of a negro vote behind them, the American Catholics may well improve their prospects of (some day) having a Father Coughlin (or possibly even a Jesuit) elected President of the United States.

Of the 250 or so different religious denominations in the United States the Catholic Church of America is the only one which forms a solid bloc the entire force of which is directed to transforming America into a Catholic country. On the other hand, as the author shows, the opposition to the present formidable Catholic expansionist movement in America is represented by the other denominations with all their cultural, social and political activities. These denominations, allergic to the danger threatening them, may be expected at the right moment to unite in self-defence. Unfortunately, it cannot be said that Socialism in America is yet strong enough to lend much weight to the resistance.

This book is well worth a busy person's attention. It is to be hoped that in any later edition the author will include a chapter on Bire, as that country, which (adapting a well-worn phrase from Anglo-Portuguese history) one might describe as the Vatican's "Oldest Ally," occupies a position in the Roman Catholic world which is in some respects unique.

JACQUES YESPMEDO.

CORRESPONDENCE

LYSENKO AND SCIENCE

SIR,—I have to thank Mr. Thornewell for his reply to my note on "Lysenko and Science" and further, for his courteous and friendly attitude.

I am not, however, reassured. I did not elaborate a mass of detail to support my query and I have no intention of doing so now.

I credit Freethinkers with the ability to assess the rights and wrongs of this "Lysenko" business without such elaboration. T. D. Lysenko's lecture and report to the "Lenin Academy of Agricultural Sciences" is, in English translation, published by Birch Books Limited, at 2s. 6d. It has received the support of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in the U.S.S.R. and it speaks for itself.

Mr. Thornewell has read this wretched screed and, to my amazement, he can see nothing wrong with it!

I say again: It is unthinkable that such a hotch-potch of Communist jargon and pseudo-science could be dictated to a scientific society of standing in the West.

It may be said, I suppose, that the Russians are entitled to do as they wish in their own country, even to the extent of holding scientists and scientific thought up to ridicule.

There are one or two minor points raised by Mr. Thornewell. There are, of course, a few cranks in the scientific world who still uphold the use-inheritance theory of Lamarck, and I believe there are still a number of mental fossils, "scientists," who oppose the theory of evolution; but Mr. Thornewell should know better than this.

Mr. Thornewell is also too cavalier in his reference to the standing, disappearance and death of Vavilov.

Vavilov was a botanist of international reputation, and surely it is a matter for grave concern that these circumstances are so obscure?

Mr. Thornewell is even naive when he says that Lysenko could not be ignorant of genetics because he was trained under Vavilov.

The same thing could be said of any gardener or garden labourer at Kew, but something more is necessary in order for them to rank with Sir William Salisbury!

With the closing of the schools of genetic research in Russia, and the dictatorship of this mountebank Lysenko, we are presented with the gravest possible illustration of the setting back of the clock of civilised thought and freedom of thought and investigation on the part of scientists. Finally, the issue remaining is abundantly clear; that in all possible

societies that have reached some semblance of civilisation Freethinkers will always have their work to do—"The price of freedom is eternal vigilance."

It appears to be pretty clear that the Freethought issue is not entirely a religious one; to be an Atheist is not synonymous with being a Freethinker. That, being the title of our journal, the issue by this time should be abundantly clear.—Yours, etc., ROBERT F. TURNEY.

SPIRITUALISM

SIR,—Mr. Wood can afford to laugh at those "earth worms." His flashes of wit and enlightenment will be a cleansing agent long after "they" have enjoyed him. (Memo: Have a bottle of relish placed in my coffin.)

But, as Mr. Joad keeps saying, what piffle the spirits talk. The day of "operation cross-roads" they, through Ronald Strong, babbled the usual trumpery of trinkets and such!

The future may bring mighty enlightenments but, of course, the point is—we have enough materialistic light to enable us to put this world in decent order so as to obviate future generations stumbling as ours has done. "Let me help and the worms are welcome," is our attitude. Others, Christians and such, are of a far lower order than those jolly worms.—Yours, etc., H. FIDDIAN.

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

SIR,—Referring to the article in a recent "Freethinker," I consider that when a man dies he is dead, and I do not feel disposed to waste any time in pursuit of the life-force "when released from its physical container." There is a similarity in the soul of the Christian being released from its vile body at death.

When a watch stops ticking I do not go about inquiring where the "tick" has gone to.—Yours, etc.,

FREDERICK C. WYKES.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 8, 7 p.m.: "The Church of Rome—Its Significance and Its Danger," Mr. A. D. HOWELL-SMITH.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W.1).—Monday, March 7, 7 p.m.: "The Body Mind Relationship," 2nd Lecture: "The Central and Autonomic Nervous System," J. A. C. BROWN, M.B., Ch.B.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Life Force or Death Instinct," Prof. J. C. FLUGEL, D.Sc.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "The Recipe for a Long Life," Dr. E. A. WILSON.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

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

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-15 p.m.: "Superstition," Mr. J. M. THORSTON, B.Sc.

Glasgow Secular Society (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Inherent Anti-Social Character of Christianity," Miss E. MILLARD, M.A.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: 68th Anniversary.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Royal Romances," Mr. BERNARD McQUELLIN.

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