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Price Threepence

IEWS AND OPINIONS

The Doctrine of the Trinity

WE live in a changing world, and even those doctrines which profess to deny change in favour of a static conception of Man and the Universe are forced to recognise that fact. The theory of evolution applied to ideas no less than to species, is to-day, playing havoc with Christianity in general, and in particular with Christian Theology. Anyone who compares the present-day writings of even fairly conservative theologians, with the theology of a century ago, cannot fail to observe this fact. The recent "Life of Jesus" by Professor J. C. Cadoux is a case in point.

Nowhere is this change in theological emphasis more evident than in relation to what was, in less critical ages, the most elaborate, fundamental, and central doctrine of Christianity, the cardinal dogma of the Holy and Undivided Trinity: "Three Persons and One God." for amongst the Reformed Churches the famous Doctrine is on its way out. Such influential modernist theologians as Bishop Barnes and Dr. Inge, may perhaps be able to square their theology subjectively with the Trinitarian Dogma of the Church to which they officially belong, but to an unprejudiced reader of their works, it does not seem at all clear how they reach this conclusion.

Only in the Roman Church is the old dogma still proclaimed with portentous solemnity, and such a devout Catholic State as Eire officially proclaims the doctrine in the First Article of its secular Constitution. But even Rome is unlikely to be able to keep her theological windows tightly shut against all infiltrations of modern thought indefinitely.

The Doctrine of the Trinity was not part of Primitive Christianity. In fact, Primitive Christianity had very little in the way of fixed theology. And it was not to be expected that it should have done so. For it is indisputable, whatever may have been the precise details, that Primitive Christianity started, and gained its first adherents amongst the "lower" classes of the Roman Empire, the illiterate slaves and "proletariat" of the great slave empire.

Christianity was founded, and its future assured, by the person, or persons, who hit upon the brilliant idea of transforming the Cross, the instrument of Roman terror which kept the slaves in subjection in this world, into the instrument of their (alleged) salvation in the next. It was a stroke of psychological genius, and it made the fortune of the new Oriental religion. As Dr. Faustus has reminded us in an immortal phrase: "in the beginning was the Act." In the history of religions, as in that of secular movements, action comes first: speculation comes later and belongs to a later generation.

This fact of universal application was also observed in relation to Christianity. Theology, which began with the Gnostics in the second century, only originated when the educated classes of the Pagan world began to come

into the Church, and it became necessary to state for their benefit, the tenets of the new religion in terms of the decadent theosophical culture of that age of growing pessimism and of intellectual decline. The Doctrine of the Trinity, the eventual culmination of this theosophical culture, was not finally evolved until the end of the fourth century, when it took shape in the famous "Athanasian" Creed in which the complicated phraseology of Greek Philosophy was utilised to give a scientific form to the pre-scientific ideas of essentially Pagan theology, a theology which would have been blasphemous or unintelligible to the original Jewish founders of Christianity.

As is common knowledge, Christianity became the official creed of the Western World during the fourth century when there was completed that memorable counter-revolution which eliminated the secular classical culture of antiquity in favour of the new esoteric mystery—religion from the East. The self same period saw the end of the internal theological conflict between Trinitarian and Unitarian (Arian) theology inside the Christian Church itself. At the Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (A.D. 325), Athanasius of Egypt carried the day with his affirmation that the Father and the Son are "consubstantial, co-equal, and co-eternal." His chief opponent at the Council, the Unitarian theologian, Arius, died soon after under circumstances which suggested to his orthodox contemporaries the avenging hand of an outraged God. In 381, the Council of Constantinople completed the Dogma of the Trinity by adding the Third Person, the Holy Ghost. And soon after this latter date, the theologians of the Monastery of Lerins in Gaul, summarised the Trinitarian Dogma with meticulous precision in the famous "Athanasian Creed."

From which last date, the "mystery" of the Trinity, has been, and still remains to-day, the official doctrine of the Church "which except a man hath steadfastly and faithfully believed, he cannot be saved," as the Athanasian Creed expresses it without any ambiguity.

The creed appropriately named after St. Athanasius—who actually does not seem to have written it, at least in its present form—defines a mystical Oriental Theosophy in Greek philosophical terminology of a precision which contrasts most incongruously with the "mystery" upon which it expatiates in such detail: we recall the more modern gibe that Herbert Spencer and his followers sometimes talked about their postulate of the "Unknowable" with as much familiarity as if it were the man next door.

Actually, the famous creed represented a compromise between the Jewish Unitarianism with which Christianity started, and the Pagan polytheism of the non-Jewish peoples "converted" to Christianity. Hence the peculiar arithmetic: 3=1. But the actual language of the creed is decidedly favourable to polytheism rather than to monotheism: for example, "And in this Trinity none is before or after, none is greater or less, but all

three Persons are co-eternal one with another and co-equal." Any Pagan accustomed to the numerous polytheistic Trinities from India to Egypt, would recognise such language.

What are the origins of this famous Dogma which has imposed itself upon the thought of the Western world for fifteen centuries? It has been customary to trace it, according to the methodology of the science of Comparative Religions, from the older trinities of the Egyptian Osiris—Isis—Horus, or even from the still existing Indian, Brahma—Vishnu—Siva. And, of course, the adherents of such a theory are entitled to the relevant observation that St. Athanasius, its titular author, was an Egyptian, and thus himself a native of the ancient home of Divine Trinities.

However, it is a fundamental assumption of critical thought that it is always rash to advance speculative explanations when historical ones are readily available. And in the case under consideration, there is a perfectly satisfactory explanation in the secular history of the era in question. As and when viewed from this angle the Doctrine of the Trinity merely represents the transfer of the secular government of the Roman Empire from this world to the next. The "three in one" and "one in three" represent merely the several Roman Emperors who ruled the Empire in the fourth century: politics transferred, so to speak, into theology.

For at the end of the third century, the Emperor Diocletian (283-305) reorganised the administration of the then declining Roman Empire, and divided the Imperial office between several emperors. Under his successors, the number rose at one point to seven. But two or three was the usual number: in 381, when the Council of Constantinople defined the Dogma of the Trinity, it was actually three.

Moreover, these "Emperors of the East and West" were "co-equal and co-eternal," in the fulsome court language of the epoch. And their rule extended in theory equally over the entire Empire. The analogy between Earth and Heaven is complete: earth preceded heaven, and the Godhead and its divisions were modelled on the actual Imperial office here below.

The old English philosopher, Thomas Hobbes, once declared in a famous phrase: "The Papacy is the ghost of the Roman Empire sitting crowned on the grave thereof." But actually, "the ghost of the Roman Empire" was not confined to Rome: it extended to Heaven.

F. A. RIDLEY.

A TRANSATLANTIC ICONOCLAST

MR. BARROWS DUNHAM'S *Man Against Myth* (Muller, 1948, 10s. 6d.) is a stimulating, if at times, exasperating work. This volume is lucidly written and its author is uncompromising in opinion, whether concerning spiritual or temporal themes. He is as pronounced a Rationalist as Mark Twain himself and is unsparing in his criticism of the lies, shoddies and shams of contemporary political and religious life. Indeed, many assumptions commonly regarded as beyond dispute, he incontinently relegates to the realms of mythology.

One of these alleged myths is the generally accepted assertion that human nature is unchangeable. "This ancient platitude," Dunham observes, "might long ago have been relegated to a home for superannuated ideas were it not so constantly useful. It has been

voiced by a motley congregation of sinners and saints. . . Everyone has said it, many have believed it, few have understood it." Penal reform, a more equitable distribution of national wealth and scores of other reforms have been obstructed by those who plead the immutability of human nature. Various instances are advanced, even of men of superior intellect, who have been bemused by this misconception. That all our motives and actions are fundamentally self-regarding seems obvious, but it makes a profound difference to society if our conduct is the product of purely selfish considerations instead of being inspired by a determination to extend the benefits enjoyed by a few to the service of the long-suffering many.

Despite human stupidity against which Schiller assures us the gods themselves fight in vain, immense improvements in social life have arisen in the past 300 years. As Dunham claims: "Men have seldom been more universally ignorant as they were in the Middle Ages, when the victims of disease were treated according to astrology and the vicissitudes of life were attributed with equal improbability to the influence of saints, on the one hand, and of demons, on the other. Yet man has contrived to emerge, at least partially, from this state and to produce the science and technology of the modern world."

It is urged that apart from competition, civilisation, such as it is, would descend to complete paralysis. But our author avers that if this were so, the Soviet State would have collapsed long since, as its critics predicted that it must. Yet, competition has certainly not been completely eliminated, even in Russia, as the recent dismissal or disgrace of scientists and State officials makes evident.

Again, Herbert Spencer is severely censured for coining and applying the term *survival of the fittest* to human society. He cites Spencer's *Social Statics* as follows: "It is much better that the ruminant animal when deprived by age of the vigour which made existence a pleasure, should be killed by some beast of prey, than that it should linger out a life made painful by infirmities, and eventually die of starvation." Our author furnishes no answer to this obvious truth. That a ruthless struggle for existence has led to the evolution of higher types, both of plants and animals, is demonstrated by the fossil record of the sedimentary rocks. Also Spencer's contention that the adaptation of organisms to their environment points to "a far-reaching benevolence," was urged while he was still a Theist, while his devastating dismissal of the design argument in his later *Principles of Biology* when he had become an Agnostic, shows how far he had advanced. Indeed, Spencer observes in his *Autobiography* that but for ill-health and other work, all Theistic implications in his essay on *Education* would have been expunged, and doubtless this would also have occurred with his earliest volume, *Social Statics*. It is, however, creditable to Dunham that much as he detests what he deems Spencer's harsh conclusions, that he notes that "Spencer's honesty about himself is a very endearing trait. It is strange that these murderous theories are sometimes found in lovable men."

Dunham's chapter dealing with racial problems is excellent in every way. Anti-semitism is severely censured, and held up to contempt. The racial conflict between black and white in the U.S.A. is reprobated, while Nazi persecution and murder of "inferior" stocks are execrated. Nazi atrocities are recorded so appalling in character as to seem almost incredible. It is stated that near Maidanek, in Poland, buildings were erected in which members of "inferior" nationalities were daily

incinerated. These revolting crimes seem to have exceeded the most horrible excesses of the Inquisition itself. As the Russian armies moved westwards, the Nazis strove to conceal the evidence of their guilt. At first, the bodies of prisoners were buried, but as the Russians advanced, the corpses were thrust into ovens to reduce them to ashes. Initial difficulties of rapid disposal were overcome when Nazi experimenters "worked the oven heat to 1,500 degrees Centigrade, and the furnaces began to consume as many as 2,000 bodies in a day. In this manner no less than 1,500,000 people perished in Maidanek."

If racial animosity can thus degrade so many Nazis, other modern communities run grave risks of following in their footsteps. Well may Dunham declare that the atrocities of these noble Nordies transcend any ever recorded of Jews and Negroes, for he states, to these "Aryans" and all their insufferable kin, more rightly belongs the famous judgment of Jonathan Swift: "They are the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl on the face of the earth."

That there are two sides to every question, if they be only the right and the wrong, our author does not deny. But he urges objections to the principle of universal toleration which demand careful consideration. He recalls the general policy of wait and see, pursued by the Western World when Hitler was preparing his shameful aggressions which led to the humiliation of Munich and its sequel, the catastrophe of the Second World War.

The extinction of Fascism, Dunham justifies on the ground that a dispassionate study of its acts and principles reveals it as the unrelenting enemy of pure science and culture and, indeed, all we include in modern humanism. "It is a fact," he avers, "that Fascism destroys popular government and civil rights. It is a fact that Fascism abolishes independent trade unions and enormously increases the exploitation of labour. It is a fact that Fascism has one and only one foreign policy: world conquest." As Dunham notes, the freedom granted by the Social Democratic Party in Germany to the Nazis, enabled Hitler to poison and inflame the minds of the masses by means of oratory, pamphlets and other publications. Once in power, the Nazis promptly silenced all criticism. Freethought was penalised and the road made ready for the blood bath that cursed and impoverished Western Europe. Now, are the intolerant to be tolerated?

As a scientific Materialist our author treats with scorn the metaphysicians' contention that human consciousness creates and sustains the external world. The conclusions of Berkeley and other Solipsists, he contemptuously rejects. Like Herbert Spencer, he treats as the "insanities of idealism," the fantasies of Croce and other purveyors of metaphysical moonshine. To Dunham, cosmic consciousness and the speculations concerning the universe as an embodiment of the divine mind, are equally absurd. As he puts it: "The age of the earth as geology reckons it, must be placed in the billions of years, whereas the human race has existed for only about 500,000. . . . Clearly then, it cannot have been human consciousness which has kept the earth and the universe in existence. There were incalculable aeons of time when human consciousness was not, and the stars moved in their courses indifferent to any human astronomers."

T. F. PALMER.

WHY STRANGE ?

"It is strange that Christianity has tolerated an eschatology more savage than any other religion.—Dr. W. R. Inge.

THE CHRISTIAN INFERIORITY OF WOMEN

NOT all the tenets of the Christian religion are expressed. Some are implied. And some of these implied doctrines are the strangest. Take for instance, the inferior position of Women. There is no expressed dogma in the Christian Churches that women are inferior to men. But few dogmas are so tenaciously and truly held in fact by the general world of Christians.

God the Father is male. God the Son is male and there is no Goddess the Daughter. God the Holy Ghost is always spoken of as a masculine, not as a feminine, and not as a neuter "Third Person of the Trinity." The Trinitic God is, invariably, given the masculine pronouns of He, His and Him.

Satan, too, is male. So also are his principal lieutenants, such as Beelzebub and Mammon. Indeed, the King of Heaven and the Prince of Darkness are the very embodiment of masculinity and no believer thinks of them in any other form.

Coming now to the Archangels such as St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael and St. Uriel, there is not so much as a solitary female amongst them. Indeed there is no evidence that a single angel, or devil, is female. Not one has ever been described in Holy Writ as female. This is remarkable when we consider how female-nature ranges from the angelic to the diabolic in general estimation. Yet there it is! The whole Christian cosmogony is exclusively male.

Coming now down to Earth from Heaven (or up from Hell) what do we find? All the Apostles were men. It is true that various females were around our Lord and his Apostles at times, but not one was considered worthy of being enrolled amongst the principal "Twelve." (Yet one would have thought that a woman of more spiritual calibre than Judas Iscariot, such as Mary the sister of Martha, or the Virgin Mother herself, might have been promoted to Apostolic rank.)

Again, although women have ever dealt largely in words, for they have wordy natures both by tongue and pen, not a single female author is included either in the Old or New Testament. Not even a single Epistle is the work of a woman of the Early Church—in spite of the female propensity for writing epistles, which is a familiar phenomenon to us all!

Faithfully do the orthodox Churches follow the tradition of relegating women to an inferior status. In the Roman Catholic Church no woman can be a Pope, Cardinal, Archbishop, Bishop or even a humble Priest or Deacon. No ordination for her! In the English Church she may not be an Archbishop, Bishop or Priest, and while there are a few Deaconesses, this order is few in number, frowned upon and kept well in the background. No male remains a life-long Deacon in the English Church; for males the Diaconate is a stepping stone to the Priesthood. Yet the female Deaconess remains a Deaconess. No Bishop, however modern-minded, will ordain her to priesthood. Ecclesiasticism is a male "closed shop." However saintly the female, be she martyr, virgin or holy matron, no priestly or prelatical job for her.

All this is commonplace. Yet how rarely—unlike most commonplace—is it stated in print? Or discussed in talk? And its implication is far from commonplace. For that implication is a rooted belief in the actual inferiority and subjection of womanhood—no small matter.

Since woman is unfit, or unfitted by her sex, to be a priest, it follows that she cannot perform the functions of priesthood such as the Mass or the Holy Communion. She may—at great need—baptise, but under no circumstances may she "confirm" or "lay on hands." She

"takes" neither marriages nor funerals. She cannot hear "confessions" of sin. She may (in the English Church) but she very rarely does, and she certainly is not encouraged to, lead in prayer or preach or even "read the lessons" publicly. All this is due largely to the old Jewish idea of the inferior status of woman before and during the time of Jesus, powerfully reinforced by the harsh words of St. Paul later on. St. Paul seems to have regarded women with hostility at worst and distrust at best. Certainly he was no feminist. He did not believe even in sex-equality or anything approaching it.

Hence though English women may be doctors, lawyers, bus-conductresses, factory-fodder and the rest, they may not be ecclesiastics or Freemasons or taxicab-drivers, to name three exclusive masculine fields of activity. It is true that some of the obscurer and less reputable Dissenting sects have a very few "women-ministers" so that decent conventional Church-Christians are sometimes shocked to see names like "The Rev. Maude Royden." But even here there is no unqualified approval of such rare birds as these small concessions to the modern pretended belief in democracy and the equality of the sexes.

A curious feature of this curious situation is that Christian women, however arrogant and domineering in their homes, tamely and supinely acquiesce in their Church with regard to their implied inferiority. The Christian tradition of keeping woman in her lowly and secondary place is very strong, and religion is nothing if not conservative and traditional. "Our splendid women" (as English newspapers call them) may become Cabinet Ministers but not Ministers of God—a status reserved for the male alone. Even a "Mother Abbess" ruling her community of nuns and perhaps administering considerable wealth, is inferior in status to the humblest male ordained priest. Priesthood for herself is beyond her dreams.

Will it always be so? There is no present sign of any likely change. The Church of Rome sets the fashion—as in so many other things to-day and that Church is contemptuous of the very concept of female priesthood. Yet there were, of course, priestesses in Ancient Rome; and men and women who lived ages before Christ would laugh at the modern Christian English idea of an all-male priesthood and episcopate. This fact shows how illusory is "modern progress" which in many of its unreasoning prejudices is startlingly behind the ideas and customs of 2,000 or more years ago.

Putting it on the lowest plane, the economic fact is that the Church offers no "careers" and no salaries to Woman. The humble, unpaid work, such as church-cleaning, sick-visiting, service-attending and the like, they are graciously permitted to do. But in the Church, the titles, the status, the cash, the chief acting-parts and costumes are reserved for the lordly male. It is one of the very few preserves remaining to him.

Yet any Roman or Anglican priest will tell you most emphatically that "Man and woman are equal in the sight of God." They are not however, equal in the sight of Christian Congregations, and this circumstance illustrates another of the many gulfs between talk and action, between false pretence and reality, that disgrace Church Christianity.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

THERE WAS ONCE . . .

A GREAT SCIENTIST. He discovered that the Earth was merely one of the smaller planets of one of the millions of smaller stars of the Milky Way—by which token he was about as important as one of the smaller grains of sand in the Sahara Desert.

W. H. W.

THESE AMAZING MORMONS

IN a book recently published entitled "These Amazing Mormons" by one, Joseph H. Weston (he became a Mormon a few days after completing it), there are some lovely little titbits that are worthy of mention.

In the story of the visits from angels that Joseph Smith (the founder of this sect) received, Joe is reported to have said that the angel told him that within the generation in which Joe lived great judgments would come upon the earth, with great desolations by famine, sword and pestilence. Now, this all happened in the early part of the nineteenth century, and yet the famine, sword and pestilence desolations predicted for that generation were as nothing when compared with those of the twentieth century (the two Global Wars and the atom bombs). This angel must have slipped up on his times and crossed centuries.

Mr. Weston tells us a little later on that Mormonism can be "no more rationalised than Catholicism, or Protestantism, or Mohammedanism, or Judaism. . . . It must be irrational then, for I gather that the reverse quantities will hold also, that it is as rational as Romanism, Churchyism, Mussulmanism or Jewry.

A little later on this gentleman tells us that although the negro might be a very good man he is carrying the stigma of Cain, which prevents him from entering the priesthood. Of course, it is possible that at some time in the future God will reveal that it's O.K. for the negroes to become priests, and hey presto, we are allowed to forgive them for what Cain did. There is no reference concerning their attitude towards the other coloured races. As usual, God has been very regional, and only supplies the answers to the problems that immediately confront the "chosen" ones in the locale in which they live . . . the rest of the world is non est.

One encouraging fact reported by Mr. Weston is that thousands of young Mormons of both sexes have married outside the faith in the last few years (owing to the war) and have left the Church. These young folk probably joined other Churches for the idea of "nothing to come," is alien to their way of thought, and will appear frightful.

"The Mormons were the first Anglo-Saxon people ever to make use of the science of irrigation," so says this worthy man, but his very idea of Anglo-Saxon people brings in racial discrimination again. My part of the race is smarter than yours . . . so there!

Although the cross is not evident in Mormon ritual, there is still the body and blood of the saviour, ritualism and symbolism once more appear. They eat a piece of bread . . . symbolically of body. They drink from a glass of pure water . . . no doubt symbolical of white blood. "There was no wine, nor was there any despicable compromise with unfermented grape juice, we are told, and yet was it not J.C. himself who turned the water into wine, which makes you wonder who was right, J.C. or "Poor old Joe?"

Mr. Weston tells us that Mormons have no clear idea of what non-Mormons thought about them and their faith, which would seem to indicate that these people are very insular and have but little intercourse with outsiders. I should like to say at this point, in all fairness, that the Mormons I know are all very interested in attitudes towards their faith, that they have not been over-dogmatic and that they do not (unlike some other brands of Christians) wish to burn the unbelievers.

Like so many offshoots of the original gospel there was the original surge and then a slackening off, and

to-day, we are told, the Church is not making the wholesale conversions of yore. One of the main weaknesses in this respect, Mr. W. feels, is that too many positions of importance are held by people born and brought up within the narrow confines of the faith, which means that they can have but little idea of what is required to procure new converts to the faith, and are consequently unable to advise or plan suitable drives.

In the chapter on polygamy, Mr. Weston deals at some length with the burning question that has made the Mormons known throughout the world. As a partial psychological justification for the practice, we are told that "The craving of a woman for motherhood is greater, when given a normal means of expression and security for her offspring, than her desire to selfishly possess a man. This pure love for children is a higher love than that which exists between men and women, and its cultivation represents a step upward in the social scale for human beings." He then goes on to say, "However, the Mormon Church to-day takes the lead in combating polygamous marriages in its zeal to uphold the law of the land," which leads one to wonder where the duty of the Church lies—is it to God's word, or is it to the man-made laws of the State? If I believed in God, and I thought he told me to do some thing, I think I should be so scared that I should defy the laws of the land in order to obey. But then, these God-men have some hot ways of rationalising and reconciling opposites. Apparently there were some members of the Church who didn't like to be reconciled so they formed a breakaway sect, the "Fundamentalists," and it was of this group that we heard, in 1943-44-45, when they were found to be still practising "The Word of God." Apparently this group of sincere believers numbers but one hundred.

P. LENNOX-KERR.

ROYAL ROAD FROM CHURCH!

"WELCOME Victoria—Albert" the Highlanders wrote at night in lamps, and Her Majesty responded by writing a book. *Leaves from The Journal of our Life in the Highlands* was published in 1868, and was dedicated "To the Dear Memory of Him who Made the Life of the Writer Bright and Happy."

As Victoria and Albert epitomise those who accept the social ethic of comfortable churchgoing, it is not unamusing to study their virtue in practice in the "diary of a somebody."

"Of course we find Christian patience: "though Albert stood in the water some time he caught nothing," and again there was the rifle which *would* jam "just when he could have shot some fine harts." We realise the supreme fortitude of the consort when confronted with disloyal fish and guns. And it is with fitting resignation that the Queen mentions, when on a cruise, "our paddle wheel again got wrong." Maybe the diarist was sustained by the knowledge that there were plenty of "handy and well conducted" sailors to set things right; but the royal patience is yet an example to those of us who do not learn our catechism of virtues.

Then, surely, we can discover a good lesson in Christian simplicity when the distinguished author does not think it beneath her dignity to mention that the scenery round Yarmouth is "very flat," and when Albert staunchly holds "the Caledonian Canal is a most remarkable work." You see—it is not in the nature of the sermon-fed to be

high-and-mighty about the obvious. There is, in our Highland epic, a moving description of a simple walk: "We went as far as the Marble Lodge, a keeper's cottage, and came back the same way." This is almost a meditation for those who are harassed—especially the bit about coming back the same way!

Justly, the good life brings its own rewards, so there are moments of inspiration which arrive when some trusted servant has led our pony to "the very highest top" of a hill "from where the view is like a panorama." Then we cry, "Oh, what can equal the beauties of Nature!" Such a spiritual experience, as Albert remarks, "refreshes one for a long time."

For instance, it gives one strength to face disaster. There is an expedition to Craig Gowan. The Queen writes: "I sat down to sketch, and poor Vicky, unfortunately, seated herself on a wasp's nest and was much stung." Her Majesty admits she was too alarmed to rescue her daughter; still, encouraged by thoughts of a better world, she ends her account of the expedition with the exclamation, "What a delightful day!"

Some of the sharpest revelations of sung Sunday-school morality are to be discovered—as indeed one would expect—in the great lady's dealings with others. There is a certain sympathy for the melancholy *peer* whose blindness was caused by over-fatigue; but there is only terse forgiveness for the two *men* who walked on the road, close to the royal person, "which they had no business to have done." Then there is the servant, the royal piper, who, in a footnote, "unfortunately went out of his mind." We understand that this piper clearly showed lack of zeal in not living to a ripe old age of devoted service, and in the fact that "we had become quite fond of the bagpipes."

The royal author could approve of the proletariat when they were "very clean" and never attempted to marry "out of their class." Yet she was prepared to watch a race up Craig Cheunnich, knowing that afterwards the peasant competitors would spit blood. This endurance race was staged in the Queen's honour. Of the victor, her own gillie Duncan, Victoria notes "he has never been so strong since."

Still, one must realise that those who are Sunday-saved have a magic armour-plating against the misfortunes of others. Indeed, the Queen was so unworldly she often chose to ignore bad news. At first she "did not at all believe" the report in *The Sun* of Wellington's death, and she bravely proceeded with the picnic she had planned. Later, a letter from Lord Derby could not be denied—England's hero "was no more." Then Victoria firmly wrote: "Not an eye will be dry in the whole country."

But, no doubt, some of the loyal subjects also had the consolation of a breakfast of porridge and Finnan haddies and a dear sermon at the kirk. No doubt they, too, were fit and willing for another picnic on Monday. Thanks, you see, to Goodness!

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

ARMY MORALS

"In Brussels is an orgie of vice in which many British soldiers join. The high-class prostitutes of the German Army are taken over by the officers of the Allied Forces—yet—only one short month ago nothing was too bad for a German, nothing too good for ourselves!"—P.236.

"Both sides suffered from alcoholic debauchery, while both used the Bible as propaganda of hate."—P.166.

"The Christian Churches are the finest blood-lust creators which we have, and of them we made full use."—P.43.—*A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*, by Brig.-Gen. F. P. Crozier.

ACID DROPS

The *Universe* will soon be taking second place to the *Sunday Express* as the chief protagonist of Roman Catholicism in this country. This new line will not surprise Freethinkers who remember the depths of religious journalism reached by the late James Douglas in that paper. It seems that the gravest threat to civilisation and its freedom is coming from the Communists, and the Roman Catholic Church is bearing the brunt of the attack, and the *Express* implores all "who realise that faith is the sure shield against materialism and the decay of the human spirit" to rally to the support of the Catholic Church. "The Roman Catholic Church must be sustained and cherished in its tribulation." Considering the Church's record of persecution this is pretty cool, and no one of intelligence will believe that the *Express* Editorial is ignorant of the history of Catholic persecution. Incidentally, a little known fact is that the Catholic Church still reserves the right to punish heretics, which is only another name for persecution.

Although Communism has been pronounced definitely anti-Christian by the Pope and his Cardinals, there appears to be plenty of collaboration between Catholics and Communists in France. Their new party is called "Progressive Christians" and one of the principal Communists in the movement, Martin Chauffier, has proclaimed, "I believe in revealed truth. I believe that the Church is divinely instituted. . . ." Needless to say, the Jesuit journals are not at all happy at this collaboration though this may mean "a danger that what is said against the Progressive Christians will be applied to those who are trying to offer something to the French working classes that will win their allegiance from Communism." There seems to be a fair mix-up.

The other evening his fans saw the Liverpool boxer, Stan Rowan, "bless himself" before his fight with Jackie Paterson who was then completely beaten. Here a curious question in fairness to the sport must be raised. If Stan had not crossed himself would he perhaps have lost the bout? If not, did he win because he was helped by Unseen Powers in consequence of making the Sign of the Cross before the fight? And if this is so, was it fair to his opponent? We are now also wondering what would have happened if Jackie Paterson had also made the Sign of the Cross before the fight? Perhaps the fight would have been over before the Lord had made up his mind which boxer to assist.

Catholic girls at Catholic dances are now not allowed to wear strapless gowns. We shudder to think the fearful harm that Catholic boys may incur if they ever danced with a girl whose dress was held up by a patent fastener of some kind and not by a visible ribbon. We suppose that Cardinal Kiley, who has issued the ban in America, has visions also of the dress suddenly giving way—and then, wow! Sex, even of the mildest kind, obsesses these priests at every opportunity, and sometimes we wonder that they even allow any dances at all.

Another Catholic record—given for guidance to all true believers. Mrs. Gallagher of Co. Donegal, reached the advanced age of 101 the other week. She never went to school, never travelled beyond Dungloe on the west coast of Donegal, and she has never even seen a bus or a film. But she is a perfect Catholic believer—and no wonder!

Even that very religious Tory paper, the *Holborn Recorder* "felt bound, the other day, to refer to the "riches" of the Lord's Day Observance Society. It appears that it now has funds amounting to £12,000 "for keeping Sunday holy" (these words are the "Recorder's"). "Misery" Martin is described as the "energetic secretary" and a "doughty campaigner" as he leads the Society in its battle against all forms of sport, amusement, and games on a Sunday. It is also going to oppose all political meetings on God's day and has even protested to Mr. Attlee for thus desecrating the "Sabbath." With an income of about £28,000 a year, the Society can certainly continue a vigorous campaign—though if only the interests it attacks could find sufficient courage to face its stupid intolerance it would not be long before it disappeared as a damnable nuisance in a free State.

We have often wondered what God Almighty thinks of the many squabbles the Prayer Book of 1662 has been responsible for—even the "Church Times" has to admit that "the Book of Common Prayer of 1662 does not and cannot meet the needs of 1950." After all, it is the Lord who has to hear these prayers, and though he probably knows them all by heart now, does he really want them changing? Many of the prayers read like drivel in the 1662 edition, it is true—how God could listen to them with a straight face is difficult to conceive; but if the reverent but very quaint rhythm in which they are composed are changed, say, into Americanese, what could the Most High think? However, the Church has to do something to justify its existence, and newly translating the Bible and changing the Prayer Book will give it something to play with. But the question of making more converts whether through the Bible or Prayer Book—that will still remain.

Last week we were called "amiable nonentities" and this week, Guy Ramsey in the *Daily Mail*, goes out of his way to call all Materialists, spivs. He said that "Materialism is the philosophy of the spiv, and the creed of the cheat." But at least he does not fall into the popular error (consciously or unconsciously) of asserting that all Materialists are Marxists. However, as we understand, the term "spiv" means someone who gets by with a minimum of useful work, and trades on the credulity of "mugs," which seems to us to be a particularly apt definition of the "Founder" of the religion that Guy Ramsey boosts. As a matter of fact, the only reference we know of Jesus working was in his father's carpenter's shop, and so fond was he of work that when Joseph and Jesus cut a plank too short, they were too lazy to cut another, so Jesus, by a miracle, stretched the short plank to the required size.

We have always been a little sceptical about most of the Log Cabin to White House or the Local Boy Makes Good stories, we place them in the same category as the stories we hear about the Christians who were at one time Atheists—which usually happens to adolescents. Even the Dean of Canterbury is not above using the story. He started life on 13s., and it was during his university days (13s. a week?) when he became a follower of Darwin and a near-Atheist, robbed of his faith in God. It won't do. If a man once becomes an Atheist and understands the position, he will never again turn to God, unless he becomes mentally deranged.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

R. TIMMS.—G. W. Foote's "Mother of God" (3d.) gives an excellent account of Mary from the Freethought point of view.

J. YOUNG.—Both books on Nietzsche you mention are very good.

R. K.—Why not carefully read "Materialism Restated" where scientific materialism is argued?

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary gratefully acknowledges a donation of £1 1s. from the North London Branch N.S.S.

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

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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).

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 as long notice as possible.

SUGAR PLUMS

We are pleased to note that the American "Freethinker," edited by Joseph Lewis, has successfully won a legal fight with an interfering and probably very religious New York policeman. It was being sold in the streets as it has every right to do—the vendor even possessing the necessary permission from the police department; this was not enough however for the bigot, who did his best to get up a row and eventually charged him with "obstruction." The judge appears to have been absolutely impartial, and properly acquitted the defendant after a hearing in which the interfering policeman proved to be a fool. We hope the lesson will be enough to stop further religious bigots on the warpath against freedom of thought.

Mr. J. Clayton will lecture in the Market Square, Blackburn, to-day (April 17) at 7 p.m. for the local N.S.S. Branch. Besides having many friends in Blackburn, Mr. Clayton is well known there as a speaker and always commands a good audience. That in itself is a compliment, and a sufficient recommendation to all readers in that area.

In spite of several opposition platforms, the Sheffield Branch N.S.S. carries on its regular meetings at Barkers Pool every Sunday evening at 7 p.m. Mr. A. Samms, the Branch Secretary, bears the brunt of the speaking and friendly faces are always an encouragement. There are plenty of Freethinkers in Sheffield and it should be a pleasant duty to support those working hard in the local movement.

THE BISHOP'S CRUSADE

SOME years before the war, a lawyer friend, an enthusiastic supporter of his local debating society, took upon himself to meet a Roman Catholic priest in a debate on Atheism. He was not an Atheist himself, but felt quite competent, as a successful lawyer, to "mug-up" a case; and was quite astonished to find that you simply cannot mug-up Atheism. He had to call off this debate—or rather, he managed to get me to take his place and, needless to say, I enjoyed it all immensely.

I thought of this when reading recently in the "Daily Mail" an article by Guy Ramsey dealing with "the current philosophy of Materialism." Mr. Ramsey no doubt was "assigned" to write an article dealing with the Bishop of London's coming crusade against "those who have never heard of Christ," or who "disregard Him" (I do love this capital letter); and as the unbeliever, the non-believer, the ignorant, the scoffer, and many others will be approached by the gallant Crusaders, it behoved Mr. Ramsey first to tell his readers what this awful enemy of the Christian Faith, this blatant Materialism, the world's worst enemy, really was.

I should have thought recourse to a dictionary would have been his simplest way—but I expect he found mugging-up Materialism was almost hopeless. Besides, if properly studied, it might have shown Mr. Ramsey that Materialism was the only true philosophy of the world, and that would have been too shocking for such a Christian paper as the "Daily Mail."

He therefore obviously decided to play true to his creed—ignore dictionaries and Materialists, and plump for Materialism as "the philosophy of the spiv, the creed of the cheat, the doctrine of the man who says, 'You go to hell—I'm all right.'" And he contends that this Materialism is more widespread than ever in Christian countries.

Out of curiosity, I looked into one of the latest dictionaries—the Thorndyke—for a definition of Materialism; here it is: "1. Belief that all action, thought, and feeling can be explained by the movements and changes of matter; 2. Tendency to care too much for things of this world and neglect spiritual needs." Dr. Thorndyke seems here rather to disagree with the erudite Mr. Ramsey, but I suspect that the article in the "Daily Mail" would have been neither so picturesque nor have that fervent appeal to religion if the real truth about Materialism had been faithfully dealt with. (I should add here that Webster, dealing more fully with the word, agrees with Thorndyke.)

Those Freethinkers who are Materialists (as I am), must not too induly complain. We have been lied about so religiously through the ages that one or more lies about us do not much matter. And we cannot expect that readers of the "Daily Mail" should mug-up the problems of Materialism for themselves, even if that were possible, to check up our funny special article writer.

It is, of course, quite true that there are two meanings to the word Materialism, and that wherever possible Christians like hurling the more disreputable one at Materialists, pretending that the scientific one does not exist. It is because of this that "that out-dated old fogey," Charles Bradlaugh, preferred never to use the word if he could help it; and even the arch-Materialist, Buchner, did not like to be called a Materialist, though this may have been for different reasons.

Let us allow Mr. Ramsey to wallow in his own ignorance, however, for much as I should like to put him right, I do not feel that what he thinks or does not think about Materialism (that is, the true Materialism) matters

two hoots. He may learn one day that it is a philosophy in science held in the past by some of our greatest men, and is being increasingly taught as the best of all "explanations" of the Universe. But if he prefers still to believe in "Christ Jesus" with that mythical deity's galaxy of devils and miracles, what is it to us?

Of one thing we can be quite sure and that is, the complete failure of the Bishop of London's coming campaign. He is going to attack every house in the Diocese whether occupied by Atheists, Roman Catholics, Jews, Arabs, Dissenters, Christian Scientists, and even "nominal" Church of England people. The idea that the Bishop can find laymen sufficiently learned to tackle the well-read Jew, for example, or the properly instructed Roman Catholic, seems to me to be as funny as is Mr. Ramsey's description of Materialism. I gladly admit that converts can be made from both sects but that is due more to a combination of faith and pure ignorance than anything else. Few of those who have properly studied modern anthropology, and have mastered some of the reasons *why* people have believed in religion in the past, could ever be converted. I will go further. I doubt very much if even Mr. Ramsey, or many of his colleagues in Fleet Street, really believe in the Virgin Birth or the Resurrection. Are they convinced that dead Jewish saints came out of their graves alive after the Crucifixion and "appeared unto many"? Do they believe in the Ascension yarn—that Jesus, after being killed, visibly flew up into "Heaven"? Would they be prepared to argue that the story of Jesus carried by a Devil above the streets of Jerusalem, and put on the pinnacle of the Temple is authentic history?

All these things and many more "miracles" are believed by the Bishop of London and his helpers; and they look like having a high old time in debate on the doorsteps of many houses. And if "conversions" take place at all, it will be among the people who are already fervent believers.

But coming for a moment to the spivs and the cheats—we wonder how many of them would be prepared to "deny" Christ Jesus? As Mr. Ramsey knows full well if he has studied the statistics of religious believers in our prisons, there are so few Materialists or unbelievers that the Government has firmly refused appointing a Freethinker to do any kind of "uplift" similar to the work of a prison chaplain. The old lags, the confirmed drunks and prostitutes, and almost all murderers, are generally as fully believing in the consolations of the Christian religion as the good Bishop himself.

Mr. Ramsey points out that it took one man, Peter the Hermit, to galvanise "all Christendom" and probably wants to liken Dr. Wand to that insane fanatic. It is true that Peter led the Crusades, but surely Mr. Ramsey knows a little about their history? Surely he knows that never in Europe had a fouler gang of murderous beasts and cut-throats been got together? Rape, sodomy, looting, and cannibalism, were their distinguishing features and the only two things that came out of the Crusades of any use were that most of the Crusaders happily were exterminated, or exterminated each other; and this allowed some of the then great Arab scholarship to trickle through the Christian Dark Ages into Europe, thus leading to the Renaissance.

Finally, does Mr. Ramsey imagine that any of the members of the National Secular Society will re-discover Christ as the result of the earnest persuasions of Dr. Wand's helpers? It would, I think, do such an eminent journalist good to see what we can do in such an encounter.

H. CUTNER.

UNNATURAL HISTORY

ACCURATE recording from observation is a modern tendency of the last two centuries. Such a keen watcher as White of Selborne was vague on bird migration, discussing gravely the theory that swallows hibernated the winter at the bottom of ponds. Someone should have asked what happened to their feathers and breathing in so long immersion.

Medieval zoology is scientifically valueless, though amusing, as reading a Bestiary reveals. Unicorns, dragons and mermaids were accepted as real, and human characteristics attributed to animals, so there are records of trials of them in law courts. More commonly creatures appeared in stories behaving and talking as people. Strange variation was the witch's cat, possessing powers unknown to ordinary felines.

Two centuries of research have not destroyed superstitions. Many of these refer to wild or domestic fauna. Though not so many or so strongly held they persist in modified forms down to jest or reference.

Some are startlingly persistent. Such is the theory that when in danger ostriches hide their heads in sand. As figure of speech or derogatory comparison for obstinate persons it is in constant use, like pigheaded and mulish. Writers and orators who employ the ostrich simile do not actually believe so. It has become a cliché, overused and not thought about. Like many more it should be laid to rest in the interest of clear thinking and statement.

The same can be said of crocodile tears. No one believes now that crocodiles weep over their victims, while as synonym for hypocrisy it is outworn.

Scrapped with it should go the memory of the elephant. Elephants never forget: one wishes we could get rid of this fable, baseless as fact, useless as exhortation, though it continues to be cultivated. As a joke it is wearing thin; threatens to become our stock canard. No data exists to show the elephant's memory as better than any other beasts.

Toads have been victims of much hatred and misrepresentation, though harmless generally and helpful to gardeners. The three witches in "Macbeth" throw into their horrid brew—

"Toad that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one;
Sweltered venom sleeping got,"

and

"Fillet of a fenny snake,
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Adder's fork and blindworm's sting,
Lizard's leg,"

among a heap of ingredients. Incidentally the blind-worm has no sting.

No more correct in "As You Like It" is Duke Senior's—

"Which like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head."

Unless the eyes are reckoned as jewels, for they are beautiful.

Venom is non-existent, save that birds and beasts of prey find the warty skin nasty to taste, so reject toads as food. Medievally toads were reported to spit poison, more extremely to spit fire.

Though dazzled by bright light bats are not blind. If their sight is poor their other senses must be correspondingly sharper, for they find their way about with ease in dusk or dark, taking their prey of moths and night insects on the wing.

Persistent is the theory that if in a room with a woman a bat will get entangled in her hair. Whether of intent or mishap believers in this never explain, but the superstition is widely held.

The proverbial blindness of moles may be stronger based, but they have eyes with some perception in them, whilst the senses of smell, taste, hearing and touch are highly acute.

Hedgehogs may be fond of milk, but of their reputed sucking cow's udders for it one must be sceptical. Evidence for it happening would have to be strong. The size of the animal, the shape of its mouth, and the sharpness of its teeth make the process unlikely, difficult of execution. Would cows stand or lie still for such uncommon milking? But many country people aver hedgehogs suck milk from cows.

Old rustics say pigs cannot swim. If they try to do so they throw their forelegs so far forward as to cut their own throats with their pointed claws. This may be unconscious transference of imagery from seeing so many hogs have their throats slit. Pigs have been seen to swim, striking out vigorously. It should be noted they are waterloving animals.

That is a reminder rabbits drink. Many wiseacres say they do not. Pressed for a reason some cannot give it except to say they know it is so, or will grudgingly explain that green food contains enough moisture. Those who keep hutched rabbits should give them clean drinking water and will find them flourish better.

The pelican feeding its young on its own blood may have arisen from defective observation of the bird disgorging fish, possibly bloodstained, from its bottom bill to its young. Several other birds regurgitate their food for their nestlings. Also wolves do, and dogs have been known to do likewise.

Fewer queer legends linger about birds than reptiles and mammals. Outstanding one beside the pelican is that of swans:

"Like some full-breasted swan
That fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume
And takes the flood with swarthy webs."

To the question why such strong swift animals as horses should be subject to man widely diverse answers have been given. One was that horse's eyes magnify, so men looked bigger and stronger than himself. Tellers of this quaint explanation obviously knew nothing of relativity. If horse's sight magnifies then everything is magnified, so in proportion or ratio man is still the same comparative size to his surroundings.

To finish on a surprising one consider the shrew myths. It caused paralysis to any person over whom it ran; but died itself if it crossed man's tracks. Pegged into a tree-trunk to die the shrew conferred upon the tree, preferably ash, magical powers of healing.

The only vestige of truth in it all is that the shrew is a hungry creature, fierce and pugnacious beyond its size. As relies the words beshrew, shrew, shrewd and shrewish linger applied to human beings.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

AMERICA'S NEW HUMANIST MOVEMENT

SINCE writing my article on "Rationalism in America," several of the smaller progressive humanist and free-thought groups here have formed a co-operative movement, the United Secularists of America. So constructive and energetic is this new group that it certainly is of inspiring interest to fellow humanists throughout the world.

The United Secularists developed from a national convention of humanists and freethinkers held in Chicago this past August, 1948. The main sponsors for this

convention were Progressive World Associates, who for nearly two years now have published "Progressive World," the "fastest growing freethought publication in America." With forty to sixty-four digest size pages every month, this is the largest humanist magazine and a very valuable addition to the world's growing group of over a dozen leading humanist journals. The United Secularists now take over this publication.

As one who sees humanism as the vibrant philosophy of life which urgently seeks the full development of human potentialities for worth-while and happy living, I've been very pleased with the constructive nature of so many of the articles published during 1948 in "Progressive World." Many writers for this journal have what I feel to be the two prime qualities of any humanist worthy of this honoured name: human feeling for the value and dignity of human life, and full consciousness of the human mind's power to intelligently guide human behaviour.

The great American agnostic, Robert G. Ingersoll, had these prime qualities in high degree, together with the inevitable accompaniment of a true love for the beautiful in life and a hatred for war's terrible slaughter of life, and it is of real interest that his grand-daughter, Eva Ingersoll Wakefield, is a regular and valued contributor to this journal, while her husband, Sherman D. Wakefield, is its editor.

This journal has been a keen supporter of Unesco and of World Government, both being movements to replace behaviour patterns which are based upon primitive and outworn nationalist dogma with the guidance of humanity's world-wide behaviour by humanity's global intelligence—by the world-wide authority of humanity's finest minds.

Of course, many writers here deal courageously with the degrading slavery to the human mind of the primitive dogmas of the orthodox religions and especially of that fantastic global curse, the Roman Catholic Church. England's fine humanist author and my valued friend, Archibald Robertson, has contributed two articles along this line which he tells me were specially written for this journal.

What a thrilling experience indeed to meet here—as in all humanist journals worthy of the name—other minds keenly awake to life's urgency and fearlessly grappling with all the various problems of human behaviour to-day; minds free from every and all of the damnable taboos and prejudices which in the press and in regular periodicals distort and cripple and limit the fine free play of the human intellect—the human intellect which is the true intelligent hope of humanity. Such taboos as derive from the need to flatter the vanity of the ordinary reader, to bow and scrape shamefully before ancient racial and national and religious myths and dogmas of the most ignorant and dangerous sort, and also, of course, to never, never question the cruel and idiotic exploitation and wastage—yes, wastage—of the mass of human beings economically.

With such a fine and outspoken magazine as the writers of "Progressive World" have already amply and ably demonstrated that they can develop, the United Secularists of America must surely go far in their avowed aim to obtain at least fifty thousand members. The three other main secular groups in America, The Freethinkers, The American Humanists, and The Truth Seekers, have nothing to lose and everything to gain in supporting to the utmost and perhaps in eventually combining with the new United Secularists of America.

GORDON CAULFIELD.

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC STRUGGLE FOR WORLD-EMPIRE

OF all the so-called Roman Catholic countries, France is undoubtedly the least Catholic and in many ways the most actively anti-Catholic. That has been so ever since the Revolution of 1789. Macaulay, writing in his *History of England* on the progress made in Protestant countries as compared with the Catholic, classed France as the exception. He was thinking in terms mainly of industrial progress rather than of social welfare, and in that sense he justly regarded Catholic France as well-nigh on the same level as her Protestant neighbours. This fact is not surprising when one views broadly the background of French history. The old Catholic State of France had been shaken to its foundations by the Revolution of 1789, and though subsequently Napoleon and his successors acting in their own interests permitted its revival, the Church in France, except during the short-lived Vichy regime, has never succeeded in regaining its former stranglehold. The Holy Alliance and all the other means devised wherewith to bludgeon the people into submission to papal authoritarianism, only instigated Frenchmen to detach themselves still further from the Church of Rome.

How the struggle proceeded is effectively depicted by Avro Manhattan in his book *The Catholic Church Against the Twentieth Century*. It was a struggle in which the Catholic Church in France, acting under clear directives from the Vatican, gave its support to monarchies, dictatorships and the like, in opposition to any and every form of popular government. The Vatican's savage campaign against the Paris Commune of 1871, against its spirit, its principles and its leaders, was typical of its activities in this respect. With the suppression of the Commune there followed a period of reaction, but once the fear of the Communards (a fear sedulously fostered by the Church) had passed, the influence of the Church rapidly again deteriorated. It was now that the Third Republic assumed a counter-offensive, and from 1880 onward, by a series of legislative measures, it curtailed the activities of the religious Orders. Between that year and 1886, the French Jesuit organisation was again dissolved; primary education was made free, compulsory and secular; civil marriage was made obligatory, and members of the religious Orders were debarred from teaching in State schools.

These measures in turn brought the curse of God from the Vatican, which pronounced anathemas on all the leaders of the "Godless" Republic and called upon all good Catholics to destroy it.

The mutual conflict between Church and State thus went on until one day in November, 1890, the French Cardinal Lavignerie, on his return to France after an audience with Pope Leo XIII, proposed as a toast that the Catholics of France should rally round the Republican Constitution, and as a token of his good faith ordered the White Fathers to play the *Marsellaise*. This was the signal of a change in Vatican tactics. The new tactic of wooing the Republican Constitution was only partially successful, and right until the outbreak of the First World War the anti-clerical spirit continued to manifest itself.

It is remarkable how the advent of war gives to religion the appearance of resuscitation. This is due, at least partly, to the fact that under the increased stress of the time, religious bodies are obliged perforce to become more social-minded—to adapt themselves more to the everyday needs of the people, who in turn show a readier spirit of co-operation. Readers of a book entitled *The Men I Killed*, by a British General, may recall a sentence in

that book to the effect that the Churches were the Army's finest recruiting centres and "we made the fullest use of them." On this account, the State versus the Church conflict in France was for the most part quiescent between 1914 and 1918. The apparent reconciliation between the two institutions continued into the post-war period, and in 1921, diplomatic relations between France and the Vatican were finally restored.

As Manhattan shows, the most fervent Catholics are to be found among the aristocrats, the landed gentry, the military caste, and the wealthy or well-to-do classes; whereas the lower middle class and the industrial proletariat are almost wholly indifferent to religion and, when roused, definitely hostile.

The author gives an illuminating account of how the Vatican utilised the transfer of Alsace-Lorraine to France in order to strengthen its iron hands in dealing with the French Government. Alsace-Lorraine being solidly Catholic and for that reason none too eager to submit to the authority of an agnostical French administration, the Pope found himself in a position to strike a bargain with the annexing Power. Briefly, the bargain was that the Vatican undertook to keep Alsatian rebels in check by ordering the local hierarchy and the Catholic organisations to follow a certain course, in return for which the French Government was to cease its hostility to the Church and to grant it all possible privileges. The deal was duly effected, and France, the least Catholic country in Europe, whose population was for the most part indifferent or hostile to the Church, whose statesmen were mainly agnostic, dropped its anti-clerical ardour.

In the concluding pages of the section dealing with France in his book, Manhattan, after a detailed account of the Vichy period, when Pétain and his associates attempted, with the aid of high Church dignitaries, to turn back the clock of history to the medieval era, gives a telling account of how those same high dignitaries, after the withdrawal of the German occupation forces, were able in the space of a few months to openly declare themselves in favour of the "New Authority" under the leadership of General de Gaulle. That the religious leaders in France were able to adapt themselves with such speed to the new circumstances created by the Allied military victory is one of the wonders of this wonderful generation. It was certainly a remarkable somersault.

It would be a help to the Freethought Movement in this country if those interested would fill up the application forms available in most Public Libraries, asking for copies of this book. Whoever Avro Manhattan may be, his work *The Roman Catholic Church Against the Twentieth Century* is certainly the most up-to-date book available, and in the interests of freethought it should be widely circulated.

JACQUES YESPMEDO.

THERE WAS ONCE . . .

AN HONEST MAN. In life he was a failure. Quiet and inoffensive, men used him as a door-mat, or thrust him roughly to the wall.

Poor fellow—he never realised that Life is the Happy Hunting Ground of the Profiteer, Sharper, Crook and Cad; that the prize goes to the man who can out-wit his neighbour and drive his own brother to the gutter. He was sensitive—they called him timid. He was kind—so they called him weak. He was honest—so they called him a fool.

And because he did not assert his rights or lift his voice in protest; because he did not fight his fellows with their own foul weapons but blew his brains out instead—they called him a Coward!

W. H. W.

CORRESPONDENCE

POLITICAL MURDERS?

Sir.—I have no wish to pursue this controversy to inordinate proportions, but Mr. Austin Forbes' letter ("The Freethinker," 20th March, 1949) demands at least a brief comment from me.

I did not say simply that Mihailovitch, Mainu and Petkov were murdered. I said "Mihailovitch, Mainu and Petkov were murdered by the Courts. Masaryk, I am firmly convinced, was murdered outside them . . ." In other words, the first three were judicially murdered and the fourth was dealt with somewhat more crudely than usual. There is no evidence that Masaryk was pushed out of a window, but I cannot imagine that a man of his moral character would jump. Incidentally, where did those two letters he is alleged to have written get to?

Mr. Forbes speaks of independent observers. Who? Reporters who had to be careful what they said to be sure that anything at all would get through, or Friends of the Soviet Union and the British-Soviet Society. I like Mr. Forbes' definition of independence. The judge has not yet been born who would accept it in a Court in Great Britain or the United States. The truth-drug jibe is really pathetic. But it is certainly remarkable that Mindzenty's conduct at his trial coincided so well with all that he predicted in his letter to the Roman Catholic Bishops.

It would seem—if one can judge from his treatment of Petkov—that Dimitrov learnt something from the Reichstag Fire Trial. I might add that Mr. Forbes is the first entrant into this argument who has said in as many words that the Cardinal was innocent. I certainly never did. All I said was that he was being tried for holding an opinion and not as has been alleged, for putting it into effect in a treasonable manner.

Mr. Forbes obviously dislikes Fascism practised by Fascists. Why then does he condone it as practised by Communists? Or is the answer to that one too obvious?—Yours, etc.

FRANCIS I. GOULD.

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

Sir.—Mr. W. H. Wood's reply to his critics and his recent article "Life After Death" are truly remarkable performances, although by no means unique, in the history of freethought.

To some extent I blame Mr. Wood's critics, they appear to be angry at his confession of faith, this attitude—to my way of thinking—is a mistake, to be a freethinker is not a way of attainment. We must not imitate or emulate the fanatical followers of Lysenko or Loyola, but must be ready to lend an ear to points of view when they cut across our established opinions.

Not that Mr. Wood appears to me to be particularly tolerant of opposition; his critics, Mr. Bower and Mr. Smith seem to be especially gifted with guile, they are "prejudiced know-alls," guilty of "cheap gibes and ridicule." "Mr. Smith and other scoffers," etc.

Mr. Wood in his confession of faith appears to be in a very exalted frame of mind, the condition of the believer.

To encounter this condition in a freethinker evokes surprise; surprise, the one condition of our being that guarantees the existence of an external world.

The converse is, of course, equally true, to wit: the discovery of intelligence in a Christian. However, Mr. Wood is extremely interesting, even if very gullible. Those of us whose minds are not spiritually uplifted will find it extremely difficult to credit Mr. Wood's lady medium with a "specialised knowledge of airship construction" derived from the *Spirit World*.

But we must not be too hard on Mr. Wood, who has not been foolish in the hands of a lady. His critics should bear this elemental fact of the frailty of human nature in mind.

Mr. Wood's planes of existence, A and B vibrations, and the analogy of the radio set are naive in the extreme.

In conclusion, I sincerely trust that Mr. Wood, in the interest of religious psychology, will tell us how he can believe in an "After Life" without a belief in ghosts and if he draws the line anywhere in the Spiritualist Cloud Cuckoo Land? Does he believe in the "Flying Trumpet," "table rapping," "levitation," "matendligation," "spirit photographs," and "Borley Rectory"?—Yours, etc.,

ROBERT F. TURNEY.

OBITUARY

T. N. WHEATON

I never conduct a Secular Service without feeling that I would far rather be shaking hands with the living Freethinker than paying the last tribute of affection to the dead one. This feeling was very pronounced when, on Friday, the 1st April, I conducted a Secular Service at the Stockport Crematorium for Thomas Norman Wheaton. Mr. Wheaton was my own age, and though not a near neighbour, lived only a few miles away. I had never had the pleasure of meeting him, a fellow soldier in the Army of Human Liberation. All I could do was to pay my tribute to the memory of yet another Freethinker (Mr. Wheaton was a member of the Parent Society) who has joined the Immortal Caravan, and to extend on behalf of the movement and myself our condolence to the widow and family.

WM. COLLINS.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting held 7th April, 1949

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen in the Chair.

Also present, Messrs. Hornibrook, A. C. Rosetti, Seibert, Bryant, Griffiths, Ebury, Woodley, Cleaver, Taylor, Barker, Mrs. Venton and the Secretary.

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

New members were admitted to Glasgow, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, North London Branches and to the Parent Society. Report of the Annual Dinner, Conway Hall, Glasgow, North London, and Mr. J. T. Brighton's lectures were presented, and North London Branch congratulated upon its very successful year's work. Conference resolutions and other items in connection with the conference were discussed at some length. Messrs. Griffiths, Seibert and Taylor were elected as an Agenda Committee to meet on April 12. The proceedings then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- 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.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS and others.

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