

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### In Its Place

"WHAT," asks a correspondent, "is the best reply to make to a man who asks what do we propose to put in the place of Christianity?" The best reply, and so far as we are concerned, the only reply, is "Nothing." Why should we put something in its place? If it were admittedly good and serviceable, the question would be pertinent. If one is removing the foundations of a house, the nature of what is to be substituted is of first-rate importance. But if the foundations are being weakened because water is percolating through the soil, the question of what will be put in the place of the water we propose diverting is quite irrelevant. When it was proposed to make factories consume their own smoke, that man would have been looked on as a lunatic who had demanded, "What are you going to put in its place?" If the suggestion had been to remove the atmosphere, the question would have been pertinent. There is no need to put anything in the place of a thing that is injurious or dangerous. Its removal is all that is needed. That is why we say that the only correct answer to "What will you put in the place of Christianity?" is "Nothing."

As is not unusual, when the Christian states a proposition, he does so in a way that begs the whole point at issue. If Christianity is useful, if it is performing some beneficial function in life, then there is need before it is removed, to have some idea of what is going to take its place. But no Freethinker believes this to be so. His whole case is that Christianity is, at best, harmless, and normally it is obstructive and dangerous. "What will you put in its place?" is a question that one Christian may properly ask of another, but it is one that a Christian is never justified in putting to a Freethinker. If a man believes that some sort of a God is necessary, he is bound to provide a new one before he destroys the one already established. And human nature is such that, provided a new absurdity is substituted for the old one, most people are convinced that an improvement has been effected. But the question of putting something in the place of Christianity does not trouble the Freethinker. It is not his concern. The Christian makes the same blunder when he asks the Freethinker to account for the existence of evil. That, again, is the Christian's concern. The Christian really has no right to manufacture a lot of conundrums and then look to the Freethinker to supply answers to them.

What now is it that the Freethinker is trying to remove? Our whole aim may be summed up in a sentence. We wish to destroy the belief and the influence of supernaturalism in science, in morals, in sociology. That is the negative aspect of our work. The positive aspect is that of encouraging the growth of natural ideas in all these departments. And of course, if a man believes that you cannot have a sound science, a healthy morality, or a progressive sociology without supernaturalism, he is warranted in asking for

something equally effective in its place. But in that case the discussion obviously turns on whether supernaturalism is necessary or not. The Freethinker says it is not. He asserts that the whole influence of supernaturalism, in all these departments is to mislead and obstruct. It serves no useful purpose whatever. His function is not that of a surgeon faced with the problem of finding a new leg for a man after he has amputated a useful one, it is that of a physician removing a stricture in the social artery. The physician knows that when the obstruction is removed, the normal recuperative powers of the patient will do the rest. The Freethinker knows that when the poison of Christianity no longer operates, human life will freely supply all that is necessary to life and happiness.

Christianity has had a long run, religion has had a still longer one. And during its lengthy career, religion has become more or less closely associated with a thousand and one things with which it has no real connection. But to ignorance and unreflection, when things are seen together in fact, their separation in thought is almost impossible. Religion has always been associated with morality, people have expressed their ideals in terms of religion, therefore, says ignorance, without religion of some sort, our morality and our ideals cannot stand. That is exactly the way we can imagine some fear-stricken savage thinking the first time someone suggested that seed should be sown without sprinkling the ground with blood as a sacrifice to his God. The two things had always been associated, therefore, they could not be separated. But when courage had its way, the blood sprinkling was seen to be useless. The savage did not have to put something in its place, he simply cancelled it, and applied his intelligence and energy to the work before him. And, as here, so elsewhere. Religion has no organic, no necessary connection with the real things of life. Its association is always accidental, ignorance created the union between religion and life and is still fearful that when a divorce is pronounced the social structure will collapse.

But suppose we imagine this country subjected to a devastating epidemic of common sense, and religion were to disappear as a consequence, what would be the result? Would anything of real value be lost? Clearly the relations between people, of parents and children, husbands and wives, would remain. The State would remain. Society would remain. The beauties of art, the wonders of science, the glories of literature would remain. The world would remain with its problems infinite in number and seductive in character. Babies would still be born, boys and girls would grow up, men and maidens would marry, human beings would continue to laugh and cry and love and hate, to toil, to triumph, or flounder in despair. All that now exists will go on then exactly as before, save for the one thing, that we should cease to squander our energy in a useless manner, and rid society of something that has never yielded real help to any human being during the whole of its history.

That is why we say there is no need to put anything

in the place of Christianity. We do not want to take away one God and recreate another. When a gardener sets about pulling up weeds from a flower-bed he does not put "something in their place," he knows that the weeds are absorbing nutriment the flowers should receive, and that if he removes the weeds the natural strength of the plants will do the rest. We realise that human nature contains within itself the potentialities of its own greatness, and if we clear out the weed of superstition and ignorance, we may trust to the development of the human race. Our aim is to rid the world of a superstition that has been a canker in the heart and a cramp in the intellect of humanity ever since its inception.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## GANDHI'S MESSAGE TO MANKIND

THE eminent alienist, Dr. Henry Maudsley, commended the perusal of biography and, above all, autobiography, as an index of human character. And not only for what is overtly stated, but for what is unconsciously revealed. Works of this nature include Rousseau's *Confessions* and, few are so self-revealing as Gandhi's *Autobiography* (Phoenix Press, London, 1949, 21s.). In this candid avowal, the most intimate relations of marital life are frankly and fearlessly disclosed. When Gandhi deemed himself blameworthy, either in domestic or public affairs, he unhesitatingly acknowledges his shortcomings, as he conceived them. Indeed, this unconventional study, written in all humility, reveals its author as one of the most unassuming reformers of recent generations.

Mohandas K. Gandhi was born and educated in India and was called to the Bar in London in 1889. For 17 years he practised in South Africa, but in 1908 abandoned his calling to champion the cause of the ill-used Indians there and some of their grievances were removed by his agreements with General Smuts, but only to be restored by South Africa's present reactionary administration. In 1915, he returned to India bent on his country's release from British rule. Still, he supported England, both in the Boer War and the conflict with Germany later.

As a humanist, Gandhi constantly strove to conciliate Moslem and Hindu and was an unceasing advocate of the emancipation of the outcastes, stigmatised as untouchables. Yet, despite his championship of Hindu rights, he bitterly estranged sectarian Hindus, one of whom mortally wounded him in Delhi in 1948. The current *National Register* states that Gandhi "held that non-violence was the panacea of all human ills, political, economic and social, and he judged all activities whether of the State or of the individual, by their conformity to that doctrine."

Gandhi's concept of God was that of Absolute Truth. In a lifelong search for the eternal verities, Gandhi deemed himself a devout adherent of a principle through which the divine is adumbrated. But however closely he approached divinity, he confesses that "it is an unbroken torture to me that I am still so far from him." Still, there is scarcely a gleam of a personal deity, and a hazy Pantheism seems to pervade Gandhi's strivings towards sacred absorption.

In a land of child marriages, Gandhi, the son of an official, was wedded at the age of 13. Years since, the Agha Khan deplored the waste of food and money in India on weddings and burials, the people so frequently

placing themselves in the clutches of usurers in consequence. Gandhi regrets the necessity of relating the details of his marital life, but feels bound to do so in the service of truth. "Marriage among Hindus," he observes, "is no simple matter. The parents of the bride and bridegroom often bring themselves to ruin over it. They waste their substance, they waste their time." In fact, there is scarcely a limit to their extravagance and folly. But as they are religiously sanctioned, generations must elapse before the masses seem likely to abandon consecrated customs, however absurd.

Two sections of the work under notice are devoted to the misdemeanours of an unfaithful friend whose first dereliction of duty was the enticement of Gandhi from vegetarianism to meat-eating. To the average European, there appears nothing outrageous in this. Yet Gandhi, who secretly succumbed to the temptation, treats it as a mortal sin. But worse remains behind, and the faithless friend who had made him, what G. B. S. somewhere calls a corpse-feeder, nearly led Gandhi into sexual sin. From these failings he ultimately revolted, and he became a strict vegetarian and, so far as strict discipline prevailed, he grew more and more adverse to marital intercourse, although he became the parent of several children.

Although Gandhi acted for a time as the lord of creation, he eventually realised the utterly abject state of the wife in Hindu society. The acquaintance who had induced him to eat meat, poisoned his mind against his spouse, quite unjustifiably. Then, as Gandhi sorrowfully concedes, while a servant wrongly accused may leave, and an undutiful friend may be discarded: "A wife if she suspects her husband will keep quiet, but if her husband suspects her she is ruined. Where is she to go? A Hindu wife may not seek divorce in a law court. Law has no remedy for her. And I can never forget or forgive myself for having driven my wife to that desperation."

Gandhi's father had Moslem and Parsi friends with whom he would discuss religious themes, and, when listening to these conversations as a boy, he became tolerant of all creeds save Christianity. "In those days," he avers, "missionaries used to stand in a corner near the high school and hold forth, pouring scorn upon Hindus and their gods." About the same time a well-known Hindu was converted to Christ and baptised; devoured flesh, imbibed intoxicating liquors, and adorned himself in European dress. These departures were all sinful in Hindu eyes. "I also heard," Gandhi declares, "that the new convert had already begun abusing the religion of his ancestors, their customs and their country. All these things created a dislike in me for Christianity." At this period, Gandhi was not strongly religious and his readings of the Laws of Manu made little impression. "The story of creation and similar things did not impress me very much, but on the contrary made one incline somewhat towards atheism."

Gandhi's departure to England was beset with difficulties. No member of his caste had ever crossed the ocean which they deemed extremely impious, as a residence in Europe would lead to contamination. The Sheth or headman of Gandhi's community denounced the projected voyage, but the lad was bent on the adventure and denied the right of his caste to interfere. This defiance inflamed the Sheth and Gandhi says: "He swore at me but I sat unmoved. So the Sheth pronounced his order: 'This boy will be treated as an

outcaste from to-day. Whoever helps him or goes to see him off at the dock shall be punishable with a fine of one rupee four annas."

While in London, Gandhi read H. S. Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism* and became a complete convert. He was elected to the Committee of the Vegetarian Society and met Dr. J. Oldfield among others. But the President and financial upholder of the Society was a Puritan who deplored the presence of Dr. T. R. Allinson on the Committee, owing to his advocacy of birth control. A motion was proposed and carried for Dr. Allinson's exclusion. Yet, while Gandhi thought the use of contraceptives dangerous, he considered "it quite improper to exclude a man from a vegetarian society simply because he refused to regard puritan morals as one of the objects of the society."

After two years' residence in England, Gandhi became acquainted with Theosophists who recommended his study of Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia* and other poetical writings. Then he visited Madame Blavatsky and Mrs. Besant at the latter's house in Avenue Road, while among his readings was the *Key to Theosophy*. He also became friendly with a Christian who persuaded him to peruse the Bible, but he found our sacred Scriptures somewhat wearisome. "I read the Book of Genesis," he states, "and the chapters that followed invariably sent me to sleep." The New Testament, however, proved more impressive, for the Sermon on the Mount has its antecedents in several of the sacred Books of the East.

Annie Besant's *How I Became a Theosophist* deepened Gandhi's tendency towards Theism, especially as she was then a recent convert from Atheism. Every Indian, he observes, knew Bradlaugh's name and had heard of his Atheistic opinions. "It was about this time that Bradlaugh died. He was buried in the Woking Cemetary. I attended the funeral, as I believe every Indian residing in London did. A few clergymen were also present to do him the last honours."

Gandhi's *Autobiography* closes in 1921. He remarks that since that year his activities had become so familiar to the public that further relation was no longer necessary. As already intimated, this self-portrait forms a human document of intense interest and information. It is, indeed, an outstanding instance of candid criticism and appraisal of its author's strength, as well as weakness of character.

T. F. PALMER.

## THE FRAUD OF FREUD

THE great number of neurosis and similar derangements during and after the war has made Psychology fashionable.

In books, plays and films the Freudian creed is being preached. Psychology, like religion, is a stop gap for "reason" and has the advantage of being "up-to-date."

In the Freudian mythology that is being born under our very noses, the "Subconscious" is cast for precisely the same role as that played in Christian Theology by the concept of "Original Sin."

Starting from the Kantian dualism of Unknowable Reality and Subjective Presentation in Thought, Freud, in seeking a metaphysic with which to co-ordinate his empirically reached subjective duality of consciousness and subconsciousness took over the Schopenhauer-Hartmann conception of "Desire" (subliminal psyche)

and Reason (idea). This meant a retreat not only to Kant, but even further to the Theological Dualism of the Middle Ages.

How could this happen in our "enlightened" century? It was made possible through a subtlety of Freud who himself "discovered" a basis for the belief in God in the perennial desire of every boy to strangle his father because he enjoys a monopoly (as far as the boy knows) of carnal intercourse with his mother." The Freudians achieved a world success by varying the slogan of the seventeenth century sensationalist school. (Hume, Berkeley, Locke.) "There is nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the senses" had been John Locke's dictum. The Freudians revised "senses" into "sex organs" and converted fornication from a Deadly Sin into a positively "scientific" virtue. If giving innocent pleasure to thousands of emotion-starved philistines entitles anyone to a seat in Heaven, a front seat should in fairness be reserved for Sigmund Freud.

The science of psychology, distinctively so called, has been the science of *conditioned reflexes*, i.e., the empirical psychology of neural processes and reactions. The genuine Freudian psycho-therapeutic *practice* provides valuable empirical data for scientific generalisation. However, apart from being a practical technique of dealing with cases of neurosis, Psycho-Analysis claims to be a metaphysical theory of mental processes by which Sigmund Freud sought to generalise the results of his practical psycho-therapeutic technique: it is at that a metaphysical theory of knowledge—an epistemology—for an idealistic "explanation" of human behaviour within society, its moral relations and origin.

In this field it must of necessity clash with Marxism, the mainly economic explanation of social progress, and it is precisely this aspect of Psycho-Analysis which endears it to certain circles. In a London weekly, Communism was psychologically "explained"; in a life of Karl Marx, a German Freudian maintained that Marx suffered from a liver complaint in middle life and that in consequence his theories can be traced to an inherent "inferiority complex." Others find that "unsatisfied sexual urges" were the cause of the French Revolution, and that the decapitation of the King left the French people with a "Guilt Complex."

As a matter of fact, "Freudism" could be explained as arriving during the period when the patriarchal family system began to dissolve, and that in our unsettled post-war conditions it became a fashion together with betting and clairvoyance. On the other hand, Society cannot be explained from the viewpoint of individual psychology, as though social development was the result of "soul" reflexes in the individual. Man is not only an individual he is also a member of Society and reflects accordingly, his individual milieu is affected by collective conditions and the prevailing historical facts. It is, therefore, highly probable that the lower classes must suffer far more from neurosis than does the upper class, but whilst the latter have the leisure and the means to have their minor troubles treated, the causes for mass neurosis cannot be alleviated. In our civilisation, the tabu on money, night, love, property, etc., daily aggravates the complexes and the covert traumatism.

In order to avoid a change of these conditions, it seems quite safe to employ psychologists who have to maintain that aggressivity is a pathological complex; it is their task to dope the victims of this state of affairs by repressing the actual antagonisms into a psychological Heaven. And in this way, Freudism is a fraud and a pseudo-religious weapon of reaction.

PERCY G. ROY.

## ACID DROPS

Except for a great sigh of relief from his backers and friends, little David flies home, unwept, unhonoured and unsung. Even the "Assemblies of God" who, we understand, were his sponsors, have been not a little worried by David's all-too-human failing of giving the "glad-eye" to a pretty girl. That this should anger the Assemblies of God is rather amusing for they, in the words of their secretary, "fanatically accept everything in the Bible," and if David's namesake in biblical times, who was quite the ladies' man and could take time off from the affairs of state for a little spooning, why the excitement when the modern "man after God's heart" does the same? David's "slip" has certainly overshadowed his campaign, but in a last attempt to prove that the tour was worthwhile, his manager states that medical evidence could easily substantiate all the claims made for the miracles—"but it would be *un-Christian* to produce that evidence": which is about as good an excuse as we could think of.

Trust the *Universe* to see the red hand of Moscow, even in an infants' school. The row going on over the appointment of a schoolteacher to a class of backward children of five to six years old at St. Ives is ridiculous. The teacher, who is a member of the local Communist Party, protests that she only teaches the children the three Rs, and it is fantastic to suggest that politics enter. But the fact that there are two Catholic children in the class gives the local priest an excuse to butt in, and he is making the affair a question of "God and anti-God." He objects to what he terms the "tampering with the innocence of children and the purity of the fountain of education." By this, he means only education from the Roman Catholic point of view—and is this education?

The Lord certainly looks after his own—through the Ecclesiastical authorities, of course; for they have seen fit to appoint the Right Rev. J. Woodhouse to a parish that has been uninhabited since 1942, when the War Office requisitioned the area for battle practice. The stipend from this parish, inhabited only by rabbits and wild-life, will ensure that the Right Rev.'s income does not fall below £1,000 per annum. His only duty will be periodically to inspect the church and perhaps preach a sermon in about 20 years' time. As we have so often pointed out, sweet is the service of the Lord.

John Waddington, in the *Eastern Daily Press*, thinks that the Bible in Basic English may well be used in schools as well as the Authorised Version which is not always clear to children. The implication that the Bible is clear to others is really funny when one thinks of the reams of paper and gallons of ink that have been used to explain Gods' Word. Perhaps John Waddington has not heard of Luther's famous aphorism that "the Bible is as a nose of wax"; perhaps, even, he has not heard of the many revisions and interpretations, or of the thousands that have perished for not understanding the Bible? The *Bible Handbook*, by G. W. Foote, would help him to see how crystal clear God's Word is.

"Little David" has gone home, but we still have a part of the American faith-healing racket with us. We shall not be surprised if Renee Martz will follow him soon, for something has gone awry with the dispenser of

miracles up above. Mrs. Daniels, who had been an invalid for two years, was visited by Renee and her father, and after praying, found she could walk unaided, although she had not done this since last December. However, the poor lady died the next day. We can only suggest that God must have been bored stiff by the barrage of requests from the American legion, and refuses to help them any more. In any case, as the surgeon once said, "the operation was successful, but the patient died."

The Lord still holds his own in the delectable neighbourhood of Worthing, and his bodyguard in the form of the Library Committee are ever on the *qui vive* that nothing shall be allowed to touch Him. The Public Library Committee have refused to display "The Freethinker" in its reading rooms, no excuse being given. It is just that the worthy Wortlingtons would rather clutter up the Reading Room with religious periodicals, while anything in the nature of opposition will not be tolerated. Freethinkers in the area should organise and again petition the Committee that in the interests of the ratepayer and Democracy the Committee should include at least one periodical giving the other side on religion. We would be glad to forward any letters to our Worthing representative from interested Freethinkers in that district.

That eminent Christian—and incidentally a strong supporter of Hitler—Dr. Malan, is determined to enforce the colour bar in South Africa, and he is going to compel everybody to carry an identity card clearly stating whether the holder is European, Native, Coloured, or Indian. He is not going to allow coloured and white students, either, to mingle together in universities. In fact, all are one in Christ is just Christian nonsense as far as Dr. Malan is concerned—and perhaps also with most Christians. But it's a very good slogan.

Before the Catholic members of the British Association. Fr. Harriott asked why it should be that "science, which should lead men to God, very often appears to lead them away from him?" Of course, he did not give the obvious answer. First, science never pretended to lead men to God; on the contrary, science completely ignores God. Second, science, as such, knows nothing of miracles, devils, hells, heavens, gods, or even the necessity of "men of God." The whole of the jargon which the Christian Church calls theology is for science just ignorant and useless.

It is the fashion of Christian priests of all denominations to pretend that there is no conflict between science and religion, but the fact remains that if this is so it is because religion has been completely ousted and has had to retire ignominiously defeated. There is not in the whole world any notable scientist who believes in the Adam and Eve and Serpent story, and the "Fall of Man. Without a "Fall" there is no necessity for a Saviour—and smash go the fundamentals of Christianity.

## THINGS WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW—

Will the Rev. Tommy Burns (U.S.A.), former heavyweight champion of the world, deal more effectively with the Devil than he did with Jack Johnson?

Was the British Association very proud of the fact that its President, Sir John Russell, presided at a meeting of the Salvation Army, which still believes in Original Sin, Devils and Hell?

# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## SUGAR PLUMS

On his way back to New York from the Rome Conference of Freethinkers. Mr. Charles Smith, the Editor of the *Truth Seeker*, called at our office and met Mr. Chapman Cohen. The two "veterans" of the Movement must have enjoyed their informal chat later over lunch. Mr. Smith's hobby is reading on philosophy, psychology and logic and he hopes to produce a work on these subjects in the near future. He was given a warm welcome also at Conway Hall where he heard an excellent discourse by Mr. Hamilton Eyle.

We are sorry to hear that the Manchester Branch have had some difficulty with the arrangements for their lecture room at the Land-o-Cakes Hotel, and the meeting which was announced for October 2 in these columns last week has been cancelled. The Branch secretary will advise all members by post the date of the next meeting.

Will South Londoners please note that owing to the earlier closing of Brockwell Park, the time of the Sunday meeting has been brought forward to 3-30 p.m. Mr. F. A. Ridley will speak to-day, and although we understand that a counter-attraction will be a football match, we hope there will be a good gathering of Freethinkers.

Appreciations of "The Freethinker" come in regularly. The President of the Rationalist Society, Mr. G. P. Stahl, of St. Louis, U.S.A., whose "Where Was God?" appeared in these columns recently, has favoured us with an interesting communication in which he says, "A recent article by F. A. Ridley in "Views and Opinions" is very timely. His admonition to beware of becoming too enthusiastic over Moscow, however much we should like to see Atheism triumph, should be heeded, lest we advocate and endorse totalitarianism—the end of all Freethought."

A month or two ago we mentioned the monthly magazine, "Enquiry," which is published at 1s. 6d. per issue by Messrs. Horace Cox Ltd. We have just seen a copy of the September issue. This is well up to the standard of the previous number which we mentioned. It contains contributions by such well-known figures as Prof. H. H. Price (on telepathy), Middleton Murry (on

the State), L. D. Gammans (on nationalisation), Prof. Robert Broom (on prehistoric man), and John Rowland (on recent scientific books). Describing itself as "a journal of modern thought," this magazine deserves to be widely read.

## THE 29TH INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF THE WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS

THE 29th International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, held in Rome from the 9th to the 12th of September, can be recorded as successful, useful, and enjoyable. When the President, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner opened the proceedings on Friday afternoon, the beautiful "Hall of Young Europe" contained what might be described as a reunion of a large and happy family. Although those present came from different parts of the world there was no shyness and almost at once everybody got to know each other.

British Freethought was officially represented by The National Secular Society, The Rationalist Press Association Limited, The South Place Ethical Society, and the Ethical Union. There were also visitors from Manchester, Leicester and Jersey. Other countries officially represented were Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, Australia, New Zealand and America. Stringent currency restrictions prevented many delegates from other countries making the journey.

The President, Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner, thanked the Italian National Society, "Giordano Bruno," for its energy and courage in arranging the Congress in Rome. The Chairman of the Italian National Society in a warm and spirited response welcomed the delegates and visitors. The assembly was also addressed by an Italian M.P. The arrangements were for three sessions of three hours each per day, but the time-table had to be altered in some directions.

On Saturday morning reports of the Freethought situation in various countries were read. Mr. R. H. Rosetti reported on the position in Britain. Then came a number of papers on "The Scholastic Problem" in which the schools in different countries received considerable attention. Mr. H. J. Blackham of the Ethical Union contributed one of the papers. The relationship between the Humanist organisations and those of Freethought led to lengthy discussion, chiefly in foreign language, and was continued on Sunday morning. The outcome being that so long as the activities of the Humanist organisations remained secular their co-operation with Freethought would be welcomed, but there could be no weakening of Freethought policy to accommodate Humanist Societies. The need to combat clerical and religious influence was as great as ever and must continue to be one of the main features of Freethought policy.

After the Sunday morning session there was a coach ride to Tivoli in the pre-Apennines. There lunch was served to the accompaniment of a ceaseless babble from international tongues, and a non-stop request for autographs. After a short ramble round the village we went back to Rome and visited the monument of Giordano Bruno, Garibaldi, and the grave of Shelley. At each place short speeches were given. On Sunday evening the Italian National Society entertained the delegates, visitors and friends with a concert in which the artistes gave a feast of song of the highest quality.

Monday was given over chiefly to a committee composed of delegates qualified to attend and vote by the paid-up subscriptions of their respective Societies to The World Union of Freethinkers.

That committee dealt with the resolutions that had been submitted, and to the domestic matters of the organisation. The resolutions ran along lines familiar and acceptable to Freethinkers, such as religion in schools; peace; abolition of all forms of tyranny and dictatorship in social life; abhorrence of racial hatred; the misuse of the Press and other mediums of public information; freedom for science and citizens; and so on. The election of officers followed. Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bommer was enthusiastically re-elected President of The World Union of Freethinkers. Mdlle. P. H. Pardon was re-elected Hon. Secretary, and a warm tribute was paid to her devoted service to the Movement. As her health left much to be desired, in fact she was at the Congress against her doctor's order, it was considered advisable to elect two secretaries and Mr. Blackham of the Ethical Union agreed to act as the second.

Messrs. L. Courtois, of Belgium, and J. De Ronde, of Holland, were again elected as Treasurers. A Bureau Executive of five to carry out the business of the Union, and a National Executive of ten, to be called in special circumstances, were elected. Mr. R. H. Rosetti refused nomination on the ground of translation difficulties, but Messrs. Granville Cook of Australia, and Smith of America, agreed to serve and were elected.

An invitation for holding the next International Congress in New York in 1951 was discussed and certain difficulties pointed out, it was finally agreed that the invitation be submitted to the respective Societies for consideration, and for them to report to the Secretary by January 1, next.

On behalf of the Congress the President then thanked the Italian National Society "Giordano Bruno" for all they had done in making it possible to add another successful and enjoyable Congress to the roll. The special committee having concluded its business after a session lasting nearly six hours, the proceedings terminated, and in an atmosphere of comradeship, with leave-takings and many hand-grips, the 29th International Freethought Congress came to an end.

The publication of an official report of the Congress, with translations of the papers read, is for the decision of the new Executive of the World Union, but the announcement will be made in due course.

R. H. ROSETTI.

## THE "PARLEMENT" OF MAN, FOR THE FEDERATION OF THE WORLD

HAVING arrived in Belgium too late to be of any assistance in the campaign to release Anders Clarin, "World Citizen No. 2," I decided to change my plans and accept an invitation to spend the week-end studying how the monthly review "Parlement" is produced and published, in six languages, and distributed throughout the world.

The editor is Edgar Gevaert, artist and author, whose home and studio is in the village of Laebhem St. Martin internationally famous as the centre of a Flemish school of painters. He and his family tend, unaided, a farm of 22 hectares and yet have found the time to make the whole of the neighbourhood and the town of Ghent so world-government conscious that their home is a positive hive of activity. If you appear in the streets of Ghent with pamphlets bearing Garry Davis's photograph, you are mobbed by the local *gamins* for possession of one.

Save for the luxury of a home richly decorated with their own paintings, the Gevaerts live the lives of simple farming folk, yet such is Madame Gevaert's hospitality and campaigning zeal that it is nothing—so I learned—for them to seat forty guests at table.

Their prodigious achievements have, of course, been made rather less onerous by the assistance of their ten children—four fine boys and six comely girls—all artists, musicians and linguists, in their teens or thereabouts, but most of them old enough to have worked as lumberers in the French Maquis when fleeing the Nazis as political refugees. (One among them—Therese Gevaert—will, I venture to predict, one day make a name for herself as an author and illustrator of children's books.) Having studied Edgar Gevaert's anti-Hitler pamphlets dating from 1933, it is not difficult for me to see why Adolf was so anxious for a tête à tête!

With the pangs of parting softened by an invitation to return soon, I came away encouraged by the memory of this happy team of federalists working unceasingly together in single-hearted devotion to a great cause.

HAROLD S. BIDMEAD.

## THE GOOD LIFE

He looked on Life with keen, clear eyes,  
And saw the Battle as it is,  
Not solely built in sick men's sighs,  
Not the defeated's hope of bliss.

With Reason's cudgel in his hand,  
He laid about him with a will,  
He ridiculed the Better Land,  
That fantasy of weak and ill.

When folk, said he, forsake their gods,  
And stand erect on their own feet,  
They win their joy against great odds;  
The Powers of Darkness beat retreat.

He savoured beauty, found it here;  
To truth he too was wedded fast;  
The march of time he did not fear;  
Content he sleeps the sleep that lasts.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### FINAL REPLY TO MR. GALLAGHER, M.P.

Sir,—I have no desire to monopolise your pages, to which I contribute, perhaps, more than your readers can stand! However, as Mr. Gallagher "rushing in where angels fear to tread," has launched yet another diatribe at me, I fear that I must ask your permission to take up yet more space in reply, I hope, for the last time.

With regard to my other critics, the difference between Mr. Cross and myself is, I think, only one of emphasis which does not affect our fundamental agreement. As for Mr. Nicholson, I made a technical slip for which I apologise, but it in no way affects my fundamental argument, which, I repeat, that under any circumstances, to support Rome against Moscow, the "Black International" against the "Red," would be for the Freethought movement sheer defeatism and ultimate suicide.

Regarding Mr. Gallagher. I must in the first place ask the readers of the *Freethinker* to note, and to judge for themselves the extraordinary similarity of Mr. Gallagher's line of reasoning with that of the Church of Rome, Moscow's equally totalitarian rival. Says Pope Pius, you must be a Catholic or an Atheist, if you reject our claims, you must logically reject everything, there is no "middle road." Says Mr. Gallagher on the part of the rival "Church" of Moscow, you must logically either be a Communist (Russian variety) and accept the Party Line, hook, bait and sinker, or else you must line up with the Vatican, with the anti-Soviet warmongers, with in short, the whole contemporary reaction.

In both the case of Rome and that of Moscow, an identical totalitarian logic dictates an identical reply: Mr. Gallagher and the Roman Pontiff speak with a single voice! Mr. Editor,

did I err when I referred to the Vatican and the Kremlin as rival totalitarian churches, which both represent the very negation of everything for which Freethought stands?

When we turn to the details of Mr. Gallagher's somewhat diffuse polemic, I must confess to being in a certain difficulty, since his arguments hinge largely on questions of current party politics which have no perceptible relation to the philosophical question of the relationship between Totalitarianism and Freethought which we are supposed to be discussing. I can only again assure Mr. Gallagher that if he could only liberate his mind from his totalitarian logic and its inevitable clichés—in short, if he were to practise a little freethought—he would understand that the fact that I regard many aspects of the Stalinist set-up as anti-Socialist and altogether objectionable, does not mean that I advocate the equally objectionable Wall Street alternative as the sole alternative, or, still less, that I am in favour of dropping atom bombs on Russia in a new "crusade for Christian civilisation."

To use a phrase that Mr. Gallagher may appreciate, he ought to learn to think dialectically, and not as he does at present, in the terms of the static logic of "either" "or." On this point at least, I am sure that the founders' of Dialectical Materialism, Marx and Engels, would have taken a very poor view of Gallagher as a logician, since dialectical reasoning, we understand, ends by resolving its contradictions in a "third front" ("synthesis"). It is apparent that it is Mr. Gallagher and his pseudo-Communist outfit who have strayed from the genuine Marxist line of thought, for Dialectical reasoning automatically excludes finality, and accordingly, totalitarianism.

I do not propose to follow Mr. Gallagher in his party polemics against the Washington government and its social democratic rubber stamps. If Gallagher and company had their way they would all be in jail anyway like their opposite numbers east of the (so-called) Iron Curtain: for Stalin's policies have an irresistible logic! In reference to what Mr. Gallagher said about the L.L.P. it is a pity that he did not stop laughing at it, and hearken to its warnings. For during the Second World War it warned that America and Britain would turn against Russia as soon as Hitler was out of the way. Unfortunately, the Communists were then too busy calculating their great comrade Winston Churchill, to notice this.

A final point. I must repeat that in my opinion the "withering away of the state" is metaphysical moonshine. It is absolute nonsense to say that there is no ruling-class in present-day Russia: why even the Anglo-Soviet Society had to admit a few years back that there were millionaires in the Soviet Union. And as an old Socialist propagandist who frankly desires to abolish exploitation in both Britain and Russia, I would ask Mr. Gallagher to tell us how consistent is it with Marxist economics to be a millionaire anywhere without exploiting the unpaid labour-power of the working class? The Russian State is the instrument of the "Communist" bureaucracy, not of the Russian workers, and it will never "wither away" by the voluntary action of its beneficiaries, which is precisely why no political opposition is allowed in Stalin's Russia where, incidentally, I would be shot for writing the above. Mr. Gallagher can tell this sort of moonshine to the Marines, for even the House of Commons would laugh him down.

I am afraid, Mr. Editor, that I do not see the slightest reason to change my original advice to Freethinkers to steer clear of both totalitarian camps. By so doing, they will keep the torch of human progress alight.—Yours, etc.,

F. A. RIDLEY.

GENIUS A NEW GOD?

Sir.—We sceptics of the simple faith of the Stratfordians are accustomed to the invocation of genius to solve all mysteries but it is surprising to find it advanced in the *Freethinker*. What part have your readers in mysticism of this kind? If geniuses can be shown to learn languages without grammars and geography without maps the explanation might be tenable. William Shakespeare is not only credited with a knowledge of Latin—and he might have picked up some at the Stratford Grammar School—but a knowledge of French and perhaps of Italian; also of Italian geography. Genius has to learn, though it may show greater aptitude than the ordinary pedestrian mind.

If there was plenty of evidence that Shakespeare of Stratford wrote the plays I should not reject the theory on the ground of impossibility. There are gaps in his life and it might be argued that they were filled with private study. Such a self-made man, however, would be far more remarkable than now, and there is no suggestion of surprise at the production of the plays as there would have

been if the young fellow from Stratford had been credited with them. For then there were no public libraries and no evening continuation schools.

All the records at Stratford, as Taine said, suggest a shopkeeper more than a poet. They have fifty thousand documents and not one to show that any distinguished literary man lived there! No play was performed there in the lifetime of the alleged author. No mention was made of him by William Camden in his *Britannia*, when dealing with Stratford. No notice was taken of his death.

If he did write the plays he may be compared with the Christian god who moves in a mysterious way his wonders to perform.

I have enjoyed G. W. Foote's literary essays, but have found no reason for believing that he had any knowledge of the controversy as to authorship, beyond a cursory glance at Baconian claims. I fancy if William Shakespeare had started a religious, and not a literary cult Foote would have covered the claim with ridicule. I have not said his claim for it cannot be shown that he claimed to be the author. If he could revisit the glimpses of the moon and behold the literary professors prostrating themselves at Stratford he might say what fools these mortals be!—Yours, etc.,

WM. KENT.

"FOREIGN RELATIONS"

Sir.—It is important that all protagonists should realise the change that has taken place over the last 25 years. In 1914 we had the Ministry of Propaganda and later in 1939 this was altered to the Ministry of Information. It will be noted that this war-time institution still exists. Its business is the "seeding" of information regarding foreign countries, in accordance with the policy of the Government of the time.

Such information is distributed by the radio, the Press and the cinema and the bulk of the people do not appreciate that it is "selected" although it is to be hoped that Freethinkers are not led astray.

With regard to the Press, it is obvious that the tremendous advertising placed with them by the Government is in itself an encouragement to print nothing but what suits their foreign policy.—Yours, etc.

T. D. SMITH.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Branch (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. KAY, SMITH and BILLING. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Wednesday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. KAY, SMITH and BILLING.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY. (Highbury Corner).—7 p.m.: Mr. L. EBURY.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.
- South London Branch N.S.S. (Brockwell Park, Herne Hill).—Sunday, 3-30 p.m.: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m.: Messrs. E. BRYANT, C. E. WOOD and E. PAGE.

OUTDOOR

- Glasgow (Brunswick Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. S. BRYDEN, E. LAWASI and J. HUMPHREY.

INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: A Lecture.
- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon St.).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "What is Truth?" Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Public Opinion," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.
- West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Loco. Men's Institute, 62, Forest Lane, Stratford, E.15).—Tuesday, September 27, 8 p.m.: A Meeting.

SECOND-HAND BOOKS. Wants List Welcomed. Michael Boyle, 30, Parliament Hill, N.W.3.

## CHRISTIANITY AND THE MODERN WORLD

ONE of the most effective criticisms which modern Free-thought advances against the Christian attitude to life is the suggestion that in this twentieth-century world of totalitarian tendencies the whole scheme of things as envisaged by Christianity is totally irrelevant to the problems which we have to face. That, in fact, is probably the reason why such a vast proportion of people (especially of the young) are not so much opposed to Christianity as completely impervious to it. And that is the reason, likewise, why such efforts as the recent mission to London are condemned to failure before they start. There are occasions, it is true, when an individual church, with a brilliant or a likeable minister, may find its services packed to the doors—but those who pack it are, for the most part, religious believers from other churches, not newcomers who have been attracted back to religion.

Now, it is very rarely that a Christian thinker can be found to admit these things—or even to see that anything can be said in favour of the attitude of mind which is expressed in these columns. And for that reason I think we should welcome Prof. H. A. Hodges's interesting little book, "Christianity and the Modern World View" (S.C.M. Press, 2s. 6d.). Prof. Hodges is Professor of Philosophy in the University of Reading; he is also (which must be rare in our day among Professors of Philosophy—think of Prof. Heath and Dr. Joad) an orthodox Christian. In his book he has tried to relate his philosophical knowledge, which is deep, with his religious faith. He has also tried to show how the two aspects of his personal attitude to life may be linked up with the "modern world view"—a view which he admits to be increasingly secular.

Here is the sort of passage which makes me praise this book highly: "Christian preachers and writers often affect to pity the non-Christian. It is he who is blind, and his blindness may be traced, as he traces ours, to pathological reasons or even to an underlying hostility—in this case a hostility to God and to self-knowledge or discipline. By contrast with him we are the clear-sighted people, the people who are able to weigh evidence impartially, and are free enough from prejudice about life and the world. I doubt whether even the man in the pew has really this complacent conception of himself; and we, who belong to the Christian intelligentsia, do we think of ourselves in this way? Are we sure that our failure to agree with our contemporaries is not sometimes due to a failure to understand them, and that there is not in us a blindness comparable with that which we are taught to discern in them?"

That, I feel, is something which was well worth saying, and which has been well said. Much of what Prof. Hodges writes is equally stimulating; and if his book fails to convince, as regards its main thesis, that is not his fault. It is the fault of the theological outlook which is so much a part of his mental make-up that, even though he is clear-headed and intelligent, he cannot for a moment admit it to be at fault.

But Freethinkers never blame a Christian believer for his belief. They merely say that they can see through his ideas, understanding where he has unwittingly deceived himself.

One point, however, deserves to be recorded in Prof. Hodges's favour. He does not fall into the error, so prevalent in our day, of identifying the secular outlook with the Communist outlook. True, he sees, as every thinker must see, that Marxism is an important aspect of modern development. But he would, I think, agree with the view that has in recent months several times

been advanced in these columns—the view that Marxism (at any rate the orthodox Communist Party kind of Marxism) is only one aspect of the irreligious development of our day.

It is seldom that there appears a book written from an avowedly religious point of view which a Freethinker can read with any pleasure or satisfaction. "Christianity and the Modern World View," is that comparative rarity, a Christian book with an intelligent and intelligible background. For that reason I hope many Freethinkers will read it. They will not be convinced. I know; but they will be deeply interested.

JOHN ROWLAND.

## "FREEWILL"

I stood before an altar-rail, a promise to fulfil. A Parson said to me, "Wilt thou?" I gave reply, "I will."

My bride-elect had features fair as any I had seen. Had she been ugly, "I will not" my answer would have been.

Some say I exercised Freewill. Now was this really so? Conditions being what they were, could I respond with "No"?

"I will" expressed my willingness; disclosed my state of mind. Could I have chosen otherwise, while feeling so inclined?

My fond desire, affection, love, were not produced by me; and yet, they played the leading part to fix my destiny.

My choice was due to fancy, taste, which I did not create, and thus my preference became inevitable fate.

And so, as on through life we go, whate'er is said and done, there's something in us, *not selfmade*, for ever goading on.

Though often we may errors make, 'tis good to realise we profit by experience and, through mistakes, grow wise.

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

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