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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Freethought and the Modern World

It is inevitable in a movement concerned with the dissemination of ideas that there should be an absence of that sensationalism which usually commands an attention out of all proportion to its worth. The historian of politics has most often to record a series of rapid advance or equally rapid retrogressions, of scenes of passion and enthusiasm which appeal to the sporting instinct of average humanity. The history of Freethought usually has, on the other hand, to note the gradual growth of ideas that appear to be independent of local circumstance, and which in any case appeals to a type of mind that can scarcely be classed as normal. Freethought is not, of course, quite independent of the circumstances of the moment, but it makes no appeal to the passions and prejudices of the moment and in the main rests for support upon the wider and more permanent features of human development. But this is an aspect of things that does not appeal to men and women in the mass. The promise of an object that may be immediately obtained—shorter hours of labour, better wages, and so forth, appeals to many people. It is only the few who are able to recognise that orderly and sustained progress is not to be maintained by a system of hand to mouth legislation, but by the firm grasp of principles clearly conceived and intelligently applied.

Church, chapel or political parties may be judged to a considerable extent. If the Freethought type of mind ought to be regarded as abnormal, then the type of mind that can brave social ostracism is still more so. It is certain that at no time have Freethinkers been more numerous, nor have religious beliefs ever had less hold on people than at present. Religious defences nowadays concede almost as much as they conserve, and seldom fail to awaken doubt as to the value of the retained residuum. Religions become liberal as money grubbers become generous—when they are on their death beds.

It is idle, too, to test Freethought by strength of organisation. Personally, I have never been able to agree with those who aimed at creating what was little better than the Church, with other names and services. If Freethought means something worth striving for, it is something much wider than can ever be contained in any sect, however large it may be. And the advantage is certainly slight if we are to convert a man from being a sectarian from one side to being a sectarian on the other. Even mere organisation is a poor test of the strength of Freethought. For a strong organisation depends, in the main, upon two things, upon pressure from without or the development of sectarian feelings. The latter, as I have said, we do not want, and the former Christians no longer supply us with help.

Persecution, it is true, is not dead, but it is no longer of that open kind which drives people together for self-protection. It effects its purpose by underhand

methods, and so does its work with the least possible injury to those for whom it operates. The only satisfactory test by which to estimate the growth of Freethought is to note the extent to which it influences life. Here the evidence is clear and decisive. The numerous attempts of the Christian world so to re-mould religious beliefs as to make them more palatable to the modern taste are all indications of the influence of Freethought advocacy. Christian preachers are usually content with their teachings so long as the congregation are satisfied. It is only when these begin to grow restive that concessions are made, and one may be sure that ultimately a powerful cause of this restiveness is the work of those who have always striven to keep the results of modern criticism well before the people.

Quite as important is the influence of Freethought on social matters. Short-sighted critics of Freethought, who pride themselves on possessing a practical mind—usually most unpractical people—often express the desire that militant Freethinkers should devote themselves to more useful social work than that in which they are engaged. Deeper study would show that the influence of Freethought on social and political life is great. It is only stating a simple truth to say that not only have most important social movements taken their rise among Freethinkers, but also that some of the most strenuous workers in the advanced social and political field are still of that class. As Freethinkers, our share of the work is very largely of a liberative character. Many thousands of people pass through our hands or come under our influence, year after year, and who thereby become recruits to various social and political organisations. They come to us with their minds full of religious beliefs, and their energies absorbed in its study or propaganda. By and by their minds are rid of their load of useless lumber to more useful labour.

The Freethinker who has the proper sense of historic proportion will not look to either large membership or powerful organisations as a test of success. Instead, he will look for evidence, when he requires it, to that steady broadening of thought and deepening of human interests, that, in spite of many drawbacks, steadily proceed. And, from this point of view, he will gain the conviction that Freethought is one of the formative forces of the age, and this does, in fact, give to it its chief strength. If Freethought depended upon any one man, or even on a combination of men, or if it depended upon temporary political conditions, its destruction would be an easy matter. The Roman Catholic Church conquers an opponent because it has known how to fight, but in fighting Freethought, the Churches are struggling with an enemy whose great ally is time itself.

The advance of Freethought is, therefore, certain that its ultimate triumph is secure, and this very conviction ought to move us to renewed action. Whether an individual Freethinker here or there does his share of the fighting or not, the work will go on, but it will go on

the better for the hearty co-operation of each individual. Abstention does not stop the work, it only throws a heavier burden on each. And let us make no mistake about this—every Freethinker who does not fight is playing the part of a friend to the Churches. He is benefiting the enemy by withdrawing a soldier from the opposing army. Moreover, a more general and a more aroused co-operation among Freethinkers would break down, as nothing else could, the social arrangement that presses heavily on so many. For the game of ostracism can only be practised by a large majority against a feeble minority.

Now I do not believe that Freethinkers in this country are a feeble minority. They are growing more numerous day by day. They are apparently small because of the way in which people keep their religious opinions to themselves, as though the only people with a right to express themselves openly are those who mistake a prejudice for an opinion, and an ancient superstition for knowledge. If anything like a genuine census of opinions in this country could be taken, the result might be a great surprise all round.

And, therefore, our immediate need is not so much more Freethinkers as Freethinkers who shall adequately realise that opinions are only of value so long as they find expression, and are thus able to play their part as determining agencies in the progress of the race. An opinion unexpressed is only so much mental lumber; expressed, it becomes a dynamic force that multiplies itself indefinitely. One cannot always be certain that one's opinions are sound, but one may always rest assured that to act as though they were something to be hidden or ashamed of is to be guilty of disloyalty to all concerned.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## THE ELIZABETHAN SETTLEMENT OF RELIGION

THREE prominent features distinguish the period of Queen Elizabeth. These are the development and supremacy of England as a maritime Power; the extraordinary display of literary genius without parallel since the palmiest era of ancient Athens, which was repeated on a minor scale some two centuries later, and the third, the ecclesiastical settlement which has influenced our religious history ever since.

Under Elizabeth the Church was firmly placed under the dominion of the Crown. The burnings of heretics, as such, which disgraced the previous reign of Mary ceased; the ferocious heresy Acts restored by the Catholic Mary were repealed, and Elizabeth became the Supreme Governor of the Church. In the opening years of her reign, outward conformity to the official faith was demanded by the authorities in the interest of peace, as the community was still divided in opinion. Prof. Maitland in his *Reformation Settlement* and Arthur D. Innes in his *England under the Tudors*, with other standard authorities, substantially agree that "the State, thus sanctioned such institutions as, under a reasonable liberty of interpretation, might be accepted without a severe strain of conscience by persons holding opinions of considerable diversity; so that conformity should be possible to the great bulk of the nation, including many who might not in theory admit the right of the State to a voice in the matter at all."

Thus, Elizabeth's advisers deliberately aimed at compromise between the discordant sects who were chiefly divided by those who desired to retain the Mass, while others detested the Mass as Popish idolatry and favoured

the Calvinism of Geneva. But, if the secular Power denied the claims of Rome, it was almost as fully opposed to the autocratic demands of John Knox. Its task therefore was the creation of some form of communion which embraced both parties. None the less, the system established by the State, with its episcopacy and church ceremonial, led, as Elizabeth's reign proceeded, to pronounced differences of opinion; the conservative party supporting the episcopal system, while the growing Puritan body strenuously opposed it.

The Queen's interest in religion, such as it was inclined towards ceremonial, whilst Burghley and Walsingham favoured the simpler worship of the Puritans. Still, in the earlier years of her reign, when it was imperative to lessen every reason for discontent, it was advisable to allow the greatest possible latitude in religious observances. It was essential that all adherents of the reformed faith should present an undivided front to the Catholic community who would have eagerly welcomed the restoration of the ancient cult, and it was from the Papists alone that any open hostility to Elizabeth was to be feared.

Later, in 1570, when the Pope excommunicated the Queen, with the subsequent plots against her life, there was danger from disaffected Catholics and their Jesuit inspirers which became only too plain. Still, these conspiracies, the Catholic insurrection in the North of England, the horror aroused by the massacre of St. Bartholemew in Paris, and the still later overthrow of the Spanish Armada, despite its blessing by the Pope, all conspired to strengthen the hands of the Puritan and sever England—let us hope for ever—from the tentacles of the Vatican.

So long as the Protestant sects squabbled over vestments, the Royal Council attached little importance to the quarrel. But when the conflict between the supporters of Church Government and the advocates of a Presbyterian establishment became acute, the authorities intervened in the interests of order. Then, to fish in troubled waters, the Romanist missionaries, Campion and Parsons, arrived on the scene. So to placate the Catholics, the State stressed the Catholic aspects of its Church, while heavy penalties were imposed on those who recognised Papal supremacy.

At the same time it became logically impossible for the Puritans to abandon their loyalty to the throne, although Episcopalians suggested that the measures directed against disloyal Romanists should be extended to the Puritans themselves.

With the Act of Supremacy of 1559, a Commission was appointed to enforce the observance of the law relating to matters ecclesiastical. In 1583, the Court of High Commission employed methods which Burghley, Elizabeth's chief minister, characterised as too inquisitorial. The Puritans bitterly resented these harsh measures as tyrannical and unjust, and when the Martin Marprelate tracts appeared in 1589, the State Church was denounced in language so violent that a marked reaction resulted. The Puritan onslaught on the one hand, and the resentment of ultra-Catholics on the other occasioned severe enactments against aggressive Romanists, while many Puritan divines and others sought safety in the Netherlands.

High Church doctrines were proclaimed by Bancroft, who was later Archbishop, while the constitutional case for Church Government was presented by the latitudinarian prelate, Hooker, in his classic, *Ecclesiastical Polity*. But these occurrences were the mere antecedents of the later Puritan resistance which led to the overthrow of the Stuart monarchy in the succeeding century.

It is sometimes assumed that the persecution, both of Catholic and Puritan at this time, was really the result of religious intolerance, and that its political justification was a mere mask for theological animus.

Innes, however, contends that there is a wide distinction between the persecutions of Mary and Elizabeth's reigns. "Broadly speaking," he asserts, "it is now the universally received view that no man ought to be penalised on the score of opinions conscientiously held, however erroneous they may be; but if these opinions find expression in anti-social acts, the acts must be punished. Punishment of opinions is rightly branded as persecution." Still, it is unfortunately too true that both Puritans and Romanists were fined, imprisoned and even executed during Elizabeth's long reign of 45 years, although her motives were far more secular than religious.

But no one can seriously contend that Frith and other martyrs under Henry VIII were capable of conspiracy. Or that nearly all who perished in the holocaust of Mary's brief reign (1553-1558), when upwards of three hundred heretics were burned alive, were dangerous to the State. As Innes cogently comments: "Mary kindled the fires of Smithfield for the salvation of souls, not for the safety of her throne. Whereas the foundation of Elizabeth's persecutions was that *opinions* as such were of no consequence; but that people who would not conform their conduct to her regulations must either be potential traitors politically or anarchists socially." Apart from these requirements, opinions orthodox or heterodox, were deemed of little importance.

From our present-day outlook persecution of any kind appears pernicious, but it is only fair to remember that except in Holland no other European country had any immediate prospect of attaining the limited toleration which existed in the spacious days of Burghley and Elizabeth.

T. F. PALMER.

### BRUSSELS STUDENTS PROTEST

ON Friday, February 18th, the Belgian police force came out in full as the students of the University of Brussels formed into procession at the University gates in the Solbosch. The students were of all kinds and of every faculty. They had assembled at the call of the General Students' Association, supported by the Students' Liberal Association, the Students' Socialist and Communist organisations, and the Cercle du Libre Examen (the circle of free inquiry, or Freethinkers). Here is the transcript of the notice convening the demonstration:—

The Students of the Free University of Brussels demonstrate against the campaign of the Christian-socialist Party to gain an absolute majority.

The Catholic Party undertakes an electoral campaign to obtain an absolute majority and so to consolidate its power. More than ever the Church teaches in its schools resignation to the vanquished and submission to the oppressed in opposition to all progress.

More than ever the Church pretends in the name of liberty of teaching the right to form at the expense of the State, blind legions of future electors.

More than ever before, the Church takes from the State budget the money to pay for institutions which preach that the voter should cast his vote in the name of religion for the party of reaction.

More than ever the Church under pretext of Christian charity pretends to absolve and rehabilitate all those enemies of freedom to be found in the ranks of the Rexistes.

The Church goes so far as to call itself the champion of that liberty which it has ever denied and withstood when it had the power.

An absolute majority for the Church would mean the submission of the State to the Church; the clericalisation of all teaching; the release of all collaborators with the Nazis; the intensification of the clerical dictatorship in the Congo.

Come with us and denounce this policy of obscurantism and reaction.

The procession numbered over 1,500. Carrying numerous banners, chanting "A bas la Calotte" (down with the priest's cap), these young people went slowly in good order to the square in front of the Bourse. At a signal, silence reigned and a young man with a stentorian voice which scarcely needed the megaphone which he carried, harangued the crowd in French; he was followed by a student with an even more powerful voice, who thundered in Flemish; the first was the president of the convening association of students and the second the president of the Flemish Students' Society. The students then sang songs of freedom, distributed great numbers of anti-clerical pamphlets and dispersed quietly.

The orderly behaviour was in marked contrast with that of a couple of hundred Catholic Monarchist students three weeks before, who demonstrated in favour of Cardinal Mindszenty by breaking a large number of windows.

The Belgians are beginning to awake to the threat of the Catholic political parties to the liberties gained so hardly before 1914.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

### EINSTEIN AND EDUCATION

UPON March 14 the civilised world celebrated the 70th birthday of one of the greatest thinkers of the contemporary era, Albert Einstein. Even that highly respectable organisation, the B.B.C., joined in the universal homage paid to the eminent Swiss mathematician. Unlike the traditional Teutonic philosopher who shuts himself away from the world in a selective "ivory tower," Professor Einstein is a man of parts, whose interests and activities extend far beyond his professorial studies. Any opinion expressed by this man of genius, who has been dubbed "the world's first citizen," must be regarded as at least worthy of serious consideration.

Accordingly we propose to glance at, and to pursue in more detail, a pronouncement that the great scientist has just issued upon the vital subject of education.

In our contemporary, the "News Chronicle" of March 14, there were published some extracts from Professor Einstein's forthcoming autobiography (due, we understand, for publication here next autumn). We think that the iconoclastic views expressed therein by the illustrious proponent of the "Theory of Relativity" upon the subject of our contemporary educational system, are of great importance, particularly to Freethinkers, and it is in this last connection that we propose to comment on Professor Einstein's devastating criticism of our present educational methods.

Dr. Einstein observes, when speaking of his university days:

"I soon learned to scent out that which was able to lead to fundamentals and to turn aside from everything else, from the multitude of things which clutter up the mind and divert it from the essentials. The hitch in this was, of course, the fact that one had to cram all this stuff into one's mind for the examinations, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect on me that after I had passed the final examination, I postponed consideration of any scientific problem for a whole year."

Einstein goes on to comment that it is "a sort of miracle that the holy curiosity of inquiry, a delicate little

plant" which, before all else, needs freedom in which to evolve, "has not yet been strangled by the methods of instruction at present in vogue," and he concludes: "It is a very grave mistake to think that the enjoying of searching and seeing can be promoted by coercion and a sense of duty." Even voracious beasts of prey, thinks the Professor, can have their appetites destroyed by compulsory indiscriminate feeding.

We have reproduced the above observations of the great scientist because we think they say something which is both opportune and urgent, and needs saying, for the fact is that contemporary education from the secondary school to the university has been almost entirely superseded by compulsory cramming for examinations which represent a very imperfect test of knowledge, and which directly discourages any originality, mental initiative, or unorthodox opinions.

It is this last aspect of the subject, the strangling of what Einstein arrestingly termed "the holy curiosity of inquiry," that makes this question one of absorbing interest and importance to Freethinkers: for the simple and obvious reason that freethought cannot possibly exist without free thinkers.

That men of original genius have not as a rule made an outstanding success of their "education" is common knowledge. We recall a statement made by that eminent publicist and rationalist, John A. Hobson, in a lecture shortly before his death (at which the present writer was present), "One thing must strike everybody, how very few of the outstanding intellects have owed anything to a university," in short, Mr. Hobson went on to indicate the free play of original thought is hindered rather than promoted by formal "education" as conducted at present. The experience of Professor Einstein entirely conforms with this last opinion.

In fact, when one considers the following facts, it is hardly possible to assert that education, as expressed in examination results, is anything like a reliable test of the higher forms of intellectual ability.

Edward Gibbon, the greatest English historian, became so without any help from the University of Oxford; which expelled him on account of his temporary conversion to Rome. (It is a somewhat ironic commentary upon present-day methods of education, which admit of no exceptions to its cast-iron rules, that the one world historian of the first rank that this country has produced, would not now be allowed to teach history to an elementary class because he had no "qualifications"—except knowledge.) Thomas Carlyle, the most eloquent of English speaking historians, took no degree in history, and T. H. Buckle, the most philosophical, never went to a university. Whilst Herbert Spencer, the greatest of English sociologists, not only did not go to any academic seat of learning, but refused all academic honours and ignored them when conferred. Whilst Charles Darwin, the greatest and most influential scientist of his century, was "ploughed" for an honours degree at Cambridge and had to be content with a "pass" degree.

And to-day, Bernard Shaw, the most brilliant of contemporary men of letters, has publicly denounced "the swindle of examinations."

It may, of course, be said by the defenders of the present system that the above are exceptional cases, and that "hard cases make bad law," and that a powerful and original intellect like, say, Bernard Shaw, or the present Editor of the "Freethinker," cannot conform to a system intended necessarily for average people.

But even if this is so, we must comment that it is not a very satisfactory system of education which appears

specially to penalise its geniuses equally with its dunces. In any case, the above special pleading just is not true. Extraordinary ability differs from ordinary ability in degree, not in kind: in quantity, not in quality. As has been well said, "Everyone has some genius latent within him." Incidentally, it would be a poor look-out for democracy were it not so.

The fact, of course is, that what that interesting Victorian thinker Auberon Herbert termed "the sacrifice of education to examination," is capable of doing, and is in fact actually doing, untold harm on all significant mental levels. It discourages all critical and original ideas in favour of a "safe" conformity with the often unmoderated orthodoxy of the last generation, which most examiners represent.

It is at best largely a matter of luck if one's views agree with those of the examiner, who, willy-nilly, is bound to be biased in favour of some views against others. This directly encourages mental servility, since where, as at present, the examinee's whole career depends upon the result of the examination, only a very exceptional man or woman will take risks with an original view which may "plough" him or her at the hands of an orthodox or unimaginative examiner when a conventional succession of "safe" replies can be relied upon to secure life's "glittering prizes" which so often depend solely upon the result of the examination.

In short, such bureaucratic servility constitutes a thinly disguised, but most effective "law against dangerous thoughts" to borrow an expressive Japanese phrase.

The permanent and unbridgable gulf between such a system and Freethought stares one in the face. Cramming produces robots, and the robot conditioned by orthodoxy is the very negation and antithesis of everything that we mean by Freethought. Historically the examination system was invented by the Jesuits in the era of the Counter-Reformation. And one can easily see the uses of such a system to reactionary orthodoxy intent at all costs upon destroying that "holy curiosity of inquiry" of which Professor Einstein speaks so eloquently. It is, in fact, the perfect training for the totalitarian state.

In calling attention to this vital matter we think that Albert Einstein has added yet another service, and that not the least important, to the vast obligations that Isaac Newton's illustrious successor has already conferred upon mankind.

F. A. RIDLEY.

## W. H. WOOD REPLIES

AS I predicted in my recent article "Life after death" our disturbed homets have re-acted true to form. But before replying to my critics I would like to remind them (as the Editor of this Journal has so frequently reminded them) that the essence of Freethought is freedom of thought with freedom of expression, and I sincerely congratulate "The Freethinker" on its broad-minded policy of allowing writers to express their thoughts freely though they may not appeal to all of the readers all of the time.

Mr. Bower accuses me of throwing Rationalism overboard because, as he says, how can one really be a Freethinker until he has set aside all influence on his thoughts but the desire for truth?

But surely, Mr. Bower, I stated very plainly that it was through my desire to discover the truth that I suggested we should welcome scientific investigation of survival after death. My article was not headed "Life after death!" as though I had already proved the

matter, but "Life after death?" The question mark was rather important. Mr. Bower, however, states that there is no life after death. He is entitled to his opinion, of course, but he is not entitled to state anything as a fact if it has not been proved—or has he himself returned from the dead with some indisputable evidence? If he is merely defending his own conclusions by prohibiting all inquiry into the matter then his attitude is worthy of the most narrow and bigoted Christian who asserts his teaching as positive truth when it is nothing of the kind. I am quite willing to accept the evidence obtained from scientific investigation but not the word of prejudiced know-alls who thrust forward their *own* conclusions as indisputable truth.

And now for our good friend T. D. Smith! I am afraid his knowledge of Spiritualism (a horrible and entirely misleading word) is somewhat elementary. He seems to imagine that because the earth is some ninety millions of miles from the sun the home of the spirits must be too far away to allow them to appear suddenly in our midst when called for—even by express jet-planes. I can assure him that spiritualists do not believe in another world situated somewhere in the stratosphere: they believe that the world inhabited by *people* after death (not *spirits*) is this same world which they inhabited during life. So far as I understand their theory, it is based on the assumption that all life is pulsation, a system of vibrations like the waves used in radio transmission.

Different planes of existence vibrate to a different wave-length. Supposing in this life we are tuned to an A vibration then in the life that continues after death we would be tuned to a B vibration. The psychic medium performs the function of a receiver and transmitter because he is able to tune in to a different wave-length in the same way that a radio receiver can be tuned in to get different transmissions on different wave-lengths. What you hear on one wave-length you cannot hear on another although the transmissions are vibrating through the ether at the same time.

We, who are only attuned to the A vibration, cannot hear and see (like the medium) what is happening on the B vibration. We would be foolish indeed if we thought, because our own radio-set was restricted in range and selectivity, that nothing was happening on any other wave-length. On this theory it is not impossible to imagine that the business of dying may be merely the turning of a switch enabling us to vibrate on a different wave-length. In other words our life goes on precisely as it did before in this same world, but being out of tune with the old life we cannot see, hear or feel anything of the life pulsating on the A wave-length.

I do not say that I accept this theory or reject it but I am in favour of scientific investigation and endeavour to prove its truth or falsity.

Mr. Smith asks, "What do the spirits keep on worrying us for?" They have never worried *me* but I am deeply sorry if they have troubled Mr. Smith. Perhaps they are a little annoyed by the cheap jibes and ridicule of those who seem to think they know all there is to know. Mr. Smith next argues that if Spiritualism is a natural phenomenon like gravitation, then whatever we say for or against it will not alter it in the least. But has Mr. Smith forgotten that even the law of gravity had to be discovered by scientific research? If the early scientists had argued with Mr. Smith that it would be a complete waste of time to debate gravitation I am afraid we would not have progressed very far.

As for modern inventions and discoveries—electricity and atom physics—can Mr. Smith or anyone else defi-

nitely prove that the ideas and thoughts of our scientists may not have been influenced by thought-transmission from another plane? As yet we are only on the fringe of understanding mental telepathy and thought projection, and as for Yoga science and the marvels performed by genuine adepts we know absolutely nothing at all. I recommend Mr. Smith and other scoffers to read the works of Paul Brunton, Gerald Heard, Major Yeates-Brown, Dr. Alexander Cannon and others who have studied these matters at first hand. I have travelled all over the world and I have seen in many countries many things which Westerners would call impossible. I have also studied occultism for more than thirty years and I remain open-minded and unprejudiced—an honest seeker after the truth. That is why I am an Atheist. I do not believe in spirits, gods, or any other supernatural flap-doodle. I believe there is a perfectly *natural* reason for all psychic phenomena. If life continues after death there is nothing divine or spiritual about it—it is the operation of a natural law. And I have no doubt that there are many natural laws about which neither Mr. Smith nor myself have any knowledge.

It is, I know, only too easy for the ignorant to ridicule that which they do not understand. If Mr. Smith had understood my article it should have been quite clear to him that I was not defending fake mediums or money-making seances. I have found many frauds during my own investigations but one does not assume that because some people are crooks that all are crooks.

In conclusion I would like to recall a remarkable demonstration of mediumship by the well-known Mrs. Estelle Roberts. A few days after the R.101 airship disaster some years ago in France, Mrs. Roberts "contacted" the dead commander, Flight-Lieutenant Irwin. Irwin had been a personal friend of mine—we had been flying airships together both in England and in the Aegean during the first world war—but neither I nor anyone else having any knowledge of airships was present at the seance, so there could be no suggestion of mind-reading. Mrs. Roberts, through the pilot Irwin, gave a detailed account of the disaster and its cause in highly technical terms; terms which could only be known and understood by someone possessing a specialised knowledge of airship construction. At the time of the seance the official inquiry had not been held and there had been no published report of the cause of the accident. The details given by Mrs. Roberts were found to be absolutely correct after investigation of the wreckage by Air Ministry experts. If Mrs. Roberts did not obtain her information from Flight-Lieutenant Irwin *after his death* then from whom did she obtain it, and *how*?

Those who have troubled to study spiritualism can relate many similar cases, but those who have *not* remain content in their ignorance to deride what they do not understand. For myself, I prefer to go on seeking for the truth with the open mind of a freethinker.

W. H. WOOD.

**THERE WAS ONCE . . .**

**A FILM STAR.** He was immaculately dressed and elegantly groomed. One day he appeared in the street and thousands of hysterical women fought to see him. They kicked and scratched and bit each other in their frenzy and many were injured in the mad stampede.

In the gutter, across the way, was a beggar in rags. He had fought in battle, faced death, and suffered hell for those same women.

**A PROPHET.** He spent his life predicting dates upon which the world would come to an end.

The May-fly prophesying the date on which the Tortoise would die was hardly more foolish.

## ACID DROPS

"An entirely new spirit in finding funds is needed, or else the Church is likely to lose its aided schools wholesale," said the Bishop of Chelmsford. The Churches have got to find £630,000 in order to have an excuse to keep their stranglehold on Education in Church schools. If they do not soak their flock for that amount, the State will take over the schools entirely and the Bishop of Chelmsford will have to be satisfied with undenominational religious instruction in schools. Why not pray for that amount?

The Agreed Syllabus of Religious Instruction for use in schools maintained by the Liverpool Education Committee has been issued, and Freethinkers should note that any child can be excused from religious instruction at the request of the parent. Children of Freethinkers will, of course, miss a lot, for the Liverpool Committee are agreed that the Syllabus will "encourage sound learning in the fundamental truths of life and conduct." Which means (as we see it) that any children withdrawn from religious lessons will grow up ignorant little savages, and will undoubtedly end up in the Juvenile Delinquency Court—except that the latest figures seem to show that the more religion a child gets, the higher the percentage of delinquency, which *may* be a coincidence.

As an instance of the stupid lengths to which a Christian will go to "prove" the authenticity of Biblical miracles, surely the Vicar of Peckham is one of the best examples. He quotes as proof of the Jericho story, the discovery by Professor Garstang, who excavated some ruined walls around Jericho, and this is taken to be proof that at some time in ancient history, Jewish priests marched round the walls of Jericho and with a blast of their trumpets, the walls fell down. People who can believe this sort of thing, and pity 'tis that so many do, will believe anything.

A gentleman of the name of Christopher Byron contributes an article to the "Church Times" entitled "The Christian Ascent—Better Self-Examination" which, thank heaven, can add a little to our gaiety in these troubled times. Here is part of his method of "self-scrutiny"—"Think of Jesus on the Cross. Compare the behaviour of your eyes, ears, lips, hands, feet and heart with his." When that most holy and edifying self-examination has been terminated ask, "What sins did I wish specially to avoid last time?" Then, "gather together all the outstanding sins I can remember in the space of ten minutes," look out for their "sources," and "get them over." Everything will be all right if only we then repeat the Lord's prayer. Could unmitigated drivel go much further?

Are you one of those peculiar persons who disagree with Mine. Kuzenko (Secretary of the Soviet General Workers' Union) who thinks that it is quite correct to gaoi anyone whose opinions run counter to the majority? Or are you one of those blatant atheists who deny the existence of the Christian God? If so, you are an "amiable nonentity." At least that is the opinion of the Archbishop of Canterbury. When he preached to an R.A.F. station he said: "There are only two classes of people in the modern world who really know what

they are after, one is the Communist, and the other is the convinced Christian, the rest of the world are amiable nonentities." Well, well, what a lot of nonentities there are in the world.

A most determined attempt to convert London will be launched by the Bishop of London on May 20. No fewer than 14 leaders of religious thought are going to help him, including the Archbishop of York, and perhaps the Holy Ghost will add his quota to the valiant evangelists. We have no doubt whatever that completely believing Christians will hear them all gladly—but for all their eloquence and pains, will they be able to produce one real convert? We doubt it.

The Mothers' Union and the "Church Times" are having a delightful set-to on the question of divorce. The M.U. absolutely refuses to have anybody as a member who has been a party to divorce and this, according to the "Church Times," goes "beyond the teaching of our Lord and the discipline of the Church." So that's that. But the mystery for us is why any decent woman wants to belong to this Mothers' Union, which is as thoroughly out of date as the equally stupid Lord's Day Observance Society. Surely these religious bigots should be allowed to stew—and die—in their own silly juice?

Mr. H. H. Martin, who is the Secretary of the Lord's Day Observance Society and who ought to join hands with the Mothers' Union, wants to be called, not "Misery" Martin, which suits him so well, but "Merry" Martin—which suits him no more than "Merry" suits the head of the M.U. He recently had a debate in Hastings and his opponent pledged the meeting that they would go on with Sunday shows even if it meant prison. And the audience yelled "We'll all go!" If that spirit prevails, it would mean the end of Misery Martin and his gang of interfering and intolerable bigots. Once his bluff is courageously challenged and the Lord's Day Observance Society will be as futile as the Salvation Army.

Another grave dispute is shaking the Church. How should "amen" be pronounced—should it be "ehmen" or "ahmen"? Some great theologians claim it should be ehmen when said, and ahmen when sung; others point out that it is ahmen in the Church of England, and ehmen in the Nonconformist sects. It really is a most knotty point and should be settled by a come-together of all the 300 odd sects of Christianity. After all, one can visualise the horror of God Almighty if the prayers wafted to Him end with ahmen when His sensitive ear demands ehmen.

An interesting note on the parish register of Fornby, dated 1799, added by the priest in charge then, records that the mother of the baby named therein "was sold by her husband at Fornby Cross and purchased for 15s. and a bowl of punch." The "Universo" which gives this adds, "Yes, less than 150 years people were bought and sold in this country." This Christian journal might have added too that this sale took place when England was almost thoroughly Christian—when Wesley had stumped the country bringing in many thousands of converts and when "infidelity" was pursued with all the rigour and intolerance of the Christian law.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No : Holborn 2601.

41, Gray's Inn Road,  
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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

- H. FIDDIAN.—We are always pleased to receive letters from readers, but agree that a letter to another newspaper has more propaganda value than one to the "Freethinker."
- T. A. MILIGAN.—Thanks for letter. A good way of showing your thanks for the benefit derived would be to introduce the "Freethinker" to others.
- T. BENTON.—Thanks for cuttings.
- I. YETTRAM.—The General Secretary gratefully acknowledges a donation of £1 to the Benevolent Fund.

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*Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning*

*The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), THE FREETHINKER (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FREIDENKER (Switzerland), LA RAISON (France), DON BASILIO (Italy).*

## SUGAR PLUMS

Arrangements are going ahead for the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society to be held in Nottingham during Whitsun. Branch secretaries are reminded that motions for the agenda must reach the Head Office not later than April 5. Individual members of the Society are also entitled to send in resolutions. Another important item for those who wish to attend the Conference is to notify the General Secretary of any hotel accommodation required as soon as possible. There is an active Branch of the N.S.S. in Nottingham and a good Conference should result.

A new book on Protestantism has just been published by Prof. Latourette in which he prophesies that it is in this form that Christianity will survive. He points out that all the religious systems between 650 B.C. and 650 A.D. have died out, while Christianity alone has survived "among senile or decaying rivals." We like the idea that Christianity is not "decaying" or is not "senile." The late ex-abbe Loisy and the living Dr. Barnes have both made earnest attempts by drastic "modernism" to save Christianity, or at least to save some form of Christianity, and are in consequence violently assailed. But if the Christian religion, which they have attacked, is not senile or is not dying, we are prepared to eat any old hat.

In any case, even Dr. Latourette sees something of this for the Protestantism he thinks will survive will have to be very different from that which goes now under the same name—though as a good Anglo-Catholic journal, the "Church Times," hates the name, and is not particularly pleased that its own form of Christianity looks like dying in Dr. Latourette's eyes. However, if we take God and Jesus Christ away, as well as all the miracles, and all Christian dogma and doctrines—perhaps the Christianity remaining will survive. Perhaps.

The Glasgow Secular Society's Annual Dinner in the Grand Hotel, Glasgow, last Saturday was a pronounced success. A large party was piped into the Dining Room by Pipe-Sgt. Murray, and all were soon busy with knives, forks, and conversation. The Society's Chairman, Mr. R. M. Hamilton, gave the "Chairman's Remarks" in his very best style. Mrs. M. Whitefield, Secretary, moved the Toast, "Our Guests," and the "Glasgow Secular Society" was moved by Mr. R. H. Rosetti, with Mr. A. Copland responding. The Toast "Freethought Everywhere" was moved by Mr. G. Colebroke, to which Mr. C. McShane responded. In the musical programme, Miss Jennifer Clark, and World Champion of Highland dancing, Miss Gladys Bruce, gave delightful displays to the music of Pipe-Sgt. Murray, whilst Mr. G. Colebroke and two members of the Society attended to the vocal side accompanied at the piano by Mr. A. Copland. A message of goodwill to Mr. and Mrs. Chapman Cohen was read out and later wired to their home address. The singing of "Auld Lang Syne" brought a happy evening to a close. The week-end was rounded off with a packed hall in the McLellan Galleries where Mr. R. H. Rosetti lectured on "An Evening with the Gods."

The Nottingham Branch N.S.S. are quickly off the mark for open air work. Mr. T. M. Mosley will speak in the Market Square at 7 p.m. to-day, (April 3) on "The Challenge of Secularism." Congratulations to the Branch for its zeal, and to Mr. Mosley for opening the session.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. are also losing no time for a start in the open air. Messrs. Barker, Winter and Whitaker can be heard to-day (April 3) at 7-30 p.m., at Castle Street, Kingston, and all Freethinkers in the area are asked to attend and to make the meetings known. That should be accepted as a duty towards those carrying on our work.

Freethinkers in search of a well appointed school, in good surroundings, with an entirely secular curriculum, should write for particulars to the Principal, International School, Tacchomo, North Curry, Taunton, Somerset.

## HERESY IN THE CHURCH

WHATEVER may be said to be the case in the Roman Catholic Church, there appears to have always been dissent in the Protestant camp—much to the amusement of its rival. To read the pronouncements of the Pope's henchmen, the very idea of anybody differing in the slightest degree from the Vatican is absolutely impossible to conceive, for the Church of Rome is One, utterly and emphatically, just as it came fresh from God Almighty through Jesus Christ nearly 2,000 years ago. The actual truth is, of course, quite different, for there has always been as much quarrelling and dissent in the one form of Christianity as in the other—the Church of Rome getting rid of its heretics as far and as quickly as possible and the Protestant Church doing its utmost to swallow them unconcernedly or not.

In the "Church Looks at Itself," the Rev. Martin Davidson (Watts, 7s. 6d.), gives an entertaining and interesting account of some of the works written by supposedly pious and orthodox Christians published during the nineteenth century and later, works which caused a great furor because, with a lot of "scholarly" verbiage designed perhaps to confuse the all-believing

Fundamentalists, they took almost the same position towards Christianity as had for long been popularised by Thomas Paine. It is not really surprising that some divines became dissatisfied with out and out Fundamentalism—with such avowals, for instance, as that made by Dr. S. P. Tregelles, his "full belief in the absolute inspiration of the Scripture," holding "the 66 books of the Old and New Testament to be verbally the Word of God, as absolutely as were the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God on the two tablets of stone." Dean Burgon added to this in his view of Inspiration, all the punctuation marks in the Authorised Version, and no doubt views like these were too much for the common sense of even Christian scholars.

"Essays and Reviews," published in 1860, was the upshot, and though to us it is only very mildly heretical, it was received with a burst of dismay in mid-Victorian England. It was one thing for a "vulgar" Atheist (though actually he was not an Atheist), like Tom Paine to attack God's Word, but quite another when eminent Churchmen like Dr. Temple (who afterwards was made Archbishop of Canterbury), Prof. Baden-Powell, Prof. Benjamin Jowett, and others actually queried the reality of miracles, the Evidences of Christianity, and the Mosaic Cosmogony. In fact, so acrimonious became the dispute that two of the contributors to the volume, both clergymen, H. B. Wilson and Rowland Williams, were suspended by the ecclesiastical courts, though later they were reinstated on appeal to the Privy Council. The jibe then appeared that Lord Chancellor Westbury "dismissed eternal punishment with costs."

Dr. Davidson gives many quotations from the writers in "Essays and Reviews," and they were well worth repeating. For example here is what Jowett thought about the "Interpretation of Scripture":—

Thus Christ often speaks of the blessedness of poverty, of the difficulties which riches present to the attainment of everlasting life, etc., but such precepts fail to appeal to us or to our experience of life. We believe that the literal acceptance of them would be detrimental to ourselves and to society and the few religious sects which have acted on them have come to no good. Nor, because Christ set us the example, is it suitable for people to wash one another's feet. Many other similar examples could be mentioned. Professor Jowett deplores the attitude of those who ascribe to Atheism or unbelief the critical observations which any intelligent man can make for himself . . . It would also be a singular inversion of the purpose for which Christ came into the world—to change the lives of men—if the object of Christianity would now be to prevent men from changing their opinions. . . .

My own experience has been that, however much we are exhorted to follow the teaching and example of Christ by fervent Christians, they themselves draw the line at washing people's feet, and it did not require Jowett's eloquence to persuade them either. You will even these days get Fundamentalists yelling that the Bible and the Bible alone is their great Rule of Life—yet overboard goes the Bible Sabbath Day for the pagan day of the sun and with it the prohibition against eating pork. All good Christians draw the line at the Bible interfering with good eating.

When Dr. Temple in 1868 was made the Bishop of Exeter, there was the usual howl about appointing a heretic, the venerable Dr. Pusey calling it a "horrible scandal." Dr. Temple, in fact, found himself much in the same position as Dr. Barnes these days; but like

Dr. Barnes, he does not appear to have worried unduly, whatever his brothers in the Lord thought of him. He no doubt kept his opinions on such spiritual matters more and more to himself, and as Archbishop of Canterbury, he died in the highly respectable odour of sanctity.

Before the row over "Essays and Reviews" had died down, Bishop Colenso began publishing his famous attack on the Pentateuch which appeared between 1862 and 1879. Here indeed were grounds of complaint, for when Colenso had finished he had smashed into smithereens the five books of Moses and Joshua as history, or as divinely inspired. As a first class mathematician himself, he ridiculed the various figures given for the Children of Israel in Egypt and for such miraculous and secular events in the Holy Book as the number of animals slaughtered, the number of burnt offerings, the wars of Israel, the Deluge and the Ark, and many other things. Like the two clergymen of "Essays and Reviews," Colenso had to face a charge of "erroneous teaching" and was found guilty and prohibited from acting as the Bishop of Natal. He appealed, and was allowed to devote himself to his work as the courts assured him of his income as a Bishop. He worked hard for the natives in Natal as well as continuing his attacks on Bible "truth," and no doubt these days would be anathema to a fellow Christian like Dr. Malan.

Colenso was naturally vehemently attacked by all kinds of Fundamentalists, but his positions stand unassailed. His was necessary work—though Freethinkers had more or less reached almost all his conclusions long before he caused such scandal in the ranks of the Church. However, dare-devilry was still rearing its ugly head among the orthodox, for in 1889 appeared "Lux Mundi," more essays by "heretics" within the holy precincts of devoted believers, who tried again to infuse a little light and reason into the credulity and superstition which permeated the Church of England. The volume, says Dr. Davidson, "can be regarded as the expression of a common hope," though the essay by Dr. Gore "proved painful reading to many orthodox Christians." The reader will find it all carefully gone into by Dr. Davidson, and very good reading it makes.

Space precludes my giving more than a passing mention to the chapters in the "Church Looks at Herself" dealing with the great advance made by Church critics like Canon Streeter, the Bishop of Derby, the R. H. Lightfoot, and other writers on the Gospels with their "Form Criticism," with Dr. Sanday, Dr. Burkitt, the Rev. J. M. Thompson, and others on "Miracles." Then, in addition, there is the "Modernist" movement with Dr. Barnes as its most advanced exponent and all initiating many other controversies which shook the Church and is still shaking it. It is all very interesting and very intriguing.

But, speaking as a Freethinker, I cannot but feel that the Church is at least 100 or 200 years behind Freethought. Some of the points which roused priest, parson, and bishop to fury are mere commonplaces to us, and many of their arguments were better put by Anthony Collins, Woolston, Voltaire, D'Holbach, Paine, Henneil, Robert Cooper—and above all, by Robert Taylor. Yet it is as well to know that all religious criticism did not come from Freethinkers, and that the Church could also produce its own drastic critics. We are apt to forget it sometimes, and so this well-written and well produced little work will, I hope, introduce to those who don't know it an interesting chapter in the history of the Church.



## RIDICULOUS CHRISTIAN NAMES

A FRIEND of mine is afflicted with the Scriptural name of *Caleb*, the meaning of which is—*dog*.

There seems to be no limit to baptismal cruelty inflicted by silly parents upon babies who cannot resist; time and again you can meet life-long martyrs of objectionable or ridiculous names. Says Daddy: It was good enough for my grandfather, it will do for my son. From generation to generation our "Christian" names are inherited like a disease; they have degenerated into a mere label, a meaningless chiffre, devoid of inspiration and individuality but for their manifold variations. A cypher could do as well, for they are generally chosen without any knowledge of their meaning.

Originally, a child's name had a bearing upon actuality—such as Clan and family—or was to express certain hopes and auguries for the bearer's future. Totem and Gens (clan) are gone, yet the names derived from them still persist into our atom-age.

The Roman *Nomina* (gentile names) came by inheritance to denote the position of the gens in the state. They have survived in such names as Julia (Juliet, Jill, etc.), Emily, Anthony, Claude (Gladys) or Cornelia. The same applies to Keltic clan names (and even family names). Roman *Cognomina* were originally neither more nor less than nicknames, sometimes far from complimentary—like Brutus (the brute), or Sulla (red-pimpled). Whether fortuitous, derisive or honourable, they still linger on as Augustus (august), Paul (contraction of Pauxillus = small in stature, weak), Camilla, etc. Some of them denoted origin from a locality, such as Adrian, Florence, Barbara = the (barbarian) girl from abroad, Fingal (fair stranger) = Norwegian, Benjamin = Southerner, German, Norman, Roman, Sidney; Wallace (Welshman); Frank (Freeman), etc. Magdalena (with all derivations) is the woman from a locality "The Tower."\*

The clan was based on a particular Totem animal, hence names like Corvin (of the raven), Rachel (ewe), Levy (snake), Osborn (Divine Bear), Ursula (Little Bear), names in AR (eagle) etc. When the totem became a deity, names evolved such as June, Diana, Aurora, Flora, May, Selina (selên = moon) and Helen; Sylvia, Martin (of Mars); Bridget ("bright," a goddess of fire); Isidoro (gift of Isis); Arthur (Thor's eagle); derivation of the deities of INGE and IRMIN (Armin, Irma) etc.

The pagan Saviour Dionysos became a Christian Saint as such—St. Denis—and, in addition, his epithet "Urbanus" (town-dweller) was separately sanctified.

Ambitious parents still select such names as Rex, Regina, Queenie, Austin (august), Cyril (lordly), Donald (world-ruler), Basil (royal), Sarah (princess). Mythological and heroic folklore accounts for a lot of presumptuous names; when of Teutonic origin, they are *dithematic*, i.e., composed of two roots without any grammatical relation between them. Most names of this kind are connected with warfare or obsolete notions:

WAL, WAR (war, battle) = Warburg, Walburga; Ivor = Ing-war. GER = spear: Gertrude (spear strength), Gerard, etc. ALB, ALF (goblin, elf—a formidable or malignant spirit such as TRUT—nightmare): Alvin, Albert, Alfred, etc. ETH (Ed-, Ot-): the tribal property (Edward, Otto, Othello). Might results from wealth, ETH becomes Ethel (edel, Adel = noble); Adolf

(Ethelwolf). Edvin, Ethel, etc.—the rich become rulers. RIC is related to both rich and rex: Richard, Derek (theoderic = people's ruler).

HELM = magical helmet (in William, Wilhelm). HILD = hilt: Hildegard, Matilda (maht = might), etc. All names in IR or (H)ER are related to "army," German "Heer" = the *Grand Convocation* of the bondsmen. Apart from Irma (Herma and Emma) we still have Herman, the great warrior (Warner, Warren). Harvey and Harold or Walter (Walt-her), the army administrator, etc. Similarly Morgan or Murdoch is a sea warrior, Lewis (Louisa, etc.) the "famous slaughter" etc. Charles denotes a burly, ill-bred countryman, a churl (German kerl), so you can figure out yourself the meaning of Carla or Charlotte. Nicholas, like Victoria, alludes to Victory, of course.

Many names were of definitely restricted usage, such as George, the tiller of the soil, or Philip, lover of horses. He who knows the meaning of a name cannot refrain from smirking when meeting a fair Mela (black) a tall Paul, a blonde Maurice (Morris), a charwoman called Sarah, a twin called Monica (unique), a single Thomas (twin) or a married Virginia!

The peak of nonsense, of course, is reached in the flood of Biblical names or names invented to fit the innumerable saints (the majority of whom are fiction). There we have Christian, Christopher, Angela, Beatrice, Celia (heavenly), Dolores (sorrow), Dominic (belonging to the Lord), Malcolm (tonsured servant of St. Columban), Vera, or Olga (Helga = holy), Dorothy, inversion of Theodora (gift of God) and Matthew (ibid), Goddard, Godfrey, etc., and names connected with OS (deity, divine) such as Oswald, up to the host of Hebrew names connected with El or Yahve (Ja, Je, Jah, etc.): Jonathan, Gabriel, Raphael, Samuel, Michael, Jeremy (Jerem-jah), Tobias (Yah is good), Zachary (Sachar-jah), etc. Maria (Mary) is a suitable name for a character in a tragedy, but I cannot think of parents who want to christen their children "Bitter." It was not for nothing that the Churches did not allow the translation of Scriptural names, otherwise it could easily be seen that they were mythical terms, mostly derived from autochthonic deities such as the ancient Moon God Abraham (august Father), Adam (red), the giver of fertility (Sun and Soil)—then with the metaphorical meaning of "man" (Enosh) = made of clay—Jaakob (Jack, James) = He revolves (Heaven), etc. Joseph, the Giver of Abundance, is a form of Osiris, Isaac (Yizehoq = he grins) a form of Faunus; Leah (Pale) a lunar phase, etc. Eva (for Hava, Hayya, with guttural "h")† is "Life" and creates Kain (spear, symbol of Priapos), etc. Deborah = Bee, Daniel (God of Justice), Peter = rock.

Our nomenclature abounds in variations of a particularly ugly name, Elizabeth (Elsie, Alice, Betty, etc.), derived from Hebrew Eli-sheba, the Swear-God. El is "strength" as manifest in the oak or bull as divine personification, and "sheba" denotes the "Evil-Seven" Spirit or Saturn (Saturday), an awe-inspiring deity in the name of which an oath was taken.

You would surely deride a bluffer who, without knowledge of their proper meaning, throws about foreign words in the wrong place. Is such demeanour less objectionable if these ridiculous words happen to be Christian names? Why not simply give names in plain language, a language that conveys a distinct meaning to every sensible person?

PERCY G. ROY.

† Similarly Anna for Hanna = mercy. John = Johannan (Yahve's Mercy), German Hans.

\* Mount Cynthos in the island of Delos accounts for Cynthia and Delia.

## "OUT OF THE WOOD"

THE Church in Scotland has recently been disturbed by the production of a play by the Iona Youth Trust, written by one of its experts on the Theatre, and presented to an audience representative of public life in Glasgow.

The play, "Out of the Wood," is an indictment of modern civilisation and insists that if civilisation is to survive Christians must enter into the political arena, and armed with the teachings of Jesus Christ cleanse the world of its wickedness and build the new Jerusalem here and now.

The play was performed in the Athenaeum Theatre, Glasgow, on February 2, 1949, to an audience comprised mainly of clergymen and their various parishioners.

The play has a prologue and two acts. The prologue presents the world as it is with sin and immorality triumphant and ends with the destruction of this world through war and the atom bomb.

Curiosity had been aroused by the publication of a pamphlet, "The Christian Faith and Municipal Politics," also issued by Community House as a preliminary to the production of the play itself.

This pamphlet had shocked the unco' guid by declaring that local politics "are no more corrupt than the politics of many presbyteries and kirk sessions," and could be purged if Christians played their part in local elections.

The pamphlet had also stated that "many of us live in stinking closes devoid of sanitation and surrounded by grim vistas of desolate housing. "That 'pick-up' girl on Argyle Street has been through the juvenile courts and comes out of a dreary overcrowded house; that grubby child in St. Enoch's Square is one of sixty-six in a jammed class room taught by the tired and often hopeless teacher you see on the bus every morning."

However, the play's the thing, and it was to see the dramatisation of all this agony that a well-fed, prosperous audience of worthy Glasgow citizens foregathered at the Athenaeum on what promised to be an occasion worthy of such an assembly.

A further inducement may have been that all seats were free, an inducement not without effect on many of those who wear the cloth.

The play is a new version of the old morality play. It would also appear to derive from "Man and Superman" Strindberg's "Dream Play" and influenced to some extent by Robert McLeish's "The Gorbals Story."

There was no fear, however, of the show being stopped by laughter breaking in. The play ran true to Christian form in that it was gloom and misery all the way. Not the sorrow and agony of an O'Casey or the intellectual stimulation of a Shaw. A group of rather dull young Christians burdened by a crude, cumbersome and unwieldy cross are forever trying to gate-crash various meetings of the high and mighty men who rule the destiny of a great city. They are further burdened by a message which is never very clearly defined, and the smart men whom they are up against are not slow in pointing out to the pilgrims the rather wide gaps in their logic.

The business men have the additional advantage of being led by a most brilliant advocate, who in contrast to the pilgrims who so assiduously pursue him is diabolically clever, poisonously healthy and the very epitome of worldly wisdom. Who can this terribly wise person be? Yes, it is the old devil himself. We know this by the tail he exhibits attached to his elegant pants. However, the

pilgrims are not deterred even by his Satanic Majesty and continue their journey armed with their heavy cross, and at the end of their labours have rescued a sick child from cruel parents and taken the poor little mite to what was probably the fever ward of the local workhouse.

The late General Booth complained that the Devil had all the good tunes and helped to popularise his bands by stealing quite a number of them.

John Milton, in his heyday one of the great devil killers, wrote a long poem destined to destroy for ever the influence of Beelzebub. His poem is remembered by the power and vitality of the monster he set out to slay.

So in this play, the Devil had the advantage over all the other characters. In deportment, in ability, in eloquence, in dress and appearance and histrionic ability he undoubtedly stole the show.

The entry of the Church into the theatrical arena should act as a warning to those who are interested in the theatre as a centre of cultural activity.

The one theatre owned by the Y.M.C.A. in Glasgow has a censorship through which no particle of O'Dots, Gorky, O'Casey may penetrate.

The drama suffers to-day as it suffered in the past as a result of religious bigotry. The first post-reformation theatre built in Glasgow was destroyed by a mob incensed by the bigot George Whitefield on a visit to that city in 1752.

Actors were for centuries regarded as unfit for Christian burial. It behoves everyone interested in the theatre to be on guard lest a new cultural black-out descends upon the theatre.

JOHN QUINN.

## PONTIFICAL INDULGENCE CONCEDED TO THE PORTUGUESE NATION

(Our Portuguese correspondent "N.F." sends us a leaflet advertising the sale of a Papal Indulgence in Portugal, 1948. The following is a translation of the advertisement. The Indulgence is 50 centavos from which the Pope receives a percentage. A Bulla (Indulgence) was originally conceded to the Crusaders. Ironically, the phrase "vender Bullas" (to sell Bullas) in popular parlance means "to cheat.")

### GENERAL SUMMARY

of the spiritual graces granted to the Portuguese nation which run in conjunction with your offering for the upkeep and improvements of the Diocesan Seminaries and for the wants of the Church and for poor parishes, and for other pious necessities. These indulgences were granted for 10 years by His Holiness Pope Pius XI, in December, 1934.

By buying this summary and giving the prescribed offering, a member of the faithful can during the years when valid:—

1. Gain a plenary indulgence on two chosen days provided that he takes Confession and Communion, he can profit if he has made his Easter Duties and that he prays for the intentions of Our Holy Father, the Pope.

2. Gain an indulgence of 15 years and 15 quarantinas (periods of 40 days), provided he participates in the pious works practised in the Church, and that he fasts on a day not ordained and prays for the intentions of the Pope.

3. Gain the indulgences of the Stations of the Cross in Rome under the usual conditions.

4. Gain a Plenary Indulgence if in danger of death, with Confession and Communion (Perfect Contrition will not suffice), invoking the name of Jesus aloud; if this is not possible, mentally and accepting death resignedly as a penalty for sin.

5. Gain a Plenary Indulgence applicable to a defunct, praying for this "proesente corpore" and having received Confession and Communion.

All these indulgences except the last and the plenary in danger of death, are applicable to the Souls in Purgatory.

6. Being a priest, he can celebrate mass or order it to be celebrated in his presence in the times in which the Mass and other Divine offices are forbidden, in the places where usually celebrated, under these conditions:—

- (a) That he has not been the means of causing the Interdiction, nor having impeded its removal.
- (b) The doors of the Church to be closed and no bells to be rung.
- (c) No excommunicated persons nor lapsed Catholics to be present.
- (d) He must offer up a prayer for Our Holy Mother, the Church.

The Apostolic Executor has:—

7. Power to absolve in the Internal Court, once during life and once during danger of death, or twice in each separate case, those guilty of irregularities in the complying of their Divine offices, except when the fault is homicide, simony, heresy, apostacy, or other offence which has given scandal—provided a sufficient offering is given.

8. Powers relative to the revalidation of titles and ecclesiastical benefices and the retention of illicitly received goods, all in the terms of the Special Indulgence which it is necessary to purchase with this Summary.

9. Faculties in the dispensing from the laws of fast and abstinence, for which it is also necessary to obtain the Special Indulgence.

10. Power to sub-delegate all the benefits conceded by the Indulgences.

By the wish of Our Holy Father, this printed Summary is as efficacious as the original issued from Rome. It is only valid if the member of the faithful gives the required offering.

Signed. M. CARD. PAHIASCO  
(EXECUTOR APTICO)

N.F.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**POLITICAL CATHOLICISM ON TRIAL**

Sir,—Mr. Ridley deals with my criticisms of his recent article "Political Catholicism on Trial" with wit, with rhetoric, with scant respect and with scantier relevance. This "hidden hand of Moscow" stuff is just a little outmoded. It is a very long time indeed since the hand of Moscow was hidden, and an equally long time since I left the bottom form of the political kindergarten. I am much younger than Mr. Ridley, but not as young as all that.

Let me say at the outset that Mr. Ridley appears to pick a quarrel with me where no grounds for such a thing could possibly exist. Where the charges actually made against the Cardinal were concerned, Mr. Ridley and I were in complete agreement. I said—as did Mr. Ridley—that Cardinal Mindzenty was being charged because of his political views. Let me repeat that. It is exactly what I said and it is exactly what I meant.

But I also said—or tried to say—that it is the absolute antithesis of justice, the denial of everything for which Communism claims to stand, to put a man on trial for his life because you happen to disagree with him politically. I repeat

that. Does Mr. Ridley disagree with me and, if he does, why? We fought two wars for less than that.

Of course, Communism is like a red rag to a bull to me. I have the ridiculous and old-fashioned notion that a man's opinions (political or not) are his own affair, that a man's life is his own concern and that a man's religion is his own business. I know it is reactionary nonsense, but I happen to believe it. Communism, Fascism and the rest have trampled the things I believe in the dust of nearly half a continent. Am I not to get excited?

I hate Communism with a personal and vindictive hatred as deep as anything a man can feel for a political system a continent away based on a theory a century removed in time, and Mr. Ridley may be witty on the subject of bias if he dares.

My case is simple. I agreed in the main with Mr. Ridley's original argument. What I do object to is that he condoned a trial based on trumped-up charges in which a verdict was finally reached on a faked-up confession. Mr. Ridley need not protest. We all know that his article was published before the verdict. We also know that we all knew before the trial opened just what the verdict would be.

How Mr. Ridley deduces that I am insulting the intelligence of "Freethinker" readers or where I suggested that they could not check up on his statements regarding Hungarian history is a mystery to me. I do know, all the same, that if he and I have read "In Darkest Hungary," published at about 2s. 6d. by the Left Book Club, a great many Freethinkers have not. That is a matter for sheer common sense. I know also that very few of them would bother to check up on such statements. That also is a matter for sheer common sense.

Finally, on my "weird conclusion," I do not propose to take that up here. This is not an evasion since, with your kind indulgence, Sir, it makes a subject for another article for "The Freethinker," and it may be that Mr. Ridley will take up the endgels with me again . . . who knows?—Yours, etc.,

FRANCIS I. GOULD.

**LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.**

**LONDON—OUTDOOR**

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

**LONDON—INDOOR**

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, April 5, 7 p.m.: General Meeting—To Discuss the Future Policy of the Circle.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W.1).—Monday, April 4, 7 p.m.: "Psychology and the Problems of Peace," 3rd Lecture by Prof. J. C. FLUGEL, B.A., D.Sc.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Mystery of Cruelty," Mr. S. K. RATCLIFFE.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Psychology and Crime," Mr. BRIAN S. J. SPIKES.

**COUNTRY—INDOOR**

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Negro Problem of the United States," Dr. JOSEPH MITCHELL (League of Coloured Peoples).

**COUNTRY—OUTDOOR**

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

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Messrs. WINTER, WHITAKER and BARKER.

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

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