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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Cripps and Christianity

SPEAKING recently in Oxford, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, delivered himself of a weighty discourse on the unique and irreplaceable importance of "spiritual values" and the paramount necessity for the British people to cultivate such values in preference to more mundane ones. Sir Stafford's oration was delivered under the auspices of "Christian Action," a hybrid body backed chiefly, it would seem, by Roman and High Anglican Catholics.

On this occasion the chair was taken by the Master of Campion Hall, the Jesuit seminary attached to the University. Sir Stafford, a High Anglican, ended his speech with an impassioned appeal for a return to the "fundamental principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

A few days after his oration, the Right Honourable gentleman in his capacity as the "economic dictator" of British Democracy spoke in the House of Commons, his theme being the now familiar one of austerity. In particular, he girded up his Parliamentary loins and waxed eloquent on the necessity for "limitation of personal incomes," and for a general "wage freezing" policy for the working population.

As far as we can recall, the learned speaker made no reference to either Christ, or to Christian principles in the course of his speech. At Oxford, the Chancellor talked questionable theology, and at Westminster, questionable economics, but judging from his public speeches he appears to keep his religion and his economics in different compartments of his brain. To be sure, it is not an uncommon habit amongst theologians, lawyers and politicians, in all of which categories the versatile Cripps may be legitimately included.

It would perhaps be out of place here to permit ourselves to comment at length upon the somewhat extraordinary change that has come over Labour philosophy and economics since the pioneering days of the Labour Movement. With regard to the former, time was when the Labour pioneers of the vintage of Robert Owen, Keir Hardie, and James Maxton, were either sharply opposed to religion, or, at the very least stood for the clearest and sharpest secular philosophy of the separation of Church and State, the last-named standpoint being adequately summarised in the old Social Democratic formula: "Religion is a private matter," and the more robust and intellectually mature Socialism of the pre-1914 Europe endorsed the categorical definition of Tridon and Bebel. "Socialism stands for Republicanism in politics, for Communism in economics, and for atheism in religion."

Whilst as for economics, before Labour became respectable by jumping the "band-wagon" Socialist economics stood pre-eminently for the "age of abundance," and austerity was loudly proclaimed the crowning sin of Capitalism. This was so, not only with the thorough going Socialists who hitched their wagons and their hopes to the economic teachings of William Morris, Peter

Kropotkin and Karl Marx, but was true, equally, of the moderate who swore by the *ipsissima verba* of Henry George, Professor Soddy or Lord Keynes.

In all the above cases it was held that under Socialism, Communism and Anarchism, the Single Tax, Social Credit, or what-have-you, appetite would come with eating in *this* world, and the next world could be left to look after itself, if indeed, there existed such a place at all.

Obviously, we and the British Labour Movement have travelled a long way since then, we have arrived at the era of Sir Stafford Cripps, where the economics of austerity require to be buttressed by Theology and where the only surplus commodity is the Bread from Heaven.

What is the actual, not metaphysical connection between these two phenomena: the simultaneous insistence of Cripps upon less to eat in the material sphere and the overflowing supplies of "spiritual food" available without "points" or "coupons" of any kind. There is usually some kind of connection between phenomena, though particularly when the speeches of politicians are in question, it is not always evident at first sight what it is.

Actually, all that Sir Stafford Cripps and his colleagues are now doing is to imitate a time-honoured precedent: when material goods are in short supply, shift the emphasis to spiritual values, when a Government cannot feed its population in this world, urge its concentration upon higher things; and that is exactly what the pious Cripps and his colleagues in the Government of His Britannic Majesty, the "Defender of the Faith," are busily engaged in doing. It is indeed the traditional social rôle of religion, for one does not need to be a Marxist to recognise the opium-like quality of traditional religion.

Sir Stafford can claim famous predecessors in this ancient art of simultaneously taking away earthly goods and giving in return promissory notes on the celestial overdraft in the Bank of Heaven. Napoleon, that shrewdest of political observers, summed up the connection between religion and politics in a masterly manner.

"I regard religion," declared the Imperial author of the Concordat with Rome (1801) and who was also the Deistic disciple of Rousseau, "not as the mystery of the Incarnation, but as the mystery of the Social Order, were it not for the fact that the poor believe that somewhere else there is another world where a better distribution of goods prevails, they would rise in revolt and cut the throats of the rich."

And in case Cripps' memory does not stretch back as far as Napoleon, we can give him another, almost contemporary example. Mussolini, the Italian Dictator, was an artist in this line of business. As frequently happened, whenever he cut the living standard of the Italian people under the Fascist régime, he invariably made a speech about heroism and "the supremacy of moral values." He did that sort of thing much better than our Chancellor, for Mussolini knew his way about

the social scene. In his varied career he wrote a pamphlet (a very good one) in support of Atheism, and he also made a Concordat with the Vatican, bartering material cash for religion's "spiritual" assistance.

Sir Stafford is in good company. He and his colleagues, whose insistence on the "things of the spirit" keeps pace with their dollar shortage, are, whether they know it or not, faithfully pursuing and illustrating the classic rôle of religion, the emptier the stomach, the fuller the soul! "Pie in the sky" in lieu of bread in this vale of tears.

Freethinkers will draw a moral from this strange combination of austerity below and abundance above, and it is surely this: poverty and insecurity are religion's most ancient and trusty allies, a world of shortages is necessarily a religious world, and by the self-same logic, an age of science and abundance will be an age without religion. It will be an age of science, an age without humbug—and without Cripps.

F. A. RIDLEY.

JEREMY BENTHAM AND HIS DISCIPLES

(Concluded from page 3.)

ALL the Philosophical Radicals strongly condemned sectarian intolerance whether directed against Catholics, Freethinkers or Jews. They also deprecated the national spirit, traditional prejudices in general, as well as our insular scorn for the culture of Continental peoples, while their religious heterodoxy alarmed and scandalised conventional piety. The uncompromising opinions expressed in the *Westminster Review* induced Napier to invite the young Macaulay to assail and expose their pretensions in the *Edinburgh Review*. Macaulay had personal knowledge of these intransigent Radicals, who condemned Whig and Liberal alike. So, while expressing the highest admiration for Bentham personally, who, he admitted, had "found jurisprudence a gibberish and left it a science," Macaulay held up his disciples to derision. Some of these men, he averred, were regarded by their adherents as the lights of the world, while pious people regarded them as incarnate demons when, in truth, they "were in general, ordinary men with narrow understandings and little information." These upstarts, he declared, held literature in contempt, while "some teacher assures them that the studies they have neglected are of no value, puts five or six phrases into their mouths, lends them an old number of the *Westminster Review*, and in a month transforms them into philosophers."

Macaulay selected James Mill for special vituperation, but, when later he became a candidate for a post in the East India Company, he feared that Mill's influence would be urged against him. But much to Macaulay's surprise, Mill, then an important official of the Company, supported his application and he afterwards expressed his deep regret for his venomous attack on the Utilitarian philosopher's *Essay on Government*. "Serious as are the faults of the Essay," confesses Macaulay, "a critic while noting these faults, should have abstained from using contemptuous language respecting the historian of British India. It ought to be known that Mr. Mill had the generosity not only to forgive but to forget the unbecoming animosity with which he had been assailed, and was, when his valuable life closed, on terms of cordial friendship with his assailant."

The Benthamites played a splendid part in securing the humanisation of the criminal code. If Sir Robert Peel was a Conservative statesman, he nevertheless induced Parliament to remove the death penalty in over

100 cases previously legal. Bentham's correspondence with Peel was largely responsible for this humanitarian policy on the part of the Government. As Halévy assures us, when in 1823 Peel "undertook the reform of English criminal law, it was from Mackintosh, Bentham's disciple on this subject, that he stole the glory of having executed this great reform; and when in 1833, a Commission was nominated to complete the revision of the criminal laws, the first name on the list of members was that of John Austin, the Utilitarian jurist of University College."

Also, in legislation concerning real property Bentham's influence is obvious, while in the reform of judicial procedure his influence is pronounced. Indeed, Lord Brougham declared that "the age of Law Reform and the age of Jeremy Bentham are one and the same."

Moreover, the Philosophical Radicals stood pre-eminent in colonial development. The Indian Penal Code was drawn up by Macaulay, but its provisions were those inspired by Bentham and James Mill. "Meanwhile," notes Halévy, "a young adventurer, Edward Gibbon Wakefield, worked out a plan for the systematic colonisation of Australia. The Government was to sell lands at a high figure, and then, with the profit obtained, was to organise the immigration of the labourers needed to put them under cultivation: thus, an economically paying colony could be founded and at the same time the mother country would be rid of her surplus population." So a joint stock Colonisation Society was established with the aid of John Stuart Mill, Sir William Molesworth, George Grote and other Utilitarians who thus became the founders of the Australian communities of to-day.

These far-reaching activities were soon extended to Canada, when, after a serious rebellion, all the leading Philosophical Radicals contributed to the restoration of peace in concord in that important Dominion. The grievances of the French Canadians were submitted to the House of Commons in London by the Benthamite, Roebuck and, after the insurrection had been suppressed, the then Liberal Ministry sent out the Philosophical Radical, Lord Durham, as Governor, accompanied by Gibbon Wakefield and the Benthamite, Charles Buller. As Halévy testifies: "A liberal and democratic constitution, chronologically the first of the colonial constitutions, solved all the difficulties after a few years of crisis. It is paradoxical that the Benthamites should have played such an immense part in the foundation of the new colonial Empire; but it is natural that they should have helped to make the Empire into a federation of autonomous nations."

Previously indifferent to electoral reform, Bentham was ultimately convinced of its necessity, and he figured prominently in the famous election of 1831. Moreover, several eminent Benthamites became members of Parliament now that the middle class and a few working class electors became entitled to the franchise and the leading boroughs sent representatives to Westminster. Among the Members returned to the reformed Parliament were Grote, Molesworth, Roebuck and Charles Buller. Previously, in 1830, another Benthamite, Hobhouse, had secured the permissive use of secret voting in vestry elections. Yet, session after session, the Radical Grote had unsuccessfully striven to induce the Government to introduce the use of the ballot in Parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, legislative and municipal reforms were secured. As Halévy intimates: "The Chartist agitation was soon to begin and the 'People's Charter' was nothing else than the political programme of Bentham as well as Cartwright: it was Francis Place who drew it up."

It was under Benthamite inspiration that Southwood and Chadwick established their health administration, while, departing widely from James Mill's and David Ricardo's opposition to State interference in the conflicts between capital and labour, the younger Radicals encouraged and supported measures to protect men, women and children against the exactions of tyrannical employers of labour. Both Southwood and Chadwick were members of the Commission of 1833 which created a board of factory inspectors. The Benthamites also rendered invaluable aid in the repeal of the Corn Laws, while their humanitarian services in general, materially assisted the causes of liberty of thought and expression. But by the middle of the nineteenth century their chief work had been accomplished, although John Stuart Mill, Gladstone's "Saint of Rationalism," continued to exercise a deep and abiding influence among intellectuals of every shade of opinion throughout his lifetime, and long after his death in 1873.

T. F. PALMER.

CONVERSION

JOHN ROWLAND'S recent article is very good in parts. The people he mentions never were Freethinkers.

The determining factor in their so-called conversion is materialistic and social.

People without strong principle and with a high cost of living, usually tend toward where the money is good, and especially journalists and other writers.

I have one in mind who is continually being converted, and I have heard him lecture over a period on "Why I am a Christian." Then, "Why I am a Rationalist." Then, "Why I am a Theosophist," and lately on "Why I am a Spiritualist." I hope to live long enough to hear this carpet-bagger lecture on "Why I am a Roman Catholic."

In regard to authoritarianism. The Roman Church happens to be the most powerful of the religious bodies, and of course, the International Communist Party is the most powerful political Party in the world.

But they are no more authoritarian than the Conservative or the Labour Party, and all must toe the line or get out.

What more authoritarian party can you have than the theological cheesemongers and intellectual counter jumpers that constitute Welsh Nonconformity who, with their umbrellas and leggings, have made the Welsh Sunday a day of horror?

I myself did not know what atheism meant until I read a book by Chapman Cohen. So he did a lot of thinking for me, and of course for a number of others, and on this particular subject I still regard him as an authority, and believe with him that the Christian religion and all other supernatural religions are scientifically dead, and all the forms that remain are vampire shadows sustained by the powers that be, for the sole purpose of aiding them in their cruel and often brutal robbery of the masses, for denying them the fruits of the earth produced by science and labour, they must in their terror of the great awakening, offer them the consolation of another shadow. A shadow of "pie by and by in the sky." (See the Sermons of Sir Stafford Cripps).

There is no such thing as "The Psychology of Conversion." But there is a "Materialistic Basis for Conversion," and mostly it is summed up in "What can I Make Out of It."

W. H. POWELL.

THE N.S.S. 24th ANNUAL DINNER

THE feature which distinguished the Dinner this year was that, for the first time since 1915, the familiar figure of Mr. Chapman Cohen was not in the Chair. His place was taken by the Acting President, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, and it can be said at once that he filled the position in every way as a worthy successor to the giants of the past. It could not be easy to follow Charles Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, and Chapman Cohen, and Mr. Rosetti made no attempt to "follow in their footsteps." He struck out a path of his own and worthily filled the honoured post.

All the same, both Mr. and Mrs. Cohen (and their family) were present, and old friends and members were delighted to find them looking so well and so happy to be again at such a reunion. It is always a happy event, and always looked forward to again by all who share in the work of the N.S.S. And this year was no exception. Members and friends came from many towns and places—from, be it noted, Bradford, Leicester, Southampton, Farnborough, Bournemouth, Birmingham, Cirencester, Portsmouth, with visitors from Germany, Chicago, and New South Wales.

It was indeed a happy crowd who gathered together at the Holborn Restaurant last Saturday evening and, as Mr. Tom Mosley later pointed out, it gave the lie to the usual Christian contention that Freethought made us miserable. Laughter radiated the atmosphere, and everybody made the most of the opportunity to meet old and make new friends. The absence of Mr. Glanville Cook was regretted. Unfortunately he was obliged to return to Australia.

After the very excellent dinner, came the concert, always a great feature at N.S.S. dinners; and it is good to record that on this occasion the artistes kept up the high reputation of other years. Mr. Cyril Addison opened the proceedings with some beautifully played pieces by Scarlatti, and other gifted composers, and he shone equally as well with his sympathetic accompaniments throughout the evening. Miss Eileen Cusack's magnificent voice gave us some delightful renderings of both light and dramatic songs, while beautiful Miss Marjorie Wieland played havoc with some of the more married men in the audience who were wooed so persistently by her. In addition, she gave some excellent Cockney and other character sketches. The funny stories and broadcast parodies of Mr. Cecil Johnson caused roars of laughter, while the astounding performance of Mr. Ming Chow combined a fine performance of conjuring with a most bewildering pick-pocket act. Fortunately for the astonished victims, Mr. Chow gave up the swag or there might have been a riot.

All the speeches were characterised by humour—and brevity. The Chairman led off excellently, and was followed by Mr. Tom Mosley, who is doing such fine work in Nottingham and who proposed the toast to the National Secular Society. He was followed by Mrs. Venton in support with a delightful little speech. The toast to Freethought at Home and Abroad, was made by Mr. Avro Manhattan, so well known for his books and lectures on the Vatican, and he was seconded by Mr. F. A. Ridley. It was the first time that these two speakers had attended an N.S.S. dinner and they both did full justice to their subject. All the speakers paid Mr. Chapman Cohen many graceful and well-deserved tributes. And with the singing of that fine old song, Auld Lang Syne, a happy and memorable evening was brought to a close. It would not be unfair to say that among the New Year's resolutions there made, was the one to come again next year.

H. C.

ACID DROPS

The water shortage in New York brought Cardinal Spellman into the news. He suggests that New York Catholics should pray for *three months* for rain. A lot can happen in three months, including rain, and so it was a great and pious thought on the Cardinal's part; for naturally the first torrent of rain would have been God's response to his faithful sheep. In addition, he advised parishes not to waste water—a wonderful piece of advice under the circumstances.

If anybody imagines that our priests have relinquished their hold on marriage because the State has made it a purely secular concern, he should listen to the Rev. A. Herbert Gray. Speaking in Norwich the other week, the reverend gentleman insisted that "Marriage is a religious institution, an agreement not merely between man and woman, but between God, man and woman." If this were really so, God seems to have made an awful mess of his side of the business for divorces appear to mount up in numbers every year, and if God Almighty is not in part responsible, who is? Perhaps Mr. Gray's reply would be that God made the marriage and man makes the divorce—but with an Almighty at the back of marriage how can poor puny man break it?

We always thought that only birds and Angels had wings but we note that there is a "Winged Book Fund" instituted by the United Society for Christian Literature backed up by such people as Lord Elton, Lord Luke, Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, Sir Ralph Richardson, Lady Tweedsmuir, and Dr. Malcolm Sargent. The Fund is required to disseminate plenty of Christian literature—not of course for books like the *Age of Reason*, or the Essays of Huxley, Bradlaugh, and Ingersoll. Good Christian literature in the past had no rivals for sheer boredom—most of the sinless works of people like Emma Jane Worboise, Charlotte M. Yonge, and other spinster ladies, designed to bring young people to Christ, are as dead as mutton. And that will be the fate of the Winged books if the principal object is to "convert" people to the outworn, Oriental nonsense of Christianity.

The advertising boost the Holy Year is giving the Roman Italian Church, particularly in Protestant England, is phenomenal, and it is not surprising that the Pope is imploring "non-Catholic Christian Churches" to come in while the going is good. "Why," he asks tearfully, "are there still separations? Why are there still schisms?" The Pope can turn out this artful humbug by the yard, for he knows the answers as well as we do. All he wants is the complete surrender of reason, in the name of Christ, and all the Church's troubles will end. He insists that "all men on earth are our children," though he had nothing to say, it will be remembered, when Mussolini ordered Abyssinians to be taken up in aeroplanes and thrown out. At that time, the Abyssinians were certainly not his children.

We pointed out weeks ago that the Pope wanted the erring sheep to come back with "contrition." Here are his exact words delivered only the other day: "The venerable father of the Gospel story is waiting anxiously on the threshold of the Holy Door for the contrite return of the prodigal son. Who will wish to remain obstinate in the desert of his guilt?" Soft words and kid gloves? No, the sword, the stake, and the cell. The Roman leopard will never change his spots.

A "Client of St. Joseph" is very much disturbed. He has suddenly discovered that "the name of St. Joseph, foster father of our Lord, and spouse of Mary, is not yet explicitly commemorated in the Holy Mass." This is a most grievous omission and the Holy Year should see it rectified post haste. But we do like the words, "foster father of Our Lord." Why, it was Mary herself who distinctly declared that Joseph was the father of Jesus in one of the canonical gospels (Luke, 3, 48)—and who should know better than the lady herself the paternity of her child?

The Archbishop of York, Dr. C. Garbett, told yet again the old, old story of the birth of the Saviour of the World amidst the dirt and straw of a stable, "unheralded and unsung." That is, except for a wandering star, a royal deputation, a celestial choir, representatives of the Palestinian Land Army, and sundry predictions and prophecies by Isaiah and other Jewish fortune-tellers. Nevertheless, if there was little advance publicity, box office receipts have more than surpassed the expectations of the producers.

What Mgr. Knox has to say about "liberty" should never be forgotten. It is the boast of Catholic apologists that they alone know what is meant by "liberty," and Mgr. Knox has provided them with an authoritative answer if challenged. "When we demand liberty in the modern state, we are appealing to its own principles, not ours." That is a frank, clear statement of Roman Italian Catholic Policy, and those who value liberty of thought should know it by heart.

School teachers in Malay are in dire straits, for many years they have been agitating for more pay and, after repeated refusals, have been forced to the desperate expediency of holding special prayers en masse to God as a "last resort." When matters get to the praying stage, the outlook is pretty hopeless.

One of the most accomplished pickpockets (on her own valuation), 73-year-old Mrs. F. Worthington, of Berkeley, California, has been sentenced to 60 days' imprisonment. She confessed that she has stolen more than 500,000 dollars in her 40 years of activities. When sentenced, she remarked that she would now have more leisure to read her favourite book, the Bible, and her favourite Psalm, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," which has been so great a comfort to her! So, too, we imagine, was her half a million dollars. To a reporter she said she always felt at home in Berkeley: "there are so many churches!"

The official organ of the Dutch Reformed Church, *Kerbode*, is of the opinion that Natives in South African prisons are being coddled, and with true Christian brotherly love urges that the death penalty, whipping and flogging, should be used more frequently. There is nothing like a good flogging to drive out devils, particularly black ones.

Do miracles still happen? Of course they do, ask the Roman Catholic Bishop of Lafayette, who is investigating the case of Herbert Theriot who, dying of gangrene, was cured almost overnight by holding a holy relic (a bone of Blessed Father Moreau) and a photograph. Why must we waste so much time and money on hospitals when the solution is so easy, for there is never a shortage of holy relics. We commend the idea to Mr. Bevan.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mr. A.—Thanks for your good wishes. The old, old story that Horatio Bottomley was the son of Charles Bradlaugh is definitely untrue, and is in line with the usual Christian lie.

J. HAYES.—Debates by Charles Bradlaugh are out of print.

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

Mr. W. Glanville Cook, Editor of the *Rationalist*, and representative of Australia and New Zealand at the Congress of Freethinkers in Rome, returned home on Thursday last on the S.S. *Strathnaver*. We hope he will take back pleasant memories of his stay in England.

Mr. Cook proved to be a forceful speaker and a worthy representative of the Antipodes and we expect he will return to the fray with redoubled ardour in the fight against superstition. Representatives of the R.P.A., the N.S.S., Dr. Norman Haire, and other friends, were at St. Pancras Station to wish him *bon voyage*.

Newcastle-on-Tyne readers are reminded that Mr. F. A. Ridley speaks in The Socialist Hall, Pilgrim Street, this evening (January 15) at 7 o'clock, on "Political Catholicism." The part the Catholic Church is playing in world politics adds importance to the subject, and Mr. Ridley is well qualified to deal with it. The lecture is under the auspices of the local N.S.S. Branch, admission is free, with some reserved seats at one shilling each.

The lovely rose blooms in our gardens are often quoted by Christians as testimony to God's wonderful handicraft, but apparently God slipped when he fashioned man, because on Monday evening in the Breaston Literary and Debating Society hall, near Nottingham, the Rev. W. Chivers will affirm that "Man is by nature evil, but capable of being redeemed." Mr. T. M. Mosley will take the negative. We will not prejudge the result of the debate, but if the Rev. Mr. Chivers proves his case we shall have something to say when our turn comes to appear before the heavenly tribunal on the day of judgment. The debate begins at 7-30; admission is free and all are invited.

Birmingham readers with a liking for a game of Whist should make a point of attending at Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, on Saturday, 21st January, where the local N.S.S. Branch has arranged a Whist Drive beginning at 7 p.m. Admission is by ticket, obtainable at the door, 2s. 6d., including refreshments.

Accion Laica Argentina, founded in December, 1946, held its Annual Congress at Buenos Aires from December 8th to 10th. The agenda was: (1) Liberalism as a Philosophical Principle; (2) Theocracy and Liberalism; (3)

Secularisation and Civilisation; (4) Non-Sectarian Education and Sectarian Teaching.

The president is Dr. Alicia Moreau de Justo, and the hon. secretary Senor Oscar Alfredo, office, Avenue de Mayo, 953, Buenos Aires. An International Congress was held at Buenos Aires in 1908; but since 1914 free-thought had been kept alive only in the Freemasonic Lodges. We wish every success to Accion Laica, who hope to convene a Pan-American Freethought Congress next year.

Recently published is Mr. Sean O'Faolain's *A Summer in Italy* (Eyre and Spottiswoode) and if anybody believes in the grand solemnity of the average Roman Catholic confessional, the following little extract from the book might disillusion him. It should be pointed out that when Mr. O'Faolain and his friends took up arms to defend Eire, "the Church pronounced us virtually excommunicate." However, he went to St. Peter's all the same to confess. The priest—

drew back the slide. As soon as his voice whispered to me I knew I was sunk. It was rich with the buttermilk of County Limerick. The sweat broke out on me. This man would know all about the Republic. He would take the side of the Bishops, as in duty bound. Or else he would say something like:

"Yerrah, for goodness' sake? And what Brigade was that now? The First Cork? Sure, don't I know Tommy Barry as well as I know me own hand?"

And we would become so pally that I would sweat again with shame to have to tell him my tale. What he actually said, in a rapid, soft and gentle voice, was this:

"Well, now, I suppose all the usual sins since then? Women and drink and no mass and bad language and dirty stories and all the rest of it? Ah, well! My poor child! God has been very patient with you. Say three Hail Marys now. And God bless you."

Quite possibly far bigger "crimes" have been pardoned by merely uttering a few Hail Mary's—such is the wonderful power of words.

We note that the National Anti-Vaccination League has addressed a letter of protest to the Prime Minister "in making use of the Royal Prince's inoculation to boost diphtheria immunisation." There are quite a number of eminent medical men who have always opposed both vaccination and immunisation, and great Freethinkers like Bradlaugh, Ingersoll, and Mark Twain, among many, were bitterly antagonistic to vivisection. Those of us who agree with them can only hope that the protest to the Prime Minister will have some effect. Unfortunately, the mass of people follow like sheep and never take the trouble to investigate the medical claims in favour of vaccination or immunisation. Doctors are almost as sacrosanct as bishops, and what they say, goes. Only a select few will question medical claims with the thoroughness they question supernatural claims.

Mr. C. Humphrey Boyle who was an ex-Lord Mayor of Leeds, and who died the other day, used to recall that his grandfather, Humphrey Boyle, over a century ago, "was active in the movement for the protection of free speech and writing." He was, in fact, one of the glorious band sent to prison for selling Paine's *Age of Reason*. "In after years," Mr. Boyle used to say, "it was a matter of family pride" that his grandfather suffered 18-months' imprisonment for such a cause. It certainly is a great debt that Freethought owes to such men as Richard Carlile, Humphrey Boyle, John Clarke, and many others of that noble band who sold the *Age of Reason* and other heretical works.

INTERNATIONAL FREETHOUGHT CONGRESS AT ROME, 1949

Report of the Proceedings

I.

THE Congress opened at 4 p.m. on Friday, 9th September, in the Hall of Giovane Europa in the via Principessa Clotilde. The Congress was welcomed to Rome by Dr. Ezio Bartalini on behalf of the National Freethought Association of "Giordano Bruno." In a speech in which he expressed his intense pleasure at seeing once again the Freethinkers of the world assembled in Rome, the first time since 1904, he told how the proposed Congress in 1924 had been suppressed by the Fascist Government whose agents set fire to the building which housed Giordano Bruno at that time, and how the leaders of the Association had been driven into exile where most of them had died. He lamented that Freethinkers in exile had found a rational outlook very rare in no matter what country they had sought refuge.

The President, Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, thanked Dr. Bartalini and "Giordano Bruno" for their warm welcome and then opened the Congress with an Address in which he set out the changes in social structure which had occurred since the great Rome Congress of 1904, and pointed out how altered the problems of Freethinkers had thus become; with the application of science to industry there had developed mass production, mass organisation and mass war. The place for the individual thinker had become more and more restricted. From this he passed on to a consideration of the lessons to be learnt from the lives of Giordano Bruno, Pietro Giannone and Giuseppe Garibaldi, from whose examples we could draw courage and the inspiration to unceasing effort in spite of all set-backs, and he called on the Congress to look to the future inspired by the consideration of these great Italians.

The Secretary, Mlle. P. H. Pardon, then gave a report of Freethought activities in all parts of the world, a report which made the greatest impression, built up as it was on detailed documentation. The general conclusions were perhaps somewhat depressing; she found that in most parts of the world the Movement had diminished in following and in influence, however much it might have gained in intellectual territory.

On Saturday morning the National sections presented their reports, Holland, Australia, Belgium, United States, France, Great Britain, Italy, New Zealand, Czechoslovakia and Germany. Messages of encouragement and support were read from the President of Honour, Members of the Committee of Honour and from Italian Freemasons. On behalf of the Independent Italian Socialist Group, Dr. Perrotti, expressed their interest and support of the Freethought Congress and of the rationalist outlook in philosophy. These reports were followed by the discussion of the first problem on the Agenda, that of the Schools, which opened with papers by Mlle. Pardon dealing principally with the situation in Belgian schools and appealing for a public system of education which would develop health of mind and body, create happiness through life, happiness in strength of resolution and in service to others, and a freedom of the mind, and by H. J. Blackham who gave a careful analysis of the educational problem throughout the world; he divided countries into four groups, firstly those in which all children were obliged to attend State schools; secondly those in which all children were obliged to attend Church schools; thirdly in which all schools were maintained or aided by the State, some being entirely State schools with no theological bias, others being schools with a special religious bias, and fourthly

countries in which there were State schools and independent private schools with varying religious aims.

In the schools of the first type all children may be indoctrinated in political, metaphysical or nationalist dogma and deprived of alternative views, and Freethinkers should not be led away by the prospect of universal secular education. The schools of the second type are the aim of the Roman Church and prevail where that Church prevails, e.g., in Spain, Eire, Quebec and in Italy. It is said that this should now be the case in Italy which had enjoyed more than sixty years of liberal education, until the advent of Fascism. In schools regulated according to a system of the third type, in which the State pays more or less for education in voluntary confessional schools, secular education is not promoted and religious cultural division is encouraged; in fact, in Catholic countries the system invites domination, because the Church schools are given a financial advantage against the State schools. The duplication of schools is a bar to progress. Of the last type are the systems in the U.S.A., Australia and in New Zealand. In these countries there is developing the increasing contest between the powers of Roman Catholicism and the State, in which the former endeavours to gain a footing and ever-increasing influence in the public schools. The private schools can only compete with the public schools at the cost of oppressive voluntary taxation on the members of the cult supporting the school. For this reason they are likely to decline without State aid.

All the systems have their defects from the rationalist point of view; but Freethinkers must bear in mind that very valuable work can be, and is being done for child development in all classes of schools, even where the dogmatic handicaps may be very severe.

The third report on the schools was by Professor Gabriele Pepe who emphasised the present handicaps of the Italian schools and declared that little progress could be made in genuine educational expansion as long as the Roman priests dominated the Italian schools. The debate closed with a brief discussion, chiefly in the further elucidation of the three speakers' points of view.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

(To be continued.)

ISRAFEL DEFEATED

I heard a melody divine,
But could not make it mine,
And, still less, thine.
Not for lack of will,
But want of skill,
Which I lack still.
Not from want of heart,
But lack of art,
It to impart.
That melody so fine,
That tune divine,
Never will be mine—
Nor thine.
Gone.
Beyond recall:
I would have given it to all;
But it is gone.
Let, then, the curtain fall.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, An Anthology for Freethinkers.
By William Kent. Price, cloth 5s., paper 3s. 6d.;
postage 3d.

DETERMINISM OR FREEWILL? By Chapman Cohen.
Price cloth 2s. 6d.; postage 2d.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE R 101 SEANCE

Sir,—In your issue of December 11, Mr. Cutner writes, "The 'revised' version of Mr. Charlton and Mrs. Goldney is obviously not what was said by Mrs. Garrett."

There have been so many twists given to the facts regarding this seance, that I had not intended wasting time endeavouring to untwist them. But I cannot let the above remark pass without replying that I do not lend myself to "revised" versions differing from an original.

In this instance I never issued any version or report at all, nor did Mr. Charlton so far as I know. Miss Beenham, a good shorthand secretary, took down Mrs. Garrett's trance utterance. Part of this came so fast that, although she transcribed it immediately, she was unable to get it all down completely clearly (even good shorthand writers have their speed limits). In spite of this, when Mr. Charlton saw the script, he formed the view that the material was beyond what could be produced normally by Mrs. Garrett. I took down his annotations to the transcript, and Mr. Price drew up a report in which the medium's words, item by item, are given in one column with Mr. Charlton's comments against them in a parallel column. Naturally Mr. Price made use of Mr. Charlton's comments in his report, for he could appraise the material from an expert point of view, and Mr. Price could not and neither can I.

I have no evidence that Miss Beenham's transcript was ever tinkered with; nor do I think it likely that anybody else has, or I think I would have heard of it. The use of the word "fraud" by Mr. Cutner is, therefore, quite unjustified in this particular case.—Yours, etc.,

K. M. GOLDNEY.

THE SHAKESPEARE PROBLEM

Sir,—Mr. A. Yates puts clearly what must have occurred to many general readers, viz.: Whoever may have written the plays of Shakespeare he was obviously not a dry as dust, precise scholar (such as Bacon, for instance), but a mid-England rustic, with a fair rustic education for his day, touched with the fire of genius.

Shakespeare's plays abound in the rustic English of Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and Gloucestershire (including slang) in current use among old people to-day, which learned writers, even playwrights with the country knowledge of Johnson, scorned to use. Editors have tried to hide it, but it still peeps out as in "We are such stuff as dreams are made on," which I recently saw altered to "are made of."

Shakespeare borrows legal phraseology holus-bolus and often makes a bit of a mess of it, as a country tradesman, peasant, and sportsman would; but he may have been helped here and there by a friendly attorney's clerk. To attribute such loose writing to a great lawyer is simply absurd.

In fact, this stage-struck countryman cribbed wholesale ("borrowed plumes"), and his cribs are the dullest parts of his plays, except when illuminated by touches of his own open-air genius.

Would a scholar have written "Loves Labour's Lost" or "The Merry Wives," for instance? I know not.

He adopts the jargon of the pedagogues and then pokes rollicking fun at it as country folk actually do to-day when summing up the language of their own pastors and masters.

Whoever he was Shakespeare was no "bookful blockhead ignorantly read."

All the evidence of those nearest to him of his own generation, hostile and friendly, is that he was a rustic-minded genius, not too clever in the ordinary sense, but just clever enough to know what sounded well and what fell flop, except when he became careless in his "borrowed plumes."—Yours, etc.,

F. C. PARSON.

SHOULD WE RESPECT RELIGION?

Sir,—I am a Christian (and, horror—! a Catholic) but have many friends who are "Freethinkers" and many times we have discussed matters of religion. We are all agreed, however, that mere invective is no answer to any question, and to gibe at another's views because one does not believe what he believes is—just bad manners.

I was surprised therefore and not a little disgusted, to read the cheap gibing remarks on religion in the Christmas Day edition of your magazine, especially the silly little paragraph on the Dogma of the Assumption.

If, as you think, you have a "message" to give to the religion-infested world, surely you would do better to frame it in good manners and respect, rather than in cheap journalese.—Yours, etc.,

JOHN LENDALL.

OBITUARY

WILLIAM THURGOOD

We regret to announce the death of Mr. William Thurgood for many years a reader of *The Freethinker*, and a member of the R.P.A. His interests were scientific and had made a special study of Land and Fresh Water Molluscs. He was librarian of the Conchological Society of Great Britain and Ireland, President of Leeds Naturalist Club and Scientific Association. The cremation took place at Lawnswood Crematorium on 8th December. At his expressed wish the service was entirely secular; the deceased's brother, Mr. Frank Thurgood, read extracts from Omar Khayam and other works. His wife survives him and to her we express our condolences at the loss of a good and ever helpful colleague.

D.F.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "The Future—War or Peace," Mr. E. V. TEMPEST.

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 17, 7 p.m.: "Ethics and Modern Thought," Mr. HECTOR HAWTON (Secretary, South Place Ethical Society).

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "An Hour with Rabbin Burns," Mr. JOHN S. CLARKE.

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (Spring Hall, Huddersfield Road).—Saturday, January 21, 7 p.m.: Annual General Meeting. 7-30 p.m.: Symposium by Members, followed by Discussion. Refreshments, 6d. Friends invited.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (The International Club, 64, George Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Annual General Meeting. Members only.

Newcastle Branch N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Political Catholicism," Mr. F. A. RIDLEY. A few reserved seats, 1s.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Greece and Democracy," Miss BETTY BARTLETT.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Rome's Holy Year," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "There is no God," Mr. L. EBURY.

OUTDOOR

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Bombed site, St. Mary's Gate).—Lectures every lunch hour, 1 p.m.: Messrs. E. BILLING and G. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon. Mr. L. EBURY.

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

WANTED.—Reports of Chapman Cohen's debates. Offers to H. Cleaver, 29a, Dunraven Road, W. 12.

WANTED.—Small unfurnished or furnished bedroom in the Paddington area, no service. Mr. Sanderson, 44, Oakington Road, W. 9.

PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS. By J. M. Wheeler. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

CHALLENGE TO RELIGION (a re-issue of four lectures delivered in the Secular Hall, Leicester). By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS. By W. A. Campbell. With a Preface by the Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson. Price 2s.; postage 2d.

NIGHTCAP AND HALO

(Concluded from page 18.)

PRUSSIA'S short campaign of 1866 against the mighty Austrian Empire, decided by the blitz victory of Königgrätz, seemed to show that militarist leadership was the means to German supremacy. A prerequisite towards this end was the crushing of the proletarian "mob" who had started organising since the 'sixties. Sheer brutal force was supplemented by the subtler weapons of chauvinistic intoxication and philosophical dopes; desperate "Herrenmenschen" (Lordly men) eagerly preached the gospel of Individualism in order to mermerize Class Struggle. Bismarck, the autocrat, was acclaimed when he undid most of the liberties, insufficient though they were, that the German bourgeoisie had won in previous struggles. Whilst cowardly spitting into their own faces, these "liberal" gentlemen needed self-intoxication through a nationalist mass hysteria.

As long as things went well, the prevailing frame of mind was one of egocentric individualism (Max Stirner) or rather aristocratic anarchism. "The strong is strongest when alone," proclaimed Otto J. Langbehn, a contemporary of Nietzsche's. And Nietzsche, himself apostle of amoral, individualistic superman, preached the virtue of "living dangerously." The great man, he held, was an end in himself, and the others, the "herd" were merely a means to His well-being, just good enough to be exploited by Him.

Wagner suited perfectly this ideal of "aristocratic inwardness" for selfish ends. To be rich or influential was sufficient reason to be exploited by him. He levied "loans" in the spirit of a Plantagenet monarch, trespassed marital faithfulness both ways and utterly wronged his best friends. When in Dresden he found that he could not lead a life of creative leisure and luxury, he grew so discontent that he consorted with Bakunin, the Russian anarchist. It cannot be established beyond doubt what part he actually took in the outbreak of riots, yet one thing is clear, namely, that he did not join hands with others for the sake of any common ideals. He made his way for himself by hook and by crook.

The marvellous awakening after the financial boom rendered the German petty-bourgeoisie susceptible to mysticism—they dreamt of an authoritative State with leaders to define right and wrong—essentially a glorified Military Order on the pattern of the medieval highwaymen, Minnesingers, craftsmen, artists and warrior, filled with a noxious breed of fancies, myths and desire-symbols. After the wholesale collapse of their established values, they re-coined them into the "Aryan supremacy," the "Germanic Mission" through "Blood and Steel." War—the "Steel Bath" was considered a valuable and creative function.

Wholeheartedly Wagner rode the wave of blatant, patriotic arrogance typical of an impotent nation with a hurt self-love. Nietzsche, the aristocratic individualist, despised a nation-wide generalisation and turned away from this "beer-mug patriotism." He had no predilection for the Germans—in fact he abhorred their petty-mindedness—nor had he ever felt contempt of the Jews whom he considered the "toughest and purest race now living in Europe." The simplification and generalisation of all Germans as a lordly race of supermen disgusted him, yet it carried Wagner, when their ways parted, to his crowning triumph.

Between 1853-1855, Count Arthur Gobineau published his *Essai sur l'inegalite des races humaines*; his claim of the superiority of the white race over the others aimed

at justifying colonisation. Still, this superficially expounded thesis of the prerogative of certain chosen nations had a far better reception in Germany than in his native land, France. It was no accident that the German Gobineau Society was founded at Bayreuth by the frequenters of Wagner's house, the Cliveden set of Germany's awakening imperialism. However, this imperialism had not much scope left in the colonial field, therefore, the assumed superiority of the white race in general was varied into the prerogative of the chosen people of Teutonic stock in particular. Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Wagner's son-in-law, "discovered" the historical mission of his fictitious "Aryan Race," but since this was to be a pure-bred, god-fearing nation, he also made frantic efforts to whitewash Jesus from the blemish of being a Jew. And fittingly, Wagner himself adorned his Aryanised Lord's Valhalla with a host of fair-haired beasts and saintly Knights of the Grail, loving and warring and demonstrating in a semi-mediaeval setting and baroque language all the virtues of Germanic "inwardness."

All this romanticism of a semi-mediaeval set-up is a clear sign of cultural decadence. There is a twilight both at dawn and dusk; and there is romanticism at the rise and decline of a social order. But though alike in form, there is an essential difference as regards the contents between the romanticism of ascendancy and that of decline. A sound and healthy society will evolve a romanticism in arts that is sound and secular; facts are being boldly faced and tackled, whilst break-up romanticism shirks the issues; escapism prevails and solutions of problems, if any, are sidetracked into dream-lands. (No wonder that just now we experience such a glut of plays and films on spiritualistic subjects and Psycho-Analysis!). It is the Twilight of the ruling Gods; their artists, in despair and gloom, dream of fairyland and Paradise, fantasies and mysticism—apart from shallow "fun"—tend to estrange arts from Life. The revolutionary feelings of Youth are manifest—not in contents, that Heaven forbid!—but in distorted forms.

Take for instance the motive of Antiquity as used in the Renaissance and as it was treated under Rococo.

With Wagner, both sorts of romanticism nearly coincide owing to the quick sequel of boom and slump in Germany, yet the romanticism of decay prevails by far. In addition, and as a result of the long protracted birth pangs of their bourgeois emancipation, the Germans have no proper romanticism of ascendancy; even what has to go as such is tainted with complaint and fear and *rêverie* (cf. Schubert, Schumann, Mericke, etc.). On the other hand, in Vienna, the Capital of a centralised Empire, classicism partially extended as far as Wagner's contemporary, Brahms.

Nowadays, in the era of global exchange of thought, commodities and culture, the complex of social relations which conditions the outlook of every artist embraces the entire world. Though trends of decadence may dominate in one place, they can be counter-acted from others. Yet, this stage had not been reached in the Germany before and during the times of Bismarck.

As a musician, Wagner no doubt is a genius and pathfinder; as a poet and philosopher, poring out his pretentious rubbish, he is nothing but a pathological case. But it is just for this reason that he appeals to the fear-ridden petty-bourgeois all over the world.

PERCY GORDON ROY.