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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Christian Rationalists

SOME little time ago the present writer was taken to task in the columns of "The Freethinker" for referring to a famous modernist theologian Dr. W. R. Inge, as a "Christian Rationalist." Of course, "it all depends," as a Brains Trust member of the B.B.C. used to express it, what one means precisely by the term "Rationalist." No doubt the essence of what Aristotle would have styled the "substance" of religion and of the religious mentality is irrational, but notwithstanding, this does not prevent theology, the "science" of religion, from assuming a logical and pseudo-rational form which often mimics very successfully the real article. Any student, for instance, of St. Thomas Aquinas and his modern "Thomist" disciples cannot but agree with such a dictum. And, of course, modernist theologians like Dr. Inge, or Bishop Barnes, accept not only the formulas but also many of the actual conclusions of rationalist thought.

It is, however, in their relations with other, and in particular, with rival religions that the theologians and apologists of Christianity (and no doubt of other religions as well) indulge in genuinely rationalistic arguments which are, in fact, inseparable from those used by genuine Freethinkers in their anti-religious polemics. Indeed, they not infrequently "out-herod Herod" in this last respect. Many "reverent rationalists," and indeed, not a few irreverent ones, would recoil from the sweeping and often grossly personal attacks that are frequently employed in, say, current missionary literature directed against the rival religion, Islam, in which it is not at all uncommon to find Christian writers using language about the Prophet Mohammed which would probably lead to a prosecution under the Blasphemy Laws if employed by Mohammedan missionaries here against the character of the titular Founder of Christianity.

In fact, if one thing stands out the proverbial mile from even a superficial survey of current missionary literature, it is its total lack of any consideration of the religious feelings of rival creeds and of their adherents. To repeat the example already given, the Prophet Mohammed, is the object of a profound personal devotion as the greatest of God's prophets by some 250,000,000 people. But respect for their feelings does not in the least prevent accredited controversialists of the Christian Churches from referring to the Prophet in the most explicit terms as "whoremonger," "an elderly sensualist," "a cut-throat and brigand," "an impostor who consciously fabricated his 'visions' for the benefit of the credulous multitude," etc. And yet, forsooth and save the mark, these are the selfsame people who demand indignantly and insistently that "unbelievers" should, at the very least, show reverence and manifest respect for the religious feelings of Christians and for

the Person of the "Sacred" Founder of Christianity. Obviously, for such people, "blasphemy" represents a one-way traffic.

But not only do Christian theologians habitually disregard the elementary canons of literary decency and controversial restraint in their references to rival religions; equally do they throw overboard all their distrust and suspicion of the claims and power of reason, which they habitually display in controversy with Rationalists. "Faith" may be above Reason where the Christian Faith is concerned, but Reason is always above "Faith" where any rival faith is concerned. For against such, Christianity does not hesitate to use the most formidable batteries of reason and critical knowledge, tearing to pieces in the most critical manner imaginable the scriptures of rival faiths such as the Koran and the Book of Mormon. For in relation to such, the Christian critics forget all their inhibitions against the use and sufficiency of reason in matters of faith, which they habitually employ against Rationalists where Christianity is concerned. Every other religious scripture, however holy or venerable, is fair game for the most ruthless "higher criticism" at the hands of these Christian "Rationalists."

To take a concrete example, we will defy the most outspoken advocates of Rationalism in religious matters to show us the whole fairly extensive range of freethought literature, a more drastic analysis of religious origins in the light of thorough-going rationalist analysis, than, is, say, the article on "Islam" in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* or that on *Joseph Smith and Mormonism* in Vacant's *Dictionnaire de Theologie Catholique*, both standard works of unimpeachable orthodoxy, entirely untinged by Modernism, in, respectively, the Protestant and Catholic Churches. In both the above articles, every weapon of science, critical reason and the most modern "higher criticism" of the literary sources of the respective religions, is used in the most unsparing manner. Yet the Protestant criticism of Islam is penned by an Anglican cleric and Oxford Jesuit, and the critique of Mormonism by a French Jesuit. And, we may add, both authors would have recoiled with horror before similar criticisms in "The Freethinker," which either employed such critical methods or used such extremely blunt language as they use about Mohammed and Joseph Smith in relation to the problems of Christian origins or to the personality of Jesus Christ.

For example, the late Professor Margoliouth concludes his critical analysis of the literary sources of the life of the Founder of Islam with these not very reverent remarks:—

"The character attributed to Mohammed in the biography of Ibn Ishaq (i.e., the oldest Muslim Gospel) is, as has been seen, exceedingly unfavourable. In order to gain his ends he recoils from no expedient and he approves of similar unscrupulousness on the part of his adherents when exercised in his interests. . . . He organises assassinations and wholesale massacres. . . . His career as tyrant of Medina is that of a robber-chief. . . . He is

himself an unbridled libertine, and encourages the same passion in his followers."

And so on. Hardly a conspicuous example of "reverent rationalism," when one considers that the sweeping charges do not refer to Caligula or Nero, but to one whom hundreds of millions still regard as the Prophet and Shadow of God upon earth. But then the Arab Prophet is still Jesus Christ's chief competitor in the mission field.

Nor does the American Joseph Smith fare much better at the hands of his Jesuit historian. "He was a gross profligate and obvious charlatan." The Book of Mormon is a "tissue of grotesque fables." The early Mormons were "crude and illiterate rustics devoid of critical faculty and easily duped by a clever impostor." The Mormon version of American history is "demonstrable nonsense effectively disproved by science." All of which may be very true, but what would the reverend father say if rationalists wrote this about Christian and not Mormon origins? Incidentally, the Pagan controversialist, Celsus, of the second century actually described Christ and the early Christians in very similar terms to the above, as we may judge from the Christian writer Origen's reply; but that was in ancient Palestine and not modern America.

We may conclude, accordingly, that the Christian respect for Faith only refers to their own, and not to other people's. Also that "Reason," whilst not for home consumption, is a legitimate article for export where other religions are concerned. For Christianity is quite prepared to use reason provided, of course, that it "proves" the truth of Christianity exclusively. No less a person than the great St. Augustine of Hippo set the fashion when he refuted the non-Christian claims of Astrology with a display of rationalistic logic of the purest character that no contributor to "The Free-thinker" could surpass. And since that distant day, the Church has practised his system of double book-keeping, using Faith against domestic Reason, and Reason against foreign Faiths—the Christian version of "Rationalism."

F. A. RIDLEY.

## RELIGION AND PLEASURE

THERE are few pleasures in this life, as those who have lived know; but the followers of repressive religions like Buddhism and Christianity try to deprive men of these few. They might spare themselves the trouble; for, the way that life may turn out, men may easily fail to find any great pleasure in their lives and therefore do not need the help of religion in order to be miserable. It is not a philosophical moderation in the conduct of life or a philosophical abstinence from excessive pleasures that the ordinary religionists teach; at least no preacher that I ever heard taught a sensible philosophy of moderation in pleasure; it is rather against earthly pleasure itself that the Christian extremists rails; and Christ's teachings support this kind of poisoning of human life. For example, his statement in Matthew XIX: 11-12, which reads in part that "there be eunuchs which have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake," is apparently an obscure admonition against what is called a pleasure and against life since it is against the cause of life. The New Testament is not a clear source of any doctrine; but evidently from the teachings of Christ and the Apostle Paul regarding renunciation of the world Catholic monasticism developed, aided by social conditions in Europe during and after the decline of Rome;

and, when under the influence of Christian ascetic dogmas and traditions a man or woman leaves the world of men to live in chastity, fasting, and dreariness, we have evidence that one of the aims of Christianity in its Catholic form is to deny life and that the principal method of denying life is to deny its pleasures. Schopenhauer, who believed that life should be denied, wrote: ". . . die Verneinung hat ihr Wesen nicht darin, das man die Leiden, sondern das man die Genüsse des Lebens verabscheuet." What good is accomplished by this melancholy doctrine of denial of pleasure is unknown; and from a naturalistic standpoint it is a useless philosophy. Why is not denial of suffering a part of the denial of life, especially since the sufferings of life outnumber its pleasures?

It is observable that in the repressive religions and indeed in most other religions fasting is esteemed; but there is no reasonable explanation why hungry worshippers are more pleasing to divinity than well-fed ones. Sexual chastity is regarded as a great virtue although no one knows why the sexual relations of men would be of interest to the gods. In Christianity there is a traditional horror of the sexual relations which in themselves are little enough; the result of this horror is the misery of prudery, false modesty, and suppression of natural desire. The question is, why are the repressive religions inimical to pleasure when pleasure is what makes life worth living?

It seems to me that, to answer this question fully, it would be necessary to answer fully the question of what human nature is; and I confess that I cannot answer the latter question; however, we are not entirely in the dark regarding the former question. It is a point of philosophy that this life is poor in pleasure and rich in pain and that its pleasures are, metamorphically speaking, sometimes sickly specimens; and it is possible that some of the religionists who rail against pleasure and the flesh have found little pleasure themselves or have become incapable of it and are determined that no one else shall have any pleasure. Human motives are not always lofty; so this personal motive in the moral declamations against pleasure must be considered. Disappointment with life as a pleasurable experience impels men to asceticism; and the moralist may often be the disappointed man. As a matter of speculation it may be said that, if you assume that life has a moral meaning, which I believe it may have, the religious negation of pleasure is an imperfect result of the intuitive knowledge that pleasure produces a life that is painful and that to escape life you must deny pleasure. Yet, it is a curious fact that, although the Christians are the enemies of earthly pleasure and joy, they do not seem to be incensed against eternal pleasure; for, while the Buddhists desire disappearance or extinction of the personality in Nirvana, the Christians anticipate a heaven of eternal pleasure where they will receive what they gave up on earth.

Religion has always been a principal means by which men have tyrannized over each other through the use of fear. There are few, if any, pleasures, harmless or harmful, which the religionists have not condemned; and in some cases the priests and the preachers forbid certain pleasures to their slaves on pain of eternal damnation in the fires of hell where their worm dies not and the fire is not quenched. The religionist who uses the fear of this pleasant and gentle corrective method to coerce credulous men into obedience to his ignorant conceptions

\* . . . denial has its essence not in that one should abhor the sufferings of life but that he should abhor its pleasures. *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, Viertes Buch, section 20.*

of morality is another kind of tyrant along with the political tyrants. He seeks to dominate men for the money and the personal satisfaction which he may gain through dominating them. The use of fear by religionists, even though they ostensibly use it to make men good, indicates base natures inspired by base motives; for it is incompatible with the ideas of morality, goodness, and truth, that fear and deception should be used in teaching these things. The religionists are usually without the political power to be the physical and political masters of men; so they strive to become their spiritual masters; and their power is sometimes as complete as that of their brethren, the political tyrants.

The list of pleasures that have been condemned in one period or another of religious history probably includes every natural pleasure and every pleasure invented by men; for the religious principle involved is that pleasure itself is bad. The pleasure of sexual desire has been condemned; and tobacco and alcoholic beverages have been condemned along with the amusements of fiction, the theatre, the motion picture, and dancing. Whatever does not agree with their view of things is said by the religionists to be immoral and damnable; and it will generally be found that what they call immoral contains or is thought to contain pleasure. It is evident that amid the conflicting dogmas of the various Christian sects a classic Christian principle is that man is born in sin, that his conception is therefore a sin, and that he should get no pleasure from living but should live in a state of religious and moral anxiety until he dies and goes to heaven where he will enjoy the pleasures that he denied himself on earth.

It is the desire for pleasure that helps to keep human life in existence; and the religionists have, ignorantly in most cases, under their control no less than the motive for living itself when they frighten the people into moral abstinence from pleasure. The sincerity of the priests and the preachers in the matter is illustrated by the fact that they have rarely practiced their dismal fictions but have been in enough cases examples of immorality; and this is especially true of the Catholic priesthood. The philosopher should practice moderation in pleasure and in the rest of life and should refuse to be deprived because of the superstition of the people of the little pleasure that he finds; but I do not know what the people should be taught, whether abstinence from or moderation in pleasure; for, while to teach them good sense and moderation seems like a good thing, history and experience show that they are little susceptible to good sense and moderation. Be that as it will, the religious doctrines against pleasure and the natural life have done no good in the world and never will do any good.

WILLIAM RITTENOUR.

### LAMBETH PALACE (The House of the Lamb)

THIS famous residence of the Archbishops of Canterbury, known since 1244 as a treasure-house of archaeological research, contains interesting documents of ecclesiastical history. The Palace Library had for its Keeper, Rev. Samuel R. Maitland, D.D., who catalogued the manuscripts, and by authority published many of them, relating to the Reformation period.

When looking over some of these documents I was amazed and amused by reading the correspondence, which the Librarian's Preface states that these papers contain irreverent burlesque, even of the Scriptures, characteristic of the writers and too common with the Bishops,

whose powers of invective were bitter in attacks one on the other, as:—(Old English spelling is modernised.) Were not the images and roodlofts destroyed by civil power because Bonner, the Arch-bocher, will do nothing for them in London? Stand still awhile Bonner while I rub thee, tell me plainly, and face out a lie, as thou art wont to do, speak not one thing, and do another, as thy wont: once in thy life state the truth, and shame thy Master the Devil, art thou the son of an *erraunt hoore* for thy mother, and so a bastard; yet thou sayest the Mass, when the Laws suffer no bastards to be priests. How comest thou to be a Bishop, when the law says thou mayest not, all men know that thy mother, when thou wast begotten was an hoore. Common voice and fame sayeth, that the truth is that Bonner, you are a bare whippe jack for luere of money and a Sausage Bastard, and of this race come thy cousin, Wimmelslowe, the Arch-deacon of London. These things be so evident and plain, yet thou blushed not. Thou sayest thou hath a Bull from the Pope for dispensation, when thou wast at Rome: yes, for the cause of the divorce between King Henry the Eighth and the Queen, but nothing for you, from the Pope. But you betrayed the Queen's cause. O sincere judge, a mete man to sit in condemnation of the innocent, yea, more mete to stand in the pillory than in the pulpit, or wear the Tyburn tippet, Sausage Bonner, may the halter stop thy wind.

Thus, *Bishop Bonet's papers and letters*, Sig. D. VII b, and the binding cover bears an impress of the insignia of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, with the motto, "Honi soit qui mal y pense."

The Lambeth Palace stores of documents relating to religious activities are next famous to those of the Vatican Library, and herein are the materials from which Church and clergy knowledge can be learned, both serious and awful, and even droll, according to which religion prevailed during the earlier periods of English history.

These manuscripts can be handled and read, and there is one of clerical cruelty: that of the Marian Persecution, when Bonner was Bishop. This authentic "List of the Martyrs" begins with John Rogers, burnt at Smithfield, February 4, 1555. There are 277 entries in the list, each with the person's name, place of death by fire, and the date. The last victim, the 277th, being Richard Snel at York, September 18, 1556.

We learn from the sworn evidence, during the questioning of persons, "presented" to the Bishop and charged as heretics that some of the "foul sayings" were sometimes ribald and often droll, and even stage-plays acted in Churches displayed the immorality of monks, their ribald "feats" of the Popish clergy, with profane ballads, as asserted in, the "Fantasie of Idolatrie." Some heretics were "taken" for blasphemy which the clergy declared was an introduction to Atheism, for, if sacred things were mocked, it would be hard to stop such petulant humour and scoffing at religion, even the Bible itself and the Mass.

Many circumstances were ludicrous and done in derision of images and ceremonial worship, at Easter in St. Paul's, the custom being to lay the Sacrament in the Sepulchre, at Evensong, on Good Friday, and take it out at morning service, Easter Day, when the choir (quire) sang "surrexit non est hic" (He is risen, he is not here), and the priest going to take out the host, found it was not in the Sepulchre, for someone had stolen the wafer. This incident gave rise to a ballad, that God had been stolen, and another made of bread, in its stead.

On Sunday, April 8, 1554, there was a tom cat hanged upon the gallows at the Cross in Cheap (Cheapside), apparelled like a priest, ready to say Mass, with a shaven

crow. Its two fore feet were tied over its head with a round paper like a wafer-cake put between the paws, whereon arose great evil-will against the City of London, for the Queen and the Bishops were angry, withal: therefore, the same afternoon there was a Proclamation, that whoever could bring forth the party who did hang up the cat, should have twenty nobles, which reward was increased to twenty marks; but none would earn it.

W. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

## THE MOSES MYTH

### II.

LIKE the Joseph legend, the Moshe haggadah was afforded a pseudo-Egyptian varnish that starts with the name of the hero. This in the Septuagint is given as "Mōūsēs" (a drawer of water); the massoretic vocalization of "Moshe" is still dubious, since the Arabic form of *Mūsā* seems to be based on a highly antique tradition. The Egyptian "meshu" or "moshu," frequent in theophoric names, simply means "Babe" (newly-born, novice) and befits Moshe as the first-initiated lad in Israel. Yet the Scriptural "Red Sea" is a bowdlerization; the Hebrew text has "yam-sūf" which means "Reedy Sea" or Sedgy Moor. Dr. Abt asserts that the "overthrowing" and drowning of Pharaoh in this bog is a parallel to similar immersions, especially that of Sodom (Gen. xiv, Yahvist), or the Battle in the Vale of the Shōdim (Animal Demons) near Sodom, and that the Sedgy Moor must be localised at the Southern tip of the Dead Sea, a marshy part still covered with saline bushes. The Syrian gnostics translated this yam-sūf into a yam-sōf, the mystical "Final Sea" on the dangerous Border of Ordeals. The Biblical localization of yam-sūf in the district of Goshen (Gen. xlv, 10; xlv, 31, etc.) has quite erroneously been equated with the Egypt district of Qēsēm (Sept. Gesēm arabias) alias herōonpolis or the land of Ra'mesēa; in fact it was a strip of territory between B'er-Sheba, Xebrōn\* and Ghazza, well around the ancient town of Gerār as is obvious from Jos. x, 41, xi, 16 and xv, 5; even the Græco-Egyptian Septuagint omits gēsēm and puts gosōm (instead of gosōn). Probably, after having found asylum from starvation in this land of Goshen one of the hired labourers had a brawl with an Egyptian supervisor of the Colonial Administration. Afraid of punishment, he fled to the territory of the Madyanitic Arabs near the Bay of Akkabah (Hydjaz, now Transjordan), an Egyptian borderland (Mizir). There he married, as the story goes, the daughter of a "priest" among the Levites "Adherents" and converted himself (Ex. xviii—Elohists), later he returns together with his Arabian wife (in Num. xiii, 1, she is a kūsūth or Ethiopian!) and Gershon (=Alien Client), his son, to Southern Palestine where he introduces his new God Jāhu'æ. However, he met with resistance against his accepting his foreign family and deity, so he evaded once more and with a few followers went to the Desert of Shūr or the Desert Mounds of Noreb. For fear of Egyptian patrols or for lack of grazing places he turned to the steppes of the Dead Sea and in this district, already abandoned by the Egyptian Government, he succeeded in forcing upon a medley of settlers his authority and God. Later, his supporters expanded to the West in proportion to the recession of the Egyptian power.

\* In Hebrew words X is to denote a guttural-like Scottish "ch."

Under no circumstances must the Hebrews be mixed up with the Hyqsos who came to Egypt as conquerors, and even if one day some archeologist should excavate a Xabirru settlement in the Delta district, he may rest assured that Moshe's people had definitely no connection with them. Nevertheless, Mr. Petrie Flinders was fanciful enough to detect Moses' story in the Sinai inscriptions.

Yithrō (Regū el-Hobāb), Moshe's father-in-law and tutor (Ex. xviii, 24) was, it is said, a Qēnī, a descendant of Kain; yet the Qēnītes were a clan of the Amālēkites who were so much hated by the Hebrews. It may be that the Quor'an tradition considered Jethrō to be a doublet of a certain Arab prophet named Shu'aib. Sura xxviii, 21, of the Quor'an does not give his name at all; in Sura 26 he is a man of Madyan, though, whilst Sura xi, 91 names "Shu'aib of the Bush People"—probably a mythological ancestor of the Me'inean tradition, recalling the Yemenite town of Shaeb. Now it is worth mentioning that there is a Me'inean inscription (in Lixyianian letters) from the oasis of Egra (Al'ala) where, in the form of "lavi'u" the Levites are mentioned, and this is the only non-Jewish occurrence of this term. Hence Madyan was the territory where Moshe first came into contact with them and their deity (it was only in the late fourth century B.C. that Sinai, the Mountain of the Lawgiving, was supposed to be in the West of the Sinus Aelaniticus, i.e., the Bay of the Aqqabah!). "Levi," hardly derived from the metronymicum "Lé'ah," comes from the (Arab.) root lawā=to attach, and hebr. "Lāwāh" means: to be connected with, adhere to. The Levites had never been an independent tribe, they were the "Adherents." But whose adherents were these itinerant ordainers? This query can only be answered through the Quor'an, the first prophet of which is called Zalyx (Sura vii), the man of the Thamud people (=the Rock Dwellers); he preached in vain and was derided until Allah in His wrath destroyed the sinful towns in the fashion of Sodom. Zalyx, with the meaning "He who prays," may have been a nickname of a reformer active among the settlers of the joint oases of Al'ola and Dédān-Muzriān in the North-West of which a settlement is still called Madā Zalyx, Zalyx's Towns. Perhaps he was the founder of the Levitic order. Dr. Abt opines that the God Yahve the cult of which—as is evident from names beyond the orbit of Jewish culture—was not limited to Israel, had originated with the Arabian Madianites.

He consequently maintains that Yahve has to be derived from the Arabic language; up to now all explanations from Hebrew have been rather unsatisfactory. Generally it is thought that Y-H-W-H springs from the verb hāwā=to be, either in the *hiqtīl*-form (H-Causative-Perfect Past, 3rd masc., singul., active)—which can hardly be evidenced elsewhere—and would mean: He causes to be; or it may be derived from basic yih-yāh. Old Hebr. Yahyēh equal Yahvēh=He exists (cf. the Elohists interpretation Ex. iii, 14). According to Theodoretos, bishop of Kyrrhos, Northern Syria (first half of the fifth century, after Quaestion, ad Exodum, 15), 'Aā (Ejhaeh) was merely the equivalent for the original form of "Iabe" still in use with the Samaritans. Other Greek authors have: 'Iage, 'Iabai, 'Iā-ā, 'Iao, etc.

Prior to 70 A.D. this name was not considered to be esoteric and far from keeping it secret, Yahve himself in Exod. xxxiv, 5-7 (Yahvist), blurts it out three times. All the explanations of this name derived from Hebrew

and the idioms of Canaan are forced, to suit religious purposes, and contrary to grammar. Consequently other sources were tried out.

Langdon, the American archæologist, distinguished for the explanation of the "legitimate" son of God-Heir, considers Yahvæ a doublet of Ea, the God-King of the Sumeric pantheon (in the last edition of the *Encycl. Brit.* he corrected his earlier assumption of Ea having been imported from Arabia).

It may be that Sinai, the Mountain of the Lawgiver, is derived from the Sumeric God of Knowledge and Law, En-zu or Zu-En; yet Yahvæ is much younger than Ea, the Ruler of Water, and may still have been alive when the cult of Ea flourished. Deities, Dr. Abt asserts, are reflected and perpetuated authority of ancestors, elevated and localised under simple appellatives such as: Lord, Queen, Owner, or Beloved, etc. Through everyday use these terms grow blurred and distorted; the more they become unintelligible, the more carefully they are preserved and fixed. Hence the Ethymologist must beware of being led astray by accidental similarities in such names, even if they occur with related peoples or in neighbouring localities.

According to Gen. iv. 26 (Yahvist) the name of Yahvæ was already known to the first Hebrew, Enosh=Man (genuinely, Adam were merely the legendary ancestor of the Idumæans!), but Ex. vi. 3, asserts that it wanted Moshe to propagate it.

Several scholars have come to believe that Yahvæ is but a secondary name, derived from the ecstatic cry of "Yah"—similar to the "Bakxos" (fr. Vivæhos!) in the cult of the Thraeco-Greek Dio-nysos. Such secondary and exclamatory names, however, are definitely an exception and bound to be restricted to orgiastic cults. Dr. Abt deals to some length with a theory of G. R. Driver, expounded in the *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* of 1928, to the effect that "h" in many instances of Hebrew and Persian cuneiforms was merely a *mater lectionibus*, i.e., an auxiliary for the application of vowels. He examines this theory in several instances, dismisses it altogether, and offers his own explanation.

P. G. ROY.

### AN OPEN LETTER TO BERTRAND RUSSELL.

HAVING been one of your unshaken admirers since the early thirties when I came across your atheistic ideas in the writings of Prof. Carnap, I am now growing more and more uncertain in my admiration of you and quite amazed to see how persistently you are repeating, in your books and talks, a patent fallacy on the question of agnosticism versus atheism. I have written you repeatedly, pointing out your muddle, but you didn't deign to respond. Now I see, by the July issue of the London "Literary Guide," that you have given me an indirect reply in your London Rationalist Press Association Jubilee address on May 20, repeating the fallacy once more under a philosophic guise. Coming from such an authoritative source I am afraid it will cause havoc in the less convinced rationalist minds and a "Satanic" glee in the ranks of all obscurantists all over the world.

Instead of a plain, undisguised atheism you are recommending there a brand of a wavering agnosticism of the following characteristics: (1) "I cannot prove that either the Christian God or the Homeric gods do not exist." (2) "All human knowledge is uncertain." Now (1) is patently silly and (2) is so patently false that I am in doubt whether they are worthy of serious rebuttal.

First of all, let me ask you who on earth would seriously challenge you to prove that the Homeric gods do not exist? Even to all Christian kids (who find no gods extinct or living—in their zoology) they are already non-existing by ecclesiastical definition! So the modern atheist's task, in its empirical part, is only to prove that the Christian gods Yahveh and Jesus and Holy Ghost have, in the Bible, the same essential characteristics as the rest of gods, Homeric or otherwise, who are by ecclesiastical definition non-existing. My real interest is: What is the cause of this unbelievable inability of yours to master the relevant facts about Yahveh or Jesus or Holy Ghost as *one* of their kind? I frankly can't help doubting the sincerity of your queer agnosticism towards patent Homeric or Hebrew myths.

Distinct from the empirical reasoning against all mythical gods, the second or analytical part of atheist's argument against *any* theoretical "God" is even less exacting and quite congenial to your wits. It is simply to remind the obscurantists that a contradictory definition of "God" as "something being everywhere *and*, simultaneously (as spirit), being nowhere in particular," rules out, automatically, *any* question of possible exemplification (or existence) of "God" in the world to the degree of absolute certainty. You cannot be an agnostic towards a logically false expression. So I repeat: "God's" non-existence is thus absolutely certain. Now you say "Nothing is certain." This dictum being a patent fallacy even by your own definition, I simply ask you what is the *purpose* of this self-stultifying and almost morbid abhorrence of absolute certainty in things logical (analytical)?

I see only one way for you to rehabilitate yourself as regards your treason against the plain truth of atheism—namely, by declaring that you have never meant literally and seriously what you wrote and said in recommendation of your "philosophic agnosticism" which can never be anything but fallacy as against the "popular atheism" which is true, both in its empirical and tautological demonstrations, despite the persistent distortion at the hands of agnostics and the faithful. I further suspect that you *call* some knowledge—"nearly certain" what the rest of us know to be "wholly certain," as for example: "It is logically-true that either 'somewhere' or 'nowhere'!" Now I ask, is yours a case of British understatement exemplified on a philosophic plane? Or is it—*most probably*—your ancient "trick of attracting attention" as long ago exposed by the late Mrs. Stebbing: "He (Mr. Russell) says 'all' when, so I am assuming, he means 'most'; perhaps 'half' (or even less than half) would have been all that was justifiable. To speak thus moderately would not be so effective for his purpose. Russell often, in his popular books, uses this trick of attracting attention. . . ." ("Thinking to Some Purpose," p. 128, Pelican edition.)

Now do you care about the truth—of atheism? If so, I am looking forward to your (literal and serious) reply!

GREGORY S. SMELTERS.

(24b) Eutin, Germany.

(D.P. Camp.)

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## ACID DROPS

In connection with the four hundredth anniversary of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit Commission took to Japan a jewel encrusted reliquary containing the right arm of St. Francis Xavier, one of the earliest Jesuit missionaries. The crucifix which St. Francis carried with him to Japan is being exposed in a Bombay church before being taken back to Madrid. The *India News* reports that "both the relic and the rest of the body are in a remarkable state of preservation." This is obviously another miracle, for four hundred years is a long time. There is no slackening in the rag and bone religion, and no effort is too much to dupe the "sheep" even to carting bits of human beings half way round the world. We hope the Jesuit Commission will keep the pieces together. Francis will want his right arm on the Day of Judgment.

God comes before arithmetic, and what really matters is that "a boy should fear, love and worship God," said a Catholic headmaster. This is quite in line with the religious outlook. Of course, the Headmaster did not mean "religious" arithmetic in which three equals one, nor did he have in mind that interesting problem of five loaves and two fishes divided by 5,000 and leaving a balance of 12. Our Headmaster is obviously playing for safety; imagine his pupils trying to work out the space required to house two animals of every species, let alone the other problem of seven animals of every species, we are certain the answer would not tally with Genesis.

It is not often that we agree with a parson but we do with the speaker at the recent Chichester Conference who, during the discussion on the Mission to London, said that it was not quite playing the game to inveigle youth to church with a bait of entertainments including billiards at church halls. The modern trend of providing social activities to lure people to church is apparently of great importance to the clergy, and in spite of the so-called "religious instinct" and "man's craving for religion," the clergy know only too well that youth clubs, the Y.M.C.A., boy scouts, etc., are the only ways of getting them to church. The glorious gospel of Jesus can only be made palatable by sugaring the pill. In plain English, false pretences.

We sympathise with any religious reviewer of Sir Stafford Cripps' *God in Our Work*. Sir Stafford is, as readers know well, a very earnest Christian, and he "passionately believes," we are told, that "the soul of democracy is Christianity." In fact, "it is the Christ-plan, the Christ principle, that must take the place of soulless totalitarian planning and the Fuhrer principle." But is not the "Christ principle," a "Fuhrer principle," that is, the "leader" principle?

But it is when "one inquires as to the nature and essence" of the Christianity advocated by Sir Stafford that he becomes less helpful. The *Church Times* reviewer complains that this Christianity is too strongly "ethical," too redolent of "uplift." Sir Stafford is altogether too vague and too nebulous in his "humanism," and he appears to have made only one reference in his book to "prayer, worship, and the Communion." Which is rather strange when one considers that Sir Stafford thoroughly believes that Christ is God, and his teachings are "the voice of God." So what can a poor, but very religious reviewer say? As we don't know, we give it up.

The Dean of Huntingdon, in the *Church Times*, gives "hell" to the latest "translation" of the Bible—that in basic English. He mentions many of the others, of course—Weymouth, Knox, Moffatt, among them—and he rightly asks, "How much help do these various translations give me to encourage my people to read and appreciate the word of God?" Let us admit that no translation has surpassed the Authorised Version, but in these days one might just as well ask—"Does the Authorised Version bring men and women to Christ?" And any parson or priest will answer at once, "No!"

The Dean claims that "the authors of the Authorised Version translated the ancient documents into the common speech of their day," which is just nonsense. The Authorised Version is a special "reverent" kind of language inherited in the first place from Wycliffe, and very little departed from by Tyndale. The people of England in 1611 no more spoke "Bible" English than they do now. That the Authorised Version has a beauty of its own no one can deny; but when "basic" English gives us instead of "The Lord is my Shepherd," "The Lord takes care of me as his sheep," it is turning "God's Word" into something very comical. And it will not rake in converts.

The *Sunday Pictorial*, which in general is very religious, calls the latest evangelical import to these shores, "Little David"—"this awful child." We wonder why? Has not David—who at the age of 9 entered Heaven, saw the jewel-studded gates open for him, and heard a crowd of angels clad in suitable and innocuous nighties sing in honour of such a distinguished visitor—come here sternly to turn the people of England from sin? Was not that exactly what "our Lord" did in Palestine? If the *Sunday Pictorial* can call angelic David "an unpleasant American brat," we shudder to think what it would call Jesus if he flew over from Jerusalem (or whatever his heavenly abode is called) on the same Mission here and now.

The "unpleasant American brat" claims to have cured thousands of curable and incurable cases—though it is, alas, true he could produce no medical testimony. Unbelievers have no right to expect any. When "Little David" advertises that one of his appointed ribbons—which you must buy to make it properly effective—placed round an afflicted part of somebody will heal "through special miracles," who are we to point the finger of scorn at him? How dare blatant infidels jeer at miracles, spiritual or spiritualistic! It is terrible to read that, in the face of such holiness as is David's, the *Sunday Pictorial* writer wants to give him a kick in the pants. Good Lord!

A perfect example of the "Design" argument and one showing "purpose" in life—and death—has always been an earthquake. The latest example of this beneficent will of the Almighty occurred in Ecuador the other week, when some thousands of people were killed and large tracts of land and towns devastated. And once again we must record one of those mysteries the Lord loves to inflict his children with. Fifty children were learning their Catechism in the Cathedral when the tremors first came, and perished with their nun teachers. Defenders of the "Design" argument will not use this striking example.

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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London, W.C. 1.

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

L. W. CARRUTHERS writes, "Line 1 of par. 2 of my covering letter in 'The Freethinker' of August 7, should read 'Galileo' not 'Galilee'."

A. BELLOCK, H. HOLGATE.—Many thanks; should be useful.

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.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three-months, 4s. 4d.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

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

## SUGAR PLUMS

The Urban District Council of Ormskirk are to convene a public meeting of the local government electors on the question of Sunday Cinemas. In conditions such as this, it is the well-organised minority that will be able to dictate to the majority as to how they shall spend their Sun-lays, and usually the well-organised minority are Christians. Freethinkers in the Ormskirk area should therefore combine to fight the bigots. The General Secretary of the N.S.S. will gladly forward leaflets and information to Freethinkers in that area.

A pamphlet on the training of the clergy has lately been published, and it has aroused some lengthy criticism from the *Church Times*. A clergyman has not only to be fully trained in his pastoral duties, in leading public worship, and in being able to meet in argument the average non-believer, but he has also to take sole charge of the "cure of souls" and to train budding curates—rather a hefty job for the kind of material to be trained for the Church. And the difficulty is that most of the fully trained clergy are no good at their job. The colleges training them have utterly failed.

As we stated last week, the clergy were not too pleased with the interlopers, and have shown some opposition to the "Wonder Child Preacher" and the Martz circus. We can imagine how gladly they welcomed the offer of help from the business manager of Martz & Co., particularly when the offer was couched in typical American bluntness: "Brothers," said Jack Martz, "if your business is that shaky, I guess you ought to be glad to have us around." Note, the operative word is "business."

A Freethinker would be pleased to meet other Freethinkers in Fire for mutual discussion and possibly the formation of a Freethought organisation in Dublin. Those interested should write to Mr. P. O'Connor, Ballyveskill, Tiermaclane, Emis, Co. Clare.

## PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED

REVIEWERS often get hold of works the object of which is by no means clear. I can quite understand the thousands of books written and published boasting Christianity and Jesus—Christians have to be gingered up on every possible occasion. Preaching to the converted is a necessity, as all parsons have sorrowfully to admit; for a large proportion of believers are more or less indifferent, or can easily become backsliders.

After reading a pamphlet by Mr. D. H. H. Martin, *Man, Science and Deity* (The Thinker's Forum, Watts and Co., Is.), I can only sit back and wonder what it is all about. Freethinkers will agree with a good deal of what he says for it seems to be in many instances most elementary; and it is most unlikely that Christians would read it even if given to them. A good, earnest Christian is certainly not going to pay for a pamphlet which is designed to upset their creed. Very few things in it appear, to me at least, as even a new way of saying old things.

What exactly does Mr. Martin want to convey in his chapter "Means of Apprehending Deity?" Freethinkers know quite well that during man's occupation of this world "the number of gods manifesting themselves . . . is incredibly large." So what? "Invariably revelation came via the afflatus of a prophet," adds Mr. Martin. "who is doubtless closely associated with what we would now regard as a mystic." I am by no means so cocksure as Mr. Martin is with his "invariably," but supposing it is true I can only ask again—so what?

There are many ways of "apprehending" a deity—fear, ignorance, credulity, magic, all help. Fasting for long periods, or eating nothing but herbs and drinking stagnant water for months often make a man apprehend a deity very quickly, to say nothing of devils; though I admit intoxicating liquor will produce more blue demons in a day than herbs and water in a month. But don't we all know this? What I should like to have had from Mr. Martin is a clear statement about deity—does he or does he not exist? And I don't want to be asked, what do I mean by deity?

Mr. Martin is good enough to admit that "a formidable number of classical scholars" support the view that Jesus is a mythical character; but it is laughable to see how quickly he repents somewhat of this rash statement by immediately giving also a list of books on the other side the reader must consult if he wishes to study the problem "impartially." It is a fact that, almost without exception, Freethinkers have been brought up to believe "the other side," and therefore in a real Jesus—especially those who, like Mr. Joseph McCabe, Mr. Archibald Robertson, and Mr. A. D. Howell Smith, have been brought up in a clerical household or in a monastery. And once the virus has been injected it is very difficult to get it ejected. To refer readers of John M. Robertson to a believer in a "historical Messiah" like Conybeare—apart altogether from the fact that Robertson convicted Conybeare of deliberately lying—proves how far, in some directions, Freethought has still to go. If Mr. Martin had known a little more of the controversy, or even a little more of militant Freethought, his pamphlet would have been of far greater use.

Then take the historic controversy between Materialism and Idealism which Mr. Martin treats somewhat in his first chapter. Over and over again I have read how the latest developments of the "new" physics have brought about the "downfall" of nineteenth century Materialism—but I am by no means clear as to whether Mr. Martin agrees with this or not. What he does tell us—in a footnote—is, "Recently the outlook of atomic physicists

has become even more abstract in regarding the atom (and hence all matter) as a series of 'events.' That is, we who are still Materialists, even blatant ones, have to believe, if we accept the findings of "atomic physicists," that the atom bomb which played such havoc with the Japanese when it was exploded, was not really "matter" but an event or a "series of events." Does Mr. Martin believe this, or does he want us to believe it, or what? I simply don't know. But may I register my own contempt for this drive!

When it comes to ethics it need hardly be said that Mr. Martin does not like "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" for, in his opinion, it hinders "progressive reform." He much prefers, "to understand all is to forgive all." And to make this more convincing he immediately appeals to "Christ"—as indeed I fully expected he would somewhere when reading his pamphlet. He says that this maxim "is what Christ may have meant when he is alleged to have advocated the loving of enemies."

What "Christ" is said to have said does not, it seems to me, make much difference as to whether a certain line of conduct is good or bad. Let us by all means try to "reform" the criminal, but let us make him work instead of pampering him. And let us sometimes give a thought for the *victim* who is always left out when any discussion on the criminal class takes place. There is nothing a criminal likes better than to be "reformed." He can bash your face to a pulp, disfigure you so that you are a horror to look at, but under no circumstances must you or the law hit back and physically hurt him. Why, that is *revenge*—and what does "Christ" say about "revenge"? To know all is to forgive all—let us then set free the Nazi doctors who tore babies from their mothers' arms and either vivisected them alive, or threw them into raging furnaces, or gas chambers. Let us "reform" them; and both Mr. Martin and I know how well that would be received both by the Nazis—and Christ, if he is alive in heaven.

I certainly believe in Science but I am by no means sure that I believe in all scientists. I do not see why a scientist cannot be as big a blackguard as a doctor or an author. I could give Mr. Martin particulars of some of the things which scientists have done—they sicken me at all events. Personally, I think it will be a long time before mankind can be "reformed," and we may be obliged to try out all sorts of methods. And whether Christ meant or did not mean "to know all is to forgive all"—I for one would always oppose this particular piece of sheer and criminal nonsense.

Mr. Martin thinks that "a happier, though admittedly less likely, outcome may arise through the mediation of psychical research." I was not altogether surprised to read this; man must, in the opinion of many Rationalists like Mr. Martin, have a religion of some kind. If he is not satisfied with Science or Rationalism or Materialism—why there is "psychical research." We can always promise him plenty of pie in the sky in this way, and what should poor, hungry, erring man want more than such a beautiful promise?

H. CUTNER.

We are pleased to see that many persons are waking up to the fact that all the kingdoms and monarchies of Christendom rest upon the Bible for their authority to rule and oppress the people, and that if the results of modern scientific discoveries held sway, as they should, every throne in Europe would crumble to pieces. It is true that nearly every great tyranny and wrong in the world is a Bible product.

L. K. WASHBURN.

## KILLING TIME

AT the age of sixty years, looking back over more than half a century of remembered life details, a man finds himself remembering an enormous amount of wasted time. Though partially sympathetic to it, he cannot wholly accept the view that the only well spent part of life is that devoted to getting wealth. Tempting is such a doctrine to a man born poor and living on a small income, realising that few good things can be had without money, abundance of riches being the means to plentiful pleasures.

Too cynical is the opinion that existence is a waste of time. If not a pose this seems the refuge of the frustrated and failures. Few care to acknowledge the last, although making small claims to success.

Most of us are ordinary men

"Like driftwood spars which meet and and pass  
Upon the boundless ocean plain."

Suicide would be the logical conclusion to deciding that life is entirely a waste of time. To that waste of sentiment not many will commit themselves.

A healthy boy will not think so up till the end of his teens, but childhood contains much wasted time, saving the business of growing up is in itself a justification of innumerable apparently useless activities. Human development should not be hurried or retarded, its tempo in no way varied from normal, but adults attempt to do so by differing forms of interference.

Chief of these is education in the limited content of compulsory attendance at school. Education is really a vaster and more progressive growth of the youngster, transcending what takes place in schools. Much of the latter is palpable waste of time.

Subjects of which the pupils will make little use in their lives, or at which they are dunces, as higher mathematics, history, religious instruction and other learning by rote; drawing for those with no artistic ability or taste; excessive memorisation when reference books are plentiful; music forced upon the tone deaf as poetry upon the tough-minded or literature upon the illiterate; meaningless physical exercises; as well as dull lessons nearly ignored and pointless practices listlessly performed: who cannot look back and indicate wasted hours every week of school life! For many reading is the access to knowledge, their greatest educational medium, public libraries their hunting ground, their university.

Beyond that is exercise of all the senses, sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, used in a thousand different ways as fancy suggests while wandering about in town and country.

These minor adventures in sensations would be condemned by pedants as waste of time. Contrarily, in later years one recognises them as not only pleasurable, educative, but often formative, giving a man some claims to understanding and culture, though he never acquired a university degree.

Meeting men and women who have done this latter, one is constrained to decide that many wasted their time in doing so, for they lack so much else which makes life worth while, individuals themselves livable with, companionable, sociable.

Although here on more debatable ground one thinks many persons who had higher education could have learnt all they know in less time than they spent over it. Can it be possible that teachers and educationists and controlling authorities purposely spread courses of instruction over unnecessarily long periods, if not actually retarding scholars and students? This lengthening of the pupil age would make work easier for those who instruct, as well as creating more jobs for their profession.



By private study many seem to cover large areas of learning. Wide reading interlinked with other intellectual activities fill their minds, beside providing pleasant memories in later years.

Such youths would not take enthusiastically to games, excessive time at which may be regarded as wasted. For adults to play games is even more wasteful of time and energy, arousing a thoughtful man to contempt.

Worse is the practice of watching games for several hours every week. Professional players equally waste time which might be better occupied in productive labour.

Perhaps the highest waste is reached when spectators and numerous others who do not attend sports bet on results, thus losing money, as backers nearly always do, beside dissipating much mental activity in following sporting information and calculating chances. Also enriching bookies is more than a minor item.

Every hobby may be regarded as wasteful by those who do not indulge it, but prefer some other distraction. Music takes much time, which to the non-musical seems extravagant and the output boring. Another criticism is by nature lovers who want songs of birds, sounds of wind and noises of running water as music.

Yet others would view the time and patience spent lingering in the country as lamentable waste. Better a man be in theatre or music-hall or cinema, his garden or allotment, public house or club; cycling or motoring, or making things in his own workshop; participating in political or other movements, decorating his house or playing with his children: so the criticism might go on. If one man's meat is another's poison more is one man's leisure hour happiness boring or deplorable to others.

Travel, so often extolled for its excellences can be waste of time as well as of energy and money unless planned and used to best advantage. Especially when one considers hours spent in queues and on railway stations and landing stages, or in uncomfortable hotels and apartments.

Those there are who think attendance at churches and religious practices a form of idleness, while devotees find such some of the best spent hours of their lives. Similarly diverse or opposing views are held on frequenting inns, theatres, cinemas, dance-halls or other resorts.

Maybe the ideal is to sit in silent moveless contemplation, thus driving externally active people to wonder and resentment.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

### SPIRITS AND HORNETS

It is possible that by this time Mr. Wood has had time to think over the arguments of his opponents, but there is one point which has not been made clear and which I would call "Persistence of Personality."

The idea that life is something which is added to the body is age-old. We are all familiar with dreams and this has given rise to the supposition that man has a "spirit" which when the body is asleep is free to roam about the world.

As I pointed out early in this argument, much to the disgust of Mr. Wood who thought I was being facetious, these dreams are the result of stomach trouble and hence Charles Dickens' famous statement, "There's more of the gravy than the grave about you."

Now the trouble about the identification of a person has been solved in the material world (according to the detective stories) by the finger-print. As this is excluded in the "spirit" world, it is necessary to make knowledge, language and memory the test of personality. Thus Joe Smith can be identified at a seance only because he

mentions facts which are known to his friends and peculiar to himself. Thus he might say, "I had the scar of a deep cut on my left first finger which was done at school" or he might affirm that Auntie Maggie was fitted with a wooden leg in August, 1896.

The contention of the spiritualists is that this "personality" leaves the body at death and has all the mental attributes of the dead person. Thus the spirit has knowledge, language and memory without the brain cells which store these impressions! My contention is that when the body dies the personality ceases.

This personality is rigidly tied up with the material body and the slow growth of its knowledge can be traced from childhood. Thus it would be foolish to ask the "spirit" of a child who died at ten years to solve mathematical problems of which it had no conception in its brief life.

It will be remembered that the dead air commander in the seance was said to be identified not so much because he gave his name but because of the technical description of the crash though, as Mr. Cutner points out, there is no legal evidence that the "dead" man was responsible for the statement. This is most important because it implies fraud in the presentation of the evidence.

As I have pointed out before, if "disembodied spirits" are the result of death, then we have to visualise a world of spirits beyond calculation since we have to include all the human race, all the animal creation, and to these we have to add the Plant World!

Finally, I cannot accept an impersonal Life Force (we might as well talk of the force of gravitation) or Candle Flame. What Mr. Wood is referring to is the "personal spirit" of the deceased who must prove his or her identity by the test of knowledge, language and memory.

Strangely enough (or not) this is the point at which the spirit world breaks down, in fact the spirits get very angry when they are asked to substantiate their statements by facts and to justify themselves under cross-examination and in this respect Mr. Wood runs true to form in his attitude to his critics.

T. D. SMITH.

### THE THEOLOGIANS WILL NEVER LEARN

IN the year 1886 the Boyle Lectures on Religions of the World were delivered by Frederick Maurice, and in his section on Christianity, he had this to say:—

"If ever the Christian Church should forget its true function, then God is capable of raising up strange instruments to do His Will."

There is something in that statement that is bound to command more than passing attention in these troublous times, when millions of decent men and women are "seeking the Light" of a greater understanding of the meaning and purpose of Life.

We are informed, with a flourish of trumpets, that the revised Bible is now ready and that it has taken eight years to compile. That be as it may, we can hardly expect those who have been engaged upon this work—presumably reputed Biblical authorities—to have very much altered their viewpoint about many of the leading scriptural records, for have they not been giving the same old misinterpretations for close on two thousand years?

It never seems to strike some of those ardent devotees that the Bible is essentially an Eastern book, written by ancient Eastern Scribes for the special delectation and guidance of Eastern peoples of that remote period, and as all Eastern travellers know, the peoples of those countries—whilst certainly not lacking in subtlety and artfulness—

are very fond of allegorical and symbolical description, not to mention an extreme liking for the language of the Parable. But notwithstanding this patent fact, the Theological Training Colleges continue to instruct their students in the literal translation of such teachings, with the result that we are presented with a mass of distorted transcriptions, which thinking men and women now no longer accept as a species of Divine Revelation, just because the Theologians say so.

The Christian apologists make the egregious error of supposing that theirs is *the last word*, and that any transgression of *what they say and proclaim* as the *absolute truth* is tantamount to denying the whole doctrine of a sponsored Creation by a *Personal God*.

The Church is for ever lamenting the falling-off in spiritual observance, and for this they can blame themselves, for they have not only propagated through the centuries, mistranslations of scriptural happenings—ostensibly with the intention of maintaining a grip on the minds of the unthinking and the uninstructed, but have also failed to apply to their own institution until comparatively recent years, the underlying principles of their own Creed, hence the dissension in their own ranks, which we must admit they are not unaware of.

This is where the statement of Maurice referred to above, "comes home to roost." It seems to us that they have "lost their way" in a jungle of creeds and dogmas that seem to have little relationship to the original teachings of the Master, and until they scrap some of their perverted ideas, I cannot see that much progress will be made towards establishing that much to be desired ideal, a Brotherhood of Man amongst the nations of the earth. That old policy of "do as I say, not as I do" appears to be operative just as much in religious organisations as anywhere else.

The stern and forbidding attitude of the Anglican authorities to any reform that does not square with *their* idea of how Life should be lived, is no new phenomenon in our midst, and although they consider themselves to be Christians, by their fatuous and unbending procedure, they have condemned not only grown men and women to suffer unutterable misery, but likewise placed a stigma on innocent children. I refer to the Divorce Laws and the Bastardy Acts, which would have been drastically altered but for the past opposition of the Church towards loosening what they call "the sanctity of the marriage tie" even when there is every evidence that this state has been reduced to a tragic farce.

The Church apparently never learns anything. The march of Time and the advancement of scientific knowledge have outgrown an institution that by its own shortcomings, has almost become an anachronism, and the human race will—as it has done for countless ages—go on developing an ever-expanding horizon of its present environment, leaving those of its members that cling to outworn shibboleths, to "fall by the wayside." Natural law will mercifully, sooner or later, put them out of their misery, but the eternal march into the unknown will continue unabated to the end of Time.

LOUIS S. VERNON-WORSLEY.

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## CORRESPONDENCE

### FREETHOUGHT AND TOTALITARIANISM.

SIR,—Your contributor, F. A. Ridley, claims to be a "Freethinker," presumably a man who can think, yet he gets himself hypnotised by a word designed for that very purpose.

It's an ugly expression, "Totalitarianism," but if we are to use it, then maybe we can apply it to Mr. Ridley himself. Isn't there anything that strikes the "Freethinker" very strange about the fact that Freethinkers, Social Democrats, Liberals and Tories, the "Daily Herald," the "Daily Mail," "The Freethinker" and the "Universe," all think the same about Communism.

Oh, but, says Mr. Ridley, we attack the "Universe," and says it's as bad as the Communists. Sure, Mr. Ridley and the "Daily Herald" attacks the "Daily Mail" and vice-versa, but however much you disagree on this, that and the other, you are all of one mind and one voice in attacking the new great force that is steadily changing the world. Soviet Russia, according to the gramophones of the old order, is a "totalitarian" State. But you are not a gramophone, Mr. Ridley, you are a Freethinker. Methinks I hear you boast of it. All right, Mr. Ridley, think a little. What is the State?

Is it some divine instrument that was handed down to man to stand above and regulate the relations of classes in society? Or has it always represented the centralised power of the dominant class? Can you answer that, Mr. Ridley? In capitalist society, whether there is one party as was the case in Nazi Germany, or whether there are two or ten parties, the State, Military, Law Courts, Police, and the Educational System, are all used for the purpose of keeping the capitalist system going, for maintaining the few in a position of power and privilege, and for exploiting and suppressing the many.

When the workers take power, they fashion their own State machine, to protect themselves from the dispossessed capitalists within, and the ever-hungry capitalists from without. But there's only one party. But then, Mr. Ridley, don't forget that all the land and all the wealth-producing machinery has become common property, there is no property-owning class to form or maintain a Tory Party.

When Communism is triumphant in the principal capitalist countries, when the danger of predatory wars and counter-revolution has passed from our midst, then the State will take its place amongst the antiquities of the past.—Yours, etc.

WILLIAM GALLACHER, M.P.

### THE R.101 CASE

SIR,—May I enter, somewhat hesitantly, the controversy raging in your pages about the R.101 case? As Harry Price's literary executor at least I possess some facts with which neither Mr. Wood nor Mr. Cutner seem to be familiar.

The séance was held for the purpose of communicating with the spirit of Conan Doyle—if possible. He "came through," too, as Harry Price's "Confessions of a Ghost Hunter" records in detail. In the same book there is a very detailed report about the Irwin case; "Search for Truth" mainly recapitulated the facts and that is why Mr. Cutner found the record in the latter book somewhat skimpy.

I think it would be best for both gentlemen to ignore the newspaper version; this was edited and changed for the purposes of Sunday circulation and Harry Price had little to do with it.

In psychical research which Harry Price followed for thirty years there is very seldom conclusive evidence. Price himself recorded facts and seldom drew conclusions; he had an open mind but he remained sceptical to the end of his life about personal survival.

However, your two disputants could very easily check up on the facts. Mrs. Eileen Garrett who has given up mediumship a good many years ago and is the highly successful editor of "To-Morrow Magazine" (New York City) and owner of a distinguished American publishing house, is in London and would be no doubt glad to supply what information she can. It is not true that only Harry Price and his secretary attended the séance. Ian Coster (now of the *Daily Mail*) was also present and he should be able to give his impressions. Finally, I have seen the original correspondence between Harry Price and the gentleman connected with the construction of the R.101. There is not the slightest doubt that "Irwin" or whoever it was, provided numerous highly technical details during that séance of which the medium could have no knowledge—nor any of the sitters. I am no spiritualist nor a hardened sceptic but I think that the Irwin case cannot be dismissed with a sneer—nor can it be used, on the other hand, as an absolute proof for survival.—Yours, etc.,

PAUL TABOUL.

ALL ABOUT SHAKESPEARE.

Sir,—One likes a man to have the courage of his convictions, but has Mr. Rowland courage or convictions? Like some nervous Christian, painfully brought to an awareness of the existence of infidels, he says, "I believe in the god of Stratford, but please note if he is attacked I shall turn a blind eye to assaults, I do not know how to defend him." This only confirms my contention, made in a challenging article in "Truth" recently, that it is time the literary professors—comparable with the priests in religion—started a Shakespeare Evidence Society.

Mr. Rowland may be surprised to know that when Mr. Heskoth Pearson's "Life of Shakespeare" was first issued eight years ago—he appears to be unaware of its not being a new work—the "Listener," which is hardly a paper of heretical tendencies, said that another volume on the same subject should be issued in the Penguin series to save its reputation. It may be that this is why a new publisher has had to be found.

I am a great admirer of Mr. Pearson as a biographer and his new "Life of Dickens"—which I read for him in proof—about to appear, is I think, the best biography of the novelist yet. Shakespeare is a very different proposition. As Emerson said, "it is so difficult to marry the facts about the Stratford man to his verse," and if your space permitted I could show that guessings Mr. Pearson has indulged in. Mr. Rowland obviously not the man to detect these as he still seems to believe that Bacon is the only alternative to the Stratford actor. He is nearly 30 years out of date. Moreover, he does not know—although it was mentioned by Bernard Shaw in his Preface to "The Dark Lady of the Sonnets," that Mary Fitton was not dark!

In one respect Mr. Rowland is like Mr. Pearson, and perhaps this will please him. The latter said to me in a letter when I challenged him to debate:—

"But you must not expect me to fight with you about Shakespeare, with whom I have lived on terms of great intimacy for over 40 years and whose personality is as familiar to me as that of my most intimate friend."

This is just like the Christian who tells you he knows the Lord—you cannot get over his experience. I told Mr. Pearson I certainly did not propose to waste time in arguing with people who had an esoteric knowledge of dead men. I had none.

If Mr. Rowland is prepared to fight, I am ready! Perhaps some branch of the N.S.S. will offer a platform.—Yours, etc.,

WM. KENT.

POPE AND PANIC.

Sir.—In his letter published in your issue of the 7th August, your correspondent Mr. W. E. Nicholson states, "It is a paradox of our age that a Freethinker may quite logically support Rome against Moscow." He then refers to the policy of the lesser evil.

Surely the only person who is *not* qualified to make this arbitrary distinction is the Freethinker. If political decision is to be reduced to a choice between rival slave ideologies then it is high time that the holder of such an opinion adopted another label.

The difficulty is real for all men faced by the threat of Russian intolerances, but the alternative for a Freethinker is not to throw oneself into the arms of the Pope of Rome.

The integrity of a Freethinker demands resistance to all forms of intellectual despotism, whatever their source. When confronted by tyranny, whether clerical or secular, the Freethinker must fight, must go down fighting if necessary, but never, never let us be beguiled into joining forces with our own enemies. We are not Jesuits.—Yours, etc.,

ERIC MAPLE.

FREETHOUGHT AND TOTALITARIANISM

Sir.—In Mr. Ridley's excellent, although somewhat abbreviated, article entitled "Freethought and Society," there are some excellent points, some of which require enlarging upon.

A particular point, raised by Mr. Ridley, is that under no conceivable conditions can Freethought accept totalitarian principles. . . . For it inevitably destroys not only the conclusions of Freethought, but Freethought itself."

With this I do not agree, for I firmly believe that it is absolutely impossible to destroy Freethought with any regime, no matter how absolute, totalitarian and evil.

Freethought can only come from one place . . . the individual, therefore, to destroy it means that you have to destroy the individual. This would mean that the individual would

have to be found, have his mind probed and from the findings, it would be decided whether or not he should be liquidated as a "Freethinker."

This has all been tried before, time and time again. The Roman Church tried its hardest to repress "thought" (not even Freethought) during the one thousand years of its stranglehold on European life. I use the expression life, as opposed to civilisation. This endeavour failed miserably and to-day we see the world turning away from this "God of Death" towards new Gods . . . Materialism, Marxo-Leninism, Democracy, Freethought, etc. It is up to Freethinkers to combat the ever present evils in the world, that are trying to deprive us all of our liberty of action and expression. Our "God" which is that of the emancipated mind, that of Life itself, is able to free man and enable him to stand erect and proud of his very being. Let us all fight for this emancipation, but let us also realise that although evils may befall us, no matter how hard they try to quiet the Free Mind, the individual will remain and although he may be unable to act and express his thoughts openly, there will always be the contact with his fellow beings that will influence them and eventually effect the disintegration of the absolute state.—Yours, etc.,

PETER CROSS.

SANITY.

Sir.—After reading Mr. Nicholson's letter, I read a few of the essays of Robert G. Ingersoll.

Would it be carrying adulation to the height of absurdity, to say that Ingersoll was sanity personified?—Yours, etc.,

ALBERT R. THORNEWELL.

Bacon is right, as he generally is, when he bids us read not to contradict and refute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and to consider. After all, the thing that matters most, both for happiness and for duty, is that we should strive habitually to live with wise thoughts and right feelings.

J. MORLEY.

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