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## VIEWES AND OPINIONS

### The Invention of a New Religion

STUDENTS of modern religious evolution know that the theories as to how religion itself originated have undergone themselves a process of evolution. For, whereas the old Deists of the eighteenth century in the age of Voltaire and Rousseau regarded religion or, indeed, any particular religion as the conscious invention of priests, more modern theories tend to ascribe religious phenomena, including the priests themselves, to historical or, more exactly, to anthropological causes, of which the priest is as much the product as his lay followers. From the modern anthropological standpoint, the older Deistical theory of religious origins is criticised from some such standpoint as this: if the priests created religion, who or what created the priests?

The above anthropological criticism is, no doubt, valid in, and for a large number of cases of religious origins; perhaps even for the majority. However, there was, after all, some truth in the older theory of Voltaire and his contemporaries, and the modern reaction against the theory of deliberate priestly imposture seems nowadays to have run to unjustifiable lengths. For there have been, in both ancient and in modern times, religions, and widely influential religions at that, which have been, beyond any shadow of doubt, the deliberate and coldly calculated creation of priestly impostors and of their secular backers.

Of the above, deliberately created religious cults, two, in particular, stand out notably: ancient Judaism in Palestine, and modern Shintoism in Japan. A glance at the former of these two cults, widely removed in both space and time, will serve, we think, a useful purpose in throwing light upon this currently neglected aspect of religion and may, incidentally, do something to rescue Voltaire and his contemporaries from the somewhat excessive denigration with which they are, to-day, regarded, not only by religious apologists, but even in certain free-thinking circles which might reasonably have been expected to know better.

Of our two religions, whose common bond—about the only one—is their conscious invention by power-loving priests, Shintoism and Judaism, the latter is both the older and the more modern: it dates back to about five centuries prior to the present era, and it has recently received "a local habitation and a name" in the State of Israel. Whereas Japanese Shintoism, though theoretically, and, perhaps, actually, as ancient, is, for practical purposes, a very modern cult, which only lasted as a significant force for a single life-time, before being destroyed by "science" in the shape of the atomic bomb, along with its progenitors, the Japanese ruling class.

To take the example of Judaism, as by far the most significant and historically influential:—

Round about the fifth century B.C., the originally monolatrous religion of ancient Israel changed into the

ritualistic, intensely monotheistic creed that we know to-day—prior to their captivity in Babylon, the ancient Israelites professed a national creed then in process of a gradual evolution from a primitive and grossly anthropomorphic polytheism—in which, for example, the national god Jahveh, is depicted as, literally, "walking in the garden in the cool of the day," and as showing "his hinder parts" to his devotees, and in which he could do nothing against the Moabite god, Chemosh, on the latter's own ground—towards monolatry—viz., the belief that there are many gods, but that one—"ours," of course—is superior in power and prestige to all the rest and looks after us exclusively.

This was the stage actually arrived at when the Jews were carried off to Babylon at the opening of the sixth century B.C. This ruthless uprooting of the national life faced the Jewish tribe and its priestly caste—for the monarchy had perished in the debacle—with an urgent crisis which called for urgent action, if the "Jews" were not to follow their former brethren, "the lost ten tribes," into historic oblivion. (The ill-fated Ten had been carried off bodily by the Assyrians some time before to a habitat variously computed as Afghanistan or Scotland.) Only drastic action could save the southern Jews from the oblivion that had overtaken their northern brethren.

Drastic action was taken: a religious bond of unity was deliberately created in place of the old secular state. "Judaism" was artificially created. Monolatry gave way to Monotheism: "our" god became the *only* God, Jahveh's people became "The Chosen People." In the light of the new conceptions of God, the Universe, and the rôle of the Jews in a divinely-ordained historic process, the whole national history was written, re-written, or "edited." The primitive or legendary ancestors of Israel, Abraham and his descendants, became hol. men of God, professing an exclusive monotheism unknown until long after their day—if they ever had one! The pre-exilic Kings of Judah were "translated" into pious Jehovah-worshippers, with merely a few wicked exceptions presumably left in by the priestly editors to heighten the contrast. Moses, the legendary sheikh, whose exclusive habitat was the desert, was credited with a complicated legal code suitable for a settled agrarian people, and the bluff old brigand, David, the effective founder of the Jewish Monarchy, became "the sweet singer of Israel," and the "man after God's own heart."

Institutions, literature, ritual, all underwent a complete change. The old pre-exilic literature was "edited" in accordance with the new conceptions, and a new literature was composed and audaciously ascribed to venerable figures of Israel's past, real or legendary, Solomon, Job, Daniel; perhaps all "the great Jewish prophets" themselves actually lived in this later era and had their dates put back a few centuries for the edification of their credulous readers. Thus was the Bible—our "Old Testament"—fabricated as a conscious

fraud; perhaps "legal fiction" would be a more appropriate, as well as polite term!

Finally, Ezra, "The Founder of Judaism" (450 B.C.), codified "Judaism" as an exclusive racist cult, with an elaborate and sacrosanct ritual, Passover, Circumcision, ritual sacrifice, Kosher food, no inter-marriage with the non-Jewish world. "Judaism" was finally formed: the "Nazism" of the ancient world, as it may be described with almost verbal accuracy. The most successful swindle in recorded history was triumphantly concluded.

Only two further points need be briefly noted here:—

Firstly, that the creation of "Judaism" succeeded in its avowed objective, the preservation of the Jewish people by its artificial forging of a religious bond in place of the old lost secular one. Ideas have a tenacity all their own, and often long survive the material conditions which originally created them. In the case of "Judaism," its pious forgeries "for the greater glory of God," and for the preservation of the Jews, have actually held the Jewish community together throughout the successive storms of persecution that have overtaken it, from the days of the Maccabees to those of Hitler and his Jewish-inspired "Master Race" cult and, even to-day, in the now re-created State of Israel, the ideas of Ezra are, by all accounts, far from extinct.

Secondly, except, perhaps, for a few solitary students such as Spinoza, no one saw through the imposture for upwards of 2,000 years. It was not until the dawn of the "Higher Criticism" of the Bible at the end of the eighteenth century that modern literary criticism penetrated the web of pious forgery which Judaism had created and which its heretical offspring, Christianity, had perpetrated and extended. As it has been aptly stated: "people can always believe that which it is greatly to their interest to believe." Evidently, the complacent old tag: "great is truth and it will prevail," requires where religion is concerned, thousands of years for its effective application.

F. A. RIDLEY.

### \*WOWSERS ON THE WARPATH

THE Archbishop of Canterbury and other conventional moralists have been uttering shrill protests against the sale of what they insist on calling "contraceptives" from automatic machines, and they have actually stampeded Mr. Cluter Ede into framing a "model" by-law, which he has sent to local authorities with the suggestion that they may adopt it to ban such sales in the district over which they have control.

The Archbishop and his fellow-Wowsers are less than completely honest when they refer to the articles as contraceptives. Let us speak quite plainly. The goods sold are *condoms*—more commonly known as French Letters. It is true that condoms are used for contraceptive purposes. But this is only part of the truth. They are used even more extensively as prophylactics against venereal disease. The more easily they are obtainable by persons who are unwise enough to run the risks inseparable from casual sexual intercourse, the less likely are such persons to become infected. Banning the sale from automatic machines will not prevent many persons from running such risks, but will certainly tend to increase the incidence of venereal disease in the population.

\* Wowsers, an Australian term for a killjoy.

No doubt the moralists will gloat over the "punishment from Heaven" visited on the "sinner" for his lapse from "virtue." This is part of the un-Christlike outlook of many Christians, who do not follow the example of him who is reported to have said: "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone."

But, even if one were inhuman enough to rejoice at the "punishment" of the "sinner," it must be remembered that the person who contracts a venereal infection becomes a danger to the rest of the community, who have not shared in his "sin." In the communal interest, the Archbishop and his silly sheep would be better occupied in extending the availability of prophylactics than in seeking to limit it.

What they are chiefly concerned about is to prevent extra-marital and pre-marital sexual intercourse. This taboo has been inherited by the Christian churches from the Ancient Jews. But it must be remembered that the Ancient Jew was permitted to have as many wives as he wanted and could buy, to say nothing of his concubines and handmaidens, and he was allowed a very wide sexual freedom with other women in addition so long as they were not the property of a father or husband.

As to pre-marital chastity, it must be remembered that Ancient Jewish boys and girls were frequently married before puberty, and that it was regarded as disgraceful for a young man to remain unmarried up to the age of 18. It is absurd to extend this taboo to persons who, because of social or economic factors in our complicated civilisation, cannot afford to marry until the age of 20 or 25 or 30 or even later.

Professor Kinsey's investigations have proved, what has long been known to Sexologists, that the sexual urge is at its greatest height during the late teens, and that sexual activity is at its maximum at the same time.

Rendering ordinary heterosexual intercourse difficult or impossible will not render young people sexually abstinent. It will simply divert their activities into other channels—masturbation, homosexuality, bestiality, or other "perversions," which are even more severely condemned by public opinion than is "normal" intercourse. Do the Archbishop and his followers regard these substitutes as preferable?

The Ancient Hebrew taboo was imposed in order to favour marriage and lead to an increase in the population. However suitable that aim may have been for a small people in the Middle East thousands of years ago, it is certainly quite unsuitable for this country at the present time—we have a population of 50 million, which is 15 million more than we can feed. What we should aim at is a sexual code which would favour a slow decrease in our population until it reaches a size at which its standard of living may be optimum.

It is to be hoped that all persons of goodwill will seek to influence their local authorities to decline to promulgate a by-law fashioned after Mr. Cluter Ede's model.

NORMAN HAIRE, Ch.M., M.B.

Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. We are assured of this by a number of very credible apostles and a few holy women who could not have been deceived, without counting Jerusalem which saw nothing of the circumstance. Christians firmly believe that they in their turn will rise again, or in other words, that their spiritual souls will once again regain their material bodies.—VOLTARE.

## ELEMENTARY LESSON IN MORALS

## I.

AS what is written here cannot claim to be more than an elementary lesson in morals ("moral theology" might be a better term), the reader must forgive the repetition in the first part of a number of commonplace facts. It is essential that they be kept in mind when reading the second part of the lesson, because the *ends* in this first part are achieved by the *means* set out in that second part.

Few students of modern history are unaware that the influence of the Roman Catholic Church and its political organisations tipped the balance in Hitler's favour and thereby put him into power. The same Church and its auxiliaries worked to the same end for Mussolini, Salazar and Franco, and for their replicas elsewhere, especially in Latin America. Since the end of World War II, we have seen the political power exercised by the Roman Catholic Church in Italy, France, Belgium and Holland, and quite recently in the German elections. The pattern of activity is almost the same everywhere, and everywhere the Church favours the ideology, party or groups which lean most towards reaction and against democratic government. All this now seems to be so simple that it would not be mentioned but for the fact that few people know or even try to think out *why* the Roman Catholic Church behaves in this way. That is the first point which must be cleared up, and it is important from the point of view of "moral theology."

The answer is as follows. The Roman Catholic Church regards itself as *supra-national*—that is, above all states and governments—and this position is held by maintaining and furthering certain interests. These interests are of two kinds: *spiritual* and *material* (the latter also called "secular"). The spiritual interests represent a theocratic monopoly that is totalitarian. The material or secular interests are varied, but embrace *power* in various forms including the political; and *property or wealth* in their various forms. On the spiritual side, the Church uses the mental domination of its adherents ("blind, unchallenging faith") as the chief means towards secular domination, power and wealth. The ultimate goal on the secular side is supreme secular power serving the spiritual; the ideal of a Holy Roman Empire ruled spiritually by the Pope and secularly (through secular rulers) has never been abandoned. To achieve that "Empire" a World War with atomic bombs, bacterial warfare and a holocaust of destruction, though regrettable, is *justifiable in moral theology*.

The Church does not publicise this aspect of its theology and morality, but the ideal is kept well before it in all its efforts on behalf of its two sets of interests in order of their importance—the spiritual and the secular. Thus, Vatican policy is easily explicable in terms of these interests and is always dominated by them. When Church interests clash with any other interests, Church interests come first—the highest Church authorities leave no doubt on this. In everyday practice it means that Roman Catholics must behave as the Church tells them or lose their immortal souls. In terms of secular politics it means that the Church regards itself as the power-ruler of Roman Catholics and uses this power for the security and advancement of all its interests. The formula is a simple one. Its application results in such recent phenomena as Salazar, Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, the Gasperi and Adenauer. For the Nazi-Fascist ideology, being totalitarian and reactionary, works out favourably for Church interests, over which the Church wields totalitarian power.

Communism is the declared public enemy No. 1 of the Roman Catholic Church—because it is regarded as the

greatest double-threat to Church interests, spiritual and secular. Socialism comes a close second on the list of enemies. In the years since allied military victory over Nazi-Fascism, the Church has used every weapon in its spiritual armoury against the Communist-Socialist enemies everywhere. And against Liberalism, which is enemy No. 3. Paul Blanchard's timely *American Freedom and Catholic Power* sketches how all this works out in practice in U.S.A. (Grouch: Why *Catholic* and not Roman Catholic? It is unfair to Roman Catholics not to give them their proper title; and to omit the word "Roman" is a little misleading.)

All this, though familiar to many, is intended to bring into perspective here a few of the weapons in the spiritual armoury of this Church. They come into the broad category of "moral theology." The first is that the Roman Catholic Church places its own interests in the *supra-national* category, above anything international or national, and wherever necessary the Church turns itself into a "Trojan Horse" for the maintenance and/or furtherance of its interests. The second is that the Church has its own code of morals, a code which overrules all other codes, secular law, the decrees of governments, and the calls of patriotism. This code is known to educated Roman Catholics. It is the working instrument of the priesthood in dealings with the laity; and for the use of selected members of the laity under the guidance of priests. Those who are not Roman Catholics have either no idea or the foggiest of what it is and what it means. This will constitute the main part of what follows, and is the A-B-C of Roman "moral theology."

## II.

(1) There is an obligation or "seal" on priests to conceal what they have learnt in the confessional, and it is on this basis that the faithful confess. The authority for this seal will be found in the works of the famous Redemptorist casuist St. Alfonso de Liguori (1696-1787). According to him, the seal must be observed "even where the safety of a whole nation would be at stake" (*etiam quo integri regni salus periclitaretur*). This is a great assurance to those who confess. But, while the priest is bound not to disclose such information to anybody *outside the Church*, there are provisions to enable him to convey it to another priest, and thus step by step to the highest authorities within the Church—by the priest's own confession, for example, and as below. The information must be kept within the Church, unless—(see 3).

(2) If a priest is suspected (by someone outside the Church, that is) of having learnt something in the confessional and is asked to disclose it, "He ought to answer that he does not know it and if it be necessary, confirm the same with an oath." (*Debet respondere, ne nescire cam, et si opus est, idem juramento confirmare*). Authority: Dens, Tom. 6, p. 219). This plain lying with authority for it is what laymen might call a "security measure."

(The archbishop who authorized Dens' treatise on moral theology wrote at the time: "The work) was not intended for ignorant persons. It was written in Latin, beyond, of course the reach of that class of persons and designed solely for the use of professional men.")

Thus, the oath can be used as an instrument of policy or of expediency. These two points may seem mere casuistry and of little consequence. But not so the next, which is a quotation from Dens, with translation:—

(3) An Confessarius narrans peccata, quae in confessione audivit, agit contra sigillum?

R. Si nullo modo, nequidem in generali, peccatur, seu persona possit agnosci, neque etiam ulum pra-

judicium ipsi ex eo obvenire possit, non agit contra sigillum, quia sigillum habet relationem ad poenitentem sive ad peccatorem. (Dens, tom. 6, p. 22).

Does a Confessor, narrating the sins which he has heard in confession, act contrary to the seal?

*Answer.*—If the sinner or person can by no means be discovered, not even in general, nor any prejudice to himself happen therefrom, he does not act contrary to the seal, because the seal has reference to the penitent or sinner.

This realistic provision in Roman moral theology permits the priest to "narrate" sins (that is, information) received in confession—so long as he does not cause prejudice to *himself!* Secrecy has reference only to the person who confesses, and not to what he confesses. It need hardly be emphasised that the confessional works everywhere and for high and for low. Into it go the highest in the land, "key" persons, statesmen, officials, scientists and *all* who are Roman Catholics; and in it they are in the priest's hands. The priest can ask for "further information" or explanations; and the person who confesses must respond. Such a person may feel that in loyalty to his State he ought not to answer certain questions; he may feel it a patriotic duty to refuse to answer. But the "well-instructed" and "good" Roman Catholic seldom causes embarrassment to his confessor, because it is not in his *spiritual* interest to do so. All this is very useful to the Church; it may not be to a State.

(4) A Roman Catholic is not merely permitted the privilege of telling lies in certain circumstances, but Church authority even provides rules of *how to tell lies in a way that they are not sins*. Such rules are laid down by the great Liguori and, of course, are in Latin. For example:—

Jurare cum aequivocatione, quando juste causa est, et ipsa aequivocatione licet, non est malum.

*Translation.*—To swear with equivocation when there is a just cause, and equivocation itself is lawful, is not evil.

The principles of equivocation then follow in detail, Liguori warming to his subject. We can afford space only for a sample:—

Ad majorem claritatem pro hic dictis, et dicendis in hac materia tam difficili, plura sunt distinguenda. Primo loco distinguendum, aliam esse *ambibologiam*, sive aequivocationem; *aliam restrictionem mentalem*.

*Translation.*—For the clearer understanding of what is said here, and to be said in this very difficult question, many distinctions are necessary. In the first place, we are to distinguish that one is "double speaking" or *equivocation*, and the other is mental restriction.

The Saint clarifies the amphibology (*ambibologia*) or way of "double speaking," which he says can be used in a threefold manner (*triplici modo*): (a) When a word has a double sense (he gives examples in Latin); (b) When an expression has a double principal meaning, as "This is Peter's book," which can signify that Peter is the owner of the book or, if the speaker wishes, its author; (c) When words have a double sense, one more common, the other less common, or one literal (material) and the other spiritual. What openings there are here! Liguori rounds off the principles of permitted "double speaking"—Protestants usually call it mendacity—with illuminating words: "These things being established, it is certain and a common opinion among all divines that

for a just cause it is lawful to use equivocation in the modes propounded and to confirm it with oath." (My italics.) A just cause is authoritatively defined as, "Any honest end in order to preserve good things for the spirit, or useful things for the body." Note the two, the spiritual and the material. Guidance on the good things for the spirit, and on the useful for the body, is given by the Church—the final arbiter.

The most sweeping principle laid down by Liguori is that to swear with equivocation without a "just cause" is only a venial sin. As for the final word on just causes, *any cause which*, in the opinion of the Church, *favours its interests*—that is a just cause. Examples: the cause of Salazar, Franco *et hoc genus omne*. On anti-Communism, anti-Socialism or anti-Liberalism—in fact *anything threatening to Church interests can be put into the category for attack*. And, as we have seen, there is Church authority for the practice of imaginative mendacity on behalf of just causes—in other words, on behalf of Church interests. Hence, non-Roman Catholics need not be surprised at some of the things they hear or read in the propaganda put out under Church auspices or with Church approval: what Protestants and other heretics might regard as appalling lies and distortions are, to the Roman Catholics, "lawful" and "not evil."

(5) We may conclude this elementary lesson with a few words on the mental restriction or "reservation." The Roman Church teaches that it is sometimes legitimate to make a statement to mislead a hearer if you can justify it to *yourself!* This provides the faithful with great scope for plain lying. In the *Catholic Encyclopædia* and in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, the "mental reservation" is set out as an invention of the casuists which is not only blameless but beneficent! Priests are taught the technique of using the mental reservation from such works as Fr. Lehmkühl's *Theologia Moralis*—for use in courts of law or under oath. Priests may impart to laymen as much of this technique as may be required in given circumstances.

This is, really, a very elementary lesson and these heretics who are further interested are advised to consult almost any of the Roman Catholic works on "Moral Theology." Yet, it can all be summarised briefly for practical purposes: the interests of the Church come above all other interests; in regard to these interests and most things, Roman Catholics must do as the Church tells them; and mendacity on behalf of Church interests is authorised and for them it is neither a sin nor evil, but good.

CHARLES DUFF.

## TO A DEPARTED FRIEND

Like as a slender reed beside the brook  
That quivers with each gentle passing wind  
Thus was it with thy lightly-poised mind,  
Swayed by the breeze, which none but thee so shook.  
To read thy mind were easy as a book,  
For thought will act on features so refined  
As wind on water: eyes indeed were blind  
That could not sum thy soul up in a look.

Rare soul, once sensitive to every thought,  
Who in the day for peace of mind did crave,  
And nightly prayed that mental strife should cease,  
There is no tumult in the quiet grave;  
Thou now hast that which ardently thou sought;  
Thou hast achieved thy long-desired peace.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

## THE ENTROPY ARGUMENT

At the time of publication, Jean's *Mysterious Universe* and Eddington's *Science and the Unseen World* came as bombshells, but to-day the entropy argument has become quite fashionable. There is no need to go into the question as to what is meant by entropy. The scientific details are merely distraction and confusion, for it is really the old design argument in a new dress, with entropy given as example or evidence. But it is interesting as it is an inversion of the old argument. The old idea was to show design or purpose in Nature; this argument sets out to show that there is not; or that such design or purpose cannot be discovered.

The old design argument adapted itself, after at first denying evolution, by acclaiming it as God's plan. So also, this idea is adapted to the shortcomings of science with regard to entropy, as also with indeterminacy. To see how the trick is worked, let us consider the logic of the case. Unless some foreign matter is introduced during an argument, what is present in the conclusion is logically there in the premises. The way the case is stated decides the result of the argument; and so also, it discloses its purpose. The initial proposition here is that science is based upon the assumption that Natural Law can be known by reason; that Nature is reasonable or rational; that things act in accordance with Natural Law; that things obey the Laws of Nature.

Many quotations can be given to this effect, from notable scientists, such as J. B. S. Haldane, who, by the way, has told us that he learned his philosophy from a theologian. Then, examples are given, from the second law of thermodynamics and entropy may be, contrasted with evolution, or with implications, and even statement of indeterminacy. The purpose of the argument is to discredit science; so that, either the basic assumptions of science are false; or scientific reason is false; or science is irrational in denying reason or purpose in Nature; or Nature cannot be known or explained by reason; or Nature is not and cannot be known or understood.

The logic is that science stands condemned by its own *ipse dixit*. Knowledge is inconclusive and uncertain; and science is caught in an infinite regress of contradiction and paradox; of incompatible and conflicting theories. Reason is denied, and we are back in the age of miracles and of faith. Science has failed to discover the Divine Law, and religion comes in again with its Revelation of the Divine Purpose. It is a denial of knowledge in defence of ignorance; a denial of human, in contrast with Divine reason; with human folly contrasted with Divine Wisdom, in an incomprehensible or impenetrable mystery.

There is no gainsaying the logic, but it is interesting to note that the position as stated is not the position of science but of religion, with teleological implications of predestination. It is not science that says that there is reason or purpose in Nature, or that things act in accordance with Natural Law. The logical corollary is that if reason or purpose is denied, then it is that science denies the reason or purpose postulated by religion. And by such arguments religion puts itself in the position of both asserting and denying a purpose; of asserting a Divine Purpose that is not and cannot be known or understood, and for which there is no evidence.

Science does not say that Nature can be understood by reason. Logic, often called the dismal science, plainly shows that one cannot get beyond one's initial propositions by reason. We get out of it what we put into it. One cannot learn or acquire new knowledge by reason. One learns from experience and science is concerned with

experience. Logic is a method of testing, of check and counter-check. Knowledge is obtained through the means of the senses. The basic principle of science is observation, with the check of logic given a practical expression in experiment and test, in which observation again plays its part.

Science knows nothing of law except scientific laws which are generalisations framed by scientists for the purpose of more accurately describing what happens. A scientific theory is not a statement of fact but part of a method of describing fact. Science does not say that things obey the Laws of Nature. There are no Natural Laws or Laws of Nature, but only laws framed in accordance with reason for the purpose of understanding Nature, and science only knows human reason, its own reason, our own reason.

For instance, Isaac Newton framed his universal law of gravitation in accordance with his own reason, and things do not behave as they do because he said so. He did not discover the law of gravitation, he invented it. It was a new way of dealing with old problems. And if Einstein's theory of Relativity calls for a modification in the theory of gravitation, the stars still move in their courses and apples still fall off trees. Einstein's theory was necessitated by problems which Newton was unaware of. To understand the theory we must consider the problems involved.

In the same way, entropy and indeterminacy are products of human observation and reason for the purpose of explaining and understanding. They are theories, part of a method of dealing with problems; not only empirical but practical. Not only does a mis-statement, with absurd definitions, misrepresent and misunderstand the nature of these problems, but this *reductio ad absurdum* argument confuses theory and fact and completely obscures the purpose for which they were invented.

Theories are not meaningless assumptions or suppositions. They are, like reason, psychological or subjective instruments, and their logical justification depends upon whether they fulfil their purpose in use. This Divine Purpose of religion is equally theoretical. Although it is no explanation it has its use. We need to understand in appreciating the purpose for which it is used.

H. H. PREECE.

### GAMES IN THE NAVY!

"When a chap is told 'Bumpf for God,' what does he do? He drops his knife and fork like red-hot coals, and runs, like a snake, for the lavatory, picks up three pieces of toilet paper, and comes back here. Mr. Gardener duly inspects the paper and if he finds so much as a single crease on one of the sheets, he gives the defaulter nine of the best with a good, stout walking-stick. So are you ready, lads? I'm going to ask one of you to Bumpf for God; and I'd have you remember that only the best is good enough for God's bumf . . ."

"Wade, Come To Christ."

Donald had promised Geoffrey this . . . Don't you believe you can get away with it, my lad: I'll tell Gardener to put you through it.

"I'm Christ," Gardener rapped out, sternly. "Crawl under the table, you filthy scum."

Supposing he did not move?

"Blast you, crawl under the table, boy."

They had to wait till he was pushed under; then the game started. "Sulking, the brat. But this'll liven him up. There's a straight one. And another. Kick him as hard as you can, boys . . . Cry out, would you? Tradition of the navy says that a man who cries out gets it twice as hard. Take it stoically, you sissy. God can't you behave like a gentleman? Can't you be a man? . . . Good for young boys, you know. Kick him, sir, kick him."

"Christ," said Gardener, "always adds a special kick for luck."

From *Boys in Their Ruin*, by Oswald Blakeston (just published by The Fortune Press, 7s. 6d.).

## ACID DROPS

The Klerksdorp (South Africa) Chamber of Commerce has asked all undertakers to provide separate hearses for whites and non-whites. Obviously the pious white Christians in Klerksdorp do not think that "death is the great leveller," and one can imagine them laying awake at nights contemplating the terrible picture of the inclusion of black angels in heaven. Or do they think that there will be a notice board on the Pearly Gates: Whites this way, Blacks round the back! That oft-reiterated slogan "the Fatherhood of God" will have to be rewritten after all, for white Christians cannot be too careful if they are to spend eternity with a "Father" who also has black chillun.

The Rt. Rev. Walter Carey reacts in the usual Christian manner to current affairs: "Morally" he says, "England is in a desperate crisis." He thinks that we are in such a mess that he "Almost hates the word sex." It is strange how morals always mean sex, to a Christian, and how they almost foam at the mouth at the mention of contraceptives. Nevertheless, Bishop Carey does not make himself look such an ass as did a former Bishop of London, who during a House of Lords debate on Contraceptives, said he would like to make a bonfire of these things and dance round them. A sight that would be worth seeing.

Our German Freethought contemporary *Geistfreiheit* reports a case of a 47-year-old Protestant salesman who, since he was caught in an air raid in 1943, shows the stigmata (or, as the Germans so clearly term it, the wounds of Christ) for periods of from four to six weeks.

The Catholic Church will have to look to its laurels, and our suggestion is that she takes out an injunction against Protestants to refrain from what has been, up to now, a Catholic monopoly.

Air Marshal Lord Dowding believes in wicked spirits and also that they can possess you. Well, well. He joins a distinguished company. Jesus Christ believed in them just as fervently, and most witch doctors among savage tribes hold tenaciously to the same belief. All Roman priests believe in them, and the Church has special prayers to exorcise the demons—though, it is only fair to say that Lord Dowding appears to believe more in the efficacy of an electric machine than in prayer. Goblins and ghouls, demons and devils, spirits and sprites, witches and warlocks, vamps and vampires, myths and miracles—human credulity appears to have no bounds. We are sure that in this there will be many people who will firmly follow Lord Dowding, no matter to what depths of downright stupidity he will go. Man must have some superstitions!

We gently hinted the other day that soon, perhaps, there will be no men to enter the Church, women taking their place, and we were not surprised to see the *Church Times* asking, "What are the real reasons why far fewer men than women are at present drawn to the life of the Church?" It attempts to answer the question, but can come only to the lame conclusion that the Gospel is not properly presented to men—in fact, "The ordinary man is still often presented with a picture of the priest which must leave him contemptuously indifferent." Quite right, the priest is a figure these days for laughter, but there is still another reason. It is simply that the ordinary man knows that Christianity is not *true*.

The Church has been trying to tell people the Glorious Message of Christ for nearly 2,000 years, and succeeded in forcing its beliefs on, for the most part, the ignorant, the credulous, and the grossly illiterate. With the growth of knowledge, the Church has lost its grip almost completely and now is desperately trying to find men who will gladly carry on the Divine work—and is failing. It will have to turn to women who have, we are sorry to say, been its mainstay and still are. However, the *Church Times* has one final threat in its bag. It bluntly tells men that if they won't recognise Almighty God, nor receive instruction or be confirmed—if they won't accept "the Lord's own invitation," then they "must take the eternal consequences!" This leaves us breathless; and we don't care two hoots.

A most important question concerning Jewry was settled in a manner that not even the pre-exilic prophets could have complained of, and of which Moses himself would have been proud. This serious problem was not that orthodox Jews would be allowed to dispense with ritual slaughtering, nor even a suggestion that the purchase tax on rams horns be reduced, but the epoch making decision, which ought to be engraved on tablets of stone and which has been handed down by Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie, is that, at the Annual Parade of Jewish ex-Service men at the Cenotaph, "Hats will be worn" but they will be removed during the (Christian) National Anthem. The Intention no doubt being that this will avoid offence to both the Christian God and the Jewish God. A truly Solomonesque decision.

It should be interesting to note the reaction of the only Roman Catholic Divorce Court Judge, Mr. Justice Wallington, after the Pope's ruling that Catholic judges are barred from granting divorces in "valid marriages," whether Catholic or non-Catholic. Will he, as a good Catholic, wait for a lead from the Hierarchy, and will he take orders on how English law shall be administered from a foreigner? In short, is he a Judge of the English Courts first and a Roman Catholic second, or will he reverse this? We can feel for Mr. Justice Wallington, for if he refuses to obey an Italian, he imperils his immortal soul, and not even Confession will help him save it; if he submits, will he vacate his judgeship? We think not, for it is doubtful whether Catholic authorities would advise him to relinquish such an important post.

The Rev. E. Carey in a letter to the *Newcastle Journal*, complains that "for some unspecified reason the usual phrase in the Register of Electors, 'Christian Name(s)', has been changed to 'Forename(s)'." He sees in this a deliberate attempt to omit religion altogether from public affairs. This crusader rises in righteous wrath and urges all Christians to register their protest by crossing out the offending phrase and writing in the phrase "Christian Name." Of course, the Rev. E. Carey does not seem to realise that the words "Christian Name" may offend the many non-Christians who are also electors. However, it should be amusing with Christians crossing out "Forename," and non-Christians crossing out "Christian Name."

### THINGS WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW

How are the Jesuits going to explain the recent bomb explosion that shattered so many of the windows at their headquarters in Rome? God, the Devil, or just Communists!

Do irreligious Socialists agree with Sir R. Acland that only Socialists can be Christians, and that all Christians should be Socialists?

# "THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

41, Gray's Inn Road,  
London, W.C. 1.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

Members of "Vrije Jongeren," ages 15-30, would like to correspond with English Freethinkers of the same ages: Write E. F. von Bentem, Oude Gracht, 303, Utrecht, Holland.

A. HANCOCK, B. DUPREE.—Thanks for cuttings.

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.

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

## SUGAR PLUMS

Details of the Brains Trust arranged by the Executive of the N.S.S. for the Stratford Town Hall, London, E. 15, on Thursday evening, December 8, are as follows: The Brains, Rev. D. S. Wallace Hadrill, M.A., B.D. (Vicar of Holy Cross, Hornchurch), Rev. F. R. Wright, M.A. (Vicar of Romford), R. H. Rosetti (Acting President, N.S.S.) and L. Ebury (Chairman, North London Branch, N.S.S.). Question Master, Alderman E. Cannon (West Ham). The Brains will speak for 15 minutes each on "Is There a God?" and then questions will be invited from the audience. The proceedings begin at 7-30 and admission is free. The Town Hall is in the Broadway, Stratford, and is easily reached by Central London Line to Stratford. Buses from different parts pass the door.

The Winter Number of the *Thinker's Digest* (Watts & Co., 1s.) is one of the best so far produced. Its 64 pages are packed with extremely interesting articles and digests and there are many excellent reviews of important books. New "isms" are being discovered or invented and there is an excellent summary of the latest, "Personalism," condensed from *The Crisis of the Human Person*, by J. B. Coates, in addition to many others equally informative. For those who cannot wade through the spate of books on various special subjects regularly published we heartily recommend this *Digest*.

Birmingham readers wishing to spend "An Evening with the Gods" to-day (November 27) are invited by The Birmingham Branch N.S.S. to attend at "Satis Cafe," 46, Cannon Street, at 7 p.m., when Mr. R. H. Rosetti will give an address on that subject. If they can induce some Christian friends to accompany them so much the better. We understand the hall is very comfortable and central, and admission is free.

## THE R. 101 SEANCE

[The following article appeared in the *Psychic News* for 11th November, with its Editor's comments, and we hope will be read with interest by our readers. Mr. Cutner's final comments on the R. 101 Seance will appear later.—EDITOR.]

THE Editor of *Psychic News* has been good enough to ask me to comment on the two articles on page 5 of the number for 8th October. I have pleasure in doing so herewith.

Let me begin by pointing out that if *Psychic News* published a story of a medium having tea in a Strand teashop, there could be no objection to its authenticity, for even mediums take tea. But it would be quite a different question if the story insisted that the waitress was a "spirit" and could walk through walls carrying a tray of real tea, poached egg on toast, etc. I should like some proof of such a story.

We are told that the "Full Story of the R. 101 Seance" is taken "from notes made by Miss Ethel Beenham, secretary of Price's National Laboratory of Psychological Research." Is this true? Did the Editor of *Psychic News* have in front of him Miss Beenham's notes?

In his *Sunday Dispatch* article about the seance published three years after the event, Harry Price says that the medium spoke so fast that Miss Beenham had great difficulty in getting the words down—though "it is thought" that she managed it all right (or words to that effect—I have not the article in front of me). Were Miss Beenham's notes in shorthand, and was a longhand transcript made? I should like the Editor to tell us—and if it is possible for me to see Miss Beenham's notes? I should also like to know whether Miss Beenham's qualifications were such that she could take down a highly technical talk delivered at terrific speed?

In my controversy with Mr. W. H. Wood in the pages of *The Freethinker*, I made a number of criticisms of the account of the seance as published in the *Sunday Dispatch*; for example, why should the "spirit" of Flt. Lt. Irwin speak so fast? Is this one of those mysteries which only Spiritualists can understand and a poor, benighted unbeliever like myself cannot?

How is it that he plunged immediately into highly technical details as to the faulty construction of the airship—and not a word about his own sad fate and that of his unfortunate comrades? Was he waiting for a chance of publicity in the vicinity of Price's Laboratory, because he knew that here was the most publicised "investigator" of Spiritualism in England? Did he know exactly where the Laboratory was—that is, are "spirits" immune from finding out where at a particular spot a seance is to be held?

I was not surprised therefore to read a letter later from Mr. Paul Tabori, Harry Price's literary executor, asking both Mr. Wood and myself to ignore the *Sunday Dispatch* article as it was edited in the interests of newspaper readers—in other words, he just threw it overboard. But if this account of the seance is not to be trusted, perhaps the Editor of *Psychic News* will tell us which is the authentic one? Are we to suppose also that publishing a portrait of Mrs. Garrett, the medium, helps to authenticate his own version?

Let us look at the article written by Mr. W. Charlton for a moment. He is the Mr. "X" referred to by Price in his *Sunday Dispatch* article who was shown the "protocol," and was amazed to find it so correct in its technical details. He was quoted by Mr. Wood to me as saying "I was the officer at Cardington who examined

the protocol and enlightened Mr. Harry Price as to the *really marvellous evidence* it contained." I commented on this by saying it would be interesting to know when Mr. Charlton examined the "protocol."

He now tells us that he *first* saw a detailed account of the seance in *Nash's Magazine* in the January number, 1931. And the first question I must ask is this—was an official inquiry held as to the cause of the disaster, and was this published? If so, when? According to Mr. Wood, the account of the seance and the findings of the inquiry were compared (by him?) and the seance found to be "absolutely correct." According to Mr. Charlton, he and his colleagues found the "protocol" an "astounding document," but I have discovered no evidence in any of the accounts that I have read so far as to when the "protocol" was written. Mr. Charlton, it is true, says that it was compiled "two days after the crash, long before the official inquiry opened." But how does he know this? His first intimation about the seance came from *Nash's Magazine* and Mr. Charlton gives no date as to his interviews with Price. "A few days later," may indeed mean anything.

But the cream of his article is where he carefully explains to us that he "spent some hours" explaining to Price and a Mrs. Goldney "the full import" of Mrs. Garrett's utterances. Miss Beenham does not seem to have been present, for it was Mrs. Goldney who made "very careful notes," this time of all Mr. Charlton's "technical explanations"; and—here the cat literally jumps out of the bag—it was actually from these notes that "the R. 101 seance story was subsequently compiled."

So after all it was *not* from "notes made by Miss Beenham" that the *Psychic News* "Full Story of the R. 101 Seance" was taken—it was from Mr. Charlton's "technical explanations"! Or was it?

Perhaps the Editor of *Psychic News* will now want me to comment still further? Or does he?

But of course, in the ultimate, the proper person to go to about the seance is Harry Price himself. It is true that Mr. Charlton, meeting Price *seven years later*, insisted that it was Flt. Lt. Irwin who communicated the technical details, and that the famous investigator answered, "That in my opinion is the perfect answer."

But in his book published some ten years after the seance—what is Harry Price's own conclusion, and he ought to know? It is that at the seance "there is no evidence that it was the discarnate Irwin speaking." *No evidence!*

Will the Editor of *Psychic News* note that this is the final verdict of perhaps the greatest "investigator" into Spiritualism we have had, and one who was supremely sympathetic—unlike me—to its claims?

H. CUTNER.

## INSPIRATION FOR MURDER

HE was studious in his Bible studies. Right up until the hour that he calmly set out to kill, he was a faithful Bible reader. And on his "holy mission" he killed 13 innocent people: bathed the streets of Camden, New Jersey in blood. Among his victims were two children, ages two and six.

When disaster strikes at sea, the people cry for measures to prevent similar disasters. "Investigate! Remedy! Don't let it happen again!" they say.

When a theatre or building is gutted by fire and many lives are lost, we raise a roar of protest. "Investigate! Remedy! Don't let it happen again," we tell our lawmakers.

When floods sweep cities and their inhabitants into a wild whirlpool of death and destruction, we are horrified at our own laxity. "Why haven't we prepared for this? How can we prevent it from happening again?"

It's the same old story whenever a catastrophe strikes; whenever human lives are needlessly snuffed out whenever innocent people are murdered because we didn't foresee a danger and take the necessary preventative steps.

And yet—murder is committed almost daily, without provocation, upon innocent people. It's committed because of the influence of a book which poisons the minds of men with homicidal tendencies. Weak minds, maddened by the insane delusions which this book teaches, become murdering maniacs. Innocent people, from babes in arms to peaceful citizens are ruthlessly killed by those "inspired" to carry out the edicts of the book's savage god.

If all the people who have been murdered by the hands of religious maniacs were counted—the sum total would be imposing and terrifying. Far more have thus been brutally slain than by any single holocaust or combination of them. The ship sinkings and building fires and floods shock the world and cause us to "take steps." But what are we doing to stop the pernicious influence of this demoralising book which literally *condones murder, espouses murder, inspires murder?*

The Camden incident is still vivid in our minds. Howard Unruh, 28, without the slightest provocation, committed cold-blooded mass murder. He walked from door to door on the New Jersey street as people were out shopping and attending to their affairs. Without warning he fired his German Luger pistol point blank into the faces of all those in his path. He killed 13 before he was apprehended.

Before he stepped into the street with pistol in hand, he had finished reading the 24th chapter of St. Matthew. Among the verses that he marked were these:—

6. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that ye be not troubled: for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

7. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

8. All these things *are* the beginning of sorrow.

22. And except those days should be shortened there should be no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Unruh was loyal to his murder book. He would often walk the streets of Camden with the Bible in his hand and repeat out loud the passages he was reading. And from the Bible he learned a perverted morality.

What kind of morality was it that inspired him when he killed a two-year-old child who sat in an automobile with its parents? Was it an act of morality that inspired Unruh to kill a six-year-old boy sitting on a hobby horse in a barber shop having his hair cut? A "morality" that spurred him on to kill an innocent barber, a shoemaker, a druggist and his wife, a mother and her daughter, or a bride of a month?

If the Bible is "God's word" why didn't "God" distort the killer's aim so he would miss his victims? On the contrary: The Bible God is a monstrous creation of a distorted imagination—a murderer himself—that is why Unruh and the others imitate his conduct. And why not? The leading characters of the Bible were murderers!

Shortly after the Unruh massacre, prominent religious men tried to fill the newspapers with disclaimers about Unruh's religious inspiration for killing.



However, a psychiatrist spoke out. Said Dr. Jacob L. Moreno:—

"There is no question but that Unruh's war service pointed up the use of a gun as an instrument of destruction, and there is no question but that obsessive religious ideas and instruments of destruction go hand in hand.

In committing this bloodthirsty crime, Unruh undoubtedly believed that he had a deep justification for his act—the justification of the Bible as the highest religious authority. His almost fanatical devotion to the Bible showed that he was searching out some passage that might 'justify' the horrible thing he was planning to do."

Is Unruh an isolated case? Of course not! There have been thousands like him. The tragedy is that there will be thousands more like him—For Nothing Is Being Done About It!

For instance:—

... In Spandau, Germany, a father cut the throat of his son. When he surrendered, he said: 'I am Abraham, my mission is fulfilled. I have sacrificed my son.'

After hearing 'voices and seeing visions of heaven,' Clair Young brutally killed his 19-month-old baby girl. When he was apprehended, he cried: 'I had to do it to save my soul. I'm a very religious man. In the eyes of the Lord, I was to sacrifice something in order to go to heaven.'

As a test of his faith and 'acting under divine command,' Lopez Malo of Madrid, Spain, brutally stabbed his 22-month-old daughter to death with a kitchen knife 'after the fashion of Abraham.' When the monstrous deed had been committed, the family gathered around the dead child for prayer.

Acting as a 'messenger of God,' 32-year-old Oskar Hestness strangled his only two children, boys of ten and four years of age. His only excuse was that he had had a 'vision of God' ordering him to 'choke the devil out of the boys.' Hestness said his wife knew what he was doing, 'but she knew that it had to be done because God had told me to.'

Responding to what she said was a 'command of God,' Mrs. Herberd Kennedy drowned her eight-year-old daughter. 'God told me to do it,' she said.

Crazed by religion, Walter Bingham of West Chester, Pennsylvania, murdered his two children of eleven and three years old under the delusion that 'God sent a command in a spirit that told me to do it. Why shouldn't I obey the commands of God?' was his only excuse.

A farmer, whose mind physicians said was affected by intense religious fervour, killed his wife, their two children, a boarder and himself in their home near Blue Mountain, Mississippi.

Age is no respecter of religious fanaticism. There has just come to public attention the brutal strangling to death of a mother of 87 years by her religiously deluded daughter of 64 years. When apprehended she said: 'I just killed mother because she was possessed of the devil and the Lord told me to kill her.'

An 80-year-old religionist, living near Johannesburg, South Africa, killed his son in the belief that by so doing he would bring rain to his parched community. Accordingly he cut the throat of his son, put the blood into cattle horns and dissected the body for 'rain medicine.' When apprehended, this religious fanatic said: 'I loved my son, but believed that if I sacrificed him I would bring plenty of rain and food for my people, and we would not need to work again.'

A few years ago the country was shocked by the brutal murder of a ten-year-old girl in White Plains, New York.

A 60-year-old man, known to be deeply religious, was arrested for the murder. He confessed that he had been commanded by God to sacrifice a virgin so that she could not live to become a harlot. He successfully carried out the mission entrusted to him for which he said he had received the approval of Christ. He was electrocuted at Sing Sing Prison for the murder of this child.

Wilfred Pichette, a religious fanatic who bought 'the power of Christ' from a gypsy band, confessed with his wife to killing their 19-year-old maid. Pichette said that divine power drove him to hammer Marion Doyle to death with a flat-iron. 'I was going to drive the evil spirits out of the house,' he gave as his reason for committing the murder."

Newspapers and the courts, as well as our insane asylums, are continually crowded with cases similar to the ones mentioned above. These crimes have occurred throughout the ages and continue without abatement. It would require volumes to detail them. Should not the book which inspired these people to commit these insane religious murders be condemned as an accessory? Should a book exercising such a vicious influence be held without blame?

In face of these facts, the conclusion is inevitable that religions based on the Bible as a divine message from God have provoked far more killings and murders than they have prevented.

Please bear in mind these instances do not include the wars the Bible has caused, the hatred it has engendered, the prejudice it has caused. It is high time that the Bible be exposed for what it is: a vicious, lying, dangerous book. It is filled to the brim with the most fantastic tales of murder,\* sexual orgies, rape, seduction,† and a thousand and one horrible and repulsive tales. Nor have we mentioned those who became lunatics from reading the Bible and were confined to insane asylums to prevent them from committing some dastardly deed.

Anyone teaching the Bible as a book of truth commits a foul deed. Anyone who teaches it as a sacred volume commits a crime against truth, and yet ignorant and misguided people want to impress upon our Public School children the belief that the Bible is a divinely inspired book—what perversity!

It has perverted the mind and corrupted the intellect. It has brought sin into the world and curses upon mankind.

I will not go into detail here regarding the ghosts and angels with which the Bible abounds. We are all aware of how these figments of religious delusion have plagued humanity.

The Bible's evil influence upon society as a retarder of progress, truth and the acquisition of knowledge has been so vicious that it is time mankind awoke and awoke to the evil influence of this book.

To-day, tomorrow, next week—the Bible will—as it has for hundreds of years—inspire men to murder innocent men, women and children. The Bible has been so detrimental to humanity that it very rightly should be condemned as the foulest book ever written—and the most dangerous.

JOSEPH LEWIS.

New York, U.S.A.

\* See the author's "The Ten Commandments."

† See the author's "The Bible Unmasked."

Woman, you ought to go about in mourning and rags, your eyes filled with tears of remorse to make us forget you have been mankind's destruction. Woman, you are the gate to hell.—TERRULAN.

## POETRY AND RELIGION

ONE of the most striking facts about the imaginative literature of our day is that fact that there is something like a "return to religion" which has taken place within the past twenty years or so. We have novelists like Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene, we have poets like T. S. Eliot, who have taken up an attitude towards religion which would have been unthinkable in the days when H. G. Wells and Arnold Bennett ruled the world of fiction, and Thomas Hardy that of poetry.

Now, this is a rather curious phenomenon; it seems to be running counter to the main intellectual tendencies of the time. And, in consequence, any book which analyses the literary developments of recent years, from a more or less directly theological point of view, is something which both Christians and Freethinkers will find of interest. Mr. George Every's "Poetry and Personal Responsibility" (S. C. M. Press, 2s. 6d.), is such a volume, and it deserves a wide public, not merely from among the author's fellow-Christians.

Mr. Every interprets the word "poetry" in his title in the widest sense. He has a chapter on the novel, for instance, paying special attention to the Roman Catholic novelists of our time. He points out what he regards as certain weaknesses in the religious attitude of Graham Greene, whom he thinks, in spite of his conversion to the Roman Catholic faith, to be primarily a Puritan in his outlook—hence the obsession of his novels with the idea of sin.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the book, however, is that which deals with Herbert Read and his followers—the intellectual anarchists of our time. The emergence of Anarchism as a philosophical and a political point of view is something comparatively new. Probably not since Godwin have there been writers who would describe themselves as Anarchists and who, in spite of this, have succeeded in acquiring a position so eminent as that occupied by Herbert Read, Alex Comfort, Henry Treece, and the rest. This is, of course, primarily a political matter. These writers have realised the perils of some modern developments, such as the threat of atomic warfare, and have come round to an opinion that only the complete individualism of an Anarchist can possibly put the world right.

Yet it is probable that T. S. Eliot, with his subtle command of rhythm and his superlatively acute ear, is the most striking writer of our day. Mr. Eliot has influenced many lesser writers who do not share his beliefs; but it seems clear that a man who is an Anglican and a royalist is not truly representative of the tendencies of his age. He is, however, in a way, a symptom. The fact seems to be quite clear that there are certain people who find the genuine certainty of religious belief a necessary part of their approach—and this is something which Freethinkers as a rule will not be prepared to admit. I recently wrote here of Jack Clemo's autobiography. Now, Mr. Clemo is not one of those whom Mr. Every discusses; but he is another example of the tendency which I have been discussing—the tendency to accept a philosophy and a set of religious beliefs which suit the temperament of the writer. And the imaginative artist seems especially to be the type of man who finds religious certitude helpful in his job.

What I have been writing may appear, in some respects, to be contrary to the general philosophy which this journal exists to propagate; but at the same time it is clear enough that the point of view set out by Mr. Every is a point of view which has to be taken into account by all who wish to understand the philosophical trends of the day. Consequently his little

book (which is the latest addition to the interesting "Viewpoints" series published by the Student Christian Movement Press) should be carefully studied by all, of whatever religious persuasion, who wish to understand what is happening in the literary world.

There are some strange omissions in the book, of course. For instance, there is nothing about those poetical writers who manage to maintain an unfashionable adherence to the traditional type of poetry—writers like Walter de la Mare, Edmund Blunden, John Gawsworth, or Gerald Bullett. And the chapter on the novel, which (as I have already said) deals mainly with the Roman Catholic converts among modern novelists, does not mention some of the most striking novelists of the day, like George Orwell and the Powys brothers (save for one fleeting reference to T. F. Powys). The volume therefore has its limitations, and some fairly severe ones at that. But it is impossible within less than a hundred pages to mention even all the noteworthy writers of the age. What Mr. Every set out to do was to explain for the ordinary reader what has been happening to imaginative literature in a transition period. And this he has done exceedingly well.

JOHN ROWLAND.

The mourners at the funeral of a former editor of a Denver newspaper were subjected to some secularist propaganda when literally a voice from the grave said: "This is my funeral, religion is a racket, I want no religious hymns. This is going to be a perfectly rationalist funeral. I am an Atheist, and have been so for many years." Then very quietly, "That's all." The gramophone record was buried with the body.

## CORRESPONDENCE

## GENIUS.

Sir,—Like a zealous Christian, Mr. Barnard sticks to his god with whom all things are possible. I have no such belief. I can only say happy is the man who is a genius, on his showing. Presumably he would attain a high place in any civil service examination with the minimum of study.

If Mr. Barnard will refer again to his *Biographical Dictionary*, he will find that Robert Burns was born 133 years after the birth of Shakespeare, and Heine 233 years later. Does he suggest that in that period there had been no improvement in the supply of books and educational facilities in general? In Shakespeare's time the annual number of new books was about 250; now it runs to 15,000.

I have shown that the man indicated in the plays, on Sir Walter Raleigh's own showing, could not have been the Stratford tradesman.

The article on Buckle in the *Dictionary of National Biography* was by Sir Leslie Stephen. The *D.N.B.* would rank before any compilation of Chambers. I happen to have some knowledge of how encyclopedias are compiled, and would urge Mr. Barnard not to believe in their infallibility.

The Chandos portrait was held to have been highly dubious by M. H. Spielmann, the author of the article on Shakespeare's portraiture in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Why does Mr. Barnard want this one? Because he likes it better than the Droeshout portrait in the First Folio or the Stratford bust. There are two requisites for the conventional portrait of Shakespeare. He must be high-browed and like Jesus Christ.

The point about Napoleon might have some validity if it could be shown that there is no evidence that his contemporaries and even his own family had knowledge of his victories. No inhabitant of Stratford or of England seems to have known that the former had bred a remarkable man, and this includes Shakespeare's relatives.

The folios have been worked over as minutely as the gospels, says Mr. Barnard. Yes, and they have yielded nothing to support the Stratford theory. The town is not even mentioned in any of the plays. Who could have prevented Shakespeare bringing it in? As to the expert scholarship, it is no more likely to be open-minded than a parson examining atheism. Yours, etc.,

WM. KEST.

**TOTALITARIANISM**

Sir,—I have now been a reader of your paper for forty-five years and during that time have learned to discriminate between facts, propaganda and "selected" news. I have travelled in Northern and Southern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, France, U.S.S.R., Finland, Sweden and Denmark. Strangely enough I went through a course of Marxian Economics after a term at the Birmingham University on "Industry and Commerce."

For the life of me, however, I cannot understand our friend Mr. Bott, who states that the "administrators of capitalism" in the U.S.S.R. have deluded thousands and who infers that the Russians have given up their democratic privileges. Where are the capitalists? Are there no Soviets?

It is news to me that a "measure of freedom which exists within democratic capitalist countries is of great value." Such freedom can only be gained by fighting those who deny it and complete freedom can only come with the suppression of the oppressors.

Since all my life has been a search for truth, perhaps Mr. Bott would care to write me direct stating his authorities for his condemnation of the U.S.S.R., and will also say why this country received so much praise during the recent war when she was an ally and since then has been subjected to so much hostile propaganda? Is it because her Socialised Industry and Farming is so much better run than those in the capitalist world? Like the celebrated Dickens' character, "I want to know."—Yours, etc.,

T. D. SMITH.

**THOMAS PAINE**

Sir,—It should be a matter of satisfaction to Freethinkers when the names of its past brave fighters who fought in the liberation war of humanity are treated more justly.

In previous editions of Chambers' *Biographical Dictionary* the article on Thomas Paine concluded with the words of Sir Leslie Stephen: "Paine's ignorance was vast and his language brutal; but he had the gift of true demagogue—the power of wielding a fine vigorous English." This is now omitted in the latest 1949 edition. Incidentally, this seems to confirm the tribute of *The Times Literary Supplement*: "The standard of accuracy is of the highest order," to this work of reference.—Yours, etc.,

M. BARNARD.

**COMMUNISM AND SECULARISM.**

Sir,—Mr. F. J. Treacher (the dear old warrior) visualises Communism as the "brotherhood of man, unshackled by fear or dogmas." How does this square with the persecution, terrorism and violence practised in Russia? Scarcely any liberties prevail there, as the term liberty is understood by Freethinkers. "The primary aim of Secularism is the concentration of human energy on the bettering of life in this world." (See N.S.S. Tract No. 5). I hope that Mr. Treacher will continue to advocate Secularism, and work to prevent Communism from being established in England. The rule of tyranny which is inherent in the communistic system of government is entirely foreign to Secularism.—Yours, etc.,

ALFRED D. CORRICK.

**OBITUARY**

**T. G. ROGERS.**

It is with deep regret that we have to announce the death of Mr. T. G. Rogers, of South Africa, which took place on November 14, 1949, at Durban. He was a regular reader of *The Freethinker* for over 60 years. A Secular Service was held at Durban Crematorium on November 16. We extend our sympathy to his daughter, Mrs. L. Mason.

**LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.**

**INDOOR**

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "The Path to Hiroshima," Lantern Lecture, Mr. R. J. STEELE, M.B.E.

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "An Evening with the Gods." Mr. R. H. ROSETTI (President, N.S.S.).

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, November 29, 7 p.m.: "Poetry and Mr. T. S. Eliot," Mr. ASHTON BURALL.

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Humanism—Is it Enough?" Miss E. MILLARD, M.A.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Christianity and Socialism," Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

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.: "What Kind of Socialism," Mr. A. MADDISON.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The Riddle of Christian Origins; Loisy versus Couchoud," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Loco. Men's Institute, 62, Forest Lane, Stratford, E.15).—Tuesday, November 29, 8 p.m.: A Meeting, all invited.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: A Gramophone Recital of Harold Scott's broadcast on Atheism (U.S.A.).

**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. I. EBURY.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

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