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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Rome and Reason

IN a series of articles published in these pages some little time back, we traced the evolution of the Papacy and of the Roman Catholic Church, of which it is the leader, from its origins down to the present day. Obviously, the subject is so vast that it was quite impossible to do justice to all aspects in such a short series: it would require the ample scope, the product of unlimited leisure of a Gibbon or a Buckle, even to attempt a full-length study of that vast historic canvas represented by so many-sided an institution as the Papacy.

Accordingly, in our series of articles, soon to be issued as a pamphlet, we confined ourselves in the main to the sociological and political aspects of the problem, and touched only incidentally upon the purely theological and philosophical aspects of Catholicism.

What was pardonable, and indeed, inevitable in a pamphlet, would be one-sided and ridiculous in a more extended treatment of that influential and complex institution the Roman Catholic Church, "militant here on earth" (very much so at present), for Rome represents a totalitarian theocracy which touches human life and society at practically every point.

We would stress a fundamental aspect of the problem which is, too, often ignored in discussions of the subject in anti-Catholic circles. Not only is the Church of Rome a totalitarian institution, but in strict fact, the only totalitarian institution that exists in our contemporary world.

For secular "total" states, whether of the Left or Right, Fascist, Communist or Monarchical, are only conceived by even their most ambitious supporters as totalitarian within the limits of present human experience. Fascist States only legislate for this world, and Communist States claim, in theory, to be only temporary makeshifts until the State itself finally "withers away" as predicted by the theoretical masters and prophets of Communism, Marx, Engels and Lenin.

The Church of Rome on the other hand suffers from no such inhibitions in time or space. For Rome is totalitarian in the literal sense of that it alone claims to include, and to dominate the total scheme of things. Rome legislates for Eternity as well as for time; and she represents not only "The ghost of the Roman Empire," but that empire extended spatially and to include all time and all existence. For unlike the Buchenwalds and Dachaus of a secular despotism, the concentration camps of the Vatican are eternal and death only intensifies their rigours. Such, according to Catholic Philosophy, is "the perfect society," the Church of Rome.

* Thomas Hobbes.

From the above definition we may logically deduce this further and sequential one. Since the Vatican claims to dominate ultimately all forms of human existence it necessarily includes that very important aspect of human society, Reason. For it is again often ignored by its opponents that the Church of Rome, far from being officially "anti-rational" and professedly obscurantist, professes, in theory and irrespective of whatever it may do in fact, to be a strictly Rationalist body, in fact, the only one in existence.

In the vast corpus of Catholic theology the entire Universe, from its supposed Creator to the depths of the Inferno are duly catalogued, ticketed, and analysed in a manner the precision of which no government department could possibly surpass in temporal affairs.

According to Catholic Philosophy as interpreted by St. Thomas Aquinas and his fellow "Doctors of the Church," the Universe is a vast network of rational relations, of which God is the centre, and to which the Vatican alone possesses the key. One must add that the logic which binds together this network is usually good. It is not in its deductions, but in its historical and philosophical premises that Rome leaves itself wide open to attack, and parts company decisively with historical and scientific reality.

As Joseph McCabe observed many years ago in his fascinating ecclesiastical autobiography¹ one must get out of one's head the idea that Rome presents herself to the world as a conscious *alternative* to human reason, and that she produces miracles with the same facility as a conjurer produces rabbits out of a hat. Far from such being the case, Rome prides herself upon her intellectual credentials. Conscious irrationalism—that is, the doctrine that Reason is unnecessary in matters of faith, known in Roman theology as Fideism—was formally condemned at the Vatican Council of 1870, and is now consequently "heretical." The official doctrine now is that Reason must precede Faith.

As for "miracles," far from rushing to welcome them, Rome has always displayed the greatest caution in according official recognition to them. Neither Fatima, Loretto, nor even Lourdes, have ever been officially endorsed by Rome as part of its doctrine obligatory on all the Faithful (i.e., *De Fide*). Not only are individual Catholics free to reject such "miracles," but, in theory, Rome could drop the lot to-morrow, and would be technically unaffected by future proofs of their fraudulent character.

So "rationalistic" in theory is Rome that it even extends its universal network of formal logic to include not only the Creation, but the Creator as well. For God, in Catholic "Natural Theology" is conceived as an absolute Monarch, but not as a capricious despot. He, too, is subject, if not to reason at least to logic, and is officially defined in Aristotelian Logic as "Pure Act,"

¹ "Twelve Years in a Monastery."

that is, as a Being who is already everything that he can be, in whom there are no limitations and, in consequence, no unfulfilled potentialities: the "Unmoved Mover," as Catholic Philosophy, again quoting Aristotle, defines the Deity. So far is Rome from being professedly irrational, that it conceives not only the material and intellectual universe, but equally the supposed author of all in terms of formal logic.

Incidentally, one of the really bad slips in logic of which Catholic theology is guilty, is to be found in the famous motto of the Jesuits, "Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam" ("To the greater glory of God"). This is, of course, purely heretical, for obviously a Being who is "Pure Act," i.e., who is already everything that he can be—cannot logically have more, or less glory, or, indeed, anything else, at one time than at another; there are no degrees in Omnipotence.

All of which was eloquently pointed out by the Dominican opponents of the Jesuits when Ignatius Loyola first founded his famous Order. But the influence of the Jesuits has been too powerful, even for logic.

The marked peculiarity of the Church of Rome is, in fact, its two entirely different religious systems for, respectively, its educated and uneducated adherents. To the educated it offers the subtle, logical and pseudo-rationalist philosophy noted above. Whilst for the ignorant masses it has the elaborate system of gaudy ritual, hell-fire, thinly veiled sorcery, and the unveiled superstition of its showpieces, such as Lourdes, Fatima and the rest of the priestly circus.

Like an expert juggler, Rome plays alternatively with these systems in accordance with the changing nature of the times; no doubt the Vatican would justify itself by the injunction of the Apostle to be "all things to all men."

Freethinkers will find it of advantage to study all these aspects of their major enemy, for Rome is undoubtedly that. It is the fashion nowadays in some circles to decri Bradlaugh as being "out of date." And no doubt, Bradlaugh as an evolutionist would have been the first to admit that his ideas were not eternal in changing world. But one prediction of Bradlaugh is becoming more obvious every day; that the final struggle will be between Rome and Reason, or, to be more technically precise, between the Church-controlled "Reason" of Roman theology, and the autonomous secular reason of Atheistic Philosophy.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE DUPLICITY OF RELIGION

THE development of what is known as Existentialism is a good illustration of the evasiveness and duplicity of religion. We have long been accustomed to arguments or claims as to what is true religion; what is true Christianity; and now we have the question as to what is true existentialism.

Existentialism, as that of Kierkegaard, was originally religious. Regarding philosophy as wisdom after the event, and nothing to do with any particular event, it was a revolt against reason, prophesying tribulation and disaster. It was also a revolt against clericalism and a protest of the freedom of the individual. With consideration of æsthetic, moral and so-called spiritual values, it was an emotional appeal for a return to faith, in self-realisation in service of God. It was theological, not philosophical, emotional, not rational, based upon intensity of feeling.

Now, there are two kinds of existentialism, the religious, as of Jaspar and Marcel, and the atheistic, as of Heidegger and Sartre; thus exemplifying a paradoxical duplicity, and the old Greek idea that nature is a paradox. We are both individual and social animals, and the social contradictions give a basic duplicity in the individuals, even in the language in which we think. Like the word "humanism" the term "subjectivity" has two meanings, expressing a diversity of feelings in divided loyalties, so that action presupposes a choice of possibilities in conflicting feelings.

The notion of a spiritual conflict for the possession of the soul, the anxieties, the agonies, become the "anguish" of the atheistic philosophical existentialism; and the emotional, æsthetic and moral aspect is put over in novels and plays. The transition is somewhat intriguing. How does a non-scientific, non-philosophical theological doctrine become an atheistic philosophic doctrine? The denial of God should remove even the theology, but what then can be left?

Discarding science as abstract and dealing only with probabilities Sartre's existentialism gives the "immediate sense of one's self" as the only certitude.* Rejecting what is demonstrable and accepting what is not, it goes back beyond the metaphysicians, beyond Descartes *cogito, ergo sum*, back to the theological Scholastic concern for existence and essence in Being; what ever these words may mean. In thus going back, it becomes metaphysical and even theological in its terms and methods, and it demands certitude and guidance, but gives none except feeling and its expression in action.

So, while professing to begin with the immediate sense of self, in fact, it begins with all the vagary and duplicity involved in the theological concept of the soul. But the existentialists were not the only ones in revolt; there were others who were not theological, but philosophical in their revolt. Religion comes into it, for it is said that Schopenhauer was influenced by the Vedanta and Nietzsche, by the Avestas. Emotion is there in the escape from pain, and also in the madness of genius. So also æsthetics, for Schopenhauer sought pleasures in art, and Nietzsche found passion in music. There is "subjectivity" in the Superman as well as in Kierkegaard's Knight of Faith.

The notion of suffering, agony, anguish, pain what ever word, how ever defined as a basic moral concept, is not new; it is traditional in Christianity, in all religions; and the infliction of pain as a moral corrective is a universal practice. And the æsthetic aspect, in the Devil Dances, the Mysteries, the Miracle Plays and Morality Plays, is also customary; with notions of right and wrong, expressing emotion and cultivating feelings—sentiments, passions. The subjectivity is there in the casuistical condemnation; in the declamation of sex, and of the mammon of unrighteousness, and the seven deadly sins; with conscience as the still small voice of God.

If all this shows a basic duplicity in man it also shows it in religion. God is a magnified soul and either God or soul is justification; so we have a mystical self-assertion and a logical self-contradiction; a justification for self-assertion in authority, with submission and discipline; and also for a revolt against tyranny in the exercise of authority; with God as the Voice of Authority and the soul as a Voice crying in the Wilderness. One can appreciate Sartre's idea that God is excuse, and without God as excuse we are responsible for our actions.

* "Existentialism and Humanism" by Jean-Paul Sartre.

But, if man is "at first nothing," he "invents himself" and is liable to "self-deception," and "anguish disappears" in self-realisation in action, where is the certitude of self, and what of the idea that subjectivity is truth? This sense of ones self is as transient and fantastic as the soul. Man is "freedom" yet is "condemned to choose" and is "responsible." Free! from what? Condemned! by whom? Responsible! to whom? Himself? It would be as well to realise that the self or soul is as much theological fiction as is God; as much theological doctrine.

One can appreciate a philosophical problem but here we seem to have a theological doctrine without a God. For here we have, not scientific or metaphysical abstraction but theological fantasy.

H. H. PREECE.

DOLLAR DIVINITY

MOST American imports, the world being in the crazy state it is, we cannot do without. Others we can well dispense with. They include bad films, pulp magazines and—Messiahs. One of the latter has recently turned up in London (which, he modestly assured the Press, he last visited some 1900 years ago), and started to expound his gospel from the humble squalor of an eighty-five pounds a week hotel suite.

Such prophets sprout like weeds in the United States. Perhaps it has something to do with the atmosphere, for they shoot up into the light more frequently in California than anywhere else. It is not long since the preposterous Ainee McPherson ceased to put over her ludicrous mixture of Goldwyn Girls and God; and Father Divine's soul-saving business is no nearer the bankruptcy courts than it was.

By all accounts, the new Messiah, Krishna Venta, is also making it pay. But he should watch his step. Sometimes even the prophets get found out, and when they do they find the American Police peculiarly unsusceptible to Heavenly influences. Joe Jeffers, for instance, self-styled "Prophet of Jahweh," found himself in jail after years of high-pressure revivalism. So did Arthur L. Bell, another allegedly Heavenly visitant.

Jeffers started his brunch of the business in 1935, when he founded what he called Kingdom Temple in Los Angeles. Rabidly anti-Jewish, he managed to collect a motley flock of neurotics who seemed quite unperturbed by a morals charge brought against him and his wife in 1939. More than 200 of his followers wept, laughed, prayed and waved Bibles when he was acquitted.

Nor were they unduly shaken when Joe was sentenced to four years in the Atlanta Penitentiary for stealing a car. He served only 17 months, and was soon back in Los Angeles thumping the tub for the Lord as the "Son of Jahweh, Ruler of the Universe." His jail sentence had apparently produced some promotion in the ranks of the Fleet.

He assured his followers that he was expecting a divine gift of some 5 billion dollars as a reward for his services on earth, and on the strength of this succeeded in collecting enough non-divine dollars to buy a 32-room mansion in Laurel Canyon and an 823-acre ranch near Palm Springs. There his followers upset the neighbours by shouting at nights for Jahweh to rain down dollars on them, and Joe found himself in court again on grounds of disturbing the peace.

Then another very material blow fell on the Son of Jahweh. His ex-wife sued him for alimony. Announcing

in court that he had only one dollar and fifty-three cents for himself, Joe tried to explain away his other possessions by pushing the title deeds on to his Heavenly Father. "Jahweh," he said, "has all the automobiles in the world. He can use them any time he wants."

"We have been in communication with Jahweh for years," he went on, "and in the back of my head is a two-way radio set. I used to talk to him. It is two-way, you see, 'Jah' going out to Orion and 'Weh' coming back to me. We know everything President Truman does because Huey Long covers the White House for us." The court was unimpressed, and Joe was sent to jail as a parole violator.

This shook the faith of some of his flock. Nine of them brought a civil action against him to recover more than fifty-five thousand dollars allegedly due to them for the failure of Jahweh to reimburse them for donations to his son.

Arthur L. Bell of Sacramento was equally unlucky in his relations with the terrestrial powers. In 1934 he named himself the messiah of a movement called Mankind United, which, he claimed, was formed in 1875 by nameless individuals designated as "The Sponsors." These immortals were possessed of miraculous powers. They had machines which could pop eyes out at 100 miles range and mystic powers capable of stopping aircraft in flight and melting steel at 30 miles.

As the chosen disciple of these wonder-workers, Bell collected more than 3 million dollars from the devout in less than seven years. Then, once again, the Law reared its ugly head and produced trouble in Paradise. Shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbour, Bell and 16 of his associates were accused of conspiring to violate war-time sedition laws. The Sponsors gave no divine assistance, and Bell and eleven of his disciples were sentenced to five years imprisonment.

Guy W. Ballard, who founded the "Great I Am" movement in 1930, after a conference with "St. Germain" on the slopes of Mount Shasta, collected an estimated half-million followers and enough wealth to live like a king before his death in 1939. His powers, so he claimed, were derived from a mysterious force called K-17, which had once enabled him to destroy a fleet of enemy submarines bent on attacking the United States.

But K-17 did not keep Ballard out of the courts. He and 24 members of the cult were charged with using the U.S. mails to defraud, but the Supreme Court threw out the indictment and Mrs. Ballard and her son were able, after Ballard's death, to continue with their "mission of immortality." A well-paying mission it is too. "Great I Am" followers recently purchased a palatial estate in Denver.

The latest Messiah seems to fit easily into the pattern established by his predecessors. He eats meat yet forbids his followers to harm grass. He wears a powder-blue robe and a beard and says that he has been around, in one form or another, for a few thousand years. He is also well supplied with cash. There is no doubt of his qualifications as a prophet of the lunatic fringe.

England, however, is not California. We suggest to Mr. Venta that he goes back to his native shores, where business is brisker and heads lighter. We suggest, in short, that he is one American export which the Americans can keep for themselves.

L. R. FLETCHER.

ACID DROPS

Already suggestions as to how the Bible should be treated in the forthcoming new translation are pouring in. The ex-Bishop of Barking, Dr. Inskip, for example, wants the long and boring "genealogies" which encumber Holy Writ to be completely deleted as well as the various regulations for controlling sacrifices, offerings, etc., in the Temple.

The "Church Times" thinks this is a most "dangerous suggestion," and we are bound to agree. Thus to tamper with God's Revelation to man wherein can be found everything—and in no other book—necessary for his complete salvation and his conduct in the Other World is horrible to contemplate. Every word, every comma, in the Word of God is precious, and should be preserved. May the Lord help the translators in keeping the Bible completely undefiled from infidel suggestions!

How broad-minded a truly believing Catholic can be! For example, an anxious enquirer asks the "Universe" if he can possess an antique Buddhist bronze? Why, of course, is the hearty answer. And as proof of his great tolerance, Dr. Messenger points out that he himself uses "as a Sanctus bell at Mass, a bell which originally came from a pagan temple in Burma." But—and this is most important—"it has of course been duly blessed." Perhaps the pagan fountain pen a good Catholic uses for writing, or the pagan box of matches he uses for his pipe, should also be blessed.

The impact of religion on life is so great that when a reporter of the Birmingham "Sunday Mercury" asked six people at random, "What are you giving up for Lent?" he got three blank stares as a result. All the same, if he had got six, nobody would have been surprised. The world goes on exactly the same whether people give everything or nothing up for Lent, or to the Salvation Army's Self Denial Week, or even never go to church. It is a wicked, wicked world.

The Pope does not like the modern trend of reducing the temperature of Hell fire, and we are not surprised that he has urged his priests to preach more about it. After all, the threat of Hell is one of the ways of "recalling Man to God," beside being one of the Church's most important weapons to, as Burns put, "keep the wretch in order." The description of Hell and its torments has exercised the minds of religious philosophers for centuries, and some famous books have been published—including some for children. We have, however, never seen an answer to that old question, where is the geographical location of this material fire?

Protestants have often complained that they have no freedom in Roman Catholic Spain, and that they suffer disabilities in regard to burial, marriage and schools. But Dr. R. Pattee (National Catholic Welfare) settles the question, or does he? He says that there are 165 Protestant Churches in Spain, he adds that the number of Protestant schoolchildren is so small that there is no justification for a separate school system; and finally, in almost every town and village a cemetery is provided for all non-Catholics!

A galaxy of stars will be used in the latest effort of the Church World Service to call Americans to an all out religious revival. Not only will President Truman be asked to broadcast, but many Hollywood lights also, including Gregory Peck, Ida Lupino and Robert

Montgomery. It is hoped that 76,000 churches will take a collection of £3 million the day after 1,000 broadcasting stations have completed the "softening up" process.

The Rev. E. Thorpe complains that there is not one spiritual leader in the Church to-day, and most of the Archbishops seem to be more interested in Town Planning or Housing. "It is a sad commentary," said the Rev. Mr. Thorpe "that social problems should take precedence over spiritual values." It is obvious that the Archbishops have realised how out of touch with the masses the Church has been, and they realise that this interest in social problems will show better dividends than "spiritual values." Church leaders know only too well what the choice would be to an offer of a Council house or a mansion in Heaven.

When it comes to "miracles" one immediately thinks of Roman Catholics, particularly when the "miracles" have to do with flowers. Unless we are very much mistaken, Mrs. O. Muir, a Tavistock authoress, is a Catholic, or at least, her miracle has all the earmarks of Catholic treatment. It appears she bought three tulips, (no doubt a magic number), two of these changed colour when placed before a painting of "The Madonna and the Babe." Of course there are the usual number of independent witnesses who saw the tulips before they changed. It seems that one can always find witnesses for this kind of thing. It would, however, have been more according to rule had a priest been included among the witnesses—this seems to be a sad omission on the part of Mrs. Muir.

It appears that the world is getting just a little sceptical about miracles, and performing flowers, and flowering thorns, which really cut little ice in the face of atom bombs and supersonic aircraft. Even children behaved like "little savages" when they saw a film scene of Lazarus being raised from the dead recently; in fact the laughter was so loud and long that the Rev. J. Cole painted a very black picture of the future, for he said, "these children will soon be running our local affairs. Everything from teeth to toupees is given them by the generous hand of the State." What Lazarus had to do with teeth or toupees is a mystery, perhaps he did not have any.

The Rev. A. Hardie describes as absurd the existence of seven different churches in Hexham, particularly as there are "not many Christians about." He pleads for unity and says that the division of forces is an offence against God "for the Lord's own prayer has been that his followers should unite." What an optimist. If there is one thing Christians cannot agree upon it is Christianity and in the past they quite cheerfully burnt each other for the greater glory of God—about whom they could not agree. It is too late to speak of unity, the Churches have been found out and people prefer to go to Hell or Heaven in their own fashion.

We have often quoted newspapers' references to the Bible and Prayer Book as "best sellers," and to people who are prone to accept everything they see in print as "gospel." Lord Eldon admitted that it has long been recognised that in backward areas books must be sold at below cost and the "United Society for Christian Literature" subsidises the publication of Bibles and Prayer Books in every Continent. These conditions must make every publisher green with envy, but the idea that God's Word has to be almost given away does not square with the prevailing idea that people are clamouring for it.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving us long notice as possible.

SUGAR PLUMS

A biography of the late Winnington Ingram, the Bishop of London, will shortly appear, and from extracts given in the "Church Times" a great deal is made of his "campaign" against "Secularists." It was early in his career that he came into contact with Freethought and from the accounts he gave later, all implicitly believed in by his clerical biographer, alone he met the full blast of blatant infidelity in Victoria Park. He got the very small band of the faithful to sing the "Old Hundredth"—the noise (he called it the "extraordinary noise") thus attracting a small crowd. Winnington Ingram then put forward—for us the stale—old tale of the "Christian Faith." As these tactics, on his own admission, utterly failed, he "found it better to advance to the Secularist's platform and ask leave to answer what he said." And it will interest readers to learn that Winnington Ingram actually admits that, in spite of the "scoffing and open unbelief" with which he charges the Secularists in Victoria Park, he was "always courteously allowed" to reply on our platforms.

We have no need to remind readers who remember those stirring old days in Victoria Park at the beginning of the century, that the courtesy Winnington Ingram received was from the Editor of this journal, then making his mark in the movement—if a colleague is allowed to say so—and a reputation as a lecturer and debater second to none. "Those were the days" indeed, and their like may never be seen again. We should add that, in actual fact, Ingram's campaign did not last long, but when he left he received a beautiful cabinet subscribed for not only by his Christian followers but, he adds, "his secular opponents" as well—"as they said he had always treated them in a gentlemanly way." This exchange of courtesies may surprise most of the old ladies who subscribe to the "Church Times" and who imagine a Secularist as a blaspheming old monster.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. are on the air again in the Car Park, Broadway, every Sunday evening at 7 p.m. during the open-air season. The Branch Chairman Mr. H. Day, will be the speaker for this evening, and other speakers will be announced in the "Lecture Notices" column. Branch members are asked to attend the Annual General Meeting in the Council Room of the Mechanic's Institute on Friday, April 15th, at 7-30 p.m.

Mr. J. Clayton has had to restrict his lecture engagements owing to illness at home, but he never misses an opportunity and on Wednesday, April 13, he will address the Barrowford Women's Guild at 7-30 p.m. on "Ghosts." We wish him and the ladies a successful evening, and a speedy return to good health at home.

The North London Branch has no opening or closing date for its open-air work. Its season lasts twelve months of each year and Mr. L. Elbury is the hurdy speaker. Mr. J. G. Lupton gave some valuable platform assistance until a severe illness overtook him. We wish him a speedy recovery and a warm welcome back to our platform. Good speakers with a genuine love for Freethought and the movement are not very plentiful.

ATHEISM OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

VISHNUGUPTA CHANAKYA, the chief minister of Chandragupta Maurya, was nicknamed Kautilya, "the Crooked," and in modern phraseology, he has been called, the Indian Machiavelli. But by whatever adjective one may describe his political ideology, straight or crooked, moral or immoral, there is no doubt that he was a mastermind, a highly intellectual man, well-versed in Indian philosophy. In talking about it, he says that in reality there are only two systems of philosophy, the Sāṅkhya or the Categorical school of Kapila, and the Lōkāyata or the "This-Worldly" system of Brihaspati. He ignores Vedānta or the Monistic school of Vyasa, and does not consider any other school, orthodox or heterodox, as worth mentioning.

Now the two systems that he approves of, are both openly and blatantly atheistic, the latter the more so, in whatever sense we may take the word atheistic. What is more, these two form the basis of most of the other schools, not excepting Buddhism and Jainism. If theism be defined as a belief in the existence of a Supernatural Intelligent Being, who creates this universe out of nothing, both the souls and the bodies, then no school of Indian philosophy can escape the charge of atheism. For it is a basic principle of all Indian thought, philosophic or religious, that nothing can come out of "Nothing." *Ex nihilo nihil fit*. A thing either exists or it does not. If it exists, then it has existed from all eternity, and will continue to exist, may be in a changed form, to all eternity. It is an axiom, which is accepted by all, the truth of which nobody doubts. It is the acceptance of this premise, which fundamentally divides the Indian religions from the Western or Semitic religions. The "Ishwara," whose existence is assumed by the Nyāya and by some other minor schools, is not a Creator in the real and Western sense of the word. He is called "Kartār" only in the sense of a maker out of pre-existing materials of this universe, not once for all, but from time to time, in the same way as a potter or a carpenter manufactures his goods. And this *Srishti* or Creation takes place automatically, in spite of Himself, at stated periods, under the urge of *Karma*, which remains unrequited at the end of a previous *Srishti*. He is only

an agent, a particular soul, one out of an infinitude of souls; "*Purusha visesha Isvarah*. Or He is a soul, who has reached perfection, which other souls have not. All these ideas are far from theism properly so called.

Vedānta or the monistic school, predicates the existence, of one only being, of a something neutral, "That" or "It," and not of a Person, "He" or "She." This something called Brahm, we may as well call it X or Y, is a bundle of abstract notions only. It is "sat-chit-anand," or existence, consciousness and bliss; not a Person existing, conscious and blissful. This spiritual monism of Vedānta differs from the material monism of the Western science, not more than, if looking at a curved line from one side, we call the curve "convex," and looking from the other side, call it "concave." Clearly Vedānta is not Theism, nor Brahm *Theos* or God.

Sāṅkhya is the direct antithesis of Vedānta. For it, the universe is not a delusion (*māyā*) and a sport (*lila*), but a reality with a Substance (*prakriti*) underlying it. Out of this Substance, the universe evolves as a matter of necessity. This evolution is a continuous mechanical process, albeit directed towards no definite purpose.* Mind (*mana*), Reason (*buddhi*) and Self-consciousness (*ahankar*), evolve out of this Substance, and do not form part of the Soul (*Purusha*), an entity apart from *Prakriti*. There is no Universal Soul, but an infinite number of individual Souls. All activity pertains to Substance; Soul is absolutely passive; like a mirror, it only reflects the workings of Substance, and that constitutes its bondage.

There is no room in this system for a Creator and Maintainer of the universe. "The existence of God is not proved," says one aphorism or sutra (*Isvara-asiddhe*). The later expositors, not content with this bare statement, enter into long arguments to prove that no such thing as God exists.

But the great importance of the system lies in the fact, that it furnishes, all the psychology and cosmology that there is, for the other systems to build their superstructures on.

Jainism accepts all the premises of Sāṅkhya, and expounds the idea of Soul which it finds inherent in every atom of Substance, only with a varying number of senses attached to it in different bodies. Jainism is avowedly atheistic.

Buddhism goes a step further; it drops the superfluous idea of Soul, as a separate entity. "Anatta" (no Soul), was the great truth added by the Buddha, after his enlightenment, to the two previously established *Anitya* (Transitory) and *Dukha* (Misery). The idea of a Universal Soul, which after all is only an expansion of the idea of Individual Soul, automatically disappears, and out goes with it, the idea of a Personal Supreme God, if it ever existed. Buddhism is not agnostic, as some people say; it is down-right atheistic. No Indian thinker, worth the name, ever fought shy of any logical conclusions, to which his reasoning led him, and it is unimaginable in the case of an exalted personality like that of the Buddha. No "cowardly agnosticism" for him. It is said that when questioned about the existence of Paramātmā or God, he would turn his back on the questioner. It could not have been for the reason that he could not, or did not want to answer, but that he considered it worthless to enter into controversy on the question based, to him, on such colossal ignorance. For

* A later-day Vedantin, Pandit Nischaldas, says bluntly that the Universe comes into being, when Brahm "wills to make a fool of himself": "Marzi jabe jabhk maran ki hoi."

his compassionate Self it was enough for all practical purposes, to know that all the misery of this transitory world arose from the primal urges (*vāsna*) of hunger and sex, and of self-assertiveness in man, and that to remove the misery caused by them, it was necessary to restrict the opportunities for their play, and to cultivate mental and moral improvement in solitude. The spiritual discipline thus imposed, led to Yogic practices.

This was the Hinayāna, or the Smaller Vessel, to take the suffering humanity across the ocean of misery. The Mahāyāna, or the Greater Vessel, was launched forth, five hundred years later, by the saintly Nāgārjuna, in high hopes to meet the needs of the masses and to inspire them with a feeling of confidence and comfort. And although crewed by philosophers like Vasu-Bandhu, the Vessel carried by the undercurrents of superstition and sensuality, and driven by the strong gales of Hatha-yoga, went aground on rocks and came to grief.

Strange to say that the difference between the two sects was based on a refined sense of humanism. To the later philosophers, it appeared that "Buddhahood" was not the proper ideal for a person to strive for. It looked very much like enlightening oneself away out of the stream of life; it was narrowly self-centred, and not sufficiently altruistic for the good of this world. A higher ideal would be "Bodhi-Sattva," the Buddha-to-be, or a potential Buddha, who should throw himself into the stream of life, and return to this world, again and again, in order to save humanity.

The Lokāyata system provided a ceiling to atheistic thought. "You mix certain ingredients," said the Charvākya, and go through the process of brewing, and the intoxicating alcohol is the result." Your Self or Soul is just such a thing. It did not exist before, it had a beginning, it grew, and it gets diseased, decays and ends. Beyond the funeral pyre, there is no second life to look to, in another world (*Para-loka*), no punishment or rewards for the so-called sins and merits, committed or earned in this world. All ends with death. And as for this scarecrow of a God, it has been set up by the Brahmins for their own benefit. It exists no more than does a bogeyman, which we frighten little children with.

Your existence is confined to this world (*Loka*) and as such, you have to make the most and best of it, here and now. Mind these four words of advice (*chār-vāka*):—

- (a) Be a useful and moral member of the society;
- (b) Be a good neighbour;
- (c) Be loyal to the State;
- (d) Carry on self-culture, in the best way you can.

The name *chār-vāka* may also be the popular form of "chāru-vāka," meaning "that sweet-tongued fellow," a sobriquet, given ironically and derisively to the founder of the system, Brihaspati, for his blunt and forceful attacks on the popular religious ideas.

G. B. SINGH.

THERE WAS ONCE—

A PROSPECTOR. He spent his life looking for fine gold in the dried-up river beds of civilisation. Had he chosen to search along the rich, untrodden paths of nature—he might have found it. Instead—he found nothing but dirt.

A PURITAN. He wore dark glasses so that he should not see all the evil in the world. Striding abroad with eyes upturned to the heavens he exhorted everyone to look upward to the Light.

Had he troubled to look down as well, he might have discovered the cause of the nasty smell on his boots.

W. H. W.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE "OLD GANG"

Sir.—Mr. Archibald Robertson's statement in your issue of March 27 to the effect that the Communists are doing a better job in combating religion than "The old Bradlaugh gang" is false. Communism and Christianity are so similar in their aims and methods that one astute Tycoon, the Dean of Canterbury, is interested in promoting a merger.

To take a few points at random, what is "Ideology" but "Dogma" writ large? What is a "Purge" but "Excommunication" in brief. In what way does a liquidation of reactionaries differ from a massacre of heretics? What could be closer than "Deviation" and "Schism"? As a rabble-rousing emotive word is the communist "Warmonger" much different from the biblical "Whoremonger"? Is fraternal cant inferior to democratic cant? What is the difference between asserting that Jesus was born of a virgin and that Masaryk jumped out of the window, except perhaps that the former is the more credible? Freethinkers regard the doctrine of Papal Infallibility with contempt, but the only justification of the Communist's arrogation to himself of the right to silence dissent by imprisonment or death is an unexpressed but none the less genuine conviction of infallibility in no way different from the Pope's. A Communist could make a good Catholic, or vice versa, by merely learning different words for the same ideas.

Freethinkers, as the name implies, are primarily interested in ideas, and as a Freethinker I flatly deny that religious ideas which matter socially have anything to fear from Communism. If you don't believe it, watch the Red Dean.
—Yours, etc.,
W. E. NICHOLSON.

FREETHOUGHT AND COMMUNISM

Sir.—A leading Freethinker in this country said to me years ago: "What I dislike about Atheist Russia is that it is so religious." That, I suggest, is the flaw in Mr. Archibald Robertson's claim that the Communists are doing the job of Freethought, and doing it better than the Freethought Movement. Admittedly, the Churches are worried about Communism, and for a very good reason—because it is, in effect, a rival religion, complete with Bible (Marx's "Capital"), God (Karl Marx), Saints (Lenin, Stalin, and company), and even heretical sects who are damned by the orthodox (Trotsky, Tito). And the strict Party Line orthodoxy of the Kremlin bears a close resemblance in its methods to the Party Line orthodoxy of the Vatican at the time of the Inquisition. There are a lot of people on both sides of the fence who are trying to persuade us that there is only one possible choice for a Freethinker—lining up with the cohorts of the Kremlin or with the army of the Vatican and Wall Street. Some of us still believe that another alternative is possible—indeed, essential if the world is to progress. We dislike both of the contending parties equally, and we are resolved to refuse to bow to either. Surely the orthodox on both sides must realise that the "Third Force" does exist?—Yours, etc.,
JOHN ROWLAND.

FROM A CHRISTIAN BELIEVER

Sir.—Life is Life and Death is Death. Doctors tell us that a person begins to die the moment he is born. Millions have been born into this world dying or dead. I am grey, old, wrinkled, and dying. I have fought Father Time for 73 years, and I know I am losing. If ever I live it will be after I have died for I did not live before I was born, and I have been dying ever since. Why should I not live after death? Nature tells me that life follows death. Shortly I shall be setting potatoes and other seeds in the earth. Why? Because I know that if they die they will live again. If they don't die, they will perish. If I were not a victim of this time dimension, I would not grow old. I should get younger, more virile, more perfect. I die with all the rest of this groaning and travailing Planet because I am under a reign of death. Nature and Rational thinking teach me if Life does not come after death then I shall never know what Life is.—Yours, etc.,
TED SMITH.

SPIRITUALISM

Sir.—Mr. T. D. Smith asks why Atheists should give attention to Spiritualism ("The Freethinker," March 13). The answer, I believe, is that the phenomena of Spiritualism should be investigated scientifically by qualified research workers to ascertain their reality. The results may at some

future time be valuable to mankind; astrology and alchemy led to the acquisition of useful knowledge. Spiritualism may be useful in similar fashion in connection with unrecognised human faculties.—Yours, etc.,
WM. KEANE.

SUNDAY BELLS

The warm seal
Of silence splits,
As issues the
Angular peal
Of bells
On gathering wind,
Sound swollen.
Full travelled
From slum and steeple,
Street and square.
I hear it from my bed—
I love to hear it there!

—E. SCOTT PETRIE.

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 12th, 7 p.m.: "Do We Need a State Legal Service?" Mr. R. C. FITZGERALD, LL.B., F.R.S.A.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Collapse of Chinese Nationalism," Prof. G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Barrowford. (Women's Guild).—Wednesday, April 13th, 7-30 p.m.: "Ghosts," Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Council Room, Mechanics Institute).—Friday, April 15th, 7-30 p.m.: Annual General Meeting. All members are asked to attend.

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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JESUS WRITES TO JEHOVAH

DEAR FATHER,

I have the honour to report that I have been duly born of the virgin, Mary, according to your instructions.

Mother suffered great pain, that being the lot of women in labour, as laid down by you soon after the commencement of the world; when the mud-made man, instigated by the rib-made woman, disobeyed you by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Joseph, the man espoused to mother is not a distinguished person. He is a carpenter, and accustomed to hard work earning his living in the usual manner, that is, by the sweat of his brow, as decreed, but not enforced by you for all the human race. He has the average drinking habits of this region, and, partly due to this, our material circumstances are not of the best. Still, he is a loving kind of man, although gullible, and given to daydreaming. His worst habit is whistling, a shrill, peculiarly human noise, which exasperates me immensely when I am thinking of the eternal verities.

However, to return to the birth, this, I am obliged to say, was unpleasant to us both. In the first place, the midwife was late; being delayed by her desire zealously to observe the Sabbath before setting out on her visit. In the second place, she was not very clean, and there was no readily obtainable hot water. In fact, the supply of any kind of water is inadequate in Bethlehem. It used to be good and plenteous, that is, in the time of King David, for, when warring against the Philistines, he offered a large sum for a drink of it. A superstition became attached to it, however, on account of the fact that, on the water being brought to him, he refused to drink of it because it had, he said, been brought at the cost of brave men's lives. The courses have not since been kept in order.

I was, however, washed as well as the midwife considered suitable, and my body, especially around the thighs, wrapped in the usual infantine apparel. Then I was laid down in a box which Joseph had fashioned for a cradle after several abortive attempts. Dear Father, he is not a good carpenter!

Mother is very sweet and kind. She gives me, from her own body, an extremely delicious nectar which is quite common on earth. The cows have a larger supply but not so suitable for humans; both kinds are, however, subject to infection by germs of disease, but of this, men, as yet, know nothing.

Last night we had a visit from three supposedly wise men. They said they had seen my star in the east and had come to worship me. It is a wonder that they got through, for the roads are beset by soldiers of the emperor who do not allow free travel from beyond Judea.

I have had the usual nasty operation, circumcision. I did not enjoy it, and wondered if it was necessary. The priest took no notice of my protests, stiling my screams by stuffing my mouth with part of my swaddling clothes, which were a trifle sour, for they continuously get wet, which I am unable to prevent. A stone knife was used, and there was a lot of mess.

I do really appreciate that, as one deemed a descendant of Abram, this operation was desirable. You will remember that when he was ninety-nine you appeared to him and promised him that he should have a son by Sarai, and commanded that the child's name should be Isaac. You then showed him that from this son should spring great nations and kings, and that they should obtain all the land of Canaan by war, from Sidon

to Egypt, and that, in order to keep his posterity unmingled with others, each male offspring should be circumcised, and that this should be done on the eighth day after birth. Then Abram and all his family, and Ishmael, were immediately circumcised, the latter on his thirteenth birthday.

I have been named Jesus. It is a very common name. There were, inter alia, Jesus, the son of Nun, a great hero of our dear people; Jesus, the son of Joseduk, the High Priest; Jesus, son of Danneus; and there are many so named alive now. I understand the name has been given me because I am to redeem this people from their sins. This is a great task, but at present, owing to an uncomfortable napkin, I cannot quite see myself in the part.

Joseph had a peculiar dream recently, and he said that we were commanded to go into Egypt because Herod, the King, was jealous of me and was seeking to slay me. Fortunately, mother put her foot down and explained to Joe that she had first to be purified. This could not be completed until forty days from my birth (Leviticus XII). She had then to bring a firstling lamb, a young pigeon or turtle dove, for a sin offering unto the priest. She preferred this to be done in Jerusalem. Joseph gave way, and to Jerusalem we went, where, owing to our poverty, mother offered two turtle doves, without lamb.

Herod is now dead, and he died somewhat sordidly, for a fire glowed in him slowly, which did not so much appear to the touch outwardly, as it gave him pain inwardly, for it brought upon him a vehement appetite to eating which he could not avoid to supply with one sort of food or other. His entrails became ulcerated, and the chief violence of his pain lay in his colon; also an aqueous liquor settled about his feet, and a like matter afflicted him at the bottom of his belly. When he sat upright he had a difficulty of breathing, and his breath was loathsome. He had also convulsions in all parts of his body, and suffered from worms.

He may have been a bad man, father, but his end was very dreadful. Was it really a penalty for his sins? Numerous are the people here who are greatly afflicted; there are many halt and blind or suffering from infantile paralysis. I shall be healing some of these when I am old enough to go out alone. I understand I am to cast out devils, too. Where the devils are to go to when cast out is a major problem. I should like your detailed instructions about it. It is doubtful whether they could be at ease without a suitable host. Pigs are sufficiently like humans to provide a temporary abode, but their lives are so short that the demons would require continual re-housing. Are these creatures really immortal? Could you not destroy them?

I am looking forward to hearing from you, also to the many trials you have prepared, especially the being tempted in the wilderness when the devil is to show me all the kingdoms of the earth. Then there is my appearance before Pilate, my conviction, the crown of thorns, the crucifixion, my temporary death, and my resurrection, and the everlasting glory.

In the meantime I wish you could stop Joseph from snoring. I have tried tickling his feet, but it is no lasting cure.

I am, dear father,

Your dutiful son,

JESUS.

J. G. LUPTON.