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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

King Charles's Head

A YEAR ago, last January, 1949, marks one of the most momentous anniversaries in the history of these islands. For on January 30, 1649, Charles I, King of England, Scotland and Ireland, "Defender of the Faith," was publicly beheaded in front of his palace in Whitehall at the end, and as the culminating scene of the long and bloody Civil War. The death of this ephemeral and otherwise not particularly noteworthy monarch would, by itself, be to-day merely an antiquarian memory, were it not for the memorable train of consequences which it set in motion. For from the grim tragedy at Whitehall staged upon a cold Winter's day, we may legitimately trace the evolution of civil and religious liberty in Great Britain.

People are always apt to judge the Past by, and from, the Present, but such an historical procedure is often misleading and produces an entirely erroneous picture of the events which it is sought to portray: one may add, never was this more so than in relation to the England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that era in our national history which witnessed the Reformation and its great sequel the "Great Rebellion" of the mid-seventeenth century, which effectually ended the medieval reign of political autocracy and religious intolerance.

To apply the canons of modern democracy to the actual political regime over which Henry VIII, Elizabeth, James I and Charles I, successively presided, would be to perpetrate and perpetuate a gross and misleading historical anachronism. For whatever its virtues and its faults may have been, the England of the Tudors and Stuarts from 1485 to 1649; was far from being a democracy, at least in any recognisably modern sense of the term.

In fact, the England which witnessed the Reformation was an absolute monarchy, indeed, the epithet "totalitarian" as now used was fully applicable to the efficient, ubiquitous, and utterly ruthless regime which lasted from the end of the fifteenth century to the middle of the seventeenth, and which carried through its religious revolution against Rome by methods that were as utterly devoid of "the bowels of compassion" as are those of modern totalitarian dictatorships, whether of the Fascist Right or of the Communist Left. The famous entry in his diary by Thomas Cromwell, the powerful minister of Henry VIII (d. 1540) when he expropriated the English monasteries, is very much to the point in this connection:—

Item, the Abbot of Glaston (Glastonbury) to be tried at Glaston and executed. Item, the Abbot of Reading, to be tried at Reading and executed. To see that the indictments be well drawn up and the evidence be well sorted out against the said abbots.

Even the Inquisition or the Gestapo could hardly have bettered that!

The Tudor-Stuart regime which was summarily ended by the deposition and execution of Charles I was a two-headed monster: both civil and religious in its totalitarian capacity. Its civil administration centred around the autocratic "Star Chamber" (so called from its mural

decorations), whilst in its ecclesiastical jurisdiction the "Court of High Commission" represented the English version of the Spanish Inquisition. For the Tudor State, "over all persons and causes supreme" would tolerate no "deviations" in either Church or State. The Royal Prerogative habitually overrode the Common Law, as for example, the use of torture, always illegal at Common Law, was employed by the royal courts. When they had finished with Guy Fawkes, that most famous of conspirators could not sign his name legibly; the "sworn tormentor" of Queen Elizabeth boasted that he had stretched the Jesuit Southwell on the rack until "he had made him a foot longer than God had made him." On the religious side, executions for "heresy" continued down to 1612, and religious error remained a capital offence on the English Statute Book right down to the execution of Charles I.

Under Charles I, this ruthlessly intolerant system enjoyed its Indian Summer. Charles's ministers, "Black Tom" Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, and William Laud Archbishop of Canterbury, repressed all forms of dissent in Church and State with an iron hand. Parliament was dissolved for eleven years (1629-40) and the Protestant dissenters from the Anglican Church and its then favourite dogma of the Divine Right of Kings, were subjected to a penal code of Draconian severity.

The English Revolution; "The Great Rebellion," as its contemporaries styled the mid-seventeenth century upheaval, was composite in its origins and causes. But it can hardly be disputed that whatever view we take of its ultimate causes and immediate effects, it formed a decisive turning point in the constitutional and religious evolution of the English State and People.

To say outright that the execution of Charles I and his ministers, and the simultaneous abolition of the extra-legal courts (plus their illegal torture chambers) paved the way for modern Democracy and religious toleration, would be to say no more than the truth. Though to say they immediately realised these epoch-making changes would be to go considerably beyond it. "Rome was not built in a day." Neither was modern democracy nor its inseparable concomitant, religious equality before the Law.

Indeed, whilst the anachronisms of the Established Church, the monarchy, and the hereditary House of Lords still remain, it would be an exaggeration to claim that they have been completely realised even now. In this last sense, one can say that the religious, political, and intellectual revolution first set in motion three centuries ago, is, even now, still incomplete and awaiting its final consummation.

However, as that eminent democrat and rationalist, Lord Morley, once reminded us, politics rarely achieves all its objectives at once, but is an eternal "second best"; a permanent compromise. If the social and religious revolution did not accomplish everything that it set out to do, it did, at least pave the way, and these islands are a different sort of place to live in than they would have been had Charles and his satellites succeeded in keeping the

English people permanently under the yoke of the torture chambers of the Star Chamber and the "Divine Right" mythology of the Anglican bishops.

As Thomas Carlyle reminded us, the summary disposal of Charles Stuart "taught kings that they had a crick in their necks"! It represented a much needed lesson: one also shared by Archbishops of Canterbury and by Royal ministers, for both Strafford and Laud preceded their Royal master and tyrant-in-chief to the scaffold.

In 1688, Charles's son, James II, who had belatedly sought to walk in his father's footsteps and to revive his royal absolutism, did not wait for the executioner but promptly took himself off abroad. The claws of Kings and Archbishops had been well and truly clipped in 1649, and it has not been necessary to repeat the salutary lesson in Britain. Other countries have been less fortunate.

Modern Freethought is the product of modern democracy and of modern religious toleration, and would be inconceivable without their previous attainment. Thus January 30 represents a red-letter day in the annals of religious and civil progress. The men who brought Charles Stuart to the scaffold, whether they knew it or not, brought Democracy to this land. Cromwell's Ironsides were certainly no atheists, but none the less, Atheism grew eventually from the historic soil which they manured with the blood of Kings and priests. Traditionally, "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," but the blood of the king whom High Anglicans still revere as "St. Charles the Martyr" sowed the seed of many better things than either he or his judges foresaw on January 30, 1649.

F. A. RIDLEY.

RELIGION IN THE FRANCE OF LOUIS XIV

THE sectarian strife in France which followed the Protestant Reformation culminated in the terrible slaughter of the Huguenots in Paris in 1572. This organised massacre shocked the conscience of intellectual Europe and when Henry of Navarre ascended the throne of France he assured the surviving Calvinists that their creed would be tolerated. After Henry's assassination, Richelieu and Mazarin, the royal ministers, maintained the Edict of Nantes granted to the French Protestants by the murdered Henry IV. But this measure was bound to prove distasteful to the persecuting Roman Church, and in a country predominantly Catholic, could only be a compromise. Still, when the Edict was promulgated, influential Romanists themselves welcomed toleration as the only path to peace between the armed adherents of Catholicism and Geneva.

As Mr. W. F. Reddaway judiciously notes in his *History of Europe, 1610-1715* (Methuen, 1948, 25s.): "After prolonged and severe religious wars France had arrived at the most high-minded solution. A Frenchman's conscience, the Edict of Nantes declares, is immune from coercion by the State. France is Catholic, but her Protestants may dwell anywhere within the frontiers and in most places they may also worship." Still, it seemed obvious that toleration would be withdrawn once Church and State deemed themselves strong enough to restore the Romanist religion as the sole faith of French subjects.

Cardinal Richelieu had broken the power of the Huguenots as a State within a State, but otherwise under his and his successor, Mazarin's administration, the Edict was faithfully observed, although its revocation in

1685, many historians regard as a turning point in French history, while they scornfully survey Louis XIV's conduct as the outcome of the counsel of his Jesuit confessor, and the machinations of his mistress, Madame de Maintenon, herself an apostate Huguenot.

Yet, the decree of 1685 appears the inevitable result of Louis' ambition to establish absolutism, both spiritual and temporal. Previously, every institution that curtailed the Crown's authority had been suppressed and even the Pope had been coerced into the withdrawal of Roman claims, while a successful campaign abroad had been succeeded by the banishment of many Jews and other intolerant acts. For several years past, the French Protestants had been so maltreated that thousands had fled to more tolerant lands. After ten years of persecution, despite an organised attempt to purify France from every taint of heresy, Calvinism still remained strong. So the Catholic clergy, with the assistance of several Orders were encouraged to convert the Dissenters. Louis himself became more outwardly pious, despite his marital infidelities and was especially concerned with his soul's salvation. Church and Crown combined to finance a Treasury of Conversions and converts were given monetary rewards on their apostasy. In 1680, State Tribunals containing both Calvinists and Catholics were abolished, while the learned and medical professions were forbidden to Protestants and intermarriage with heretics was declared illegal. As Reddaway observes: "Huguenot midwives were forbidden to practise, but Huguenot children might turn Catholic without parental sanction. The faint lines which divided such rules from persecution were soon passed. Protestant foundations were destroyed by hundreds and their income confiscated to the Crown."

Again, officials soon saw that petty acts of persecution were clear paths to royal favour and promotion, and these indignities were increased. The entire burden of taxation was thrown on Dissenters and there came the infamous dragonnades, when ruthless soldiers were billeted in Protestant houses until their inmates were converted, when they were ordered to others when their mission was accomplished. Cities such as La Rochelle and other Huguenot strongholds were brutally driven to Mass, while at least 200,000 of the persecuted escaped to foreign lands.

Nor was this civil strife confined to the conflict between Catholic and Calvinist. France was also distracted by the disputes of those who supported Papal claims and those Gallicans who demanded the sole jurisdiction of the French Church within Louis' dominions. It was asked how, if the Pope's decrees did not enunciate true doctrine, where was this to be discovered? On the other hand, the disciples of Jansen, a Dutch heretic who would have perished in the flames in earlier days, insisted on the Church's purification. Jansenism also lessened the distinction between clergy and laity and asserted that its own adherents were in communion with the deity, and required no intermediary. Again, they contended that Christ died to save the whole human race, a claim condemned at Rome as heretical. The celebrated *Provincial Letters* appeared from the pen of the Jansenist, Pascal, in which the machinations of the Jesuits were mercilessly exposed. But Jansenist association with the insurgent Fronde led to the closing of their famous monastery in Paris, Port Royal, and Jansenism was driven into obscurity.

Still, the Jansenists, who had influential friends among the clergy, were not completely silenced, and religious unrest was widespread. The Jesuits, however,

were determined to avenge the aspersions cast on their Order, while the King, ever anxious to display his orthodoxy, was especially so when the Crown's right to receive episcopal revenues, while a see continued vacant, was being questioned. On this particular issue, Pope Innocent XI and the Jansenists were ranged on the one side, with Louis XIV and the artful Jesuits on the other. Ultimately, however, the French Church agreed with the King, and a Church assembly unanimously approved the Four Articles of 1682 which affirmed that all Papal powers were strictly ecclesiastical; that the Pontiff's authority was inferior to that of a General Council; that the Pope must obey accepted Church decisions and that, in matters of belief, Papal pronouncements are valid only when in harmony with the findings of a General Council.

The gratified King immediately issued orders that the Four Articles should be despatched to every theological college and signed by every priest and preceptor in France, but as soon as the Pope's censure of the Church assembly for sanctioning these Articles became known in the country, Louis promptly dispersed the clerical gathering. Then, in retaliation of the Pope's refusal to recognise as Bishops those who had voted for the Articles, Louis guaranteed them the revenues of their episcopates. The spiritual despotism of the secular ruler was made secure and, as our historian notes: "Before the close of 1685 he [Louis XIV] had so wrought that the State which had once given the greatest religious freedom now gave the least." This should serve as a warning to those who think that the precarious religious liberty we possess to-day has been made permanently secure.

With the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, no Protestant, not even foreign residents, could claim toleration. So the Lutheran Elector of Brandenburg invited French Huguenots to settle in his dominions and 20,000 immigrants carried to his poor and backward realm the arts and crafts it sadly lacked, while Swiss Protestants, fearful of French persecution, also sought security under the Elector. Moreover, the intolerance of Louis alienated the Dutch whose leader, William of Orange, successfully challenged the French King's claim to European dominion. Uniformity in creed was the ideal of Louis XIV, and this cult must take the precise form which he deemed orthodox, and which he himself governed by divine right. His own arrogant motto: "Less than God but greater than the universe," reveals a megalomania that exceeds that of Hitler's or even Napoleon's.

T. F. PALMER.

BASIC GEOLOGY

THE writer of this article was asked to take a Modern Secondary School class of 40 girls (12 to 15) in Birmingham, over the Geological Galleries of the Birmingham Natural History Museum. After our tour the girls asked, "How do geologists compute the enormous ages of the periods?" Here is the substance of the reply.

Such a visit is better than a dozen lectures to adults, in my opinion. Our Home in Space—"Our Earth"—deserves our greatest study. Of all the physical sciences, Astronomy and Geology have a magnificent outlet, and immensity of grasp denied to all the rest.

The bewildering immensities of space and time with which these two sciences deal, and their insistent claim to be the only authorities that can bring home to the mind of man the awful idea of infinity and eternity. Astronomy had its birth on the childhood of mankind, in the silence and calm of the eastern nights.

Geology is the child of advancing years of human maturity. The vastness of geological time was a stumbling-block in the way of its acceptance to average people. Many were intensely reluctant to acknowledge the possibility of the existence of man being upon the earth for more than a few thousand years, even eminent men scouted it. Geologists, like astronomers, move in realms of facts which give them a freedom of action which is delightful. They move with freedom from "cause to effect" wholly denied to those wanting in this conviction of the incontrovertible facts of geology, and its allied sciences of evolution.

Time was when men believed that history began with the discovery of writing (Sumerian literature, 3500 B.C.). A century ago, geologists discovered that the earth had been writing her own history ever since moving waters appeared upon its face.

Our rivers served as historians: every day we can watch how the records in earth strata are deposited by water, of dead life forms (plant and animal) called "fossils." Things which have once lived—our greatest facts.

All quarries (except igneous rocks) are records left by ancient water actions. The whole Earth has been shrinking and crumpling over millions of years, forming the ocean basins and mountain tops.

Our Earth started as a fiery-blob, with its near planets, their elements being a small bit of the Sun—our mother. This produced staggering phenomena on our Earth, then totally without life. Its first tides were red hot lava, not water. The basic idea is that a hot thing is expanded, and a cool thing is contracted. In many places whole mountains of old strata have been worn away by frost and water action. Miles of material have been eroded.

You observe that you cannot have denudation of ground, or coast line, without re-depositing that material in another place, making the sea shallower. In time the sea bottom becomes silted up and changes into dry land. For example, a river like the Thames (a small river) carries down to the sea 5,000,000 tons of England every year. All the chalk hills of England have been sea beds in the past. Something is always snapping and giving way in our Earth's interior. Some twenty major earthquakes a year make the Earth shiver and shake.

My concluding article will give the evidence for the millions of years in periods of geology.

CHARLES H. SMITH.

(To be concluded.)

ROCHDALE, 1844

That lowly reptile, the poor, loathly toad,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head—
So runs the proverb, so great Shakespeare said—
Showing how worth in lowly life abode.
For Nature has on humble folk bestowed
Ideals, that come not to the better fed,
The proud, the high-born, and the gentle-bred,
Ideals of fellowship on life's hard road.

Thus in a little shop upon Toad Lane,
A back street in a cotton weaving town,
Co-operation's banner was unfurled.
From this beginning a majestic fane
Arose—Co-operation's vast renown,
A beacon-light that blazed across the world.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

ACID DROPS

Because of a shortage of Prayer Books in their own chapel, two Methodists visited other chapels and "scroured" other people's prayer books. They justified their peculiar sense of morality by saying that "God would not mind if we stole books from a richer chapel to benefit our own poorer chapel." This was in the true tradition of "Christian" morality, and of course redounds to the greater glory of God. An Atheist caught thus pinching might have got six months.

Catholics who are too lazy to attend Mass, but sit at home before their television sets on Sundays when Mass is televised, are warned by the Cardinal of Paris that this does not satisfy the religious obligation of Catholicism. Congregations have fallen off so alarmingly that a special letter from the Cardinal was read out from all pulpits in Paris. However, although a televised Mass is not approved, Catholics are informed that the Pope's blessing, whether broadcast or televised, is as efficacious as if it were received in his presence. For which relief, much thanks.

For forty days (and presumably) forty nights, a champion Persian cat who had strayed from the Cat Show was hunted, and eventually found by its owner who declared, "I was certain to find it, I am psychic." But couldn't cat-lovers in Summerland co-operate quicker than that!

Three times a day for ten years Mr. Eli Baltsa went to his synagogue and communed with Jehovah, one might almost say that he was on visiting terms with Him. But one morning in the darkness, Mr. Baltsa fell through a hole in the floor into the cellar and died from his injuries. One would have thought that being on such friendly terms, God might have called him to his Fathers in a little more friendly manner, even though Mr. Baltsa had passed his allotted span by three years. The verdict at the inquest was "accident," but should it not have been an "act of God?"

"Family limitation" which phrase some Catholics prefer to the more blunt but equally effective one, "birth control," gave the Roman Church a nasty knock in the Report of the Royal Commission on Population dealing with that much-discussed problem. It was shown that large numbers of Roman Catholic women made full use of the information in spite of the fulminations of priests, cardinals, and their women doctors. Of course, the Church has always approved of complete "abstinence" as a fool-proof method, and has more or less approved of a "natural" method which dispenses with all artificial contraceptives, but is quite unreliable. But what can the Church do? We can answer that one—literally nothing. And it is good for once to be able to write that.

As inevitable as the going down of the sun, the *Two Worlds* reports that a message has been received from the submarine *Truculent*. As in the airship R101 disaster, the message from the other world was of no use in explaining what had happened during the fateful minutes of the accident, nor was the "information" by the men on the spot of any help in the prevention of any future accidents. The messages were on the level of the usual spiritualist blather—"I must tell you your husband is here . . . in spirit." Another message was: "Going to help Hilda. Some of my ideas have changed." Apart from this revolting trading on the emotions, we wonder how reasonable men and women can believe these childish puerilities.

Whilst awaiting trial, Brian Hume was "comforted by reading the Bible, especially Luke and John." He also thinks that a charge such as he faced "brings a man closer to his God." A truly wonderful book, wherein every type of criminal, from sneak-thief and petty pickpocket, to rapists and murderers, can find solace within its pages. Many even find justification for their misdeeds, and most murderers have believed, and have been encouraged to believe, that they will be immediately jerked to Jesus via God's Holy Word—"there is more joy in heaven over the repentance of one sinner . . ." What a creed! What a book!

It is most interesting to find that while spiritualists do their best to call up spirits from the mighty deep—or not so mighty—quite a number of clergymen and priests do their best to "exorcise" them back to wherever it is that they come from. For example, a lady the other day opened a room that had been locked for 18 years, and out rushed the spirit of its former occupier. We were always under the impression that properly constituted spirits could easily go through any wooden door however thick—just as we are told by spiritualists that wireless waves can; but obviously this particular spirit had not had time to learn how to do it, and must have been considerably relieved when the door was opened and it got out.

However, the Rev. Francis Maddock was called in to do a spot of Christian exorcism, and with the right kind of incantation delivered in the reverent voice of a fully ordained vicar, he conducted several services in all the rooms. He did not see the ghost, of course, and it must have returned to Summerland in disgust; and whether it couldn't stand Mr. Maddock, or the service, is not clear. But what a lovely chance to confound all unbelievers was missed! Are not Spiritualists going to do something about it?

Another spirit has also turned up in the rectory at Southfleet, in Kent. It is the ghost of a nun in russet gown and lace-edged cap, and so far no exorcism appears to have laid it—or her—low. She managed even to survive the deadly attack of a genuine bishop seventy years ago, and the rector, the Rev. W. M. Fallon, appears unlike Mr. Maddock—to have little faith in the usual Christian magical service to drive her away. Perhaps an African Witch Doctor could do the trick, and we heartily send him this suggestion quite gratis.

Official figures for the number of pilgrims who went to Lourdes last year are 2,800,000, which include seven cardinals and 270 bishops. 55,000 Masses were said, 2,300,000 Holy Communions administered, and 20,725 sick people treated. And the number of miracles? Alas—the figures are not given. Perhaps the authorities are considering them. But it is noteworthy that fewer miracles now take place, in any case, than in those hilarious early days when they were almost as common as mushrooms. Is the revolting and unbelieving materialism so assiduously propagated by those dreadful Freethinkers to blame?

THINGS WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW—

How does the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London square their invitation to Parliamentary candidates to attend service at St. Paul's to ask God for guidance in their election campaign, with the Church's decision not to dabble in politics?

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

C. SWEETMAN, R. ADAMS, K. C. JONES, F. HARPER.—Thanks for cuttings.

BENEVOLENT FUND, N.S.S.—The General Secretary gratefully acknowledges the following donations: Birmingham Branch, 10s.; R. H. Standfast, 3s.; W. J. Ford, 3s.

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.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), COMMON SENSE (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), 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.

Will correspondents please write on one side of the paper, and keep their letters brief. This will give everybody a chance.

SUGAR PLUMS

Roman Catholics are making full use of the General Election campaign to secure more public money for their schools. Whatever government is returned, so long as it allows religion to intrude into State schools, there will be sectarian squabbles, and injustice to large sections of the population. The only remedy is to exclude religion entirely from State schools, leaving to parents the choice of religious instruction or none for their children, in their own buildings outside school hours. Freethinkers all over the country should be up and doing on this issue, among candidates, neighbours, workmates, etc. The following publications will be useful for question-framing material and can be obtained from The Pioneer Press as follows: *The Churches Fight for the Child*, *Freethought and the Child*, 2d. each, 1d. postage; *The Case for Secular Education*, 7d., postage 1½d., either singly, or all three for 1s. post free.

The newly-formed Irish Rationalist Society report a very successful meeting last week when Mr. E. Lawasi spoke on "Can Dubliners Go To Heaven?" The speaker seems to have disillusioned the Dubliners. We must record our admiration for the organisers of the I.R.S., in carrying the light of Freethought in the midst of Christian Ireland. The Secretary, Mr. P. O'Connor of Clonburris, Clondalkin, Co. Dublin, will be glad of the help of Irish Freethinkers and will treat any offers with discretion.

Those who ventured to the Conway Hall last week for Professor Flugel's lecture were rewarded by a very interesting address and the many questions which followed. The wretched weather unfortunately interfered with the attendance, only those who were in London on that day know how bad it was.

Mr. Herbert Morrison, M.P. for North Lewisham, was among the five M.P.s and two bishops at a meeting

at the Lewisham Town Hall. About 2,000 people listened to a two-hour speech by Bishop Beck who protested against the estimated £60,000,000 cost of the Roman Catholic Schools. No opportunity was given to challenge this statement. Bishop Beck generously offered to lease the Roman Catholic Schools to the Government on condition that the Catholic authorities retained the right to appoint their own managers and teachers. Mr. Morrison did not speak, neither did he join in the singing of the hymn for the conversion of England, "Faith of our Fathers." His presence on the platform will, however, please the Lewisham Catholics.

The January-February number of the Journal for Psychic Research contains some excellent matter including Mr. W. H. Salter's careful analysis of the documents upon which is based *An Adventure*, written by two ladies, Miss Moberly and Miss Jourdain. When this book was published in 1911, it caused a mild sensation, for it claimed that they both saw, when visiting Versailles, a scene which took place in the Gardens during the reign of Marie Antoinette. Some years ago, Mr. Sturge-Whiting made mincemeat of the book, and it looks as if Mr. Salter has done the same. Whether the two ladies really believed their fantastic story it is impossible to say, but very few other people will after reading Mr. Salter's article.

There is also an account of the Parapsychology Laboratory at Duke University with the way Telepathy is being studied there; and a review of a book, *In My Mind's Eye* by Frederick Marion, a well-known telepathist, who gives therein an account of his stage career. Those who think that "there is something in" telepathy should read this review by Dr. S. G. Soal. It proves how very careful any investigator must be to prevent being thoroughly hoaxed. It is a pity that more of the millions of people who listen open-mouthed to the Piddingtons do not read such reviews. There may be something in telepathy, but nobody has found out for sure yet.

We get many news cuttings from our readers regarding the activities of religious rogues, thieves, and embezzlers, and would point out that the religious world has no monopoly where vice or virtue is concerned; religion only makes it easier.

The percentage of Roman Catholics to the population in pre-war Germany was 33½ per cent. To-day, excluding the (Russian) Eastern Zone, the proportion of the 42.7 million population is: Roman Catholic, 45.8 per cent.; Protestant, 50.2 per cent.; Jews, 0.1 per cent.; other religions, 0.9 per cent.; and the remaining percentage is non-religious. The percentage of non-religious is equally divided between the German Provinces, except in Hamburg where 12 per cent. of the population are registered as of no religion. Hamburg has a very active and enthusiastic Freethought Society, whose President attended the recent Rome Congress of Freethinkers.

Toronto, the city of churches, has opened the New Year by a vote in favour of Sunday Sports. The proposal was opposed by Church and Chapel, by the *Globe and Mail*, the *Star* and the *Telegram*, and by the local book-makers; nevertheless there were over 86,000 votes. For to 81,000 Against—a decisive blow at the bigots.

ROMANTIC ART

It is tempting to regard Marcel Proust as the last of the Romantics. But Surrealism is a fresh onslaught on the marble stronghold of classic solidity, and, the romantic attitude is a permanent element in human nature. So says Gerard Hopkins, who has translated a selection of Proust's miscellaneous writings, to substantiate his case.

The "deeply personal" conviction that "beauty and the real are in the eye of the beholder" arises in a process in which the influence of Ruskin on Proust was so great that it is hard to "tease out" Proustian from Ruskinian idiom. The same "deliberately exaggerated and distorted presentation" of "parody" seen in Proust's confirmation of Ruskin's "Sacred classic literature paralleled with that of the Hebrews, coalescing in the symbolic legends of medieval Christendom," seen as a "form of fetishism" in the "art forms of different countries" and "the identity of certain religious ideas in Pagan and Christian symbolism," shows a similar continuity.

This evolutionary process in Art and Literature continues in Ruskin who "learned from the Bible," and biblical idiom and metaphor is developed in Proust; but without that "idolatory" of the "religion of beauty" in which, in Ruskin's words "some dear or sad phantasy which we have made for ourselves," as Proust sees it, "truth and moral feeling have been made subservient to the æsthetic sense." With a clearer appreciation of the distinction Proust asserts that "enthusiasm" which "in Art" is the "criterion of truth." This inspiration is truly religious, a "disinterested passion," a "state of Grace." It is not a "frozen antiquarianism" for we "fan to life the flames of the past."

To Proust the romantic, says our translator, the proper use of books is "as stimuli to self-discovery," as in the essays on reading. In other essays "his critical sense and deep literary erudition" is seen to "drift into fascinating backwaters of revelation and remembrance," but not "as a means of acquiring or possessing objective truth." Memory "he always stigmatised as a rational activity." It "only recalls what has been objective." Following Goethe, "poetry can be made only from what we still feel." So that "frozen memory" is enhanced by Ruskin's "reverence" in which it is "insolence" to "illuminate a mystery." *Recherche* "as he meant the word to be understood laid bare subjective truth."

Art is no mere "imitation" for "understanding depends upon familiarity." The shorter essays are "of interest to students of his psychology" being experiments, "anticipations" showing Proust "deeply concerned with themes later treated at length." The Village Church deals with a "familiar companion" with a "beauty and dignity" given "only to human faces." In childhood memories the stones live; the belfry, the steeple, the church, is personified; as someone seeing round corners or up over the housetops watching; and in phantastic imagery, changing colour and shape, as when appearing as "an outsize loaf of sacramental bread," in "black sunlight" or "deepening silence," reflecting the atmosphere of every whim or changing mood; and as a signpost or guide, "lifting the tip of its religious hat at the corner of the street I ought to take"; but "the corner lies within my heart."

If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, is truth on the lips of the speaker? Did Proust distinguish moral and æsthetic sense? We have here two kinds of truth; the difference between religious truth and the other variety. True, we see continuity in the symbolism, but at what point does romancing become downright lie?

Truly the art of romance begins in childhood's fancy as it began in the magic art of the childhood of the race. And, the symbolism is there in dream phantasy. The romantic art may express sincerity in feeling, even cultivated passion in personal conviction, but is this phantasy of romance more convincingly real than the phantasy of dreams? And what is the dream but distorted memory?

This romantic art, this personification that makes stones live, in exaggerated and distorted presentation of symbolism, may be interesting and amusing, even sensational, dramatic or effective; but to think only of pleasure and beauty is to forget fear and hatred, and the hideous and grotesque. What is this phantasy but the substance of dreams? There may be æsthetic pleasure in dreams, even ecstatic delight, as also in delirious delusion or obsession. But what of the terror of nightmare or the passion in insanity? To Schopenhauer, the dream was a short insanity, but Proust said he was "tired" of Schopenhauer.

We can say more of Proust, for when dealing with actual human tragedy in "Sentiments of a Parricide" his biblical idiom fails lamentably and he falls back on a "frozen antiquarianism" as with Shakespeare's King Lear and Oedipus and Jocasta. One feels that current newspaper reports were far more personally intimate with Drama of a Lunatic. Psychopathology is more modern and the Bible, with its platitudes, its declamation, and its condemnation of evil, gives no word of sympathy much less understand schizophrenic paranoia. For the Bible is itself romance, a tragedy in literary art.

H. H. PREECE.

CORRESPONDENCE

WHITHER WEATHERHEAD?

SIR,—What a feeble reply! A few hours notice was given. I know nonconformity as well as Mr. Weatherhead. Invariably the attendance at the evening service is larger than the morning, and the difference is mainly made up of women who cannot conveniently leave their household duties earlier in the day. It is the women who ought to have known. Men are tougher on these subjects. A month's notice should have been given: the subject could have been announced as "Secret Fears—Sexual and Others." I repeat, Mr. Weatherhead did not act fairly.

A discussion on Friday night following? Why not the same night? If the subject was not so sacrosanct as to be forbidden on the Lord's Day, why could it not be discussed then? Not long ago, Mr. Weatherhead was having after-meetings on Sunday. I do not know the reason for discontinuance. Surely there would have been every reason for one on this occasion.

Supposing we Freethinkers gave lectures and then announced that we could discuss a few days later! What ridicule we should provoke. They do not care to face the music, we should be told—probably, too, by some parsons. The Rev. Donald Soper, on Tower Hill, tackles the critics at once. Mr. Weatherhead's tactics were those adopted by the Provost of Southwark when he made an absurd pretence, in a Cathedral, of candidly discussing the historicity of Jesus.

I sat for years under a minister who was once Chairman of the Congregational Union, and almost as well known as Mr. Weatherhead is now. Rev. Bernard Snell had an audience of about seven hundred on Sunday night; at the mid-week service about twenty-five. I am sure the disparity in Mr. Weatherhead's case would be less, but many who could come Sunday could not manage Friday.

I note there is no attempt to defend the indictment of the Christian God, and we Freethinkers will continue to mark with amazement passages in Mr. Weatherhead's sermon that would better befit Winwood Reade's "Martyrdom of Man." In my "Lift Up Your Heads" I have nothing more damning.

There is no denial of the authorship of the "Comic Cuts" letter.

There is no attempt to refute my suggestion that his attack upon the hymn would be resented not only in churches, but also in brotherhoods and adult schools.

Critics of popular preachers on the diaconate must be men of heroic mould. It wants such a hero to save Mr. Weatherhead from letting down a nonconformist church with a great history.

In view of the familiar complaint that writers in *The Freethinker* are too flippant in their approach to religion, it is remarkable that a leading London minister should make fun of a hymn-writer and Hell. The belief in the latter was maintained by some of his predecessors for about two hundred years, and made untenable by the attacks of freethinkers and the indisposition of the public to accept such nonsense.—Yours, etc.,

WM. KENT.

MATERIALISM

Sir.—Mr. Preece, in his articles ("Misconceptions of Materialism"), is guilty of a number of blunders. He describes Plato as a SOPHIST! such a statement is really not worthy of comment. On this point I would like his authorities. I would be pleased, too, if he would show how any "Scientific Method" he cares to choose can be applied to Psychology, "The Scientific Fraud of the Age" (Collinwood, *Metaphysics*). One really has no need to argue with the defenders of the outworn creed of materialism, if one waits long enough they contradict themselves. He states, "It is unscientific to try to explain all in terms of one." Monistic materialism is unscientific. I am pleased further to deduce that Physics, too, is unscientific, because the physicists explain all (they do explain) fundamentally in terms of "charges of electricity," not "in" anything, just charges.—Yours, etc.,

VERNON CARTER.

RUSSIA

Sir.—I have seen many letters in something like the strain of Mr. J. G. Lupton's articles, and feel his viewpoint should be challenged. A few months since this was done in a comprehensive series of letters by W. Gallagher, M.P. I think that, in this case, Professor Bernal should be invited to reply to the criticisms made by Mr. Lupton. He would, I am sure, be well able to do this, or otherwise expose his case by failing to do so.

I have noticed that the wildest assertions may be made against the Soviet Union without the need for a backing of solid facts, viz., the statement by a reader that there are 13,000,000 people in Soviet concentration camps, a figure which is variously given as 3,000,000 or 16,000,000. Mr. Lupton asserts that there is forced labour in the U.S.S.R., but produces no proof. A study of the "Corrective Labour Code of the U.S.S.R.," which is the only document ever produced in support of this accusation, would bear out my statement that this refers to normal prison institutions for lawbreakers.

I have not read the issue of *Pravda* myself, but would like the quotation referred to by Mr. Lupton checked with the Society for Cultural Relations with the U.S.S.R. who would produce a copy. It is not uncommon for graver mis-translations to occur, whether innocently or otherwise.

Statements, I may add, are frequently bandied about in the Press that any person dying in Bulgaria, Rumania, or Russia has, of course, opposed Stalin, and has been "bumped off" in consequence. It is never apparently necessary to prove such statements.

I trust that there has been no departure from your paper's high standard of impartiality, and hope to see other readers relating Russia's case for a change.—Yours, etc.,

A. SLATER.

OBITUARY

EDWARD CHARLES SAPHIN

Freethinkers all over the country will learn with profound regret of the death of Edward Charles Saphin which took place on January 30, in his 86th year. Gifted by nature with an ever youthful enthusiasm for serving Freethought, it was only within recent months that he allowed winter to interfere with his platform work for the West London Branch N.S.S.

A love for humanity and an intense zeal to serve his fellows were outstanding features in his character, and as a Baptist minister he worked hard in what he then felt was a noble calling.

As a Socialist candidate for election when Socialism was unpopular he gave proof of his courage. His thirst and search for knowledge led him to many new pathways and he began to see the light of Freethought. Here he found a new world

for thought and action, a world in which he could realise and express himself, and he plunged into the thick of it.

Astronomy fascinated him, and the elements of sun-worship, myths, and rites, in the Christian religion gripped him, and he had few equals in exposing that side of Christian beliefs. Gentlemanly in appearance and manner, he attracted a large number of faithful friends and admirers. As a lecturer, his services were sought all over the country where N.S.S. Branches were operating. Hyde Park was one of his favourite speaking spots, and for many years he held large audiences interested, a sure testimony to his power as a speaker and teacher. As one of the old guard he took no pay, indeed he paid for the privilege of giving his best to Freethought. He was one of a grand team in the brave days of old. To the widow and surviving members of the family we offer most sincere sympathy.

The cremation took place at Golders Green Crematorium on February 3. Representatives from London Branches of the N.S.S., members of the Executive, and others, joined the widow and relatives and listened to a Secular Service read by the General Secretary of the N.S.S.

R.H.R.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "Frederick Engels," Mr. J. C. SIDMONS, B.Sc.

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, February 14, 7 p.m.: "Biology and Human Behaviour," Mr. MAURICE BURTON, D.Sc.

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Debate, "Does God Exist?" Aff. Mr. D. A. McCRAE, M.A. (Principal Angus College); Neg. Mr. M. I. WHITEFIELD (N.S.S.).

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Indonesia," Mrs. OLIVE RENIER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (International Club, 64, George Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Is there a God?" Mr. CORCORAN (R.C.).

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Coopers Hall, 12, Shaw Street, Liverpool, 6).—Sunday 7 p.m.: "The Fundamentals of Catholicism," Rev. FRANCIS J. RIPLEY (Liverpool).

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "The Russian Myth," Mr. A. TURNER (S.P.G.B.).

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "How Civilisations Decay," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Ancient Rome and Modern America," Mr. F. A. RIDLEY (N.S.S.).

Wythenshawe Co-op. Men's Guild (Co-op. Hall).—Friday, February 18, 8 p.m.: "Evolution and Progress," Mr. SMITH (Manchester Branch N.S.S.).

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.

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MARXISTS AND GOD

WHY is it that Communism is often attacked by Catholic and Freethinker with comparable rancour? Are neither of these partisans prepared to submit to absolute freedom and equality of belief?

This is partly true. People who vituperate against Marxism on religious grounds do this, not because it seeks to do them down, but because it will not lend support in damning rival denominations, sects, creeds, etc. The Catholic Church will tolerate nothing, religious or secular, which challenges its hegemony on spiritual affairs. The Established Church will not forgo its privileged position in the State apparatus, and be forced to accept equality with Catholics and Nonconformists. Secularists, steeled in the fight against religious tyranny tend to become themselves advocates of oppression.

Communists are not against God—in principle. Marxists always accept reality. They certainly have no wish to exclude God from such acceptance—but God must be proved real!

Realities cannot be removed by disbelief. Consider, as an illustration, the story of someone who, seeing a hippopotamus, said: "There's no such animal." Communists are not like that. On the other hand, wishes are not realities. Gods cannot be created by processes of thought.

Conventional worship is, however, repulsive to most Communists, as to progressive people in general. This is partly the fault of the ecclesiastics themselves. It is preposterous to ask a man to worship a deity whom he recognises as his inferior. That is the case. The anthropomorphic God of the Israelites, and of Milton, graced with attributes of jealousy and vengeance, is below the average person today, and much below the more enlightened.

As an example, the Lord's Day Observance Society recently banned a show to raise funds for a Children's Christmas Party, and no doubt feel mighty righteous and confident that God in gratitude will bless them at the festive season. What a God theirs must be—if he does, indeed, rejoice in snatching toys out of little children's hands!

The fundamental mistake of many theologians is their tendency to "freeze" God at some period of history or another. They will not allow the idea to keep pace with social development. God is circumscribed. In their jargon, they just will not allow God to reveal himself to man.

There is an analogy in people's attitudes to Santa Claus and God, although at different stages of their growth. Many a child logician will determine the impossibility of a man having a sack holding sufficient toys for the world's children, and of performing miracles of locomotion with it. As long as grown-ups sustain the fiction, however, he will lack confidence in his logic, and keep steadfast in faith.

The would-be sceptic may have his misgivings about his beliefs, about God's omnipotence and omniscience. As long as reasonable folks around him are satisfied, he, too, will accept it. If he finds that they do not do so, then he will not.

A measure of what people can continue to believe in the face of rebutting evidence available in any museum, is instanced in recent arguments in the Press about the Ark that Noah had. How can literate persons remain so unaware of Science's findings? Does the vaccine of Genesis in childhood implant a lifelong immunity to knowledge in some?

Geologists, by fossil sequences and lead-ratios, have determined the earth's age as being at least 2,000,000,000 years, and the series of mountain-building revolutions of the crust as reaching double figures.

In face of this, how can people still think of the world as being "made" in six days, and all its creatures created at once, crammed in one aboriginal barge! In time, the story of the earth will be as familiar as its spherical shape, despite the obscurantism of reactionaries.

Having established the fatuity of believing in things squarely rebutted by conclusive evidence, it is nevertheless not possible to propound God's impossibility by similar proofs. Reasoning by impossibles can only disprove the earth itself, and even our own lives. All is impossible.

Time has no beginning. It is, therefore, impossible for it to have reached the present. The beginning of Time, from which the earth (or matter, at least) dates, recedes when we search for it. It passes ceaselessly from our ken into pre-eternity, into the infinite nothing. Having no beginning, matter must be without present. Therefore, if we accept realities, we can only do so in faith, and suppose that what is finite is our own understanding.

There is a distinction, however, between matter and "spirit." We find a comparative unity of thought when matter is the subject. In the face of material phenomena—fire, earthquake, snow—all religious sects react alike. They will observe, and describe what they observe, in parallel terms. When they turn to consider God, however, they are vague, even the members of the same sect differing exceedingly. The field for interpretation of the "mind of God" seems as boundless as the field of the novelist for the creation of characters.

Manifestly, there are realities which are proved, and other things which are less definite, or else purely chimerical. Is it not a great error, as some do, to attach the greatest weight to things least firmly established? Many people, ignoring economic and political realities, base all their actions on an airy foundation. This is the way to disaster and error. Its end may be as dire as that of Haigh, and other victims of delusions.

The only possible standpoint for the progressive man or woman, however, is one which presumes the continued existence, side by side, of religious and non-religious people, working together for the common good. Exaggeration of differences only plays into the hands of their common enemies—the cunning and powerful groups who, like gods themselves, are cynically plotting the destruction of the poor who made them rich.

A. SLATER.

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