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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Theocracy in the British Commonwealth

THE Second World War, like its 1914-18 predecessor, was allegedly fought "to make the world safe for Democracy." However, some of the results of this "Democracy" appear to be a trifle peculiar when they impinge upon the religious sphere. For, in the nebulous borderland between politics and religion, it appears that the totalitarian principles of political dictatorship and the theocratic principle of religious absolutism may still combine in new forms of racial and religious oppression: there are other theocracies besides Rome, and the racist theocracy of the "Herrenvolk" ("the master-race") in politics, "the chosen race" in theology, did not perish with Hitler or Calvin.

Our attention has been drawn to a recent issue of the English South African newspaper, *The Natal Mercury*, a journal which is politically opposed to the present racist dictatorship of the South African premier, Dr. Malan, and of his Dutch (Boer) Nationalist Party. In its issue of September 29 last, *The Natal Mercury* publishes, in full, for the first time, in English, the proposed Republican Constitution for the (present) "Dominion of South Africa."

This revealing document, which *The Natal Mercury* accurately describes as that of a "Dictator Republic," and which, incidentally, bears a striking resemblance to the original (1919) constitution of the Nazi Party of Hitler, Goebbels and Rosenberg, was originally published in the Afrikaans Nationalist journal, *Die Transvaler*, with the permission and on the authority of Dr. D. F. Malan, Leader of the Herenigde Nasionale of Volksparty." The date of the original publication was January 23, 1942, when, of course, the party was in opposition both to the then Smuts government and to South Africa's participation in the anti-Fascist war. But, charges *The Natal Mercury*, now that the Boer nationalists are in power, they will not rest until they have attained their final goal in a racist republic, the precise Calvinistic theocracy which is outlined in their 1942 programme with explicit detail.

The proposed Constitution of the "Republic of South Africa" is, unfortunately, too long to quote in full: however, the first two paragraphs give a pretty fair indication of the contents of this local variation of the combined gospels of Calvin and Hitler. And these, accordingly, we quote:—

"Constitution for the Republic of South Africa.

Introduction: "In obedience to God Almighty and His Holy Word, the Afrikaans people acknowledge their national destiny as embodied in its Vootrekker past, for the Christian development of South Africa, and for that reason, accepts the Republican Constitution which follows, to take the place of all the existing regulations in law, which are in conflict with it, and especially with the total abolition of the British Kingship over and the British subjects within the Republic.

"Article 2. The State: The name of the State is 'The Republic of South Africa.' The Republic is grounded on a Christian National foundation and therefore acknowledges as the standard for the Government of the State, of, in the first place, the principles of justice for the Holy Scriptures; secondly, the clearest direction of the development of the National history; and thirdly, the necessary reformation of the government of States, *especially with an eye to the circumstances of South Africa.*" (Our italics.)

There follows an elaborate definition of the powers of the "State President," the Afrikaans equivalent of the Nazi "Führer," in the new Republic. The whole projected Constitution bears a notable resemblance to the original Nazi Constitution, with its very similar emphasis on "positive" (i.e., Nazi) Christianity. It would appear that that great rationalist idol smasher, the Norwegian dramatist, Hendrik Ibsen, was not far wrong when, as far back as the Boer War (1899-1902), he described the then Transvaal Republic of President Kruger as a "Calvinist Theocracy" which the Malan Government and its Nationalist supporters are now pledged to restore at the earliest opportunity.

So far, it is true, the "South African Republic founded on God's Holy Word" has not yet been officially proclaimed, for, no doubt, the same reasons that its German prototype, the "Third Reich," was not proclaimed at the immediate moment that Hitler took over the reins of power in January, 1933: due, in both cases, to the small Parliamentary majority possessed at the start by both the German and South African Führers, and to the general precariousness of their political positions prior to being established firmly in the governmental saddle. But, no doubt, it will come in time: for ever since the Boer Nationalists came to power in April, 1948, they have been digging themselves in and introducing their clerical-fascist State bit by bit, on the instalment system, as it were. In the field of racist relations, as we have indicated before in this column, the "Chosen Race" theory embodied in the Calvinistic Predestination theory of the Divine Right of the White Race to rule far more numerous black and coloured Helots, has made great strides under the administration of Dr. Malan, and has completely shed the "protective covering" of hypocrisy with which former, more ostensibly liberal, Governments have seen fit to envelope it.

Thus, at any rate for the present, the British "Commonwealth" contains one white Theocracy which may be accurately styled as the illegitimate offspring of Calvinist theology and of Nazi political philosophy. This revival of the ancient and, it formerly seemed, obsolete doctrines of Theocracy, is not confined to South Africa, or to Christianity: in its Mohammedan form it is found in Pakistan, also within the British Commonwealth, and the same recent era has seen the dramatic restoration of the oldest "Chosen Race" of all, Israel, the prototype and inspirer of all the others, and the Sacred Scriptures of which were the first, as it were, to patent the "Herren-



volk " theory, in that ancient " Mein Kampf " the books of Ezra-Nehemiah.\* Truly, " The price of liberty is still eternal vigilance," and the need for Freethought in its widest application, is not diminished, but is rather augmented at the present day and in the present world.

F. A. RIDLEY.

\* As it has been truly said of the modern Nazis and the ancient Jews: " Both know *what* a ' Chosen Race ' is; they only disagree *who* it is."—*La Malediction d'Esdras*, George Maranz.

## LIFE AND DEATH

BELIEFS and customs concerning death have been the means of giving us knowledge of the life of man. For without them very little pre-historic evidence of the origin of beliefs of our own day would have survived. The practice of burying food and implements with the corpse gives evidence of how our primitive ancestors lived. But it also shows that, to them, death was a sleep and an awakening; not a bourne from which no traveller returns; and fear of ghosts is universal. There was no " death " and no " other life," for the implements and food, as well as the ghosts, plainly relate to this life.

Such practices continued through barbarism, with elaboration, into civilisation. The custom of covering the grave with a stone became that of the huge structures of the Egyptian Pyramids. But it is clear from the astronomical uses of the pyramids, with agricultural implications, that concern was still for this life. So also, embalming or preserving the body shows concern for this life in this body. But with the corruption of the body associated with the notion of evil, death was not a sleep and a forgetting; it might be troubled by the terrors of nightmare, with moral implications, of discipline or judgment, shown in the Book of the Dead.

To our primitive ancestors, wandering maybe in single families, death was an unusual occurrence, but in larger communities, became more familiar. To-day, in a city like London, one might see a funeral every day. In spite of superstition, there is evidence of tombs being broken into and valuables stolen. The Carthaginians saved the real valuables, making models or imitations for symbolical use in burial. With familiarity and the accumulation of knowledge man learned to distinguish sleep and death. Man discovered death as we might find or see a dead body. Death is an objective fact that happens to someone else. Yet it still concerns us.

Despite recorded cases of premature burial, death is a positive concept, based upon evidence. Sleep and dreams are not physical, but we distinguish the living and the dead by physical symptoms, by observation. We look for movement, for signs of breathing, we feel or listen for pulse or heartbeat, may even smell signs of decomposition. We recognise them by means of the senses. The physical facts raise questions of substance and meaning of life and death; a heritage of Greek controversy. But whereas then, the problem was to explain facts of this life, now, the facts are given as evidence of another life.

With mortality came its negation, immortality; a negative argument, that we do not know, giving substance to life with fallacious analogies such as breath or dream visions; or a modern electrical analogy, to substantiate " spirit " with electricity as physical science. But the subjective question of meaning involves sentiments and feelings. With the ancient maxim, that seeing is believing, and with fear in the " presence " of reality in life, and in the " absence " of breathing in death, and with painful memories in the " appearance "

in dreams, knowledge of the physical fact of death still involves recognition and personal feelings with moral and social complications.

If Greek physics was baffled by dynamics and biology, ethics was equally ineffective with belief and conduct. With political realism and emotional need of justification for discipline and duty, the appeal in morality goes back in tradition, just as recognition goes back to childhood memories. With the visionary " other life " as moral compensation for this Vale of Tears and suffering in the " corruption " of the World, the Flesh and the Devil, life became a trial and a testing; a preparation for death as the King of Terrors, with the fear of Hell as the hangman's whip; with justification as conviction in belief; and with passionate feelings in historical conflict.

Out of the dialectic conflict came the idea of self-preservation; with concern for another life, in a world of ideas; life and death are abstract. The biological law of survival applies to an abstract species, not the actual animal, for the individual dies and death has its function. There is biological compensation in life and death; life lives on life and with death, elimination in an evolutionary process. There is purposive action on each side in the conflict. In the search for food, the flight of fear, or active combat, the striving in life is evading death. Life is purposive action; more complex with sex co-operation; with protection and rearing of the young; and with gregarious association.

With humanity, life has its compensations in conflicting ideas as well as feelings, in the association of social life; with elimination continued in discipline and criticism. Murder is the greatest crime and death its punishment. We may give our lives that others might live or seek death as an escape, but suicide is condemned, for our concern for death is socialised. Using the terms public and private instead of objective and subjective, we more clearly see the social aspect. So that, death is a public fact and concerns those left behind, more intimately those nearest and dearest. In public concern for death, we take pride in the heroism of the Glorious Dead; we take a morbid interest in murder reports in newspapers; enjoy ghost stories and tales of death and adventure in books, on stage, screen and radio.

We play with death in peace, sublimated in competitive games; we flirt with death in war, with poison gas and atom bombs; and the thrill we get out of taking risks, whether in enjoyment or desperation, shows that it is death that gives meaning to life. Mother love for child is rooted in fear of danger and death; the more the danger, the deeper the love, and the more anxious the care. Would a mother lavish care on her child if it were immortal? Would there be any sense, even in feeding it, without danger of death by starvation? To assert another life, different from this, where there is no death, is to say that life has no meaning. Indeed, the believer does say, that life is meaningless if death ends all.

The facts are similar for each generation, but the meaning does not come from tradition from the dead; it is not to be found in doctrine or dogma, but in actual experience, here and now. The past is dead, it lives in memory; present desires arise in present needs; hopes and fears concern the future. We may learn in recognition or visualise a dream future in wishful thinking, but we live now; and death only has meaning to sentient beings, to the living. To every living thing death is in the future, but to talk of death as a future life is to deny all we know about death.

H. H. PREECE.



## CRIPPS AND CHRIST

If the standard of political morality is placed low by the average citizen the politicians have only themselves to blame. The half truths, untruths, twists and turns in the meaning of words so common in political technique have won for the politician, quite rightly, that suspicion and mistrust in which so many of them are held by most members of the community. The situation has certainly not improved in recent years. Indeed, much of the trouble and misfortunes in the world to-day rest on the fact that statesmen do not trust each other, because they move in political circles where suspicion is rarely absent. This slight intrusion into the political world and its moral standard is to emphasise a point, namely, the safety in which politicians can assume a Christian cloak as an accessory to their political practices. Christianity has suffered much battering and mauling when in contact with truth, but deceit and falsehood have never objected to its company. After all, lying for the glory of Party, and lying for the glory of God can be interchangeable, when the occasion arises. There seems very little excuse for political deceit and trickery, it could be made clean, unless it has sunk too low, but if Christianity is to survive in a modern and enlightened society it must resort to unwholesome methods of propoganda. Sir Stafford Cripps has knocked about in the political world for a long time. He knows there are many black patches. As Chancellor of the Exchequer he has reached a very high and important office in the Government. I readily grant that he has reached that office as clean as the cleanest politician, and has remained so. I quite believe he has a sincere religious belief, but he is not a Christian. He is not a Christian either in belief or practice as far as Christ's teaching, or that part of Christ's teaching which Sir Stafford parades, is concerned. Contrast the teaching of Jesus on the blessing of poverty, the anti-Christian nature of riches, to set affection on things above and not of the earth, the empty kitty when Jesus was in charge, contrast that with Sir Stafford handling and allocating public money by the thousands of millions of pounds every year, and still seeking more. We know the necessity for that office in the State, but it is not an office for a Christian. Incidentally, we do not envy him his job to-day; revenue to meet the nation's bills must be a continuous nightmare, but we must also remember that that is largely due to Christian statesmen of the world landing us into two world wars, and going ahead with the necessary preparations to meet a third. Much more might be said along those lines but I am more interested in the speeches Sir Stafford makes from time to time, and the contradictory nature of them according to the audience he is addressing.

At religious gatherings he stresses the point that the only thing that can save our country from its present troubles is to get back to the teachings of Jesus and practise Christian principles. But when he addresses the House of Commons on our present troubles he tells them that the only way to save the country is for more production and still more production, to which he now adds devaluation of the £.

Now if Sir Stafford honestly believes his message to religious assemblies to be true, why is it not repeated in Parliament? Naturally, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer speaks on economics concerning the country some reliance is put upon his remarks by the people. He is looked upon as an authority on such matters, but when he puts forward a religious solution when addressing a religious body, and a secular solution when addressing Parliament it looks all the time as though one of those bodies is being fooled. It would be much easier, and

certainly safer to fool a religious assembly than an audience of alert Members of Parliament, ready to score party points.

It would be most helpful to many citizens if Sir Stafford would make it quite clear in the House of Commons which solution of the two he is recommending to the people of this country.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer addressed a Christian Action meeting in Blackburn quite recently, and there, according to a press report, he laid it down that it was necessary to join in the "insistence that Christianity is the solution for the world's problems. That the teachings of Christ was God's directive in the world." That address was given on a recent Sunday to the Christian Action meeting. The very next day Sir Stafford was in Parliament supporting the Government's plan to extricate the country from its troubles by cutting down imports and increasing exports, more production all round, greater austerity, in fact, anything but the solution Sir Stafford Cripps had given the Christian Action meeting the day before, namely, that Christianity was the solution for the world's problems, not only for this country.

The Christian Action meeting was given to understand by Sir Stafford that the practice of Christian principles would avoid war, but in Parliament he shows an allocation of two millions of pounds every day, all the year round, a total of seven hundred millions of money out of the public purse for war machinery a year. But then that is as much a Christian teaching as the remedy for war given to the Christian Action meeting—Christian principles. That is where Christians are fortunate; that is where Sir Stafford Cripps is fortunate.

From the Bible they, and he, can get anything that is needed, especially contradictions. The Bible will give sanction for the good and the ghastly; for toleration and intolerance, for truth and for lying, for the merciful and for the merciless. In fact, the Bible makes a first-rate text book for humbugs. If Sir Stafford can inform a Christian brotherhood meeting that Christianity is a gospel of peace, he can also justify the allocation of 700 millions of pounds a year from the same book and quote Exodus 15, 3, which tells all good Christians that "The Lord is a man of war." The Chancellor of the Exchequer can square both, and back both, with texts at a Christian gathering and 700 millions of pounds in the House of Commons.

R. H. ROSETTI.

## DESTINY OF MAN (GEOLOGICAL)

In timeless ages, this young earth of fire  
Was slowly cooled, then iced with arctic air;  
Then giant continents, like planets bare,  
Rose from the seas, or sunk in ocean's mire;  
No living thing had senses, eyes, desire—  
Till vital lamp, in swamp or sandbank there,  
Beacon'd Life's dawn—huge serpents, mammoths rare,  
And Apes; by stages, Man—forever higher!  
Unlike the acorn, and the chrysalid,  
Which fo'd the glorious oak, fair butterfly,  
Our old primeval earth's basaltic lid  
Cherished no pledges of humanity;  
But it, when all its denizens are dust,  
May treasure human fossils in its crust.

A. SLATER



## A CRITIC OF THE THEATRE

FROM the days of Hazlitt downwards there have been countless critics of the theatre. Those who can claim to be contributing something worth while to literature in our day are, however, few. The late James Agate, in spite of some irritating mannerisms in his writing, conveyed to his readers something of his own gusto. Mr. Ivor Brown has a distinction shared only by the greatest of our time. But among the younger men there can be no doubt that Mr. J. C. Trewin is the best critic of things theatrical.

Not long ago I wrote here of his autobiography, *Up From The Lizard*, which was a delightful book, not least in its passages dealing with plays and actors. Now there comes *We'll Hear A Play* (Carroll and Nicholson, 12s. 6d.), which is a kind of notebook of the theatre that is of very real value. Much of its contents originally appeared in the various journals for which Mr. Trewin has acted as dramatic critic. The essays are none the worse for having originally been written as journalism—indeed, they are rather more than first-rate journalism at that.

There are few aspects of theatrical life on which Mr. Trewin does not touch. He pays tribute to many figures who never received their due meed of praise in their own day. Ion Swinley, for instance, that incomparable speaker of verse, is clearly one of his heroes. And there is Bernard Copping, who ran the repertory theatre at Plymouth in Mr. Trewin's (and my) youth. A fine actor and a fine personality, he was never generally recognised as being a first-rate maker of the theatre. And there are tributes to other people who have done their best to bring the living theatre to audiences over-accustomed to the secondary art of the cinema—such as Peter Cotes, whose book, *No Star Nonsense*, I wrote about recently, and whose production of J. B. Priestley's *An Inspector Calls* in the mining valleys of Wales Mr. Trewin heartily commends.

For Freethinkers, I feel, the most interesting part of Mr. Trewin's well-written book will lie in the asides in which he castigates that high-falutin group who, in our day, have tried to harness the theatre to their religious beliefs. In speaking of Christopher Fry's verse play, *The Lady's Not For Burning*, he writes:—

"Fry is not, thank goodness, among the poet-dramatists—high Church rather than high-spirited—who view the theatre in a dim religious light and speak ever from the crypt."

I do not think that I can recall a writer of our time who can thus in a phrase destroy the illusions of a whole group. That is, perhaps, what gives Mr. Trewin his special attractions as an essayist on the theatre. He can strike off a phrase so telling in its implications that it does not seem to leave room for anything more to be said on the subject. And yet, so well he writes, that even his quieter passages stay in the mind. Someone remarked to me the other day that J. C. Trewin is the Hazlitt *de nos jours*. I thought at the time that this seemed high praise for a contemporary writer. One hesitates, inevitably, from comparing a man one knows with one of the great writers in the classical tradition. Yet, when I think it over, I am not at all sure that the praise is undeserved. Certainly I can recall no other writer on the twentieth-century theatre more justifiably placed alongside the great men of the past. Certainly Mr. Trewin's book will take a permanent place on my own bookshelves, alongside those of Hazlitt. And I do not think that it will suffer unduly from comparison with its neighbours.

JOHN ROWLAND.

## EDUCATED IGNORANCE

THERE is always much of what even educated men are ignorant, and they then, if wise, display their sense by silence; but in matters of religion the case may be different. They may then speak with assurance of what they do not know.

A distinguished retired member of the medical profession has, in the *British Medical Journal*, October 15, 1949, invited the attention of British doctors to the fact that on October 18 Christian medical men in all parts of the world commemorate the patron saint of the profession, recalling with gratitude the gospel he wrote for his fellow men. The Church, too, said he, then recalls with thanks that this physician was called to be an evangelist and physician of the soul, and prays that, by the wholesome medicine of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed. This, says our friend, is devoutly to be wished.

It is St. Luke whom our doctor so definitely asserts to have written the Gospel called "according to Luke," and also, later in his letter, the Acts of the Apostles. We could lend the doctor a copy of the Acts, in which a former owner, a scholar, has written, at its beginning: that the work was unknown or rejected by many sincere Christians in the fourth century, and he has added to his note the name Chrysostom, intending, I suppose, to indicate that Chrysostom, patriarch of Jerusalem, called, for his eloquence, "Golden Mouth," who lived 347 to 407, was the source of his information. However that may be, it remains believed that the same man wrote both Luke and the Acts; but was he a doctor?

The "Encyclopaedia Britannica" observes that there is no evidence that avails to show that the writer of Luke must have been a doctor. The medical terms in the Gospel are not highly technical, but such as a layman might be expected to use. I have made a rapid examination of Luke, possibly overlooking something of importance, but not intentionally doing so. There are references to: a man with an arm withered, one with a spirit of an unclean devil, Peter's wife's mother taken with a great fever, divers diseases, leprosy, the palsy, plagues, infirmities, evil spirits, blindness, lameness, deafness, legion of devils, issue of blood, a spirit of infirmity, and dropsy.

Then, did a doctor write that Zacharias (Luke 1) received a visit from an angel, who correctly predicted his future temporary dumbness, and that his wife, Elizabeth, well-stricken in years, should conceive? Did such a one write of the child yet in the womb of Elizabeth, that it leaped therein as soon as its mother-to-be heard the salutation of Mary, or that also the latter received a visit from an angel, who predicted that she too would miraculously conceive?

Then there are the cases of casting out of devils, rebuking fever (iv, 39), healing a great multitude (vi, 19), raising the dead, discharging seven devils (viii, 2), discharging a legion of devils, which go into a herd of swine (viii, 27), an intractable issue of blood stanching by touching the clothes of Jesus, and the latter then perceiving that an influence had gone out of him, the sending of his disciples to cure diseases (ix, 1), a multitude fed on five loaves and two fishes, and Jesus sweating blood (xxii, 44). Did a doctor write these? Then, in the other alleged work of "Doctor Luke," we may read of special miracles by the hands of Paul (xix), so that from his body were brought unto the sick, handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them. Then, finally, so that we do not overdo examples, there is the famous last chapter, wherein Paul, laying sticks on a fire, has an adder fasten



on his hand, but, shaking it off, he suffers no harm. Then there is Publius, sick of a fever and bloody flux, healed by the laying on of hands: while other diseases are also healed. Did a doctor write these accounts?

It would seem, therefore, more reasonable to suppose that the writer of Luke and Acts was not a doctor: but perhaps he was a witch-doctor. It might be that our doctor would not assert that Luke and Acts are without interpolations, but what then? What is original Gospel and Acts, and what interpolation? What did a doctor write, and what a layman? The question is insoluble.

Let us leave Luke the physician, and consider the writing itself. Our doctor assures us that the description of Christ in Luke is a pen portrait by a literary artist of the human Jesus. If we are to get at this human Jesus we shall have to start making excisions from the holy text, for the human Jesus is not born of a virgin. The miracles must go too, including the Resurrection! No, not the Resurrection, for that, says the doctor, is "the astounding climax" to which Luke leads, making sense of Jesus's mission and message. Where are we now? We are at Paul's position, "if Christ rose not from the dead, then is our teaching vain." It has no sense; but the doctor wishes to show us the human Jesus, who loved children, championed the cause of women, welcoming them as his disciples. The evidence for these gentle traits of Jesus is not very strong, especially as regards the women, for none of his disciples were women. He chose his disciples: Judas Iscariot, the traitor, Simon Peter, the coward and liar; they were of them, but there were no females among the select band. The women ministered to him; she with the ointment "ceased not to kiss his feet," Mary of Magdala watched at his tomb, and was the first to announce to his chief apostles that he had risen from the dead.

We cannot get our human Jesus without a divine character. He does not exist. How much of Luke will remain if we eliminate the supernatural elements? Almost every chapter will need excisions. Chapters i and ii would have entirely to go, and what about the nine chapters ix, 51 to xviii, 34. These show Jesus making a journey through Samaria, but, says Schmiedel, in his "The Johannine Writings," Luke leads us to realise fully that he is not clear as to the facts of the story, for he tells us (xvii, 11) that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, and adds that he passed through Samaria and Galilee, whereas Galilee, says Schmiedel, must have been left behind, that is if he were going to Jerusalem. Then Jesus is warned of Herod Antipas, but he had already avoided him by leaving Galilee. Then on several occasions Jesus meets Pharisees in Samaria; but could a Pharisee stay in Samaria, where he would be continually defiled, so that no washings could make him clean? Luke's story, says Schmiedel, has, therefore, no claim to trustworthiness, but must be left entirely on one side.

It is Luke alone who gives particulars of this journey. In Mark, Jesus journeys to Jerusalem eastward of Jordan. In Samaria, the nearest way, was avoided because an old feud had made the Samaritans unfriendly to the Jews, especially when these were making pilgrimages to Jerusalem, for we read in Luke ix, 52, that his disciples entered into a village of Samaria, to make ready for him, but the people would not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

"Dear Doctor, the more the case is considered, the more it seems that one knows little about Colleague Luke, and nothing about Jesus. If, however, you would like some quiet study for your retirement, try Luke, by all means, but with less faith, and, for a change, more scientific method."

J. G. LUPTON.

## TAKE AWAY A RELIGION AND WHAT WILL YOU PUT IN ITS PLACE?

If you take away a man's religion, i.e., his belief in, say, the "Saviour" gods Mithra, or Krishna, or Buddha or Jesus, or in a Holy Ju Ju or a Sacred Brickbat, what would you put in its place?

This foolish and futile question is always expected to flabbergast and floor us completely!

Now supposing our children were taught, by parents, schoolmasters, priests, books and a ceaselessly braying radio that they could not walk without crutches; that no one but wicked cranks disputed this fact; that everyone used them. Also if those who got along very well without these crutches were kept out of sight and hearing, or camouflaged their "guilt" somehow or other so as not to offend customers, then no doubt the majority of these children would grow up firmly believing that they were unable to walk naturally.

But, a surgeon comes along who asserts that they could all walk and stand on their own feet perfectly well if they only tried. Then, when he had finally got them all to discard their crutches would he be expected to put something in their place? Had not he given them the use of their own legs?

If a god created my appendix in the image and likeness of his own it must obviously fulfil an important and god-like function. If then a surgeon removes it and feeds it to his chickens surely it would be only logical for me—if I believed my Bible—to demand that he put back something in its place? If a surgeon removes a cast from my eye do I have to ask him to put a squint in its place, or replace measles with mumps?

For many thousands of years witch doctors, medicine men and their descendants, priests, have been incessantly dimming into the heads of their flocks the lie that no one could possibly lead a decent life unless he subscribed to their particular brand of gods, devils, demons, etc. It is therefore not to be wondered at that so many people still vaguely believe that supernatural rewards and threats are essential if we are not all to become criminals!

As a matter of fact, millions of nice people all over the world get along nowadays very well indeed without any belief in religion. The Church newspapers are everlastingly complaining about this fact. Our own archbishops have told us we are now a nation of unbelievers, who only pretend to believe. Hence the need to replace an outworn and quite useless set of religious superstitions simply does not arise.

The teaching of ethics, good citizenship, and kindness to one's fellows needs no supernatural authority, being obviously based on social commonsense.

What we are working for is secular education in schools, i.e., to prevent children having their heads crammed with a lot of very highly questionable history which the great majority of their parents don't really believe in themselves.

As for those unfortunates who honestly believe they could not get on without their illusion-crutches, let them keep them by all means; but the sooner these feeble-minded types die out the better for the race.

M. C. BROTHERTON, Comdr., R.N. (Ret.)

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## ACID DROPS

The Convocation of Canterbury has been discussing women ministers, and it must have been a lively discussion. One speaker made the point that those Nonconformist bodies who admit women to their ministries found few congregations who would give the ladies "a call," while many women were actually found objecting to women conducting say, Evensong. However, if an unbeliever is allowed a comment, it looks as if the only people willing to accept a call from God in the future look like being women. Men simply cannot stand being ridiculed any longer.

The advisers of Princess Elizabeth ought to stick to ship-launching ceremonies and theatre first-nights, and not try to mislead the public in stating as she did at a Mothers' Union meeting that "Divorce and separation are responsible for some of the darkest evil in our society to-day." Divorce merely means that the partners are incompatible, and to insinuate that it would be better for partners to remain bound together shows a lack of common sense. The prating of the sanctity of marriage may sound fine to Mothers' Unions whose opposition to any change in the Divorce Law is notorious; to the average man the idea of compelling man and wife to remain chained to each other because of some "divine" injunction is so much bunk, and we repeat our advice as above.

Hard on the news of the minor riot by girls of the Catholic Approved School comes the comment of the *Sunday School Chronicle* that "Juvenile delinquency could be prevented if people in all walks of life followed the Christian Way of Life." Exactly what that means is not clear to us, nor do we think, to the *S.S.C.* Are these juvenile delinquents the children of "wicked" atheists, or are they the children of Christian parents who have gone through the Christian mill of Baptism, Confirmation, Marriage, etc.? Surely such children have received the prescribed doses of religion (particularly the R.C.s), and have been shown the Christian "Way of Life"? It could not be that delinquency is the outcome of this "Christian Way," and yet—"by their fruits ye shall know them."

An Israeli District Court has annulled a marriage between a non-Jew and a Jewess on the grounds that mixed marriages are invalid under Jewish Law. So like Hitler!

George Bernard Shaw has advised the Pope to read his play, "Saint Joan" and the Bible after the Austrian Church authorities had disassociated themselves from performances of this play. But why the Bible?

Rabbi Dr. S. M. Lehrman complains in the *Jewish Chronicle* about the "lapses from good taste and respect for the Synagogue during the marriage ceremony." He says that no Jewish woman who has received the minimum religious education could possibly be so lacking in qualities of modesty and decent appreciation as to "parade herself in scanty evening dress, nor allow her menfolk to attend without head covering." The learned Rabbi has "something there," for a God who once regulated the size of his ministers' breeches, is not likely to look with a tolerant eye on such shameless hussies. The trouble is, of course, that women were not thought important enough in the Jewish scheme of things for Jehovah to lay down exactly how they should dress.

Italy is becoming more civilised every day, but there will be much heart-burning on the part of the older generation at the action of the wine-growers' attempt to circumvent the Divine plans. They are using modern methods which include rockets to disperse hail clouds likely to ruin the grape harvest. In olden times the procedure to avert God's wrath was to pray to the many statues of St. Vincent, or to erect crosses all over the vineyards. Now the method is to fire rockets into the atmosphere and it has proved successful in many cases, and despite much head-shaking and opposition from the traditionalists, it looks as if God will lose yet another job, and an unemployed god just is unthinkable.

Roman Catholics are opposing the proposal to substitute the second Monday in June for Whit-Monday, which may cease to be a Bank Holiday. Would the Holy Ghost by-pass a new date for Pentecost?

Two boys, one 15 and the other 16, the other evening at the Edmonton Empire, "out-Piddingtoned the two Piddingtons." They gave a wonderful performance which would have staggered those members of the Society of Psychological Research who believe in telepathy, and who are so ready to pooh-pooh trickery just because they do not know how it is done. The *Daily Mirror* reporter, who made the boys' performance a front page story, says that he thought that "they were better than the Piddingtons." And the boys claim their act as just "entertainment." But will this have any effect on the "professors" who conduct stringent tests in psychical research? Not—well, not likely.

Bishop Halsall (R.C.) insists that for Catholics, "knowledge" is not secular "but must contain the universal element of its relation to God." We simply cannot refrain from asking whether this would include "conceptive knowledge"? If God comes into it why are Catholics—especially Catholic celibate priests and Catholic single women doctors—so bitterly opposed to such Godlike knowledge?

Out of nearly 130,000 Roman Catholics in the diocese of Motherwell, only 350 are members of the Catholic Truth Society, complains Bishop Douglas. And to make matters worse, Catholics simply must be "well informed" to be able to answer their opponents. Gone, alas, are the days when the answer could be the stake or the rack; it now has to be "informed faith". We have an idea that the informed as well as the uninformed faith will share the same fate at the hands of any competent Freethinker.

At the *Sunday Times* Book Fair, all types of literature are represented—even Rationalism—but religious books—works on the Church and Christianity, have been surprisingly excluded. Exactly why is not clear, and indeed the omission is unaccountable. It would be interesting to know from the *Sunday Times* whether it is because books on religion are no longer considered "literature"?

## THINGS WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW—

Is Mr. Charles Laughton, who is touring Southern California Churches giving Bible readings, more concerned with religion than with publicity?

Does Air Marshal Lord Dowding *really* consider a Winhurst electric machine more efficacious than prayer to Jesus for exorcising evil spirits and demons?



# "THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

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London, W.C. 1.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

LESLIE SMITH.—For *The Freethinker*, 6s.

Will correspondents be good enough in future to keep their letters as short as possible. We regret to omit anything relevant to an issue and short letters will give all writers a chance of publication.

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).

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning. 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.

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

## SUGAR PLUMS

East London readers within range of the Stratford Town Hall should mark Thursday evening, December 8 next. A Brains Trust has been arranged there for that evening. Two clergymen and two N.S.S. speakers will constitute "the brains." Each will speak for 15 minutes on "Is there a God?" and then questions will be invited from the audience. The proceedings will begin at 7.30 p.m., and admission is free.

The National Secular Society's Annual Dinner will be a little earlier this time owing to booking difficulties. It will be held in The Holborn Restaurant, London, on Saturday evening, January 7. Last year, there were a number of disappointments because of late application for tickets. Accommodation is limited and when filled, no other applications can be entertained. Tickets are 15s. each, and cash should accompany application for tickets.

Mr. Avro Manhattan's lecture on "The Vatican in World Politics" was followed with close attention by the Conway Hall audience. Taking what might appear to be isolated incidents over a number of years, he pieced them together and showed them as connected parts of a long-term policy. Many questions were asked, and were dealt with in a painstaking and thorough manner. A pleasing feature of the two Conway Hall meetings has been the number of new-comers who were attracted. Their patronage of the book-stall after the meetings is also a sign of interest in our message.

The West London Branch N.S.S. has Mr. F. A. Ridley as its speaker for this evening (November 13), and his subject "Political Catholicism" will provide much for discussion. Mr. Ridley is well versed on that topic which is becoming an important question for British citizens.

Mr. F. A. Hornibrook will speak for the Leicester Secular Society to-day (November 13) on "Religion and Politics," in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, at 6.30 p.m. Mr. Hornibrook is a clear and forceful speaker, with a message to give, and there is no mistaking its Freethought tone. We wish him and the Leicester Secular Society a very successful evening.

## PERSONAL

We regret to inform our readers that Mr. Chapman Cohen has unfortunately met with an accident causing a serious burn to his hand, which will incapacitate him for several weeks. He hopes, however, to resume work in the near future.

We have been told *ad nauseam*, from Sir Stafford Cripps downwards of the need to economise to avoid a crash, and in this connection the following items are interesting:—

"We need economies . . . or the country will be facing a situation even more serious than in 1931."

From the same issue—

"Sir Stafford Cripps has approved the exportation of £50,000 to finance a film on the life of Christ to be made in France."—*News Chronicle*.

In the "Things we would like to know" feature we stated that Mr. Randolph Hearst, the U.S.A. newspaper magnate, was made a Papal Count. This has been denied by the Vatican (cf. *The Observer*). We are ready to do penance of not more than three Hail Marys and three Our Fathers for reporting this in all good faith, and further content ourselves with the opinion that Mr. Hearst ought to be decorated by the Pope as he really deserves it for his services to Roman Catholicism. However, working on the assumption that, in the political sphere at least, a denial usually means the opposite, we still think he will be honoured by the Pope. Let's "wait and see."

The new Director of the Roman Catholic Marriage Training Course—and after all who should be trained this way more than Roman Catholics?—is Fr. R. Carrington, S.J. As a celibate priest, he is specially equipped for giving marriage guidance—or is he?

According to the *Universe*, the Church in Czechoslovakia is going to be wedded to the State with a Dr. Cepicka (who is charged with wanting to "liquidate" the Church altogether) as its head. He will take charge of the Church's finances—we suspect the money here is the great magnet—and he is going to instal pro-Communist clergy into all the parishes. One thing must be clear from this; it is that a good Communist can be a good Christian and vice versa. We prefer our own secular approach to all religious questions.

*The Southern Cross* claims that sons of the Reformed Church in South Africa took part in the inauguration ceremony of the new Catholic Cathedral, and that 60 per cent. of the local subscriptions came from non-Catholics. Religion at any price?

A correspondent, in an interesting letter, informs us that as an official of the Youth Hostel Movement (Y.H.A.), he never misses an opportunity of doing useful Freethought propaganda. About 18,000 people have passed through the twelve hostels in his charge and "something to read before lights out is an important detail." So he passes *The Freethinker* around which usually provokes some discussion. We congratulate our friend on his acumen and thank him for his interest. We will be pleased to forward parcels of back numbers of *The Freethinker* to anyone in a similar position, or we will send four consecutive issues to any address on receipt of 4d. stamps.



## A DEBATE ON EVOLUTION

IN *Is Evolution a Myth?* jointly published by the Paternoster Press and Watts & Co. for 2s. 6d., the protagonists are Mr. Douglas Dewar, and Dr. Merson Davies writing for the Evolution Protest Movement, and Prof. J. B. S. Haldane for the Rationalist Press Association.

Surprising as it may seem to some people, there is an anti-evolution movement, mostly propagated by believers in the Special Creation process sponsored by Genesis. And it is a mistake to imagine that Messrs. Dewar and Davies—in this debate at least—worry very much about the Java man (?) or the Neanderthal gentleman (?) or which of the monkey tribes represent the original branch from which Aryans, Semites, Aborigines, Pygmies, and even perhaps Christians like our antis, originally sprung from.

Questions about *Australopithecus* or *Pithecanthropus*, or even about Neolithic man, together with what happened in Silurian, Triassic, or even Oligocene times, have filled so many books on Evolution that neither Mr. Dewar nor Dr. Davies is going to be caught in such an infantile way. No! if a reader of this journal were happily engaged in a debate with such erudite gentlemen, he would be immediately button-holed and solemnly asked where could be found the fossilised remains of a flea? And if no answer was forthcoming, with a shriek of triumph, they would point out that, as there are no fossilised remains of a flea or a bat, does not that prove Special Creation? Where are your wingless flies? Are you not aware that three or four chromosomes of *Drosophila artificialis* are abnormal? And where are the ancestors of *Plesiosaurus*? Don't you know that *Ichthyosaurus* is as old as *Nothosaurus* and even more remarkably specialised and cryptogenetic than *Plesiosaurus*?

Of course, questions like these are child's play to an experienced evolutionist like Prof. Haldane, if not at all to mere laymen like you or me. With lightning-like thrusts, he shows how the Malacostracan *Crustacea* of the Cambrian were primitive *Phyllocarida*; how the *Eunotosaurus* which may or may not have been a Chelonian, had an incomplete plastron; and how in the *Bienotherium*, which was first thought to be a mammal, had a joint which was still between the articular and the quadrate. Besides, the glenoid cavity thus produced exactly resembled those found in *Ptilodus* and *Taniolabis*, and in any case, it really does not matter if the dentary-squamosal hinge really existed.

How did Messrs. Dewar and Davies react to such a terrific attack? Scornfully, Dr. Davies asks how could a Collembolan beget winged forms? And Prof. Haldane ought to know that the modern aspect of *R. precursor* is most amanolous on the theory of evolution. In fact, on the question of "orgies of variation," Prof. Haldane was so guilty that a more palpable evasion and ludicrous "come down," it would be hard to imagine; and as a final onslaught Dr. Davies hurled at him, *Paluriunt montes: nascetur ridiculus mus*. One can almost imagine him snorting to the unlucky Professor—"So there!"

All Freethinkers, however, must be grateful to Mr. Dewar for his magnificent contribution to the Design Argument. He takes the tape worm and its habits as a glorious and heavenly example and shows how perfectly it is adapted for work, due to the fore part being small and narrow "terminating in a head provided with a crown of hooks and four suckers, by means of which it firmly attaches itself to the wall of the intestine of its victim (or so-called host)." Each of its segments holds

male and female organs which produce eggs; and so cunningly has the Creator designed everything, that the eggs cannot mature while they remain in the intestine of the host. The eggs have to break away and pass out of the body and the eggs become free though, unless they are eaten by a pig, they perish. Inside the pig—oh, marvel of heavenly work—the egg changes into a larva which has six spines, and by means of these God makes it go through the pig's stomach. We are not told what the pig thinks of this divine intrusion into the privacy of its inside, but in any case, it has no right to complain whatever of God's handiwork. The six spines get covered with a protective fluid and, so wondrously everything is designed, that the little animal can easily get into a human being from the pig and, by means of its hooks and suckers, grow inside him into a beautiful adult tape worm. What more marvellous example of God's handiwork as a Special Creative Artist could be given than this life-history of a tape worm? Mr. Dewar becomes positively lyrical when he considers its wonderful adaptation to the human inside.

Prof. Haldane's appeal to the embryonic ossicles of the bandicoot (perhaps better known as the *Perameles*), Mr. Dewar considers "a desperate expedient," but he finds the reference to abnormalities in the venous system of rabbits "interesting". On the other hand, Prof. Haldane severely rebukes Dr. Davies for classing *Volbor-thella* as an Ammonite, and scornfully asks, who else does so? And talking about spiders' spinnerets, he shows that in the *Ciniffo*, the cribellum is an oval skin area on which many small silk-glands open, and whence the silk is combed with calamistrum on the hind leg pair. All the same, I don't think this convinced Mr. Dewar who much prefers the magical formula that "God did it" to any an Evolutionist can bring up.

If the reader's appetite is now whetted, I can heartily recommend this book. He will be able to rattle off such names as *Liphistius*, *Argyropoidea*, *Scytodes thoracica*, *Drosophila*, *Arhynchida*, and dozens of similar ones, with the ease of a professor—if he masters the book; but whether this will help him to the conclusion that Evolution is or is not a myth, I cannot tell.

What does puzzle me, however, is what will be the attitude of the Special Creationists who so lovingly and trustingly follow Messrs. Dewar and Davies? Will they now be able to bowl over those dreadful infidel professors who obstinately prefer to believe Darwin rather than the Inspired Word of God? Will the opposers of the theory of Evolution, embraced as it is by very nearly every man of science living, and accepted without question by their millions of followers, now feel that God has been vindicated; that Devils, Miracles, Hebrew-talking Serpents, Angels, Hell, and many other Biblical marvels are all literally true? For Messrs. Dewar and Davies this was a heaven-sent opportunity to put up a good fight for God Almighty; for me, speaking as a mere layman, I can only say that I found the debate exceptionally good entertainment. But for Evolution, for or against, it proves nothing whatever.

H. CUTNER.

## A ROYAL SCEPTIC

CONSTITUTIONAL monarchs have no say in the choice of a religion, but most of them submit to this restriction cheerfully enough. Queen Caroline, consort of George II of England, was an exception.

Thackeray, in his *Four Georges*, tells us that the King "in religion was little better than a heathen; cracked



ribald jokes at bigwigs and bishops, and laughed at High Church and Low." Queen Caroline appears to have been a studious and intelligent woman, tolerant of her husband's amours and irritability, beautiful in person, and sagacious in counsels of State.

We are inclined to forget that Ministers of the British Crown have not always been as pious as Mr. Attlee or Sir Stafford Cripps. In the early years of the 18th century there were many unbelievers in the ranks of the British aristocracy. The Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole, showed little respect for the clergy. Lord Hervey, the polished and cynical courtier from whose *Memoirs* we quote, was an avowed sceptic. It is interesting to remember that Sir Robert kept his country at peace for twenty years. The phrase "peace offensive" was still to be coined and used by the more enlightened politicians of the 20th century!

In the observance of religious formalities there was not much to distinguish the conduct of Queen Caroline from that of the superficially conforming, during the period of her health and vigour. It was on her deathbed, after a long and torturing illness, stoically borne, that she shocked the Court (but, we can be sure, *not* her husband). At a time when unbelievers, we are often told, turn to Jesus, the dying Queen actually refused the Sacrament! "It having been whispered," reports Lord Hervey, who was in attendance at the bedside, "that the Queen had had nobody to pray by her, people wondered at the irreligion of the Queen" and Sir Robert Walpole desired Princess Emily to propose to the King or Queen that the Archbishop of Canterbury should be sent for, in order to stop people's impertinence upon this subject. Sir Robert . . . by way of stimulating the Princess Emily, added, "Pray, madam, let this farce be played: the Archbishop will act it very well. You may bid him be as short as you will. It will do the Queen no hurt, no more than any good; and it will satisfy all the wise and good fools, who will call us all atheists if we don't pretend to be as great fools as they are." One can imagine the expression on Sir Robert's face when he used these words!

"But all this was thrown away, for the people . . . were now just as busy and as wondering about no sacrament."

The highly respectable Victorian editor of Hervey's *Memoirs*, J. W. Croker, quotes from the reminiscences of Walpole, in a footnote, "The Queen, however, was so sincere at her death, that when Archbishop Potter was to administer the sacrament to her she declined taking it—very few persons being in the room." Croker supposes "that she had read and argued herself into a very low and cold species of Christianity." I wonder what the good Mr. Croker would have called the Christianity of Dr. Barnes? "Low and cold" is good!

The Queen, just before she died, exclaimed, "I have now got an asthma. Open the window." Then she said, "Pray."

Prayer was quite consistent with the views of the Queen. She was a deist, like most of the freethinkers of that period. But there was a clergyman employed as Clerk of the Closet by that very Court, Dr. Butler, who permanently undermined the philosophy of deism in his famous *Analogy*.

Nevertheless, the deists of the 18th century did noble pioneering work in loosening the shackles of Christian orthodoxy. Their influence, as we have seen, spread to the highest in the land; but the illiteracy and poverty of the masses limited it and led to a reaction.

E. A. McDONALD.

## LOGICAL POSITIVISM AND SCHOOLBOY'S IRRELIGION

*The Literary Guide*, February and October, 1947, March, Analysis (*Logical Positivism*; see my correspondences in *The Literary Guide*, February and October, 1947, March, 1948, August, 1949, and in *The Freethinker* of 1936), resulting in irreligion, has been manifesting itself in quite unexpected places recently as was evinced by an Oxford don in a report to *The Times Educational Supplement*, September 16, 1949.

Said Rev. D. E. Nineham of the Queen's College:—

"The boy who came to Oxford to-day entered an atmosphere that was at best apathetic, and mostly antipathetic to organised religion. He could see few Fellows in chapel even on Sundays, and not many undergraduates during the week. The present fashion in Oxford was to ignore religion as a significant factor. In all the largest schools there was a tendency to equate 'the valuable' with 'the new,' a tendency stimulated in philosophy by the popularity of the so-called school of logical analysis. The boys' attitude was one of distrust for traditionalism and of determination to seek out the truth for themselves." So far the exasperated divine.

Another Oxford man, speaking on Christian teaching in colleges (*The Times Educational Supplement*, September 30, 1949), confirmed this irregular incongruity between the Governmental "piety" and the increasing secularism of the people.

Said Dr. B. Yeaxlee, Department of Education, Oxford University: "The 1947 Act had set religion in the centre of education. It was the only subject specifically mentioned; and he believed this was the only country to have made it compulsory, and that at a time when education was increasingly secular."

Now what is it—this Logical Positivism, which has become so powerful an influence in clarifying the differentiation between sense and nonsense, and so putting atheism on a precise, axiomatic basis and dumping the fallacies of religion? For the general reader, still the best introduction to it is Prof. R. Carnap's "little classic" (O. Stapleton's epithet), *Philosophy and Logical Syntax* (Kegan Paul, 1935). Recent summary of it is H. Feigl's article on Logical Empiricism in *The 20th Century Philosophy*, edited by Ruses (New York: Philosophical Library), and, in more detail, in the ten booklets of the encyclopædia of the L.P., *The Foundations of the Unity of Science* (University of Chicago Press).

As regards the British exposition of it, Prof. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*, he is singularly muddled in one point, his treatment of atheists as metaphysicians, due to his failure to differentiate between the twofold sense of the atheist's statement "God does not exist," which notably means: (1) "The Christian god Yahveh (or his son Jeshua, or his emissary the Holy Ghost) does not exist"—an empirically true statement; and (2) "There exists no 'X' (e.g., 'God') to which a defined property 'P' (e.g., 'everywhere') both applies and does not apply (e.g., 'not anywhere in particular')"—the tautologically true axiom of the exclusion of self-contradiction. Both propositions have sense of being true, while those of metaphysicians are self-contradictory, viz., logically false. As regards the method of atheism, I have found a special instance of this axiom: "It is either somewhere or nowhere (but not both)," particularly useful in cornering religionists into the delightful dilemma of either pure mythology (=empirical falsity) or pure self-contradiction (=logical falsity). Compare also my Open Letter to B. Russell (*The Freethinker*, August 21, 1949).

G. S. SMELTERS.



THE PASSION PLAY

TO finance the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play which is to take place in 1950, in which the inhabitants of the Bavarian village perform "artistically and reverently" the story of the Passion of Christ, or the legend of the sorrows of Jesus (whichever you wish), the military government of Bavaria has approved a loan of D.1 million marks, to be repaid by September, 1950, for repairing the theatre and improving the accommodation for visitors. There have been, however, other worries during the past few years in Ober-Ammergau. Christ (Alois Lang) is nearly 60 years old, and therefore it is becoming increasingly difficult for him to appear at 50 performances, 8 hours a day, which includes hanging on the cross for 28 minutes. Many of the other actors are also getting old and the rising generation are mainly in Russian prisoner of war camps. An acute problem, too, concerning Ober-Ammergau was the delay in the "denazification" of 152 of the 800 actors who were members of the National Socialist Party. Judas, of course, was not a Nazi member! But for all that, the chief actor and manager, yes, even Christ, as well as Peter and John, *inter alia*, had first to be "de-brownd."\* And now perhaps the ex-S.A. leader, Pontius Pilate, and the ex-S.S. captain Joseph of Arimathea (perhaps the rôles were reversed), have been released from the internment camp at Ludwigsburg. 15,000 Americans, the majority of whom are making the Holy Year pilgrimage to Rome, have already registered in Ober-Ammergau.

(Trans. by J.S. from *Geistfreiheit*.)

\* Facetious reference to the procedure whereby ex-Brown Shirts are "cleansed" by the Court.

SABLE LIVELY

Look not on yellow, hue of sand and gold,  
These spell infertile lands and honour sold.  
To look on red, the hue of blood and war,  
Rouses our animal, for beasts men are.  
But look on green; the grass, the leaves, the sea,  
Must soothe the soul and set the spirit free.  
Yet night must fall, death snatch all colour back;  
Hues, and observer, be engulfed in black.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

CORRESPONDENCE

SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM

Sir,—Mr. Gallacher makes an assertion as a challenge to all: every communist must be a socialist, every socialist must be a communist.

This statement cannot mean that socialists ought to be members of the Communist Party. "Socialism will come by a bitter struggle," we are told. "Socialism means a classless society, it won't come overnight it will be a process." What this implies is that Socialist economy can be established before socialism, under capitalism, and the processes must be State capitalism like Russia and Britain. Mr. Gallacher shows his ignorance of what constitutes socialism or a classless society when he defines socialism to be common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

Marx, in his Communist Manifesto, states socialism to be common ownership of the means of production and distribution and goes on to say that money will not be required, there will be no trade, export, foreign, home, or any kind, no wages, nor profits, and production to serve the needs of man. In Russia there are millionaires, wages slaves, bondholders, etc., and its processes are not for socialism, but to strengthen capitalist economy.

Russia is a potent rival for world trade; U.S.A. seeks to protect itself against Russia by besetting her with a ring of bomber bases. Russia, being capitalistic, must find markets and now is imperialistic as Britain and U.S.A., and now occupies several countries.

Marx also says that the workers must understand Socialist principles before it is possible to establish it. The C.P.'s reform programme is quite the opposite to Marx.

Dialectics might mean to Mr. Gallacher making the opposites, capitalism and socialism, work.—Yours, etc.  
L. GALLACHER.

HAS CHRISTIANITY LOST ITS TOUCH?

Sir,—In his recent speech Sir Stafford Cripps asks us to join in insistence that Christianity is the solution to the world's problems," adding that "Christ was and is God's directive to the world, and only by following that directive can we find our way through the critical and urgent difficulties and fears that ever crowd in and on us."

Is this true?

The teachings of Christ, in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere, are largely rejected as being more or less impracticable; moreover the theological concepts of Christianity are unacceptable by other great religions, also by increasing numbers who once blindly accepted such dogmas as God, Freewill, Immortality, Virgin birth, Conception by a Holy Ghost, Miracles, including the Resurrection of the Dead. Such beliefs are on the wane, and disputed by eminent ecclesiastics.

I think this explains why, as Sir Stafford states, "There is not to-day that burning faith in the truth and efficacy of His teaching."

With this in view it appears that if Christianity has not lost its touch, it is slowly but surely doing so.

We are also faced with the fact that in disputes, industrial, national and international, Christians are on both sides; thus the elastic term "Christianity" seems unlikely to provide a solution to the world's problems that now beset and bewilder most of us.—Yours, etc.,

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

IS NOTHING THE ANSWER?

Sir,—One is led to wonder whether David Moore can yet say: "The anchor is weighed" and that he is ready to risk the voyage of freethought? Considering his last sentence first: "That Freethinkers should be better able than others to fulfil the task of creating an 'Ethical Guide'." What of the list of reformers who have long since given their verdict on this question? I consider Mr. Cohen is right when he says "nothing." I agree with Mr. Moore when he says: "Many varied systems have been devised on the subject." I disagree with him "that none have yet inspired the common man to acclaim: 'Yes, that's it'." As a student of Social Philosophy, a system of thought which is built up on the assumption that man is a moral being with a capacity to study Ideals, that Society is an Organism, that all its members owe all they have to it, that its members are born with potentialities handed down by the Race, that it is the duty of the individual to give something back to that society. It also teaches that the ultimate end is the good life to be lived for the good of the whole, and most important it is a system by which all Political, Economic, Moral and Ethical systems can be evaluated. The object of these is not to bolster up "rotting foundations" but to stand on their own merits and prove whether they are helpful or detrimental to the progress of Society and most Freethinkers will be aware of the many obstacles that confronts man in his attempt to introduce new ideas.

In the last two decades some ministers of religion who hold in reserve their opinions on science and particularly evolution, have been known to say "The people are not on the level of thought to have the truth put before them, they are not ready for it." It may be that they are influenced by their financial position which is their livelihood.

In conclusion, Tom Paine wrote:—"Every age and generation must be free to act for itself in all cases as the ages and generations which preceded it," which implies that the dead hand of trust should not stand in the way of progress.—Yours, etc.,

G. VARLEY.

GENIUS

Sir,—Just, please, another word on this topic: It is of course quite plain to your sophisticated readers that Mr. Kent, with disarming naivete, by ignoring genius, argues his case with an undistributive middle. If this method were valid, no man of genius would be known after his death. Ignore genius in, say, Beethoven, Heine, and Burns. Consider them only as commonplace men in relation to their origin and circumstances and they, with Shakespeare, would be sunk in oblivion without a trace. Mr. Kent speculates freely in inference and probability in the absence of evidence, but censures Prof. Raleigh for doing so. Ben Jonson acquired



culture and went to France. Why is it so certain that Shakespeare could not have done the same from the evidence in the plays referred to by Raleigh and travelled the Continent? My "wild statements" are confirmed by Chambers Biographical Dictionary, q.v. Buckle so delicate he had but very little education but at 29 years of age he spoke eighteen languages and had accumulated 22,000 volumes chiefly for his *History*. He was also, for twenty years, one of the very best chess players in the world. The Chandos portrait of Shakespeare reveals all the marks of transcendent genius. The high, delicately-formed forehead, domed and oval; large full eyes expressive of sensibility and contemplation; the perfectly-formed Grecian nose indicating intellect; a calm, equable temperament; profundity and clarity of thought; well-proportioned balanced profile; full sensuous lips for the bisexuality of genius, creative; well firmly-moulded chin for strength and decision of character. Mr. Kent, I suggest, would have been more plausible if he had gone all out and argued that our national hero, like Switzerland's William Tell, was nothing but a pure myth; Whateley would have taught him how. But, really now, I am sorely grieved to destroy Mr. Kent's pet delusion after his display of research and scholarship, but there it is, "facts are sacred." The folios and all relevant matter have been worked over as minutely as the Gospels; the verdict of expert scholarship of history and tradition is that Shakespeare was the author of the works that bear his name, with negligible exceptions. The verdict is "not proven," no case to answer.—Yours, etc..

M. BARNARD.

P.S.—J. R. asks how Shakespeare mastered 15,000 words. By learning them. "Tolstoy taught himself Greek in one winter." (Aylmer Maude.) My error—not six weeks, six months.—M. B.

### TOTALITARIANISM

Sir.—I have noticed that some of your correspondents criticising communism always call it dictatorship, without adding "of the proletariat." The state of communism is not necessarily a dictatorship.

During a long life I have met many communists, with various ideas of what communism should be. The central idea of all of them, without exception, was a sincere desire for the brotherhood of man unshackled by fear or dogmas.

Soviet communism and dictatorship of the proletariat, viz., the dictatorship of the Russian people over their aristocratic and capitalist masters, is surely a change for the better, after centuries of serfdom and cruel oppression. I have been a reader of *The Freethinker* since 1885 and a member at the Hall of Science, Old Street, St. Lukes, in 1887, and I find it hard to understand how a freethinker can compare communism to the Roman Catholic Church, as I read on page 390 of *The Freethinker*, October 2, 1949. It is difficult to see how Russia could be other than dictatorial at the present time, without losing all she has fought so hard for, being, as she is, in a world surrounded by capitalist enemies.—Yours, etc.,

F. J. TREACHER.

Sir.—We can all breathe a sigh of relief upon reading the final replies of those two non-socialists. Messrs. F. A. Ridley and W. Gallacher, M.P. It had become very wearisome trying to follow the tortuous process by which each has sought to convince the other of his Socialist outlook and his opponent's lack of it.

Mr. Gallacher's conception of Socialist economy is quite wrong. He states that it implies the common ownership of the means of production, of distribution and exchange. This is nonsense—there can be no exchange within Socialist economy. Under common ownership the basis of exchange relationships ceases, viz., no buyers and no sellers. Mr. Gallacher should read Marx again.

But this woolly thinking is typical of the C.P., which though it claims to view social development from the basis of dialectical and historical materialism, accepts as members believers in many kinds of religious superstitions. But perhaps this is an example of the unity of opposites. Mr. Gallacher? Such a unity is but a façade behind which extreme divergencies exist, and which together with the reformist programme of the C.P. largely explain its fluctuating and unstable membership.

The lesson of Russia is that it is impossible to build up a Socialist policy with the overwhelming mass of the people ignorant of Socialist principles. The mass trials of old Bolsheviks, justifiable or not, indicate a distrust and intense rivalry which can only be explained by the existence of a more extensive struggle within the whole social structure of Russia.

By frequent resort to Marxist terminology and aided by such organisations as the C.P. G.B., the administrators of Russian capitalism have deluded countless thousands of working class men and women into believing that Russia has something to do with Communism.

Mr. Ridley's fear of totalitarianism is typical of those supporters of reform parties who seek support for countless side issues. Totalitarianism cannot arise unless the working class are voluntarily willing to give up their democratic privileges. Even Hitler had to go to the polls, and the Bolsheviks gain an electoral majority in the Duma.

These self-styled Socialists in fact unknowingly prepare the ground for the inception of the very totalitarianism which they want to avoid. The developments in Germany before the rise of Hitler are typical. The majority of the German workers had become utterly sick of the inept policies of these types of vote catchers and were easily persuaded that the democratic form of administering capitalism was a failure.

We can agree that the measure of freedom of thought that exists within democratic capitalist countries is of great value, but it can only be preserved and extended to the extent that Socialist knowledge spreads amongst the working class. By Socialist knowledge I mean a realisation of the necessity of establishing a system of society based upon the common ownership of the means of wealth production and distribution, democratically owned and controlled by and in the interests of the whole community.

Can Mr. Ridley visualize any other condition under which free-thought can operate?—Yours, etc.,

R. BOTT.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

### INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "Clothes and Men," Mr. HAROLD DAY.
- Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, November 15, 7 p.m.: "The Future of Germany," Mr. H. L. BEALES, M.A.
- Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Psychology of Religion," Mr. G. KILGOUR, M.A.
- Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Religion and Politics," Mr. F. A. HONTRIBROOK.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (The International Club, 64, George Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A lecture.
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Some Aspects of American Thought and Character," Mr. G. E. O'DELL.
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Our National Destiny," Mr. S. K. RATCLIFFE.
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Political Catholicism," Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

### OUTDOOR

- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. E. BILLING, G. WOODCOCK, C. MCCALL and KAY.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Bombed site, St. Mary's Gate).—Lectures every lunch hour, 1 p.m.: Messrs. E. BILLING, C. MCCALL and G. WOODCOCK.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. EBBY.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

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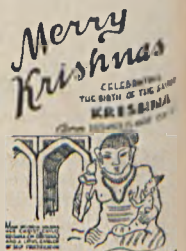
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