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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Rome and Society

ON Sunday, September 4, Pope Pius XII broadcast to a Catholic demonstration in Germany. The Pope, who at an earlier stage in his career, was Papal Legate in Germany, and is thus intimately acquainted with German affairs, used this occasion to summarize the Church's views on contemporary sociology. The Papal pronouncement on this subject is of special interest, not only because it is the Pope that speaks but also because Pius XII is a politician rather than a theologian—he was a professional ecclesiastical diplomatist—and owed his election to the Papacy specifically to his admittedly outstanding political ability.

In his German broadcast the Pope, for the first time, specified the official attitude of the Church of Rome towards present-day Communism in particular, and towards contemporary sociology in general in the post-war world. It appears that it was not Communism as such that the Vatican recently condemned in its now famous decree of Ex-communication of a few weeks back. The Pope disclaimed emphatically any political preferences on the part of the Church which he rules: Rome is not pro-Capitalist any more that it is pro-Communist. It does not stand for the "classes" against the "masses." On the contrary, Pope Pius expressed his pleasure at the decline of class distinctions which has resulted from the post-war social reforms that have been witnessed in the majority of European lands during the last few years: the Pope emphatically deprecated their return.

Thus the broadcast of the Pope was in reality a sermon on the old clerical aphorism, "Rome has no politics." The Church, the Pope claimed, had uttered its recent condemnation of Communism, not as a condemnation of any particular social theory, but solely because of the aggressive atheism and antagonism to religion which are inseparably bound up with Communist theories of "Marxism-Leninism" and "Dialectical Materialism," or, in other words, it is not Communism as a social theory, but only Communism as a particularly aggressive form of materialist philosophy—that the Vatican is forced to condemn in the interests of the Christian Religion itself.

We consider that this Papal pronouncement is of exceptional importance, and quite possibly signifies a fundamental change in the sociology and in the current political attitude of the Roman Catholic Church. For whatever view one may take of the theology of Rome, it would seem impossible to deny that the Papacy is a brilliant political institution, as indeed, such Protestant and anti-Roman historians as Ranke, Macaulay and Harnack have freely admitted. The genius of Papal Rome, like that of the Empire of the Cæsars before it, has always been primarily political. As P. C. King in a recent issue of the "Freethinker" remarked, "It is not, in fact, possible really to comprehend the workings of Papal Rome without some preliminary knowledge of the secular Roman Empire that preceded it," and whose

"ghost" according to old Thomas Hobbes, the Papacy actually is. Whatever the Vatican does, or does not know about any other world, it undeniably knows a great deal about this one! It has had over 1900 years of world-wide experience: throughout which long era it has traversed almost every vicissitude that can befall any institution in what the Anglican Liturgy describes as "the changes and chances of this mortal life." Judged by the Darwinian canon of the "survival of the fittest" in the given milieu, the wits of the Vatican must be exceptionally keen.

The sociological, as distinct from the religious and theological history of the Church of Rome, has unfortunately attracted far too little attention amongst critical historians, whether Protestant or Rationalist. But it is very remarkable. Despite its much-trumpeted motto of *semper eadem* ("Forever the Same") there can be few organisations whose devious twists and turns have been so numerous and startling as have been these of the Church of Rome. During the 1900 years since the first Christian congregations were formed in Rome, the western world has successively passed through three entirely distinct social systems: those respectively of chattel slavery, feudal landlordism and commercial capitalism, and towards each of these, Rome has known how both to adapt itself in its hey-day and to disentangle itself when its hour had struck. The New Testament explicitly and repeatedly recognised slavery,\* and the Church itself continued both to recognise slavery and to hold slaves itself far into the Middle Ages, whilst its modern association with the colonial slave trade is notorious, yet it survived the passing of slavery and lived to become the main ideological prop of Feudalism. So much so, in fact, that even to-day, the Church of Rome is still sometimes described as a "feudal" institution.

Whilst in more recent years largely under the guidance of the Jesuits, the Church has lived down its early antagonism to capitalism and has incorporated Bank Holiday amongst the Holy Days of the Saints. In the Capitalist Eldorado America, the old feudal church, which formerly banned capitalist finance as "the Mortal Sin of Usury" now flourishes exceedingly and is said to be *persona grata* in Wall Street.

A remarkable record! When the French biologist Lamarck first propounded his theory about the giraffe which "grew a long neck in order to survive," all that the famous biologist had to do in order to arrive at his theory was to study the actual history of the Jesuit Order by whom Lamarck was originally educated, and of the Church of Rome which educated the Jesuits. For Rome can stretch itself in almost any required direction!

Is the Vatican now just about to grow another "neck"? A socialist one this time, in order to survive in an age which everything now indicates is destined to be a col-

\* The English Authorised Version of the Bible dishonestly translates the Greek *Doulos*—which means precisely "slave," as "servant."



lectivist one. It is not improbable, and the Pope's recent broadcast seems best understood as an initial overture in this last direction. It is true that Rome has not once, but many times, anathematised Communism and Socialism with the traditional bell, book and candle. But then we must not forget that in earlier ages the self same Vatican has repeatedly hurled its thunderbolts against then rising capitalism and the commercial classes who embodied it. "Usury," under which term most modern financial operations were included was a medieval mortal sin, whilst successive Popes denounced the French Revolution, the capitalist revolution *par excellence* in unmeasured terms. Yet now Rome is world-capitalism's strongest ally against communism, and about 80 per cent. of the current Papal revenue comes from the U.S.A., the last stronghold of the classical age of capitalist "free enterprise." Is history going to repeat itself with respect to Socialism and Communism?

It appears to us to be very probable that it is. For it can hardly be disputed, whatever its implications, that the world to-day is moving rapidly towards a collective age. "We are all Socialists nowadays." The Victorian economist would, for example, undoubtedly describe the present-day Tory Party as, at least, semi-socialist. And its whole history proves that the Church of Rome can recognise reality when it sees it in the social sphere. The Vatican must now recognise that its openly profascist policy in the immediate past proved a complete fiasco and did Rome's reputation immense moral damage, besides being completely futile. Nor is its present political role as the open ally of Wall Street likely to turn out a better speculation. For it is now transparently clear that "the American way of Life" has got nothing to offer mankind except doles and atom bombs—for which last gift mankind is scarcely likely to prove grateful.

The future would seem to lie with other more constructive forces, and we opine from the Pope's broadcast that the Vatican, which, we repeat, is a realistic institution in politics, now recognises this fact. In effect Pius XII offers an olive branch to Communism and hints at a deal: *you drop atheism and we will drop capitalism*. That is remarkably what it looks, to at least one student of traditional papal diplomacy. The future behaviour of the greatest of the Christian churches may provide fresh examples, if not of the "harmlessness of the dove" then at least, of the "wisdom of the serpent," the traditional "Totem" of the Vatican.

F. A. RIDLEY.

### BUCHMAN'S ERSATZ RELIGION

RECENTLY, what is grandiloquently called "The World Assembly for Moral Re-Armament" has taken place at Caux, in France. The fact has been specially reported to me by a well-meaning lady correspondent. I have just returned from France (avoiding Caux).

Needless to say, the world did not assemble at all. Delegates (so-called) did. It is always like this. "Nations" are said to be "represented" by one or two egregious busybodies elected or delegated by themselves. In this way unreal and pretentious importance is lent to an assemblage of mediocrities who, in truth and in fact, "represent" themselves and no one else. This sort of nonsense—obscure persons pretending to be "mankind from China to Peru"—was invented in America, the home of humbug. However, like many bad Yankee things, it is taking root in England, a once-sophisticated country now becoming corrupted by the crude imbecilities of American films and American dollar-politics.

The very phrase "Moral Re-Armament," a contradiction in terms; pretentious, question-begging, and militaristic, insults human intelligence. To arm, or re-arm, can never be moral. At best, either arming or re-arming can only be justified by the argument that it is necessary or sensible. And 47 obscure people gathered at Caux are not 47 nations, even though their nationalities are various and their colour ranges between various shades of white, yellow and black.

It is better to call this Moral Re-Armament (alias Oxford Groupery) "Buchmanism" after the name of its begetter, Fran N. D. Buchman and to analyse it coolly upon its merits, or lack of merits. You have only to examine its Gospel-book called by the modest title of "Remaking the World" (as if Buchman made the world in the first place), which is a collection by a misguided publisher of fustian speeches emitted by Buchman himself.

With all the goodwill in the world, such as I have for anybody trying to do anything, and resolving to be as polite as possible, I can only find one word to fit this compilation. It is guff. Buchmanism is that worst of all religions—an *ersatz* religion. It is a substitute; an adulterated article. It bears the same relation to (say) genuine Christianity as such creams as shaving-cream and ice cream bear to real, fresh cream from a Jersey cow.

Intellectually and emotionally, it is a fraud.

You need not take this from me. Look at some of the bunkum for yourself. You will see that it will not stand one moment's free-thinking about. The gems I quote are not specially selected—the stuff is almost nothing but platitudes, *cliches*, blague, lather, bounce and bunk. But let me quote:—

(1) "Moral Re-Armament is the great central revolutionary force."

(2) "Peace is not an idea. It is people becoming different."

(3) "We must find that answer which will give satisfaction and security to all; an answer that is above party, that is above class, that is above faction, that is above nations."

(4) "Moral Re-Armament is for everyone, everywhere."

I have been merciful to my readers for there is worse even than this and there is very much more of this Yankee Doodle-Do. I like the "central" and "revolutionary" force for everyone including the dead in the cemetery and the day-old babes in their cradles, looking for an "answer" which clearly cannot exist and I like the "people becoming different" (from what?) that is the peace which isn't an idea! It reminds one of poor Ramsay MacDonald, the Socialist politician, when his mind went and he urged his bewildered audiences "Let us go on and on and on and up and up and up" and "Let us listen to the milk of human kindness."

If it be said that even a Buchman ought not to be treated with cruelty—a proposition from which I entirely dissent—let us remember that this sort of patent-medicine substitute-religion is productive of much evil. It induces "good people" to believe that they are doing something to reform the world when they are doing nothing but drug themselves with verbal soothing-syrup. This vague general moral chatter, these committees and conferences for "uplift," satisfy and dope people who ought to be doing, not talking about, work to make themselves and their fellows better and happier. Like the blessed word "Mesopotamia" which made the old lady feel better for hearing it, this decayed corpse of religion called Buchmanism makes foolish, especially the feminine and



epicene foolish, "feel good," when they ought to feel bad over the world-as-it-is.

Like pink pills for the pallid, Buchmanism has its swallowers. It publishes in English (mostly bad English) and French and German. One can understand its appeal to the stupider types of American; but a late Premier of Greece, Themistocles Sophoulis, ought to have had more sense than to say: "Moral Re-Armament is the ideology of freedom which every nation needs." Greece may need American dollars, therefore American goodwill, but that is no excuse for a Greek politician pretending that he knows what every nation needs or that the ideology of freedom is a cow's horn or anything else you like, as Buchmanism.

Politicians and publicists in general—Sir Alan Herbert, M.P., is an honourable exception—will not condemn Buchmanism because it sounds well and may have votes. Independent minds not knuckling to public favour who can see quite clearly that it is wrong ought to condemn it. For people to have their brains filled with this verbiage instead of proper intellectual and emotional food is as if they filled their bellies with the husks that the swine did eat. In Wordsworth's phrase: "Great God I'd rather be a Pagan suckled in a Creed outworn" than an unfortunate Buchmanite believing that the world (and himself) can be saved by the arid drivelling of Buchman who tells me that he has "accepted" God's commission to bring an answer to men and nations." How odd of God to pick this platitudinarian out of all the Yanks—but do you believe that? If you do, as the Iron Duke said, you will believe anything. And, a God who makes such a mistake in selecting his man as the deity did if he selected Buchman, is no more fit for worship than the disorganised interior of Stafford Cripps, lately undergoing repairs in Switzerland.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

## MYTH AND MYSTERY

It is claimed that the triumph of the Church was itself a miracle. It would be, if it arose in the "simple" beginnings claimed. But the evidence shows a transformation into elaborate ritual and dogma, and intricate ecclesiastical organisation. It not only involves irreconcilable inconsistencies, but complete contradiction. The Voice crying in the Wilderness was replaced by the Voice of Authority.

There can be no evidence of oral tradition and written tradition includes myth and history. For Hegellians history is cause and reason *in toto*. Others say, with Kierkegaard, that history is abstract, that myth is subjective truth and it is enough that someone said it; it is the meaning that matters. It has been said that history is bias, bunk, lies. In picking evidence, as with choosing Biblical texts, history, like myth, is rationalisation; search for explanation or justification. There is evolution with myth and myth clings to history. The sacred myths followed where the alphabet spread, for they were associated with the regions where alphabetic script arose.

Writing made history possible, and the accumulation of documentary evidence has given us an historical perspective; and it has been argued that history is what the evidence compels us to believe. If so, the search for an historical Jesus, which finds only an unknown, unnamed wonder-worker with titles of divinity, is an absurdity. The Church needs a God, but history is about human beings by human beings, with human failings. Hence the contradictions. The notion that Christianity

came from the East is equally mythical, for in its evolution within the Empire it is definitely Western and not Oriental. History does not show the mysterious East in the Christian Mystery; which, historically is distinctively human.

Hebrew script links pictographic hieroglyph and alphabet, having the features of both; and the picturesque imagery of the sacred myths is a survival of pictographic idiom, which links up with alphabetic literalism in the change from simple to more involved myth; through the visualisations as of Ezekiel, with analogy expanded into allegory in the Apocalypse; through the more poetic metaphor as of the Wisdom, or Odes, of Solomon, and the parables of the Gospels; through the verbal expression of Acts and Epistles; to the literal statement of the Lives of the Saints. This involves the development of word magic in the mystic power of curse and blessing, rhetorical invective in declamation, and theological anathema. So that Babylonian and Egyptian eschatology, passing through Greek theology, leads to Christian hagiology.

Scriptural evolution of myth is continuous, becoming more involved; from the mythical origin of the world, of man, of tribes, as in Genesis; to the origin of social facts, as of custom and law, in Exodus; of priesthood and kingship as in Samuel and Kings; becoming more personal concerning the source of knowledge and wisdom in the Prophets and Wisdom literature; and so also, the origin of the Church in Acts and Epistles; of its God in Gospels, of the source of its power in Revelations; and the origin of shrines and relics in the Lives of the Saints; so becoming more intimate as well as literal.

Nature myths, with phallic and astrological myths, combine in ancestral authority and prophetic teaching. Together with pastoral and agricultural myths, these confuse in the wisdom and inspiration of the mystic power of the Logos, Divine Reason, and in the apocalyptic New Jerusalem. With inspiration in pictographic idiom as mystic communion and divine revelation, the direct appeal is customary usage, involving social complications, is reflected in cultural complexity. The simplicity of personal intimacy is more apparent than real, as it involves anachronisms and a paradoxical inversion.

Thus, to the mythical Paul, who knew all mysteries and gnosis, idols are nothing, temples are nothing. These are mystical analogues, outward appearance of inward reality. Slaughtering animals at the shrines is sacrifice to idols, cooking food on the sacred hearth is sacramental, and the feast is social communion. But the human flesh is an analogue, temple of the soul; and a church is a temple not built with hands; a congregation; a body of people united in spirit. Phallic, ancestral and agricultural seed is confused as mystic seed. Ye are the seed. But without death, there is no inheritance. Except the seed die there is no life. Ye are the sacrifice. The Old Adam needs rebirth in conversion as a mystical resurrection in Christ.

I speak in a Mystery, said Paul, on sex and sin, marriage, morality and law. The Church is the Body of Christ, with head and members; a social institution. As with Paul, the Church is all things to all men. Christ is All in All within the Church, outside are thieves and robbers. The social Mystery was clouded with word magic by myth and dogma on the power of the Name and the Word, with declamation, invective and anathema. With mystic power of pastoral authority in the Church as the Bride of the Lamb, a pastoral myth became the New Jerusalem in the rhetorical eloquence of St. Augustine, with the Church as the City of God. And in the elusive metaphor of pictographic idiom the Hierarchy



is the cosmic analogy in the Thomist Analogy of Being.

In social development the Mystery became ministry, with social services as in ministering to the sick and the poor, gaining popular support for Authority in administration by bishops, deacons and priests. Even if these claims are mythical, divided loyalties in religious sectarian conflict of mystery cults show the Mittraic military discipline against the Christian priest-led popular assembly. It is not a matter of myth and doctrine, for in custom and culture, the mysteries were actual and historical. Our word church disguises the Greek word *Ecclesia*; which was one of the mysteries; the democratic assembly, which further expanded into the Ecumenical Council. With the assertion of, and acceptance of, Authority in the *Ecclesia*, the origin of the Church is a matter of ecclesiastical history.

Myth and mystery may symbolise ignorance but not insincerity. With divine pretensions it is passionately human. It cannot be explained by personalities, political power or Jesuitry. The Church is an organic growth, a social organism, in which faith in acceptance of authority is sacrifice of responsibility. To-day, ministry and administration concern other professions than priesthood and military. Yet the Church still remains, the democratic mystery remains, and the problem of authority remains. Do we not delegate our responsibility in good faith, putting a cross on paper at elections?

H. H. PREECE.

### WITH A BARE BODKIN

IT is a common practice for suicides to leave letters behind stating that they intend to kill themselves, though often they fail to explain why, still less justify their action.

I am going to conform enough to type to write a last letter but I know why I am ending my life, and I think my reasons are good.

The high, first and prevailing one is that I wish everybody else in the world dead before me.

Known now to psychologists is man's vast though often unconscious preoccupation with death. Much of what we do in life is conditioned by the simple fact of its ending after a few troubled years, which are mainly nasty and brutish. The subconscious mind keeps that truth prominent in its store of vague concepts so that it constantly colours all we do.

In a thousand ways we try to evade death; some by work and some by hobbies; others by pleasure-seeking and dissipation. Conversely ascetic and temperate individuals attempt to postpone it, while a few thinkers essay to contemplate death till it ceases to cause them terror.

It is not unknown for death to be welcome: to the very old, the sick and the weary; to those baffled and broken by the actualities of living, and in cases where momentary horror transcends all other considerations.

The pursuit of myths; fame, honour, wealth, power, influence, authority, reputation, eminence in many directions are extensive sublimations of the fear of death. The troubles and anxieties of parents are based largely upon desire to reproduce themselves in their children before dying. This is strongly shown in the care for hereditary titles and property, the making of wills, the endowment of memorials and innumerable other ways in which people seek to perpetuate remembrance of themselves after bodily extinction.

Around religion argument never ceases but it is clear that preparation for death is one of its chief purposes, carried forward to anticipations of a future life. Spiritualism and reincarnation continue and exploit this craving for everlasting existence.

Death being one of the abiding aspects of life it has become prominent in all human activities beside the personal desire to live. Art, music and sculpture abound in representations of death's various features. Poets frequently harp upon this theme. Death is the turning point in thousands of novels and plays, either as climax or as break in the narrative enabling the author to embark on fresh occurrences. Crime and detection fiction frankly titivates its readers absorption in death by making murder the principal incident in nearly ninety per cent. of the stories.

The subject of death appears always magnetic. Kindred and friends gather round a dying person. Funerals are witnessed and attended with nearly as much gusto, perhaps pleasure, as weddings. Death forms one of the main topics in women's gossip, and often so in men's talk. Coroners' inquests and murder cases attract crowds to the courts and are reported fuller than other legal proceedings because there is a stronger public demand for details.

With a thrill almost of joy we read in our newspapers of disasters involving our fellows. The more deaths the greater is our concentration upon the primacy of this as news.

Killing for revenge, hatred, profit, sex repulsion or perversion, to escape pursuit; and many other reasons can be found; is practised by individuals, sometimes in desperation or fury, more often as result of cold calculation. So it has been for thousands of years, and tabulated detailed cases in history, literature and criminal records are read intently, almost with gloating.

Those are only a small part of mankind's predilection, fondness or mania for killing each other. Much more fascinating it is when the slaughter becomes holocausts, killing in numbers up to millions.

Then human nature can approach nearer to satisfying its bloodlust. Governments, holders of power and seekers after it make war an instrument of policy, have done so for centuries. From 1939 to 1945 millions of people were killed, every device known to the ingenuity of man and many more invented on purpose being bent to the object of killing. The same happened in 1914-19.

In between were many lesser wars and a long one as Japan invaded and attacked China. Great wars are so numerous historically that the mere cataloguing of them becomes wearisome: South African Wars, Franco-Prussian, Crimean, Napoleonic, Seven Years, Spanish Succession, Thirty Years, Hundred Years Wars, are only a few. The list in Europe alone is appalling.

Every great nation has tried to show and establish its greatness by war. Great Powers are those which have most successfully waged wars. All the civilised and Christian nations have gone to war as if to outvie the heathen, pagan, barbarian and ancient nations in numbers killed as well as frequency of fights and in ferocity and savagery.

Still using war as policy the civilised nations, spreading their ethical superiority, fought against the aboriginal races of North and South America and the West Indies, New Zealand, India, East, West and North Africa, the East Indies and the littoral of China till the natives were subdued, in many instances by sheer extermination.

When one nation was not fighting another, civil war rent them. Federal and Confederate States of North America, Wars of the Roses and Great Rebellion in



England, Peasants' War in Germany, French and Russian Revolutions can be named, and there are many others.

Dynastic wars have been many as kings and emperors sought authority over lands and peoples. Rebellions like the Spartacist War in Rome, the New England States against England and the Indian Mutiny were notably murderous. Racial wars as between England and Scotland and England and Ireland were protracted and bloody. Wars for conquest, colonies, taxation and trade have been frequent.

Not to be out of the fray, religion has embittered numerous wars and precipitated others as the Crusades and Philip of Spain's campaigns against the Lowlands and England.

Similar in horror and bloodshed, if not classified as war, was the Papal persecution of the Albigenses, recurrent pogroms of Jews, witch hunts of medieval and later centuries, expulsion of Moors from Spain, and operations of the Roman Catholic Inquisition and its imitation by other Christian sects.

Ask in any country for the names of great national heroes and you will be told of fighters: Wellington, Nelson, Napoleon, Montcalm and dozens more. Kill one or two people and you will be hanged on a gallows. Kill thousands, better, millions, and you will be elevated on a pedestal for adoration instead of obloquy.

As a political argument, slaughter of one's opponents is still practised, as it has been over centuries of strife.

Executions of murderers and other felons and of those condemned for unpopular views and ideas have always been witnessed as enjoyable spectacles by mobs. This can be traced back till we arrive at the impalement of thousands by Eastern potentates, crucifixions in the Roman Empire, fights to death as pleasure shows for the populace, cannibalism and human sacrifices to gods.

Its last manifestation, as callous as any and more cold-blooded than most was the destruction of thousands of common Japanese by atom bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Emperor and his entourage, all aristocrats and ruling class of Japan were left alone.

Such is mankind's record. Threats for the future envisage bigger and bloodier wars. Meanwhile humanity is steadily drifting toward starvation through under-production of necessities, chiefly foodstuffs. Yet most governments are spending nearly half their incomes on wars past, present and future, and withholding millions of men from productive work. It is madness!

Being sane I have one wish only: to survive as the last man alive. Then would I gladly die, happy in the knowledge that Homo Sapiens was extinct.

That not appearing possible or likely I refuse to remain alive among such a crew of maniacs as the human race now is.

About the methods of my end I remain dubious, uncertain what means to use for making death swift yet effective. I know of poisons which kill quickly as well as surely. Employing one of those would induce a private death, unknown to any save my intimates and the coroner's court. Fanciful self-destruction like the old Roman one of bleeding to death in a bath is ruled out, as is unnecessary violence such as hurling myself in front of a fast train, though to clutch a high voltage electric cable would presumably be instantaneous.

I incline to prefer something more public and spectacular as protest against the brutality and blood-thirstiness of that lustful animal called man; something to signalise that as I cannot kill him in his myriads I will kill myself to ensure separation from what shocks and horrifies me; has become entirely repugnant to me.

That might be achieved by shooting myself while standing in the middle of London or other great city at the time of busiest traffic, so that it is all brought to a standstill. Or loading myself with chains to be sure of sinking and staying sunk, jump off a vehicle and passenger-thrugged bridge into a river.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

## ELEMENTARY SCIENCE

IN these days the majority of people have got more than a smattering of science. But there is a hard core of artistically-minded folk (especially in the so-called "teen-ager" group) to whom any idea of scientific method appears to be anathema. Just how to interest such people in what science is doing is a problem which has faced many of us; and now I think that I have hit on a possible solution.

The more abstruse, mathematical aspects of science are, of course, instantly repulsive to those who have not had some sort of scientific training in their youth. But such matters as bird-life and the flowers of our countryside may attract because of their artistic or poetical associations. And a study of birds or flowers may well bring a knowledge of the development of scientific nomenclature—which is, at any rate, a first step towards the understanding of the background from which science evolves.

Two books, lately added to Messrs. Paul Elek's "Life and Leisure" series, give a good impression of how this can best be done. "Common British Birds," by Ralph Whitlock, and "Common British Flowers," by E. M. Turner, cost 7s. 6d. each, and have such a number of illustrations that they are, by present-day standards, excellent value for money. The text is readable and interesting, and, as I have said, the books do give a sensible introduction to study.

This series of books is aimed principally, I feel, at the reader who is capable of study but who has no sort of specialised knowledge. Therefore, those who wish to acquire a modicum of knowledge on a subject previously outside their scope can turn with confidence to the volumes. And if you know of someone who is vaguely interested in natural history but who, nevertheless, thinks that the talk of science providing a basis for a satisfactory philosophy of life is nonsense—well, give him one or other of the two books I have been here discussing, and I think you might well convert him.

Freethinkers are made in various ways. Some see through the more superficial absurdities of religion and so are driven to think for themselves. Others, on the other hand, appear to have been brought round to a rational point of view by what is perhaps a more constructive course of thought—by studying the development of science.

And the study of botany or biology may be the stepping stone to a detailed knowledge of scientific method. Therefore, I say that elementary books, such as those I have here recommended, may be of extreme value in some people's lives.

JOHN ROWLAND.

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## ACID DROPS

The congregation of Chamley Green, Surrey, have upset their Vicar, the Rev. M. Alexander, by their parsimoniousness. The Vicar snorts with disgust at his meagre collection and says that the congregation is suffering from "copperitis." He begs of them to increase their contributions instead of placing the smallest coins they can find. Well, well, if the quotation that the "labourer is worthy of his hire" applies, it is perhaps the parishioners' measure of their parson's worth. The Parson is not so doubtful. Cash before Christ seems to be his motto.

British scientists have discovered a new way of determining the age of fossilised skulls and bones by the detection of fluorine gas which is locked in the process of fossilisation. Tests have already been applied to the Galley Hill skeleton which was previously thought to be over 250,000 years old, but is now thought to be no more than 10,000 years. No doubt the discovery will make our Christians whoop with joy for one of the greatest blows struck against the authority of the Bible was the discovery that man existed long before the time implied in the Bible. However, even at 10,000 years, this still makes the Creation story a mere 5,000 years out of date, so Bibliolators will still have to insist that the rib story was meant to be taken figuratively.

It is really amusing to be told continually by missionaries that there is "a real need and a great demand for Christianity in the far-flung outposts of civilisation," and usually it is added that churches are packed and the services crowded out; in fact the area could be "won for Christ" if only Christians at home would dig deeper into their pockets, and do not forget to pray. To judge from the complaints at home, we would imagine that missionaries would have plenty of work trying to convert the "heathen" at home, for so few people go to church that there is talk of closing some churches in order to be able comfortably to fill others.

It is very interesting to note that Church Missions have successfully invaded some of the holiday camps. The Bishop of Lincoln, for example, was the chief attraction recently at Skegness, using one of the theatres and, for a children's service, he used one of the ballrooms. It appears that the children were singing "Pop goes the Weasel," but the Bishop soon changed that and in a few moments they were singing "He who would valiant be" with just as much enthusiasm. Needless to add that the inevitable "Lord's Prayer" followed with the Bishop "blessing" the poor kids.

It appears also that one of the chaplains said that they were not there to make converts, but to "feed the sheep we already have." Every effort in this direction will be made—as well as getting more full-time chaplains in the camps. We would dearly like to know—though there is little hope of a reply—what Mr. Butlin, for example, would say if he were asked to allow an N.S.S. speaker to address the camp, and particularly the children? What would happen if one of the holiday campers were an unbeliever and used the theatre to address a meeting giving Christianity a high old time? What would the dear Bishop and his old lady friends say? Wouldn't Mr. Butlin get the shock of his life!

Two hundred ministers of the Czechoslovak Church have sent the government a telegram promising to cooperate with its most progressive elements "in the construction of the new Socialist society." They added,

"We are convinced that we shall thus best fulfil our religious mission in the spirit of Jesus Christ." We wonder what the answer of our Atheist Marxists is to that? Perhaps the reply would be that it is at last being seen that Jesus Christ is an Atheist Marxist.

Fr. John Heenan has discovered that "many who attend Mass are not really in possession of the Faith"—in fact as a rule, half of the regular Mass-goers never even attend a Mission. They have only, we are told, "a traditional loyalty and a vague belief." Well, we on our part can't blame them. They have to be loyal to their Church; but belief in the infantile nonsense propagated by the Fr. Heenans is another matter.

Bishop Petit of Menevia told an enthusiastic audience the other day that "there are hidden forces attacking the Church." We think this is a wonderful discovery, though he could never include the work of the Freethought movement among the "hidden" forces. We attack the Churches openly, our "infidel" books can be bought anywhere, and we are always ready to meet a defender of the Church on an open platform. It is the Bishop Petits and the Fr. Heenans who pretend that there are "hidden" forces at work against their Church because the last thing they want to do is to meet Freethinkers in an open debate.

Vatican officials have denied that the bones of Peter have so far been found, in spite of persistent rumours that they are in an urn found seven years ago. We suspect that nothing would give the authorities more pleasure than to announce that something about Peter has been found; but in actual fact, the only work which mentions him is the New Testament—all other information is purely legendary. Or, to put it more bluntly, there is no more evidence that there was a Peter than that there was a Jesus. The story of Peter with his keys and two faces is suspiciously like that of Janus, and Janus was a myth.

The South African Government, which is thoroughly Christian, has now carried its policy of racial discrimination a step further by reducing the meals provided for native children in their schools. They have actually imposed "every conceivable regulation to make the provision of school meals as difficult as possible" according to the *Church Times*. And the same journal does not mince matters when it adds, "The foulness of the racial policy of the present South African Government has never been so clearly displayed as in this crime against the children." What an indictment of Christianity!

"Candidus" of the *Daily Graphic*, is of the opinion that "99 per cent. of the people of this country wish Sunday to be a day of rest, and nobody wishes the Sabbath to be desecrated." Of course, it's all according to what one means by desecration and by day of rest. If it means cinemas, theatres, sports meetings, coach tours, etc., then we would think that 99 per cent. are in favour of desecration, and it is only the one per cent. who would regard this as otherwise. ●

## THINGS WE SHOULD LIKE TO KNOW—

Did Dean Inge, who will be 89 this year and who gave his last sermon recently, tell the congregation exactly how much of Christianity he really believes?

Did the Red Dean, during his visit to Moscow, learn anything from the Anti-God Museum?



# "THE FREETHINKER"

41, Gray's Inn Road,  
London, W.C. 1.  
Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

**TAB CAH.**—Many thanks. Glad to hear from you again.  
**S. GRAY.**—Thanks for pamphlet "Four Hundred Years of the Printed English Bible."  
**BAYARD SIMMONDS.**—Thanks, poems will be used in due course.

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

Will the Manchester Branch N.S.S. members and friends please note that it will be having a re-union on Sunday, October 2, at 7-30 p.m. Tea and biscuits will be provided at the Land-o-Cakes Hotel, Lever Street (one minute from Piccadilly). A short address will be given by the President, and future activities of the Branch discussed. Arrangements have been made for meetings every Sunday and Tuesday, at 7-30 p.m., during the season for lectures and discussions.

Mr. E. Maple, Secretary of the newly-formed Wanstead Branch N.S.S., reports a very successful inaugural meeting last Thursday. Mrs. Ruby Tabois' address was well received, and was followed by a lively discussion. Another meeting will be held next month. Full details will be given in the Lecture Notices. Freethinkers are urged to help to make this Branch a success, and are asked to get in touch with the Secretary, E. Maple, 35, New Wanstead, Wanstead, E.11.

The Bradford Branch N.S.S. has lost no time in switching from open-air work to indoor meetings. To-day (September 18), Mr. J. T. Brighton opens the session with a lecture in the Science Room of the Mechanics' Institute, Town Hall Square, Bradford, at 5-45 p.m., on the subject of "Parsons, Progress and People." The Bradford Branch possesses some very keen members, much useful work is done, and the visit of Mr. Brighton should encourage all concerned to make it a successful meeting.

The "Faith of our Fathers" is not quite so firm as Roman Catholics would have us believe, for Fr. Heenan, superior of the Catholic Missionary Society (England still regarded as beyond the pale and is still in process of being converted) is not satisfied with people who go to Mass purely as the result of habit and take no interest beyond that. According to the dictionary, habit is defined as practice which has become customary or automatic. Fr. Heenan ought to let well alone; his sheep may yet break their habit.

After all the permissions to go up Mt. Ararat, and all the refusals, we understand an American expedition began its work to discover Noah's Ark a week or so ago. Fortunately, it has three assets—a "hunch" from an American minister that the Ark is there, the report from a Russian aviator, and the belief of the peasants—who have never seen it—that it must be there. We can add a fourth asset. It is the belief of millions of Christians in the literal accuracy of the Old Testament. "Trimmer," of the *Church Times* gives a further "reflexion." "Even if they do not find the ark," he wittily says, "it will not prove that the Ark is not there." A marvellous piece of cogent analysis!

Archbishop Downey let himself go in a flounder of words the other day on the "Assumption" of Mary. The present Pope wants to make it a dogma of the Church, so the Archbishop asks his sheep to pray "that this doctrine of the bodily Assumption of our Blessed Lady be solemnly defined in our day as a dogma of Faith to the greater glory of God and exaltation of His holy mother." In the face of this, there are still Catholics who deny that when we claim that they say God had a mother, we were not telling the truth.

It is 100 years ago since Pope IX decided that it was time to make the Immaculate Conception a dogma, and we can quite understand that Pope XII wants to have his name immortalised for a similar piece of balderdash. The glory of the corporal Assumption of the Blessed Virgin "is but the necessary complement," says Archbishop Downey, "of the Immaculate conception and a crowning joy to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Cause of our Joy." How well believers relish this kind of religious twaddle!

For 3s. 6d., the Rev. F. L. Wheeler answers the title of his new book—*Who is God?* He evidently feels that, after nearly 2,000 years of Christianity and thousands of books all dealing with God Almighty, the average Christian is still ignorant of the Lord and has to be told "the sort of Person He is," as the publisher's blurb has it. Well, there is one consolation about his God—he is not an "Unknown" or an "Absolute." He is definitely a "Person," and we are back to the dear old anthropomorphic Deity so many earnest, intellectual Christians have in the past done their best to get rid of. As Mr. Wheeler would say—how the devil can anyone pray to an Absolute or an Unknown? God *must* be a Person.

Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie, in a letter to *The Times*, thinks that the Calendar Reform which is to be sponsored by two Panamanian delegates to U.N.O. is fantastic, and a grave threat to religion. He hopes that Christians as well as Jews will oppose the reform. The Rabbi has worked out that the Jewish Sabbath is likely to fall on a Friday and the Christian Sabbath on a Saturday, and in a leap year they will be different. A wandering Sabbath, thinks the Rabbi, would be little short of a catastrophe, would violate biblical injunctions and would be a cruel infliction on pious and God-fearing men. Which is about the most "pathetic" reason U.N.O. is likely to hear in the opposition speeches. The question arises, is God at home only to the Jews on Saturday, and to the Christians on Sunday? We can imagine Jehovah asking the heavenly timekeeper—"Whose day is it to-day?"



## ARE WE UNFAIR ?

EVERY week, "The Freethinker" office receives letters from all kinds of Christians, mostly letters of abuse, in some cases trying to put us right on matters of fact—or speculation. Wherever possible, we try to answer fairly but, of course, our replies are very often not allowed to be read. As far as his flock is concerned, the average priest and parson prefer to boycott this journal, and from their point of view they are quite right. We are, and mean to be, for all religions, intellectual dynamite.

Here is a typical letter:—

SIR,

I have just been reading your weekly magazine called "The Freethinker," and think it most unfair the way you attack a certain Religion (Roman Catholicism). I also take a very poor view of the way one of your writers wrote about the misfortune of an elderly lady who died at Lourdes. Enclosed is a newspaper cutting of a cure which took place there, and also a cutting to show you how well and truly Roman Catholics stick to their Religion (and without force).

Would you be so kind as to answer the questions below:—

- (1) Why do you attack the Roman Catholic Church?
- (2) Has the Roman Catholic Church or its priests done you any harm?

A TRUE AND FAITHFUL ROMAN CATHOLIC.

Now, whether this lady (who gives her name and address) will be allowed to read the reply to her questions, remains to be seen. But if she is, she cannot deny that it will not make the slightest difference to her Roman Catholicism. She will still be ready to be bamboozled by her Church; she will still think that a priest is a "man of God," something holy, sacred, almost untouchable by mere men and women.

Now, the straight reply to her first question is that we are sure the Christian religion, as represented by the Roman Church, is not true. That is, we say outright that its Gods, Devils, Miracles, its Heaven and Hell and Purgatory, are just lies. Why it is unfair to say this? Roman Catholics have every right to believe their religion if they want to, and they need never see "The Freethinker." Their priests and bishops never cease attacking Materialism and Secularism and Atheism. They call these systems of thought all the foul names they can, utterly disregarding the sensitive feelings of Atheists, Materialists, and Secularists. Every week in the *Universe* will be found heated pronouncements against unbelievers, and urgent calls to annihilate their unbelief. Yet no Atheist, as far as I know, has ever sent a letter to a priest whining to him to stop his attacks.

We are asked, "Has the Roman Catholic Church or its priests done you any harm?" The answer is not just a plain "Yes" or "No."

The Roman Church has now no power to do an individual unbeliever any physical harm. When it had the power, there is no crime committed by the Nazis which the Church did not joyfully enjoin on its followers. They were told to burn alive, to torture and mutilate, to imprison and rob, every unbeliever possible. It was the Roman Catholic Church that burnt poor Joan of Arc as a witch. It was Vanini who had his tongue torn out by red hot pincers before being murdered because he did not believe the lies of the Church. It was a boy of 18, de la Barre, who was murdered by the Holy Faith because he did not grovel before a religious procession. And there were hundreds of thousands of similar cases when the Church had the power.

It has not that power now—at least not in what we call civilised countries; but he would be a bold prophet to claim that if Rome could again make nations tremble at its anathemas, whether the Inquisition would not be

set up once more. The lady who wrote the above letter should read the accounts of the trials for witchcraft, the trials of poor old women, many of them obviously demented, the trials of young children for sorcery, and even of animals, and think of burning alive human beings of all ages, after frightful tortures, for a perfectly imaginary crime; a crime denounced, it is true, in the Bible, but quite imaginary for all that.

The Roman Catholic Church was committing such crimes in the Papal States up to about 100 years ago, but it is easy conveniently to forget history and ask what harm has it done us?

Supposing I were to write an attack on the Church based entirely on historical facts, and managed to get a reputable publisher to put the book on the market. Immediately, the "Party" would get together and politely inform the publisher that if he did not at once withdraw the book, all his publications would be boycotted, and every bookseller who displayed copies would be boycotted by every Catholic possible. The "Party" moves heaven and earth to see that school books are now written as far as possible in conformity with the Church of Rome; and in some instances, we know that the Church has tampered even with the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Catholics are, of course, overjoyed at all this—but it is the answer to the question about what harm has been done us now, individually.

We might well retort—though we do not—what harm has an individual Atheist done an individual Roman Catholic? And let me make one point clear. A particular priest or parson may be a most charming and courteous individual, and I have met many such. I am, indeed, quite convinced that in some cases they may be a power for good in social services. We do not attack individuals for these things. We attack the outworn, Oriental superstition called Roman Catholicism which is backed by a huge organisation, a religion for which there is no justification in history or science. But more than that, we attack all religions; the Roman Faith is just one of hundreds.

What about the poor old lady who died at Lourdes? Surely every intelligent person can see in Lourdes nothing but a monstrous ramp; thousands of poor sick people inveigled into paying hard-earned money in the hope of getting a million-to-one curé. They are lured there by the most impudent of lies, and the terrible thing is the hopeless misery caused to these sick people by such hope. It is difficult to express the contempt we feel for this sordid and ghastly fraud.

I have refrained from discussing here the political side of the Vatican, so little known by its dupes. But a terrific case can be made against the Roman Church on this count alone.

It will take many many years before the average Roman Catholic can pluck up courage and read without bias our charges against religion in general and against Christianity in particular. We wonder whether "a true and faithful Roman Catholic" will ever dare to read Ingersoll's *Rome or Reason* and begin to feel at last what freedom from superstition and fear really means?

H. CUTNER.

One of the best examples of the great inventor Edison's wit is recorded. A gentleman representing the building committee of a city church called to see Mr. Edison. The committee had been unable to decide whether to equip the church with lightning rods or not, and had sent to secure Mr. Edison's opinion on the matter. "By all means," said Edison, "put on the rods. You know Providence is some times absent-minded."



## THE ATHEIST SHOEMAKER

THIS Son of Saint Crispin has no connection with the pseudo-atheist made notorious, years ago, by Hugh Price Hughes, the Methodist Parson, in London. My skilful shoemaker is Sampson Arnold Mackay, an extraordinary example of a self-educated man who mastered abstruse sciences of antiquity to prove that modern religions are false, pernicious and harmful to National Society.

His "Mythological Astronomy of the Ancients"; "Pious Frauds"; "Lectures on Geology"; and "The Age of Mental Emancipation" were published during 1822 and 1839, in Norwich, where he died, 1846. I was attracted to these books, when Mr. Sladen, the Superintendent of the British Museum Reading Room, wrote to me, June 15, 1920), asking for information of a book, Mackay's "Sphinxiad," of which I have a copy, but it is not a book. The "Sphinxiad" is a cleverly contrived drawing of the Zodiac, constructed to revolve to show how the Signs of the Zodiac have their places when the Sun shines upon them, as viewed from the Earth, during its annual revolutions to form the four Seasons. This scientific diagram is the frontispiece to Mackay's "Mythological Astronomy," and the Museum Catalogue was noted accordingly. Mackay's orrery is also a mechanical apparatus to give ocular demonstration of the movements of heavenly bodies; I record these interesting details, because Freethinkers with whom I have conversed knew little, or nothing, of Mackay as a scholarly teacher of good sense, versus all religions.

Mackay was a master of comparative ancient languages as applied to the gods of Olympus and the eastern temples, the superstitious places where holy scribes fabricated books of revelation and rubbish which form the basis of the English Bible called the Revised Version, translated out of the Original Tongues with many thousands of various readings; for example, here is one in which ancient palæography\* shows the sign Os, signifying, "he who," but the forgers by placing a stroke across the Os makes the rendering, "god," equal to the Greek, Theos. Again, with the well-known biblical expression, "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God," by an easy and slight alteration of the accent "no," being originally the literal sign equal to "a"; hence, "the fool hath said in his heart, there is a God."

Mackay's knowledge of palæography was thorough, as his clerical oppressors well knew, when in debate, and it was the Rev. George Oliver who described Mackay as The Atheist Shoemaker, during a controversy about dogs and sodomites, whether they are in Heaven, or not (Rev. xxii, 15). These unnatural creatures, catamites, being mentioned in Deut. xxiii. 17, about their prices for hire, and the expression: "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" were explained to the parson, whom Mackay told to read the Bible as: Phil. iii, 2, etc., with the aid of Cruden's "Concordance."

Mackay's six publications are very scarce, and one of his books, which I have, was used by Gerald Massey when writing his elaborate works on Ancient Egypt and the evolution of Christianity.

In "Man's Best Friend, or The Evils of Pious Frauds," Mackay quotes Voltaire, "he is man's best friend who un-deceives him," and goes on to state: "It is a well-known fact that hypocrisy is universally despised, and of all the frauds that have been practised, on a national scale, those that are said to have proceeded

Mackay's "Ancient Jewish Writings and others of religious antiquity."

from the mouth of God have produced the greatest calamities; it is these pious frauds that have set men at variance against their fathers and overturned the harmony of society." The Bible tells us that the Jews, chosen people of God, were an illiterate, malignant race foremost on record as pious murderers; and this is the stuff on which Christianity is founded, and still taught in synagogues and cathedrals at an annual cost of millions sterling!

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

## GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

THE Reverend Father in Christ, the Lord Pierre, by Divine Mercy, Bishop of Beauvais.

Such were the entitlements of the gentleman who, in the early years of the fifteenth century took upon himself the honour of conducting the trial of Joan of Arc. The See of Rouen was conveniently vacant and surely such devotion to duty would receive its just reward.

Preparations had already been made for Joan's execution and all that remained was to proceed with the trial. She was not yet twenty years old and came of country-fied stock. Unable to read or write (few of that period could do either) she was to become one of the world's greatest military commanders—at any rate, that is the view expressed by colleagues who fought by her side, captains trained in the art of war.

She was held under the charge of being a witch in league with the devil. But that is not why she was burned. The Church of Rome must be supreme and for a slip of a girl not yet out of her teens to set herself up against the power of the Pope—well, that could not be tolerated.

France, in the year of our Lord 1425, was decidedly in a bad way. A foreign power had not only conquered part of Northern France but had actually been welcomed in Paris. King and Court fled south to Chinon with here and there towns holding out against the invader, here and there submitting for political reasons (cats jump one way or perhaps another) and at times going over to the enemy through flat bribery as ever was committed.

Realising the muddle that statesmen have allowed the country to get into, Joan, urged on by her voices (so she asserted) declared her intention of travelling the few hundred miles over hostile country to see her lord and king and arrange that he should be properly crowned and anointed with sacred oil; then to instil into him sufficient energy to attack the invader and drive him into the sea. Which she proceeded to carry out. If she failed to force the godams as she called the enemy (a corruption of an English oath) back across the channel, it was not altogether her fault.

She showed such tremendous enthusiasm at Orleans that the invader was routed and the town saved, she herself being acclaimed as the saviour of her country—which indeed she was. She might even have succeeded in her attack on Paris had not her mentally defective king deliberately prevented her by destroying a bridge which she must cross to get at the enemy in Paris.

Naturally enough, she was bitterly hated by her English enemies, who had sworn to burn this witch, this limb of satan, if ever they could lay their hands on her. And this they did.

Joan was captured at Compiègne in circumstances not too creditable to the French commander of that town. Instead of realising her danger and sending further help, he raised the drawbridge, thus cutting her off.



This is where the Reverend Father in Christ, the Lord Bishop, etc., comes into the picture. A trial in the fifteenth century was quite a different sort of thing from what we know to-day. The prisoner was first questioned, without knowing either the charge or who made it, and the indictment framed accordingly. And what questions! Since she persisted in belief in her "voices" she was asked to describe them. Her judges (including a Bishop, 62 Assessors, doctors from the University of Paris, etc.) knew in their great wisdom, through channels of knowledge denied to lesser folk, that the voices of demons and goblins squeaked and gibbered like the uncoiled wheel of a cart and if only Joan would admit the croak, then she was doomed indeed. It appeared that anyone could bully her with questionings. One Assessor was burdened with a provincial accent and he asked her whether her voices spoke French, whereupon she up and told him they spoke good French—better than his.

During her campaign, a noted footpad had fallen into her hands as prisoner. He was badly wanted by the civil authorities and Joan handed him over to them for execution. This was a mistake and her tormentors—pardon, her judges—were not slow to take advantage of it. But how was Joan to be expected to know the rules of war? And what under heaven, had it to do with her trial as a witch? Anyway, is it not precisely what had been done to her—taken prisoner and then handed over to civil authorities for trial and death?

It was also demanded of her to name the real Pope. Yes, there were two at least of these individuals, both claiming the honour. But the question was just another trap. It is not surprising that she sometimes failed to give the best answer to her inquisitors, but could the following be bettered? To "Are you now in a state of grace?" her reply was "If I am not, may God place me there; if I am, may God so keep me." If she had said "No" it would have been taken as an admission of guilt; if "Yes," of colossal impudence. Bravely spoken, Joan! And so in their zeal for the good name of religion, they burned her. In her last dying agony she wailed the name "Jesus." Bravely died, Joan! Her lord and king, Louis VII of France had not stirred himself to hold out a helping hand to her during her imprisonment and trial—he might have offered a ransom (she had been bought by the English for £10,000) or have made an attempt at military force, but he did nothing. Joan died with the name of Jesus on her lips when she might with reason have cried "My king, my king! why hast thou forsaken me?"

The foregoing was suggested by the appearance of a film of her life shown in London recently. Books without end have been written round this teenager of the fifteenth century and now we have a film. It is bound to be one-sided. The Church of Rome would not permit the truth to be told nor would a producer dare make the film without the approval of Rome. Why should they risk financial loss?

What the Lord thought of it all we shall never know. Certainly Pierre, Lord Bishop of Beauvais, etc., etc., was denied the coveted Archbishopric. But if the deity is silent, we are in no doubt as to the feelings of the common people. They dug up the bishop's body (he had in the meantime passed over to his rest in the bosom of the Church Triumphant) and threw it into a drain to rot, and there let us leave it. Requiescat in pace.

Poor Joan. Bravely lived and bravely died.

It is comforting to know that it was all done to the greater glory of God. Gloria in excelsis deo.

S. ROBERTS.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### MR. GALLAGHER REPLIES

Sir,—Mr. Ridley says regarding what he calls his "predicament" over Rome and Moscow, "I can only take refuge with the classic dictum of Aristotle: 'Truth lies in the middle.'"

I am afraid Mr. Ridley is not a thinker, free or otherwise, or else he's passing through the world quite unaware of what is going on. Hasn't he heard of poor Mr. Crossman, M.P., who was leader of a group of M.P.'s who were going to "Keep Left?" He proclaimed that "Truth lies in the middle." Yes, sir, he was on the middle-way between Communism and Capitalism.

Even Mr. Attlee and his colleagues accepted "Aristotle's dictum" and fervently declared that Labour Britain represented a "middle way" between the extreme of Soviet Communism and the extreme of American individualism.

Where are these "middle-of-the-roaders" now? Attlee and Crossman, Right and Left, gone wholly over to the war camp—war against Communism.

Mr. Ridley, hearken to me, there is no middle position possible. For Capitalism or Communism—for the old order or the new—that is the issue every active thinking man or woman has to face. The Church has offered itself and has been accepted, as an ally in the war against Communism. Mr. Nicholson therefore is quite logical. He, like Ridley, is with the forces against Communism and he frankly recognises that these forces include the Vatican and the Church Hierarchy. Mr. Ridley hedges on this. He pleads his international activities and writings, his membership of the National Council of the I.L.P. as a guarantee against his giving support to reaction. Am I allowed to laugh at that, Mr. Ridley?

Have you ever heard of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald and his long years of international activity and membership of the National Council of the I.L.P.? Or did you know that Mr. Ernest Bevin was, as I was, a member of the "revolutionary Social Democratic Federation and that he did, in my hearing at the Leeds Conference (1917) for the setting up of Workers and Soldiers Councils in Britain, offer to give his life for the revolution? Do you think he'll offer his life for the revolution at Washington, Mr. Ridley?

Mr. Ridley says he'll believe in the "withering away of the State" when he sees it. There's a thinker for you. And he's going to do honour to the memory of Giordano Bruno. What was it Giordano Bruno taught, Mr. Ridley? Was it something everyone could see, or was it something that required scientific study and that called for very deep thinking. See, every state is of necessity totalitarian (I don't like that word but I suppose I'll have to use it). The State in this country is "Totalitarian" but it has always been able to cover itself with a façade of toleration. Only when a critical situation develops does its real nature become apparent.

Take the recent Dock Strike. Out of a population of nearly fifty million, 15,000 went on strike for two or three weeks, 15,000 London dockers, and did you notice how quickly the facade was torn down and the Totalitarian character of the State exposed in all its nakedness?

But history makes it clear that when a particular form of state outlives its usefulness, it goes. It can't be saved, however hard those who may be interested in its maintenance try to keep it going. But all former states were overthrown by a new rising class, who in the process of the struggle formed a State machine of their own. In the case of the Soviet Union there can be no new class, so when the Proletarian State has outlived its usefulness, it will, as Marx has well said, "wither away." There will be no function for it to perform, no work for it to do, it will die out.

"I'll believe it when I see it," says Mr. Ridley. Then he launches out in the quite, accepted, orthodox attack on the Communists and on the Soviet Union.

Take this for example, "there are thus more Socialists than 'Tories' or Fascists in Communistic goals." This, I know, is a common accusation on the part of certain types of anti-Communists. Yet it is so silly that I can scarcely credit anyone claiming the most elementary understanding making use of it.

But before dealing with the accusation itself, let me ask Mr. Ridley, "have you seen these 'imprisoned' Socialists with your own eyes. Mr. Ridley, or has someone told you a story you wanted to hear?" Mr. Ridley will answer, "Oh, everybody knows it."

Yes, Mr. Ridley, everybody knew the sun travelled across the heavens, so they burned Giordano Bruno. Now to the refutation. What is a Socialist? A Socialist is one who believes, and who advocates, that the land and the means of production, distribution and exchange should be nationalised.



should be the common property of the people. Is that right, Mr. Ridley? Any objection to that definition. I don't think you can find a better. Now, Mr. Ridley, do you really believe there are people in the Soviet Union advocating the nationalisation of the land and the means of production, distribution and exchange, and that they are being put in gaol for so doing? If you believe that, you'd believe anything. Jonah and the whale should be easy for you. Anybody advocating what has already been accomplished would obviously be in need, not of person correction, but of mental treatment.

Get rid of your prejudice, Mr. Ridley, and do a little serious thinking. There is no middle road: for Communism or against. If you are against, do not be ashamed, openly and frankly associate with your allies.—Yours, etc.,

WILLIAM GALLAGHER, M.P.

RATIONALISM

Sir,—Mr. A. Yates' article on "Rationalism" would seem to be a rather cheap jibe at an organisation which has done much to bring freethought to the man-in-the-street.

Of course, "Rationalism" is not a strict definition to describe the philosophy of the goddess. And, of course, there are different viewpoints within the Rationalist fold. That should be, and must be, so. Varying opinions are the hallmark of freedom of thought; if we were to accept unreservedly any one dogma our thoughts would not progress.

The organ in which Mr. Yates writes, "The Freethinker," and the movement which I presume he supports, namely, "Freethought," are titled by similar "euphemisms" to those of "Agnosticism" and "Rationalism" which he so despises.

I don't think anyone would claim that freedom of thought would necessarily lead one to atheism. Unfettered philosophising may reasonably produce all sorts of views, however mistaken.

Mr. Yates terms agnosticism "a doctrine which exalts acquiescent ignorance into a philosophic virtue." The statement is an obvious falsehood. An agnostic is one who, having examined the arguments in favour and against a deity, has the honesty to confess that it is beyond his ken to positively state whether or not there is such a being. Few agnostics willingly acquiesce to that position. They would like to know the answer, but understand that they cannot fairly give it. There may be, outside their realm of experience, some such entity as a god—it may be that the entire pattern and progress of the universe is guided by his plans. However, the agnostic, unlike the religionist, for, having determined no practical way in which a god, if there be one, influences Man, chooses to do without him.

Now the origin of religion was that Man, since it was unflattering to his ego not to understand the incomprehensible, invented forces and entities which would explain, in summary, the entire pattern of existence. In other words, he merely tried to fill in the gaps in his own knowledge.

That is a well-known process, and I am inclined to think that Mr. Yates has been trapped in the same snare. Rigid atheism is a piece aggressive doctrine in its way, but it, too, tries to explain away what it does not understand. The statement, "there is no god" is a completely illogical proposition. It would take an omniscient intelligence to explore the universe sufficiently to find out. Even for an omniscient intelligence to make the proposition is illogical, since such an entity would at least be something in the nature of a God.

To revert to Rationalism. Mr. Yates, a few paragraphs after criticising the R.P.A. formula as "vague and diffused," concludes his article by avowing that it has a very definite meaning. Will he please make up his mind.—Yours, etc.,

J. G. DAVIES.

Sir,—Mr. Ridley's article on Freethought and the Totalitarian State has indeed stirred up a lot of criticism, all to the good, and I should like to avail myself, once more, of your columns to enlarge on the statements made in my previous letter.

Certainly it does appear, looking back, that my attitude was somewhat that of a Dr. Pangloss and Mr. Ridley was justified in labelling it "unconquerable optimism," but that is because I did not state my position with sufficient clarity.

I do believe, and I see from Mr. Ridley's letter that he also believes, that eventually it is inevitable for Freethought to triumph, just as it is impossible to destroy the Freethinker. Of course "time is the essence of the contract" and I am well aware of that fact as Mr. Ridley. The free expression of our standpoint is in danger and it is of the utmost necessity for Freethinkers, Rationalists, et al, to fight for the preservation of our freedom and to further it.

No consolation can be derived from the knowledge that some time in the "never never" we shall probably win, if in the

fight we are to be once again submerged for some indefinite period, during which the supremacy of a religion, be it Rome, Moscow, Washington, or any other, shall be allowed to destroy those who are opposed to it.

Therefore, I should like to take this opportunity to say that I stand with Mr. Ridley in his attitude towards the Totalitarian State (or condition) and shall fight for the retention and advancement of our cause. However, I should also like to point out that Mr. Ridley does accept that the Individual is indestructible and will ultimately come into his own; but it is up to us, the individuals of to-day, whether that ultimate comes now or after the impending Dark Ages.—Yours, etc.,

PETER CROSS.

TOTALITARIANISM

Sir,—Ref. Mr. Ridley's letter in your issue of September 4, might I be permitted to observe that my earlier letter, to which he refers, was not "provoked," as he seems to think, by his article on Freethought and Totalitarianism. It was written on a point which arose from his earlier article on the Belgian elections. If Mr. Ridley would do me the honour to re-peruse my letter with its real origin in mind and taking it at its face value I venture to think he might find his comments a little misplaced.—Yours, etc.,

W. E. NICHOLSON.

THE ANCIENT OF DAYS

Man cannot wait on God,  
Full of years and slow;  
If we are going, we at once should go,  
If we are doing, better do it now,  
Leaving divinity to nod  
In senile drowsiness;  
With, or without Him, we must clear the mess.  
We cannot wait on God,  
But with Man's enemies trade blow for blow,  
Wielding the sword, the spade, the trowel and hod,  
Likewise the hoe—  
Especially, the spade and hoe.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

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