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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Rome Wins in Belgium

SOME time ago, we had occasion in this column to refer to the then problematical case of Leopold, King of the Belgians, now for some years past, the enigma of European politics. Recently, the Leopold case has entered a new and, or so it would seem, a decisive phase. For the Belgian General Election held at the beginning of June was, in effect, a national plebiscite upon the question of the King's return. Its result has been to secure the return of a "Social-Christian"—i.e., Catholic-Conservative—Government pledged to pass the necessary legislation to terminate the present Regency and to secure the speedy restoration of the exiled monarch. Whilst the Belgian parties of the Left are still resolutely opposed to the Royal restoration, the odds now seem to be decisively weighted in Leopold's favour and his return to the Belgian throne in the near future seems to be now definitely assured.

Politically speaking, the Leopold affair is due, immediately, to political issues which, as such, lie outside the scope of *The Freethinker*. By way of elucidation, we may indicate that the recent and current conflict over the Belgian restoration forms part of the political and social struggle between Left and Right which divided our contemporary Europe and which included, but is, by no means confined to the struggles of such ideological "isms" as Fascism, Communism, Socialism, etc. The nominal points of disputes are now somewhat ancient: was the military capitulation of the Belgian army in 1940 before Hitler due to Leopold's treachery, as his critics maintain, or to unavoidable military necessity, as the royal supporters declare? Was Leopold a "collaborationist" with Fascism, a royal "quisling," or a sincere patriot, only anxious to save his country from irrevocable ruin?

In reality, these are excuses rather than the genuine reasons for the present controversy, and they are all rather ancient history nowadays. That Leopold personally sympathised with the Nazi counter-revolution is likely enough. Many European Conservatives did so a decade ago, and most European monarchs are deep in politics, usually upon the reactionary side. However, it is the Europe of 1950 rather than of 1940 with which we are at present concerned.

The proximate restoration of Leopold appears to represent an undeniable victory for Belgian and for European Conservatism. Individual Freethinkers naturally have their own personal point of view on political matters, and it would be outside the appropriate terms of reference of this column to comment here upon this purely political aspect. However, there is one aspect of the problem that undoubtedly falls inside our present scope, and that is the most striking aspect of the current situation: the restoration of King Leopold is, first and foremost, a resounding victory for the Roman Catholic Church. For it is the Belgian party of the Catholic "Cominform," of the "Black International" this time and not

the "Red," which has engineered the King's return, the "Christian Social" party, the Belgian mouthpiece of the Vatican. No doubt, it was not an accident that, as soon as the result of the General Election was known, Leopold hurried off to Rome from his Swiss exile and had a private audience with Pope Pius XIII, no doubt to receive his marching orders from that most astute professional diplomatist.

The victory thus gained by and for political Catholicism in Belgium is one of considerable practical importance. Belgium is one of the most economically advanced lands of Europe, and its geographical position is strategically important. Historically, Belgium represents that part of the original united Netherlands which adhered to the Catholic Church in the religious wars in the era of the Protestant Reformation and, as such, its retention within the Catholic fold has, since the sixteenth century, been a permanent objective of Roman ecclesiastical diplomacy.

In more recent times, it was the Vatican which engineered the Belgian Revolution of 1830, which freed Belgium from the rule of the Protestant Dutch and, half a century ago, Mr. Joseph McCabe, who himself studied at the Belgian Catholic University of Louvain, already then indicated the severity of the current struggle waged by Belgian clericalism against the rising forces of anti-clericalism and socialism (cf. *Twelve Years in a Monastery*).

The contemporary Roman victory in Belgium derives its importance from the fact that it forms part of the sinister drive now being made on a continental scale by political Catholicism towards world power: a dream of universal domination which still haunts the Vatican with an irresistible attraction. Rome, to-day, pursues, and not only in Belgium but on a world-wide scale, the policy which has so often served her so well in the past. In epochs of revolutionary change, when one social order is giving way to another, Rome poses as the champion of law and order and of the traditional scheme of things, and allies herself with the secular representatives of the ancient order of things: she did this after the Reformation, after the French Revolution, and she is repeating the same tactics to-day. The current clerical-conservative victory in Belgium represents the most recent example of a world-wide strategy frequently repeated in space and time.

Unfortunately, the real nature and aims of the Roman Catholic Church have been often misunderstood, even by otherwise keen critics, who have often tended to take the Catholic Church at its own face-value and to treat it primarily as a religion. Actually, Rome is, first and foremost, a power-seeking institution, which aims fundamentally at world-domination and uses religion and politics as cloaks for this supreme end as such. Its sociology is of at least equal importance with its theology. "Catholic Action," to-day, is of much greater practical importance than is, say, the ancient mythology of the Immaculate Conception. Some have been found to doubt

the existence of Jesus, but no one can possibly doubt that of the Jesuits!

The present victory of clericalism in Belgium must not be regarded as merely an end in itself. The ultimate ambitions of Rome go far beyond Belgium or even than Europe: they can only be satisfied by a renewed "medieval" era in which mankind is again subjected to the totalitarian sway of the Vatican. This, and this only, represents the final goal of political Catholicism for and towards which it tirelessly works, using impartially royal pawns and Catholic "democrats" for its purpose. For Freethinkers, it is (literally) a matter of life and death to stop the current Catholic advance. The "price of liberty is still eternal vigilance."

F. A. RIDLEY.

REORGANISING HUMAN SOCIETY

THE House of Lords recently debated a motion that initial steps be taken for the re-organisation of human society now in danger of collapse. It looks rather alarming on paper, but words will do that if one is not careful. Generally speaking, the report of the debate makes good reading, with the result a draw between pessimism and optimism. During most of the time arguments were intelligent and informative, until religion was intruded, and then the silly section came in. That was, of course, true to form in matter and manner, but it is a common trick of the trade. Public men and women dread the taunt of non-Christian more than anything else, and the introduction of a little religious dope keeps the heresy hunters at bay.

One must admit that man has made life on this earth almost a punishment, deserved by human beings for getting born. Christian countries have led the way and the churches have given full support. That is practically admitted by the Earl of Darnley who, realising the danger to humanity resulting from war, suggested scrapping the 37th Article from the Church of England's 39, which allows believers to go to war. The actual wording in the clause in the 37th Article reads: "It is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the magistrate to wear weapons and serve in the wars." The inference is that by scrapping that Article Christian believers would not wear weapons and would not serve in the wars. What Christ like simplicity.

The 39 Articles as an outline of doctrine for the Church of England were accepted in the 16th Century. Now I seem to remember having read somewhere that Christians had been indulging very liberally in wars and battles for centuries before the 39 Articles existed. Really, does any intelligent person outside a clergyman's collar believe that it was the 37th Article that sent Christians to fight in the Crimea, the Zulu War, Boer War, two world wars, etc. Take the whole of the British forces engaged in the last war, and I doubt if 37 could have been found to give the 37th Article as their reason for joining up. To the average combatant the 37th Article might have meant any article of equipment from a jack knife to a pull through. Surely the Earl of Darnley cannot be so simple as to imagine that scrapping the 37th Article would mean the end of Christians taking part in future wars.

Lord Noel-Buxton treated his colleagues to the following feast of clear thinking and definite ideas on the question before the House: "I fully support the religious attitude towards the problems of the world to-day; and in particular I am sure everyone realises that some understanding should be reached between east and west." Charlie Clapham could not have put it better. With red

Deans and blue archbishops, Socialist clergymen and conservative parsons, the state before the church with protestants and the church before the state with Roman Catholics, Lord Noel-Buxton agrees with them and on humbug. Remember we are only quoting the religious references made in the debate in order to show what happens when religion is introduced into serious discussions.

Lord Mountevans thought religion should be made more attractive, with snappy prayers. There is a great lack of humour associated with religion, he said. In what way snappy prayers and comic hymns might contribute to the re-organisation of human society was left unexplained. Could we be sure that if rounds of applause and laughter came from our churches instead of strains of "Safe in the arms of Jesus" Russia would resume presence at United Nations meetings, atom bombs would be scrapped, our Income Tax would be reduced, and the cost of living fall.

If not, the suggested alteration might be very dangerous for Christianity.

In the Sermon on the Mount we have a standard of infinite virtue said Lord Pakenham; well, what of it? Can Lord Pakenham name any country in the world where they have no standard of virtue. Adding the word "infinite" makes no difference in the conduct of Christians in comparison with non-Christians. Christians have no monopoly of human virtues, and they certainly have a good share of human vices. It does not need an omniscient mind to catalogue some possible lines of human conduct, the world has never been short of good advice for good conduct, and Christians are not above non-Christians for acting on it.

Religion has been one of the major curses upon humanity in all ages, and to toy with that curse as a remedy for its curses, if it is to be taken seriously, shows a gross misunderstanding of the part religion has played in human affairs, and an equally gross lack of understanding of human nature and its potentialities, which after all is the bed rock of social life and organisation. You can no more create a sound social structure on worn out and discarded religious beliefs, than you can erect a lasting edifice on a rotten foundation.

To reorganise human society and save it from collapse the first step is to scrap, not the 37th Article of religion but the causes of the disorganisation and approaching collapse. Civilisation has been knocked sick by two world wars. The population of this country is being financially bled to provide over two million pounds a day, every day, to deliver the knock-out to civilisation by a third world war.

Yet we are living in a world that is full of beauty and rich in the resources for economic security for everybody. At man's feet nature has laid the means for a full and happy life for every human being, if man will try to understand and use them. What the world needs is not those who can quote scripture as quack remedies for social ills and disorders, but leaders with the knowledge of human nature, and sharing its desires for happiness on this earth, and with a will to make every land great, because of its gigantic armed forces and enormous armouries, but because the people of those lands are living in peace, and are decently fed, clothed, housed, educated and free.

R. H. ROSETT.

Fellowship is heaven, and lack of fellowship is hell. The deeds that ye do upon the earth, it is for fellowship's sake that ye do them.—WILLIAM MORRIS.

THE ARABS IN SPAIN

THE ambitious Constantine "the Great" (274-337) by the Edict of Milan (312-313 winter) and the first Nicæan Council (325) had established Christianity as his State religion. Of Constantine himself, Lecky has to say, "of the fulsome and indeed blasphemous adulation which Eusebius poured upon Constantine, that Constantine was a sovereign whose character was at all times of the most mingled description, and who, after his conversion, put to a violent death his son, his nephew, and his wife" (*Eur. Morals* II, 261). Draper says "the disputes carried on in the Council of Nicæa offered a remarkable example of the greatest ignorance and confusion of idea, particularly in the language and explanations of those who approved of the decisions of that Council" (*Hist. Confl. Relig. and Science*, p. 204). Christianity, the only true religion, with its all-sufficient Bible, would tolerate no other faith and proceeded to destroy all pagan culture, thus producing the Dark Age, ca. 500-1050. The sack of Rome, 410 and 455, and the end of the Roman Empire, 476, are given by Christian apologists as the root cause of the 500 or 600 years of misery and semi-barbarism attending Christian authority and power.

The record of the Arabs in Spain refutes that Christian plea. The conspiracy of silence to conceal that magnificent development still obtains. The Arabs, who had ended the Persian Empire at the battle of Nehavend, 642 A.D., made their way west from Egypt, 647 A.D., and in year 710 practically took possession of the Iberian peninsula—setting up a civilisation, particularly in ninth and tenth centuries, which outshone that of the rest of Europe.

J. M. Robertson, in his *History of Freethought Ancient and Modern*, (2 vols., 1936), in his chapter "Freethought under Islam" (pp. 272-303) says: "In Spain the Moors came into contact with the Roman imperial polity, and at the same time with the different culture elements of Judaism and Christianity. To both of these faiths they gave complete toleration. Like their fellow Moslems in the East, they further learned all the science that the preserved literature of Greece could give them. The result was that under energetic and enlightened khalifs the Moorish civilisation became the centre of light and knowledge as well as of material prosperity for medieval Europe. Whatever of science the world possessed was to be found in their schools; and thither in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth centuries, flocked students from the Christian States of Western Europe." The best history is that of *Moorish Empire in Europe* (3 vols., by S. P. Scott, Philadelphia, 1904), the work consulted in a dozen different languages. It details the glories and wonders of Spain in contrast to the sloth and ignorance, darkness of barbarism and superstition of the rest of Europe. In smaller volume, Mr. J. McCabe's *Splendour of Moorish Spain* (1935), gives a good survey in place of the conspiracy of silence in books, wherein one would expect an account of social conditions, and attainments in medicine, science, literature, astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, philosophy, botany, jurisprudence.

Abd-al-Rahman I ["Servant of the Merciful" (God)] was founder of the independent Arabic power in Spain, 756 A.D., and made Cordova his capital, where he constructed a mosque. His policy of toleration towards Jews and Christians transcended all previous Christian practice, and thus won for his realm a great stimulus

in the way of variety of culture and industry. He kept control over the religious class. His son, Hisham, was priest-ridden; and when his successor, Hakam, showed an indisposition to patronise them to the same extent, they raised revolt after revolt (806-815), all put down by massacre.

Abd-al-Rahman II rewarded Ziryab, of Cordova, learned in music, song, geography, medicine, history and philosophy, with 40,000 pieces of gold a year. The Arab historian, Makkari, sums up the character of the outstanding Abd-al-Rahman III (born 891, reigning 912-961) as "the mildest and most enlightened sovereign. His meekness, generosity, and love of justice, proverbial; courage in the field, zeal for religion, fond of science, patron and respecter of the learned." His navy was the most powerful in the Mediterranean. "His son, Al Hakim II (961-976)," says Scott, "emancipated, and provided for, large number of slaves. No monarch of history equals him in the extent of his knowledge, or the number and diversity of his literary accomplishments. His library, up to that time, was the greatest repository of knowledge in Europe: Freethought universally prevalent." Mr. J. McCabe also says that "Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, and all the classic writers were translated into Arabic. Prodigiously large works on medicine, geography, philosophy, astronomy, chemistry and history were written. His commentaries were appreciated over the world. . . . He founded scores of new schools in Cordova and appointed his own brother 'Minister of Education,' to see that all his people had opportunities for learning." *The Encyclopædia Britannica*, under "Arabian Philosophy in Spain," tells how he opened 27 free schools in Cordova for the education of the poor, and that the mosques of the city were crowded with people listening to lectures on science and literature, law and religion. His successor, Hakim III, condemned such forbidden books to the flames—requiring future supplies from Damascus and Baghdad to provide for the brief series of illustrious men towards the end of the eleventh century: Avempace, Abubacer and Averroes. The introduction of Arabic philosophy and science into Europe culminated under the patronage of the freethinking Frederick II (1212-1250), "the Wonder of the World."

Spain, under Arab rule in ninth and tenth centuries, presented a pleasant mode of life with many amenities missing in Christendom. Population was 30 million—24 million now. People were literate. Bridges, roads, aqueducts, canals, irrigation, water supply, postal service on main roads, road patrols, watch towers, street paving and lighting, draining, dredging, baths and gardens (private and public), education, cleanliness, employment, agriculture, industries, were matters given attention. Cities were distinguished for their industries and productions: Almeria surpassing the world in silken stuffs; Murcia for silk and carpets; Seville for wine (the Koran ignored) and olive oil; Jativa for linen and paper (first in Europe); Toledo for metal work; and so on for brocade, damask, iron, copper and glass utensils, cotton, needlework, shipbuilding, tanyards, etc. (see *Arabs in Spain*, by Whishaw, 1912).

Against that, at same time, the Papacy was in the abyss of Papal vice and crime, including what Cardinal Baronius bluntly called "the Rule of the Whores" (900-964 A.D.). Arab Spain was not free from vice, sensuality and cruelty, but the general level of character was high. The Arabs had been in Spain since the eighth century and given Spain its most brilliant period of mental and industrial development. They gave full

toleration to Christians, but the Arab power, through internal dissensions and the success of the religious orthodox against intellectual development, was weakened and their rule came to an end with the surrender of Granada, in 1492. "No faith was kept with the victims. Granada had surrendered under the solemn guarantee of the full enjoyment of civil and religious liberty. At the instigation of Cardinal Ximenes that pledge was broken" (Draper, *Conflict*, p. 148). The end came in Philip III's reign in sixteenth century, with their final expulsion carried out with "unflinching barbarity" (Buckle). Scott tells how in Granada Mohammed I had given "audience twice a week at the gate of his palace to the humblest suitor certain of attentive hearing. No person too insignificant to be restored to his rights: no one too powerful to escape the consequences."

Compare with the conditions of Spain to-day in the time of "the most Christian gentleman," General Franco.

The lesson of Moorish Spain is this: it disproves and disposes of the Christian apologists' claim that a long time is necessary to develop people from barbarism, and, therefore, that long centuries were needed under Christian rule, even when vested with authority, power and wealth. So disproves also the case of Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths (453-526); and again, that of Frederick II (1194-1250), discredits the apologists' claim. Mr. Joseph McCabe says that the victory of Charles Martel in 732 over the Arabs who invaded France, "saved Europe—from civilisation."

GEORGE ROSS.

THE HEAVENLY TWINS

II.

YOU cannot expect the mythology of every region and period to follow exactly the pattern of our 2x2 principles. Gods were blended and changed their characteristics, and whilst the Sun was the representant of death and hellfire for southern peoples, he was the saviour and friend of the northerners. Let us therefore examine some aspects.

Egypt, being maintained through the Nile inundations, had nothing to fear from the sun; the floods started with the helical ascent of Sirius (Sothis), a bright star by *Leo* (lion). Sirius was conceived as a hairy (bearded) woman, as *seir* could mean both hair or ray (cf. Samson's long hair). Its representant, the *sphinx*, shows a bearded woman with a lion's body.

Gold stands for Sun—they both have the same symbol; so have Moon and silver. The constellation in which the sun exercises its top strength, is called *Leo*, as the lion unites all sun characteristics: violent strength and a yellow mane (rays). Other symbols for the sun rays were the spear (of Mars) or arrows. Apollo, before he became the gentle leader of the Muses, was a "Destroyer" whose deadly arrows spread pestilence. Mythologically, Poebos-Apollo was a twin such as Mars Quirinus, the spear bearer (Mars, fr. MAVORS, Mors = Death), and they were connected with the wolf,⁽¹⁾ a constellation by Scorpion with its deadly sting. The Martian twins, Romulus and Remus, are brought up by a she-wolf as their female component. Races are connected with sun worship (cf. the *luperci*, and *salii* = runner).⁽²⁾

In his beneficent aspect, however, the sun is delegated by ram, sheep, goat or lamb, with the moon or sky god as the "Good Shepherd" (an appellation of Hermes). In Akkad, the sun was called UZ, *goat*, literally "the climber." In the Persian period the star constellation of

the first month of the year (Nisannu) was the "Goat," the second (Airu) the "Bull of Heaven" (Alap shame) and that of the third (Simanu) was called "The Faithful Shepherd of Heaven and the Great Twins" (tu'ame rebuti). The twins among the "Twelve Sons of Jacob" were Simon and Levi, with an occasional appearance of their sister Dinah. Jacob (koptic KEB = to go round) too, was a twin; his brother Esau (Hairy) or Edom (Red) was elder, yet the bald and smooth moon representant managed to get priority. So did Moses over Aaron; they are only occasionally complemented through their sister Miriam.

Buddha (The Enlightened One),⁽³⁾ is clearly a twin of the principles 2 + B; he dies from a scorpion sting⁽⁴⁾ or, after another version, from boar's meat. The boar, a satellite of Scorpion, is connected with Yule tide (winter sun). The first citizens of Rome were the Martian twins; so were the first world citizens, Adam (ruddy) and Eve (chawa = Life), in the genuine version of ch. i, called "Ish and Isha" (He-man and She-man)—the Persian Meshia and Meshiane. This is corroborated by an Agadic Midrash (Erubin 18a): God had to split the first twins; the Theban Kadmos⁽⁵⁾ is Adam-Qadmoni: the Red One from the East (or Beginning), with his wife Pyrrha (Fire) Cain (who slew his gentle brother) means "spear" (for Mars). Queer enough, the wise Serpent, is just a female doublet to Eve and hence a version of—the Holy Spirit.

Shamash was worshipped in the twin-city of Larsa, his shrine was called *E-Babbar*, Shining House; the two aspects of Light were Marduk and Nabu (a Father and Son),⁽⁶⁾ their temples, E-Sagila and E-Zida, were inseparably connected; when the idol of one moved out, that of the other entered in procession.

Whatever deity in India temporally represented the bright sky was conceived as a twin. The Vedic Indra (root IDH—to kindle, IDDHA—afame; brother of Krishna = Blackmoon), whose weapon was the rain-bow, went together with Agni (Fire), the god sleeping in the cross-shaped wood from which fire was "drilled"; in order to render this cross more stable, its ends were often crooked and became the "svastika," which, when these extensions were curved, was the symbol of the rolling Sun Wheel.⁽⁷⁾ Varuna (Encompasser—of the world) presiding over Night and Water, was coupled with Mitra (Friend, Companion) and both were frequently invoked as one entity (Mitravaruna). Akin, but with somewhat differing aspects, were the Persian sun god Mithra and the Greek Uranos. The sun was Varuna's eye, the light, his son, and the waters were his wives.

Frequently one twin (the gentle 2B principle) is pursued and slain by his hostile brother. Every 27½ days the moon returns to the same star constellation, and every 29½ days she is "united" with the sun. Jacob, fleeing his jealous brother, has occasional meetings with him.⁽⁸⁾ The Hindus observe 27 "stations" (Lokapāla) beginning with that of Indra. The lunar stations of Saturn every seventh day (Saturday) coincide with the four lunar phases;⁽⁹⁾ Saturn being the "hostile" planet, the Babylonians, Hebrews and others considered that no useful work could be done on Saturdays.

Says Tibull (v. 17-18):—

"Aut ego sum causatus aves, aut omina dira,
Saturni aut sacram me tenuisse diem."

PERCY G. ROY.

TAILPIECE.—It remained for the Puritan Pharisees to apply to Sunday the Saturnian biliousness of the Sabbath. Their Jesus removed himself over the gloom of that day so as to rise in glory on Sunday, his proper

day. In three of the four gospels it is related how he and his disciples went on the Sabbath day through a cornfield and plucked the ripe ears. The Pharisees warned him, that it was unlawful to do this on a Sabbath (Matt. xii, Luke vi); and "he said unto them: The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark ii, 27). Then the Pharisees schemed how to destroy him.—P.G.R.

FOOTNOTES

(1) According to Pausanias (x, 14, 4) there were wolves and a brazen image of a lion in the temple of Delphi, the shrine of Apollo Lykeios.

(2) King Zoser of Egypt (3. dynasty) wore the (libyan) "case" for the ceremonial foot-race. The king, upon whose fitness the crop of his country depended (Diodor, i, 70), had to keep very strict regulations.

(3) From budh = to awake, recognise, learn. An appellation of the moon was *budha* (wise), son of Soma (Mercur). Wednesday (Mercur's day, French Mercredi) = budha-dina.

(4) The scorpion was the emblem of Iskhanna, wife of the Saturnial Nergal (Lord of the Great Abode of Rest), Lady of the Other World. After the Autumn equinox in *libra* (Dinah = Justice), the sun enters his doom in *scorpio*; he dies in *amphora* at Yule time with a resurrection 3 days later.

(5) Kadmos, who reaped from dragon teeth the first living beings, begot the moon as his daughter Semele (Helene or Selene = shining; in Hebrew Lebanah = silver-white).

(6) At the same time, Nebo (*nabû*) = harbinger, prophet, is the moon. Marduk has a twin brother and a virgin sister. Osiris, in order to resurrect with the vegetation, is slain by his twin brother Set, but he does not fight. The decisive battle is fought between Seth and Horus, the *son*! It is they who represent the two hostile principles, quite apart from sun and moon gods.

(7) Svastika, fr. *sva* (prosperity), root *SU*—to bring forth, hence *SUN* and *SON* (Sanskrit *sūnu*).

(8) The moon stays $2\frac{1}{2}$ days in each constellation, as it is put in Nr. 455 of the "Arabian Nights" this chapter is a summary on *Astrology*, according to which the sun is: hot, dry, mostly ill-bearing—the moon: cold, damp, happy-omened—Mercur (twin): both together since of mixed nature, black-white. *Ianus* looking with two faces East and West.

(9) Quarrelling representants of astral twins are Peter-Paul or the Indian saint Narada (the Human One; *amphora* is the sign of Man, hence Jesus the "Son of Man") and his companion Parvata.

(10) Hence the moon as tutor of Mankind. *Más* = the measurer; *mén, méné*, Minos the law-giver (with his bull Mino-taurus) and judge of the souls, Moses, the law-giver with bull horns, Manu, the first man (measurer or thinker), *almanach* = counter.

POETRY TO-DAY

It is often held (especially, I am afraid, by the elderly and even middle-aged) that poetry has become in our time a matter of cliques and coteries, something to be enjoyed only by those who have been initiated into a kind of literary secret society. Personally, I have never thought this. I have, from time to time, written in these columns and elsewhere of the poets of our day who, to my mind, are enjoyable by the normally intelligent reader. And those poets who can be enjoyed do not merely include the traditionalists, like Walter de la Mare and John Gawsworth, but also the supposed modernists, like T. S. Eliot and Dylan Thomas.

A book has just appeared in the series of Penguin Poets which seems to me to bear out what I have said, and I hasten to recommend it. *Contemporary Verse* (Penguin Books; 1s. 6d.) is edited by Mr. Kenneth Allott, himself a poet and also Lecturer in English Literature in the University of Liverpool. If it has any flaw it is that it tends to give some slight over-representation to the more fashionable writers, and to ignore some, like John

Gawsworth and Herbert Palmer, who are not what I call coterie writers. But it does provide a useful selection of work written mainly within the past 20 years or so. It starts with Yeats and ends with Sidney Keyes, that brilliant young man who died in Tunisia in 1943 at the age of 21.

For Freethinkers and those who share a generally rational outlook on theology, the book will have an especial interest for one reason—it shows a comparatively new development, in that some poets of our time appear to have rediscovered religion. This applies not merely to T. S. Eliot, whose theological views are well known, but to many of the younger writers, like Anne Ridler and Norman Nicholson, whose work has a religious tendency that would have been impossible ten years ago.

What is a trifle disconcerting, in fact, is that these poets, when they have any positive attitude towards religion, seem to follow a more or less reactionary religion. Possibly the philosophy of Modernism or Unitarianism does not provide enough colour for the poet; I do not know. But what I do know is that such religious attitudes do not seem to own any major poets.

I hope that what I have said does not stop readers who are interested in poetry from purchasing Mr. Allott's anthology, however. It contains much that is of considerable value, and considerably less that is third-rate than most of the anthologies of recent years. We are already realising that in the stress of emotions brought about by the events of 1939-45, many supposed poets made great reputations which they did not really deserve. Those reputations are already fading. None of those poets are represented in Mr. Allott's selection, which is a small mercy for which we can be duly thankful.

JOHN ROWLAND.

THE SPIRIT KEEPETH ALIVE

It is good for the soul
To pass by unperceived
Upon its pilgrimage;
To strive to reach its goal,
None knowing how it grieved,
Or was consumed by rage.
It is good for the soul
Never to utter moan;
To be alone, alone
Within the body's cage.

The strongest man on earth
Is he who most alone
Faces his world all dark;
Who knows his inner worth;
Knows spirit, flesh and bone
Make one man, whole and stark.
For spirit weak or fled
Causes the life to shrink,
The flesh to rot and stink;
The walking bones are dead.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

After the many years given to the discussion as to whether women should be allowed to enter the priesthood, two delegates to the Church Assembly have "come to the conclusion that the Church does not really want us." Remarkable deduction! Let the women take heart, the Church still needs them—on the other side of the altar rails.

ACID DROPS

The Archbishop of Canterbury waxed exceedingly witty at the expense of his colleague, the Red Dean, at the Mansion House Dinner. The Archbishop agrees that they differ on political views, but the Red Dean "holds profoundly and sincerely precisely the same Christian faith." The Dean's co-directors on the *Daily Worker* may not like to be reminded of this, but then the *Daily Worker* set-up is like no other Communist paper in the world.

An American parson was admonished in a Washington (U.S.A.) court after the City Fire Department had complained that over 1,000 people tried to get into the United House of Prayer, the seating capacity of which is only 500. The Fire Inspector said that it "may be your business to save souls, ours is to save lives." The parson replied that there "wouldn't be a fire as long as God is here." Now we know why so many churches in England catch fire.

The efforts of modern Christianity to stress the "Gentle Jesus" angle as against the "Jealous God" is obviously meant for home consumption, for when it comes to training commandos, the Lord God of Hosts comes into his own. In a monastery in Cyrene (North Africa), soldiers are trained on a much tougher basis than during the war, and the training is well mixed with plenty of the God of Battles à la Old Testament. The Chaplain-General, speaking of the new "soldier-priesthood," says that a man can go to the uttermost limits of physical endurance if he allows "God to help him." General Crozier's statement that Christianity is the finest blood-lust creator, still holds good.

The Bishop of Jerusalem bemoans the fact that in Israeli there are so many Jews without any religion, and he is quite certain that they won't be content to go on in this way. "The Israeli State," he is reported to have said, "may find its way to the ideal of the Catholic Church"—which means, if it means anything at all, that the Jews in Palestine may one day go bodily over to Christ Jesus. Some hope! Christians have been trying to convert Jews for nearly 2,000 years and they are lucky if they get half a dozen converts a year. No instructed Jew could swallow the balderdash of a Virgin-born Son of God Almighty.

No one need be surprised that in a book on Psychology. Dr. E. S. Waterhouse—writing of course for religious people—insists that, though Jesus "was ignorant of psychology, he was all the same the greatest Psychologist that ever lived." We are quite sure that one day Jesus will be shown to have been a greater run-getter than Don Bradman, a much greater Channel swimmer than, say, Temme, who has swum the Channel both ways, and, if it comes to playing bridge, no doubt Jesus will be hailed as the greatest bridge player the world has ever known. Why not? After all, he is Almighty God, and an Almighty must be greater than anybody else at anything.

In a review of Canon Redlich's *The Early Traditions of Genesis*, the *Church Times* complains that "of edifying doctrine the book is absolutely innocent," and that, except for a bare notice in the Introduction, there is "no mention whatever of Jesus Christ." We share the pain this must cause any fervent believer in God's Precious

Word. After all, the Fall of Man is a Cardinal Doctrine of Genesis, and without such a Fall, how could "our Lord" become the world's greatest Saviour? Perhaps the worthy Canon does not believe in the Fall, perhaps he finds it difficult to swallow a story which declares that a Serpent could speak perfect Biblical Hebrew. Such scepticism deserves the severest condemnation, but like Bishop Barnes, no doubt Canon Redlich will get away with it.

A notable saying of the week is, "It is because we are going forward, not because we are retreating, that we need more men," and the Bishop of Southwell must be congratulated on putting it so neatly. The fact that fewer candidates than ever are hearing God's call to his Ministry proves the outstanding success of Christianity. We are now looking forward to the time when the last solitary Bishop left to the Church of Christ leaves this Vale of Tears for a Happier Land—for then, at long last, this will prove the greatest of all Christian Victories. Christ will have conquered the world!

An indication of the doldrums into which religion has fallen is apparent by the plea of the Bishop of Buckingham to his church workers to carry out "talent spotting" for future ministers. The number of clergy is shrinking so rapidly that every encouragement is to be given to "members of choirs, Sunday school teachers and servers." Only a short 50 years ago, the saying was common that the "fool of the family entered the Church." It appears that even "fools" are now at a premium.

A Kingston Church Magazine reports that one of the communicants had her handbag stolen whilst she was at the altar. The police were informed and arrested a man who was later sentenced to six months' imprisonment. The vicar waxes quite fulsome and says, "Thanks to the police, this was a smart piece of work, and we ought to be grateful." He also urged people to be more careful in the future. Faith in the Lord is all right, but a policeman is much more efficient.

A circular distributed by the Southwark Diocesan Catholic Parents and Electors' Association called on all Catholics to vote for three Conservative candidates in a local election who were Catholics, against the Labour candidates who were not. The *Tribune* puts the question: "Does the Roman Church claim the right to order its followers to vote" in a certain way? And does the Catholic Hierarchy approve of the Association's action? The questions are obviously rhetorical, for the Editors of *Tribune* are not so naive as not to know that the answers to both questions is yes! But just in case the *Tribune* is really seeking information, may we add that the Catholic Church claims the right to guide the "faithful" in faith and morals, which to a Catholic covers pretty well everything.

How these Christians love one another was demonstrated recently at Shawinigan Falls, Quebec. Christian Brethren, a Protestant sect, held their services in a small chapel situated in a largely Catholic area. They had their premises wrecked by a mob of 1,500 devout R.C.s. Windows were broken, prayer-books and Bibles torn and thrown into the street. As usual, in such cases where the R.C.s are in control, no arrests were made.

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601. 41, Gray's Inn Road,
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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mr. A. SYKES (U.S.A.), Mr. G. WARREN.—Thanks for cuttings.

G. FRYER.—Your amusing caricature occupies a place of honour in our office.

BENEVOLENT FUND, N.S.S.—The General Secretary gratefully acknowledges a donation of 15s. from Mr. S. J. Barker (Natal).

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).

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.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

On Thursday evening, July 6, in the Wanstead Forum, Community Centre (Essex), the Rev. A. C. Gates, Rector of Wanstead, will debate the affirmative "That Christianity is the only hope for the world to-day." The negative will be taken by Mr. F. A. Ridley. The proceedings begin at 8 o'clock and admission is free.

Just a last reminder to Birmingham Branch N.S.S. members and friends that the Coach and Theatre Trip to Stratford-on-Avon takes place on Saturday, July 15. The coach leaves the Hall of Memory at 3 p.m. promptly. Those who have not done so must contact Mr. T. G. Millington, 6, Heskett Avenue, Birmingham, at once, if they wish to join the outing.

The Rationalist Press Association Annual Conference will be held at Magdalen College, Oxford, Friday, August 4 to Tuesday, August 8, 1950. Subject: "The Irrational in Modern Thought." Conference President—H. Hamilton Fyfe. Speakers: Prof. A. J. Ayer, "Existentialism"; Dr. Hermann Bondi, "New Thoughts on the Nature of the Universe"; Stuart Hampshire, "Some Recent Forms of Irrationalism"; Prof. A. Heintz, "Intellectual Conditions in Post-War Norway"; J. Hutton-Hynd, "American Humanism To-day"; Archibald Robertson, "Karl Barth"; S. K. Ratcliffe, "The Irrational in Literature"; Warren Sandell, "Modern Developments in Roman Catholicism." Conference tickets may be obtained from the Rationalist Press Association Ltd., 5 and 6, Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, E.C. 4. Members of R.P.A., £5 5s.; Non-Members, £6 6s.; lectures only, £2 2s.

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION

XIII

HEAVEN, as a fiction variously described by different peoples, is a symbol of unsatisfied desire. Having found that this life is transitory and that its desires, when satisfied, are followed by satiety and boredom, men have invented future worlds where these ills will not exist. The Elysian Fields of the Greeks and the Romans were the abode of the blessed dead. Virgil described this realm of the blessed in the Sixth Book of the Aeneid; in this land, where a freer air clothed the fields with a brilliant light, some of the blessed exercised their limbs on the grassy wrestling places and contended with each other in games in the yellow sand. Others danced and sang while the Thracian priest dressed in a long robe accompanied their measures with the seven notes of the scale, playing now with his fingers, and now with an ivory plectrum. Ancient heroes with their arms and horses and chariots were there. Others of the blessed feasted in a laurel scented grove from which flowed the deep waters of the River Eridanus to the upper world. Those who had suffered wounds while fighting for their country were also there together with the priests who had preserved their chastity while life remained and with the holy seers who had spoken things worthy of Phoebus and with those who had improved life with the arts that they had discovered and with those who had done things deserving remembrance among mankind. The brows of the patriots, priests, seers, and benefactors of men were girt with a snow white fillet. The Elysian Fields were on the whole a melancholy place; and the blessed led a vague, shadowy existence there where no one had a fixed dwelling place.

The ancient Scandinavians desired in Valhalla a place to which their warriors, having been awakened by the kisses of the Valkyries, would be taken to be served ale and hydromel by these damsels and to fight forever. This, it must be admitted, would be a nice paradise. The North American Indians desired a perpetual hunting ground which they called the happy hunting ground. The peoples who have professed Christianity have desired a heaven where they might sing hymns forever and find security from the ills of the earth, such as disease, old age, death, and storms. "Duranos" of the Greek of the New Testament like *heaven* in English means sky; so to go to heaven means to go nowhere; for the solid sky of the ancients does not exist. In the Koran, Mohammed promised the faithful a paradise of houris, limpid fountains, fruits, palm trees, and pomegranates, but mostly of houris.

The Christian conception of heaven is that of a place in the sky where God and Christ are rulers of the spirits of the elect; where there is a cubical celestial city, the holy Jerusalem, which measures twelve thousand stadia on a side and whose wall is a hundred and forty-four cubits high by the measure of a man, which is of the angel; where a river of the water of life flows from the throne of God and the Lamb and a tree of life grows in the midst of the street of the city and on both sides of the river; and where there is no night and the glory of God lightens the city and the Lamb is its light. It is curious how men of any degree of culture could believe in the chimera of heaven which is manifestly a human invention and the existence of which is supported by nothing.

"I shall not treat of the sacred scriptures, for they are the supreme truth."—Leonardo da Vinci. This expression of the popular attitude in Europe and the Americas toward the Bible explains how such a book

has been regarded for so long as the source of all truth. A book declared to be sacred and then left unexamined might naturally come to occupy a high place in the minds of the people who do not think well; and the policy of the Catholic Church has been to discourage their reading of the Bible. The only requirement for non-belief in the Bible by an intelligent man is that he read it or merely read a part of it. The efficacy of the Catholic policy is evident.

If the salvation of our souls depended on such a book as the Bible, we should at times be disturbed as to what their salvation depended on. Many passages and indeed whole books of the Bible are impossible to understand, as, for example, the Book of Revelations which is an extreme example of apocalyptic or visionary literature and might have been accepted for the canon because it was the most unintelligible book of its type available. The epistles ascribed to Paul are generally didactic in nature and are a chief source of the Christian system. There are passages in them which are meaningless especially if we set aside the traditional interpretations of them and examine them as they are. One example is Romans, VIII, 18-26, in which the subject discussed is apparently the resurrection of the Christians from the dead and which is clear in no language, neither in the Greek nor in the Latin and English translations. Such passages would fill with doubt and misery religious men having the power to think. Then we are told that the Bible is a book of spiritual comfort!

To be taught from such a book as the Bible, especially in childhood and youth, is one of the greatest misfortunes which can befall a man; but reason and philosophy can counteract the bad effects of such instruction. The need for ethical teaching and training in his life is easily seen; but some system of ethics other than those systems provided by religions is necessary. In religion we discover the unreason of men, not their reason; and this is why religion is only occasionally conducive to ethics and is frequently productive of folly and crime.

It could be argued that millions have believed the Bible and that therefore it is true. It does not matter what millions or even billions have done; they do not have the faculty of higher reason and by that fact cannot have a deciding voice in intellectual matters; and their belief means only that men are credulous and not that what they believe is true. It is a law of the intellect that a decision as to the truth or falsity or other quality of a thing can be reached only through the power of impartial thought; the number of minds through which the matter involved has passed has nothing to do with the correctness of the decision. What millions believe may help to form the customs of societies and may constitute what is accepted as the truth; but it does not constitute the truth. Men may rightly be dominated as the unthinking and irrational animals; and, whether one or a thousand or a million of them believe an unreasonable thing, it is of little importance.

The Bible contains passages of some philosophical value and perhaps a few of literary value. Be that as it will, the world of men would be as well off if the Bible had never existed. No intelligent child should be exposed to it; when he has arrived at the age of reason, he might examine it as a collection of fables, philosophic discourses, and lies, all of which he would be easily able to distinguish; but this examination would be purely voluntary. The lessons of the Bible should be taught nowhere. The rash might desire that all copies of the Bible be collected and burnt; however, there is a better remedy than that: let more and more copies of the Bible be printed and let

intelligent men read it; and the time may come when it will be less believed than it is now.

It has been correctly observed by the Freethinkers that the Bible is seldom and usually never read by the votaries of Christ. As much might be said of other sacred books. Sacred books are apparently not printed to be read but are printed to be laid in a corner and collect dust. Otherwise, they would not be printed so frequently in nearly the smallest type used in printing; and in this respect they resemble dictionaries which are not intended to be read from cover to cover but merely momentarily and are printed in small type in order to obtain compactness of size. It is and has been for a long time customary to print Bibles in type as small as 5½ point type; and such type is suitable, as far as printing books designed for reading is concerned, mainly for footnotes.

This beautiful tradition in the art of printing Bibles ensures that the soul of the most patient reader will be wearied before he has completed a paragraph of dense print.

What has such a book as the Bible, especially the Old Testament, to do with us in this age? The answer is nothing. The Bible is neither a book of philosophy, nor of a good morality, nor of a wise and just civil law.

WILLIAM RITTENOUR (U.S.A.)

"ORDERS OF THE GARTER"

THIS order, we are told, was first instituted by King Edward III, 1348, and was reformed by Henry VIII with Saint George added to the Garter, at an instauration in the Knights' Chapel, Windsor Castle, where all swear right singular love, good zeal and ardent affection for chivalry and loyalty to his august Majesty.

Obscurities, doubts, ambiguities and wrong feelings about the Garter, caused a reformation of this Order, whose regulations were again amended for gentlemen of blood to have the regalia habit and wear the Garter; and any K.G. without this left leg badge of virtue was liable to suspension by the College and fined £10. This College has its Dean, Warden, 12 canons secular, 8 petty ditto, 13 vicars, 13 clerks, 13 choristers, 5 other officers, a Chancellor, the Prelate, black rod man, Usher at Arms and Registrar, to guard secrets according to Statute XV while the gold neck collar enamelled with white and red roses is worn apertly and openly, but not so the noble Garter which is worn *sub rosa*, and the riband must be blue, with the motto *Honi soit qui mal y pense*.

The historical fancy of Edward III, picking up Joan's (Countess of Salisbury) garter, and openly restoring it to her is said to be the foundation of this most noble Order and its virtuous badge. "The Garter." A curious rigmarole about Joan's garter is discovered in rare MSS in the Ashmolean Library, Oxford, and these writings admit the Garter Order to be "a vain and idle romance derogatory to its Founder." These statements are important as coming from Elias Ashmole, a member of the Middle Temple and Windsor Herald at Arms.

Garters and chivalry were always hand-in-hand and so were Joan and Henry. She was William de Grandison's beautiful daughter, bravely defending her castle during the wars and the Earl of Salisbury's absence when King Henry arrived to succour her. The King with the Countess enlivened themselves by banqueting and dancing, which struck the first spark of love into his heart and she asked "Sir, what are you musing on?" The King soon told the sweet lady that she had wholly overcome him, and she virtuously replied, "My dear Lord, do not tempt me, but be honourable, even as my husband serves your Majesty."

as a valiant knight." Peace being proclaimed, festivities were held in London, where the Countess of Salisbury danced with the King, her garter came off, and his Majesty, in the face of all courtiers, restored the delicate article to Joan, who, blushing at a ribald jest, was set at ease by the King addressing the assembly with the now famous words, "Honi soit qui mal y pense."

Then followed a new Order of the "Blues," in commemoration of a similar mishap to Joan's, to Queen Philippa, whose underdress dropped in the presence of men and women, and the women of this assembly were enrolled as Ladies of the Queen's Robes.

During these historical days, the Garter formed part of wedding ceremonies, when it was customary to give garters to the bride and also to pull them forcibly from her legs; both acts being considered as "favours," to loosen the "Virgin Zone" and such was the rough usage by men at church altars that the bride had her protecting escort of ladies now known as bridesmaids.

The word "garter" etymologically explains these "favour" ordeals; "gar" means both to guard and the upper leg; to bind, as a guarded place, the garten, garden. These garters were leathern, ornamented and conferred by Richard Coeur de Lion, 1190, upon his favourites who might be stirred to manly actions with women, an eastern custom learned by Richard when crusading in the Holy Land. Earlier than 1190, William the Conqueror, before 1066, instituted a noble Order with the insignia of:—

"A blood-red cross was on the dress,

A dragon on his crest,

A golden garter did carress

The leg all glory to express."

John Restall, Sir Thomas Moore's son-in-law, states in his "Anglorum Regum Chronicum," that Edward III, at Wyndesore, perfected the Garter Order first begun by Richard Coeur de Lyon, at the siege of Acres, creating there 26 knights, causing them to wear thongs of blue leather about their legs and dubbed them "Knights of the Blue Thonge." Henry VIII knew of these ancient Garter Orders, and for this reason reformed his Most Noble Order, by employing Polydore Vergil, an ecclesiastical historian to make search in these matters. Vergil being an Italian produced much rare information from the Vatican and other Italian libraries, added to which, he examined English State documents, and some of the more curious items which could not be printed now, appeared then in Vergil's *De Rerum Inventoribus*, showing the secret sexual and religious ceremonies of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, as it was instituted during the most early times. Much of these garter rites was copied by Edward III when he battled at Calice (Calais) where the motto in old French was first produced and commenced with "honi," meaning shame and not "evil" as is said in the English rendering.

The blue Rib-band was changed from a belt to a ribbon worn over the right shoulder, then changed again to the left shoulder, by a Chapter held July 30, 1681, when Charles was King. These innovations were made when he being Duke of Richmond became a knighted Garter; the first Duke of Richmond became a knighted Garter; Madame Charles's natural son by his French mistress Vol. 1, page 660. Buonaparte instituted similar changes in the French Order of the Cordon Bleu, and at the same time changed his name "Buonaparte" to Napoleon; literally Lion of the Forest (Napo, forest; Leon, lion).

The ancient Gauls in turn copied the old Roman fraternity of "Equites Auroe Periscelidis" whose lodges were composed of a brotherhood which Tertullian called

Searchers for Truth in his *Cult Fem.* The Roman Perisceldis wore anklets as their badge similar to that of the early Greeks for *perisceldis* signifies round the leg, band garter, of a secret sex cultis in Greece, which has been fully expounded by Richard Payne Knight, Britt. Mus. Trustee, and Sir William Hamilton, both brilliant antiquaries.

"The First of the First" of all Garters was ordered in ancient Egypt where the Greeks learned their secret teachings and imitated the sacred ritual of Egyptian priest philosophers whose mysteries explain the blue and blood red colours, the leathern "Thonge" or whip, and the garter to guard a place of honour, "mons veneris." The ancient and most noble Order of the Garter originally admitted women to its mysteries as did ancient Freemasonry, and the first lady of England to be made Knight of the Garter was Queen Elizabeth.

The Egyptian hieroglyphic ritual showed the colour blue as figurative of the soul, reproduction and potency. These were divine truths of Hes, the royal bearing mother; and, to lose the blue, meant dishonour. The allegory of the biblical "Fall" is akin to the Egyptian teaching, copied into the Jewish Targum of Palestine as: The eyes of both were enlightened and they knew they were naked divested of the blue robe and saw their shame. To retain the blue therefore was honourable; hence conferring the blue ribbon of that most noble Order Cordon Bleu and of the Garter instituted in Egypt by "Wisdom" the recoverer of mankind from the "Fall," symbolical of virility, the spirit implied by the Garter to guard virtue, majesty, glory and power are ancient forms of the soul colour Blue.

Red signifies in hieroglyphics life, the blood-source of flesh, the stream of being, including the seminal essence. Red and blood were dual truths as flesh-makers, feminine first, then male; and, Pure to the woman for she is free of the dust which made man of red earth.

The blood-sucking dragon detested by women, in mythology gives rise to valiant St. George slaying the beast for which he is the honoured protecting Saint of England, women and the Order of the Garter.

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

A CRIME PROBLEM

MOST people who take up an unusual and sensible position on theology will realise that one of the main attributes of the rational human being is an understanding of the value of evidence. In fact, it is only the person who can appreciate the value of the evidence given in a court of law, during a puzzling criminal trial, who can possibly come to a sensible conclusion on one of the many problems of theology, associated with the life of Jesus Christ on earth. For that reason, I feel that all who aspire to understand theological problems should be given a course of reading in criminology. And of the criminological puzzles of the past century, perhaps the most outstanding one is the case of Madeleine Smith, about which a successful film has lately been made.

One of those who did some research work on the film was Mr. Peter Hunt, and his book, *The Madeleine Smith Affair* (Carroll and Nicholson; 11s.), gives details of the work which he carried out on the film, and of the facts which he unearthed. There are included in the book many hitherto unpublished letters—and, while these do not add a lot to the solution of the mystery, they certainly do give a new insight into the character of the central figure of the case, the enigmatic Madeleine Smith herself.

Readers who are not already acquainted with the facts of this trial may, perhaps, be told that the jury, with typically Scottish caution, brought in a verdict of "Not proven," with the result that the lady left the court, as they say, without a stain on her character. What did surprise me, I must admit, was the revelation that Madeleine Smith, tried for murder in 1857, lived on until 1928, when she died, an old woman of 92 years of age, in the U.S.A.

But her problem is one that will long provide a basis for argument among those who are interested in criminology. I think, too, that Mr. Hunt's book will, for long years, remain the standard volume on the subject. The fact that it is acclaimed, in an introduction, by William Routhead, the leading Scots criminologist of the day, as an outstanding piece of historical reconstruction, should be enough for most readers. At any rate, it is a book which I am only too happy to recommend.

J. R.

THE DIVINE MADNESS

IT is often said that religion arises in ignorance and fear, but it is a mistake to think of it as merely a matter of interpretation, for there are other factors, more dynamic; it concerns the connection between adolescence and the mystical "religious experience." The surging repressed energy involved needs consideration. This mystical experience is not uncommon, and it is also mistaken to consider it as a form of "quietism." For it may find expression in the old "berserker rage" with intensity of feeling in fanatical fury of the "divine madness."

In the recent attack on Mr. Duncan Stewart, the Governor of Sarawak by Malays, it is perhaps no accident that the two lads concerned were sixteen years of age. This not only suggests a connection between youthful adolescent vitality and mystical superstition, but also involves what might be called a cultural adolescence; a stage of development between the childhood fancy of the savage and the more rational maturity of civilised man; with the evolution of organised religion involving repression and sublimation, expressed in sentiments and irrational prejudices in the cultivation of passion.

Aldous Huxley, in his *Jesting Pilate*, gave us a graphic account of the Malay "running amok" and his comments on the religious implications were by no means out of place. In this case, the Malay seaman, squatting on his haunches, fingering his knife, and brooding over his grievances, worked himself up into a frenzy of passion so as to be completely reckless of consequences. As Huxley said, this is in striking contrast to the behaviour of an educated European who would have given a more rational consideration of the situation and circumstances. The difference is cultural as well as personal.

The frequency of such occurrences shows that there is more than a matter of personal or individual idiosyncrasy involved. It is certainly psychological but involves the personal relationship of social organisation. It involves a mystical religious fantasy, which in turn, concerns social intimacy and the cultivation of an intensity of personal feeling which is expressed in an outburst of "righteous indignation" amounting to a form of lunacy, in sheer defiance of the odds, and homicidal to the point of suicidal recklessness, with religious sanction as passionate self-justification.

This is not only characteristic of the Far East but also seen in the happenings in the Near East, as with the assassination of Count Bernadotte of the United Nations; and also in India with the killing of Gandhi, where the

assassin was protected by the police from the fury of the mob of worshippers of the Mahatma. The so-called terrorism and communal rioting cannot be explained as being political without a consideration of the religious psychology, for that is needed to cover both the fanatical enthusiasm of the assassin and the "righteous indignation" of the worshippers, or the mass hysteria of the terrorists.

Nor is this feature of the Mysterious East only to be seen with the animosities. There is the story of the Chinese sailor, who, losing his loved-one, was intent on suicide. The captain of the ship organised the crew to watch the man who was actually prevented two or three times from killing himself. The intensity of passion involved was to be seen in the terrifying sequel, for, eluding the watchers, the Chinaman finally threw himself into the ship's furnace. This is a kind of bravery that was seen in India after the abolition of the Suttee, when the women threw themselves on to the funeral pyre.

This psychology was well shown in some of Joseph Conrad's stories, as with a fetish of flesh and blood, and the sacred obligation of the blood feud. And a B.B.C. speaker, some time ago, discussing the race-hatred in U.S.A., related how she had, as a child, witnessed a lynching. With a savage brutality, two entirely innocent people, as well as the two victims, were killed by the mob. But the one thing that remained indelibly fixed in her memory was, not the savagery, the brutality, but the expression in these people's eyes. It was the boiling over of uncontrolled emotion, shown in the look of the intensest of hatred. It did not seem human.

The position in America is largely a reflection of that in Africa, where a major problem looms ahead. The ability of the white man to control the more primitive of the blacks to some extent depends upon ignorance of the wider world, and the factor of fear is undoubtedly there in superstitious respect for the white man's power and prestige. But there is also a genuine fear on the part of the white man in face of numerical inferiority with the danger of a growing sense of power among the blacks, bringing retaliation as its nemesis. The cry of Asia for the Asiatics may be followed by that of Africa for the blacks, with religion fanning the flames of hatred.

In considering this psychological and social problem, there is the influence of superstitious prejudice in adolescence. It is not just a matter of sex appeal and of fantastic erotic dreams, but a real problem involving childhood's adaptation to a wider and a changing world. For this cultural adolescence is of the same character. And religion, as a practical psychology, concerns the dynamic personal relationship of social life, with a wide social consequence as well as personal intimacy.

H. H. PREECE.

FREETHOUGHT DICTIONARY

FLOOD.—An inundation of water over normally dry ground, one of the greatest being recorded in Genesis. In this God got so tired of his own creation that he decided to drown the lot, like kittens. To save himself the trouble of re-creating all over again he reprieved one Noah, his wife, three sons and their wives. This family was told to build an ark capable of accommodating two or seven (you can take your choice) of every living thing.

So they built a vessel nearly as large as a modern ocean liner. This had one door, locking on the outside, and one window about the size of an ordinary lavatory window.

for ventilation. Into this they packed, at the lowest estimate, more than two million animals, together with food to last them a year. (What food was carried for the carnivora is not stated.)

As Noah had to send to the North or South Pole for Polar Bears, to the Argentine for sloths, which cannot travel more than a mile a day, to Australia for Emus and Kangaroos, to India for Tigers and to America for Bison, the collection of everything at one spot at the proper time was a masterpiece of strategy which has never been improved upon.

After continuous rain for 100 days the flood had risen to a height of 5½ miles above sea level, thus making the rainfall average about 9,000 inches a day. The reader can form his own conclusions as to the labour required of the eight people in removing the daily manure through a 22-inch window, as the door was locked on the outside. It seems hardly surprising that when the Ark reached Mt. Ararat, which is eternally covered with snow, and the dove was able to find an olive tree growing there, that old Noah got blind drunk. As Mr. G. K. Chesterton said, he didn't "care where the water went, if it didn't get into the wine."

GHOST.—A spirit, shadow or apparition which, when it absorbs holiness, is able to cause virgins to conceive without the usual male aid. This is alleged to have occurred in numberless places in the Mediterranean basin, although no recent case has been reported. Another school of thought has cast doubt on the theory in the famous classic lines:—

A girl on the Syrian coast, etc.

HERETIC.—One who holds a superstition contrary to that of his immediate neighbours, or any belief contrary to that of the mass of people in that part of the world in which he happens to be born. Thus, Martin Luther, Wesley, and other protestants were heretics in the eyes of Rome, while all members of the other 299 sects are heretics in the eyes of the 300th sect of the Christian religion alone, to say nothing of other religions. Some fairly well known heretics include Montaigne, Swinburne, Shelley, Huxley, Darwin, Newton, Copernicus, Galileo, Voltaire, Bradlaugh, Bruno, Mahommed, Buddha and Christ. A celebrated heresy trial took place a few years ago in the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, a country in which large numbers of people still retain Luther's belief in witchcraft.

INFIDEL.—An unbeliever, from the believer's point of view. Thus a Mohammedan is an infidel in the eyes of the Pope and vice versa; while every sect of Christians is an infidel sect in the eyes of every other sect. A spouse accusing his or her partner of infidelity, however, is more concerned from the physical than the spiritual point of view.

F. W. RENNIE.

CORRESPONDENCE

DOES GOD EXIST ?

Sir.—I have often thought of suggesting that readers of *The Freethinker* might be asked to state what they regard as the strongest argument against the existence of God.

After reading Mr. Rowland's review of Dr. R. E. D. Clark's book "The Universe: Plan or Accident?" I should like to mention the one that seems to me to make all others seem feeble, and that is: the unutterable callousness of any Creator.

If such a being exists, he has looked, for untold ages, on all the horrors of nature, those recorded in human history, and prior to history, and he has done precisely nothing to mitigate them. The only theory that fits all the facts known to us is that no such being exists.—Yours, etc.,

V. H. SMITH.

METAPHYSICS ?

Sir,—What an inquisitive gentleman Mr. Vernon Carter is. Twenty questions are clearly not enough for him. For my part, in the spirit of the game, I would be content to answer Mr. Carter till the cows come home, including his cow with the worried look. But *The Freethinker* space being valuable, I fear that cannot be. But I think that I should at least deal with this one. Mr. Carter inquires, if I admit, as I did, that my annoyance had nothing to do with the validity of his (Mr. Carter's) arguments, why I mentioned the fact of my annoyance? I did so because my annoyance had to do with my argument. It was an illustration of how stimuli led to action, annoyance overcoming inertia, "my accustomed inertia." The remark had nothing to do with the soundness of Mr. Carter's arguments.

Mr. Carter also wants to know how much of my present knowledge has been arrived at through independent reasoning, and how much from the thoughts and suggestions of others. Does he really expect me to know? None of us live in a vacuum, and I have held a British Museum reading-room ticket for over forty years. I have also been the Assistant Editor of an encyclopædia of about six million words. I hope I may be excused this *personalia*, but, really—! If I have contributed only five per cent. of entirely new and original thought, I should say I have done well.

I cannot help raising my eyebrows at Mr. Carter's ineffable remark, "When Mr. Simmons does read books of a philosophical, logical, or metaphysical nature, that will be the time for him to favour us with his opinions about the same." Mr. Carter tells us that logicians say that to argue by analogy is the weakest of all forms of reasoning: nevertheless I will risk it. It is tantamount to saying that not until I have had, and recovered from, typhus, typhoid, and small-pox, my opinions on zymotic diseases will be worth listening to. I have never read a book on logic, but such reasoning by analogy is good enough for me. Mr. Vernon Carter may be surprised to learn, however, that I have read one book, and that is Mr. Stuart Chase's book on Semantics. When Mr. Carter has read that perhaps he will not be so ready to say that "one must acknowledge the superiority of the mental faculties of others": the argument of the priest.—Yours, etc.,

BAYARD SIMMONS.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, G. WOODCOCK and R. BILLINGS. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Sunday, 7-45 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, G. WOODCOCK and R. BILLINGS. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Wednesday, 8 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, G. WOODCOCK and R. BILLINGS. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch Hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, G. WOODCOCK and R. BILLINGS.

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

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