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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Gentle Art of Censorship

"ETERNAL vigilance is the price of liberty"—we all, I think, have heard and read this oft-repeated warning, yet never has liberty been more in peril than now. In avowed Fascist and Communist States, "democratic" liberty is probably mouthed more cynically than any other words, but woe betide anyone who has the temerity to depart from party rule and party slogans.

It has always been in politics and religion where genuine democratic liberty has been assailed. Once firmly in the saddle, the Christian Church celebrated its triumph by exterminating all "heresy"—heresy then being little but doubts as to the "divine" claims of the Papacy. Before printing came to Europe, we had something like 1,000 years, properly called the Dark Ages, and we catch only glimpses of heresy in that long and terrible period. But once books began to multiply and pour from the press, heretics sprang up in all lands and the Church, insisting on its love and mercy to all mankind, began a reign of extermination, of terror of torture and *auto da fes*, imprisonment and confiscation, which ceased barely 100 years ago, and which, in only slightly different form, has been taken over by the two totalitarian modern gospels—each hating the other, yet each so infernally alike.

The Papacy began, in addition, an "Index Prohibitorum," a list of prohibited books which can be consulted by the Faithful, and which tells them the books they must on no account read. This fear of the printed word—which means nothing but the fear of people thinking for themselves and rejecting fear-imposed claims—is at the bottom of nearly all censorship. The hatred of the Tree of Knowledge—that is, what the other side thinks—is one of the most prominent characteristics of totalitarian regimes whether political or religious. To learn something contrary to the Faith is a political or religious crime of the greatest magnitude with all totalitarians. An Iron Curtain must be imposed between the true believers and the heretic. You need not always call it an Iron Curtain; a Rigorous Censorship is just as fatal and effective.

Given power in the hands of one man, whether he is the Pope, or Fuhrers like Hitler and Stalin, and there can be no limit to censorship. There does not seem much difference between the 1,000 years of Nazism which Hitler intended imposing upon the whole world, the Communism which "inevitably" is going to displace everything else, or the creed of Rome which, with the help of "fellow travellers," is getting a heaven-sent publicity in the press and radio and on the screen. These are the big men and movements with millions of devoted followers.

But what about the smaller people? The heads of corporations, the men and women jockeyed into positions in which they can show their small authority?

I remember during the war an interview with a lady who was put in charge of sending books, given by the public, to our soldiers and sailors. She proudly declared that she "vetted" each one. She was not going to allow

a single book reach our fighting men which she herself did not approve of! The sublime impudence of this damnable censorship did not appear to strike the journalist who interviewed such a dreadful type of boss in authority. And, of course, during the war we had these censors everywhere. The most rigorous censorship, much from utter nobodies, was accepted because "there was a war on." In fact, the most amusing part of the whole business was that nobody knew who made somebody a censor. It was all-sufficient to say, "there's a war on," and we all meekly submitted.

In the past, of course, the brave heretics who defied the censors were exterminated with the foulest tortures. Vanini had his tongue torn out before being burnt alive—a horrible crime which we should never allow the Roman Church to forget. Bruno was also burnt alive and so was Etienne Dolet; but these three are three out of thousands. If the Assumption of Mary had been made a dogma three hundred years ago, and the Roman Church had been in power here, it would be God help the heretics who disbelieved—and said so—such incredible rubbish.

In the age of Mary and Elizabeth, the censors reigned supreme. The cropping of ears and noses, and the chopping off of hands, were regular and picturesque events in the life of the community. When a Puritan called Stubbs wrote a pamphlet against Elizabeth contracting a French marriage, he and his publisher were condemned to lose their right hands. Poor Stubbs actually yelled "God save the Queen!" after his hand was cut off—to such a depth of insanity respect for Royalty was ingrained. But it was against playwrights and the stage that the censor has always had his merry time. The great dramatists in "Good" Queen Bess's time regularly trembled whenever one of their plays was produced. It was mostly from the stage and the pulpit that the people could learn something of the events of the day, and there is no doubt that many people and things were satirised by playwrights who incurred the risk of horrible mutilation at the hands of—mostly—ignorant censors. It is on record that more than once Ben Jonson trembled lest he should suffer such ignominy.

We have our stage and screen censors still with us and, as all readers know, the other day one man used his authority to ban a play on Television because he did not like its political flavour. There was here no question that the play had already been produced and that there were many millions of people who wanted to see it. He, the great Pan-Jam (if that is the word) used his authority and suppressed it.

It is, of course, a terrible thought that such authority should be given by some more or less unknown person to one man, and we shudder to think if such censorship was increased. Some of the older readers of this journal may remember the fuss made by the Japanese Embassy when Gilbert was going to produce the "Mikado." The idea that anybody had the insolence to poke fun at Divine people like the Mikado and his counsellors infuriated their representatives here, and it is always a wonder

to me that we did not give in. Gilbert satirised everything he fancied in his incomparable plays, but he would have had little chance now if people like Lord Simon ruled the roost. In Elizabeth's day, Gilbert would have had a hundred hands chopped off if he had possessed them.

Is censorship then needed at all? I certainly think it is. I do not believe in utter licence. I am all for freedom of thought, but there are some things we all know should never be allowed. No greater man than Robert Ingersoll ever fought for Freethought, but he always made it clear that he would never stand for, as he said, "books and pictures which were manifestly obscene." He was asked, "Who is to be the judge of that?" And his answer was, "There are books nobody differs about. There are certain things about which we can use our discretion. If that discretion is abused, a man has his remedy."

But utter licence is one thing and censorship can be, if in the hands of a powerful authority, applied to a thousand things which are a mere matter of opinion. And the greatest evil it perpetuates is that so many of us, particularly when we may be lucky enough to get before a microphone, censor ourselves. We may think we have got a free hand but we know that we have not. And better to be censored than never to speak at all.

Very few of the avowed Atheists who speak on the radio will say that they are Atheists. Some speakers may take a risk and admit their Communism—but Atheism, never or rarely ever! And until a man can avow his Atheism as freely as he may avow his Vegetarianism, the struggle for Freethought and against most censorship must continue.

H. CUTNER.

CHRISTIANITY AND SCIENCE

THE infallible Church of immutable Revelation and exclusive Truth asserts that "the Church, far from hindering the pursuit of the sciences, fosters and promotes them in many ways"; that "when a clearly defined dogma contradicts a scientific assertion, the latter has to be revised"; and that "theology is the very science of faith itself" (Cath. Ency. XIII, 609, 607, 598). To Aquinas "all inferior (i.e. natural) sciences should be the servants of Theology, which is the superior and the mistress (C.E. Vol 1, 266). The R.C. principle is thus that scientific fact is subordinated to dogmatic faith. In 12th century, Hugo of St. Victor said, "Learn first what is to be believed," and Savonarola in 15th century concurred. Theologians and Fathers maintained that "all knowledge human and divine, the sources of all sciences and arts, the origin of all consolations," are in the Bible.

Samples of Bible, i.e., Theological or Inspired, science are the two contradictory accounts of "creation" ("out of nothing," 4004 B.C.) (Gen. I and II); the earth has "foundations that it should not be removed for ever" (Psalms CIV, 5, and XCIII, 1); the earth is set upon pillars (1 Sam. II, 8); the earth has four corners (Rev. VII, I); heaven is a solid roof supporting floods of water (Gen. I, 7-8); the windows of heaven were opened (Gen. VII, 11); the sky is strong and as a molten looking glass (Job XXVII, 18); Joshua stops the sun and moon (Josh. X, 12-13); sun's shadow turns back ten degrees to guarantee Hezekiah's fig poultice (2 Kings XX, 10-11).

To say that there might be people on the other side of the earth was a damnable heresy, "giving the lie to King David and to St. Paul, and, therefore, to the Holy Ghost," said St. Augustine. In the 8th century Pope Zachary and St. Boniface assailed Virgil of Salzburg for this heresy; in the 14th century Peter of Abano escaped the Inquisition thereon only by death, and in 1327 Cecco d'Ascoli, astronomer, was dismissed from his professorship at Bologna and burned alive at Florence. Inspired geography giving Judea as a "land flowing with milk and honey" (Joshua V, 6) led to Calvin's charge against Servetus of "necessarily inculcating Moses, and grievously outraging the Holy Ghost," by Servetus' edition of Ptolemy's "Geography" in which Palestine is described as, truly, "meagre, barren and inhospitable."

The claims for Christianity re science, or the contentions that there is no conflict between religion and science, are amply proved false by the records in J. W. Draper's "History of the Conflict between Religion and Science," E. Clodd's "Pioneers of Evolution from Thales to Huxley," and, especially, in A. D. White's "History of the Warfare of Science and Theology in Christendom" (2 vols., 1896). Dr. White has to say: "Receiving this legacy of belief in science, Archimedes began just before the Christian era to open new paths through the great field of the inductive sciences by observation, comparison, and experiment. The establishment of Christianity, beginning a new evolution of theology, arrested the normal development of the physical sciences for over fifteen hundred years. The general belief derived from the New Testament Scripture was that the end of the world was at hand . . . that all existing physical nature was soon to be destroyed—hence, the greatest thinkers in the Church poured contempt upon all investigations into a science of nature, and insisted that everything except the saving of souls was folly." (I., 375.)

The findings of scientists, in so many branches of learning, contradicted, and were savagely opposed by the invincible sacred ignorance of theologians. If Darwin and his company are right, the Bible is a purely human production. "In truth there is not a dogma of Christendom, not a foundation upon which the dogma rests, that Evolution does not traverse" (Clodd, p. 220).

"The introduction of Arabian science and philosophy into Europe culminated under the patronage of the (heretic) Emperor Frederick II" (1212-50) (Ency. Brit.). The evidence that "the Church was far from hindering the pursuit of the sciences" is most peculiar. Roger Bacon, called "Mohammedan" because of Arab influence upon him, was forbidden to teach 1257, and the Pope had him imprisoned for about 14 years. In 1168 Pope Alexander III forbade ecclesiastics to study "physics or the laws of the world," under pain of excommunication. In 12th century the scientific work of Vincent of Beauvais was perverted, from dread of Church persecution, into a useless commentary of Genesiac "creation." Similarly, St. Albert the Great (1193-1280), philosopher and theologian, for his effort to Christianise science, was dealt with by the Dominicans, and escaped persecution for sorcery by yielding to the Church. In 1243, the Dominicans interdicted every member from the study of medicine and natural philosophy, and, in 1287, the study of chemistry. In 1317 the Bull of Pope John XXII gave deadly blow to the beginnings of chemical science; and the Bulls of Popes Eugene IV, 1437 and 1445; Innocent VIII, 1484; Julius II, 1504; Adrian VI, 1523, operated to prevent the open beginnings of experimental science. Pope

Paul III (1534—1550) forbade J. B. Porta's physical research. In 1619 Vanini was barbarously tortured and burnt alive. Bruno was burnt alive, 1600. In 1657, Prince Leopold de' Medici, president of the "Accademia del Crimento" was made Cardinal, and in ten years the school was dead: Borelli, professor of mathematics, was a beggar, and in despair Oliva committed suicide. In 1712 the Jesuits prevented Leibnitz from founding an academy of science in Vienna.

Roger Bacon had given deadly offence by arguing against the reality of magic, and centuries afterwards, Cornelius Agrippa, Weyer, Flade, Loos, Bekker, and a multitude of other investigators and thinkers, suffered confiscation of property, loss of position, and even torture and death, for similar views" (White, I, 391).

Mr. Joseph McCabe is very informative concerning Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64), Copernicus (1473-1543), and Galileo (1564-1642)—in his "Little Blue Books" (Kansas, U.S.A.), 64 pp., 5 in. x 3½ in., Nos. 1142, 1211, 1229, 1237 and 1248. In No. 1142, p. 35, he shows how Nicholas of Cusa realised the error of the Ptolemaic geocentric system but submitted prudently to the Church and became Papal Legate and a Cardinal, leaving a more courageous man, Bruno, to go to the stake. On page 36 Mr. McCabe says: "Copernicus discovered nothing. The revival of Greek astronomy by the Moors had recalled the fact that Pythagoras (6th century B.C.) and others had, ages ago, held that the sun was the centre of the solar system. In Martianus Capella, Copernicus and Mercury revolved around the sun." Copernicus finished the writing of his main book in 1530 and kept it in manuscript for 12 years, delaying its publication because of his dread of Church persecution. "The Church condemned Galileo and the Copernican theory with the utmost official solemnity" (p. 46).

So on the miserable record goes with Church anathema and Church and Christian pressure, censure, intimidation, or dismissal from office or position, against such as Descartes, Linnaeus, Cuvier, Newton, Buffon, Priestley, Darwin, and many more.

Here are surprising admissions. The Middle Ages were "a civilisation thoroughly saturated with Christianity" (Cath. Ency. XII, 38). "The Middle Ages have become an interlude, clearly bounded on both extremities by a more civilised or humane idea of life" (Cath. Ency. XII, 765).

GEORGE ROSS.

THE ESPERANTO CRAZE AND ALL THAT

In the International Bulletin of Contemporary Scholarship, Erasmus, of 10th March, 1950, M. O'C. Walshe (University of Nottingham), in reviewing F. Bodmer's "Loom of Language," states:—

"This reviewer's (perhaps prejudiced) view is that English (normal, not Basic) is rapidly becoming the World Language, and the planners can therefore cease inventing substitutes which are neither needed nor likely to make serious headway. It goes without saying that the sooner English spelling is reduced to some sort of order, the better."

This, in a nutshell, seems to me to state the case against any artificial World Language, though in the September issue of the New Zealand Rationalist an Esperanto addict happens to make a clever remark to the contrary:—

"There can be no doubt—he says—that the stress of actual need will eventually lead to the evolution

of an international language but the process may be very slow and the product rather clumsy. The need to fly might have led to our eventually sprouting wings but the result would have been less efficient than our modern planes. So with language. An international language deliberately designed for the purpose may be far the best solution."

However, that comparableness is a fallacy. Primitive man forwent all temptations at bodily specialisation and rather relied on artificial tools. Certain animals are highly specialised for flying, burrowing, etc., but as a result they are unilaterally developed, fit for a particular activity only, whilst man has devised and is still inventing tools through which he can surpass any animal accomplishments. In one thing only he became specialised, and that exactly is speech, the faculty to communicate in language and writing.

Language-planning started as a result of the eclipse of Latin as a vehicle of cultural intercourse between learned Europeans. Language in general starts with a limited content but a highly elaborate form. When in the late 17th century nationalities sprung up, the general use of vernaculars made it unnecessary for others than specialists to study the intricate rules of Latin grammar. It was, therefore, quite natural that in 1908 an Italian scholar invented *Interlingua*, i.e., Basic Latin, without flexions, which any well-educated European can read at first sight since most terms in any European language are derived from Latin. In this, Basic Latin has a great advantage over all its competitors, Esperanto included.

On the continent where so many nationalities live close together and the need for bridging the Babel of languages has ever since felt strongest, many different devices have been tried, from symbols used in mathematics and astronomy, to the hotch-potch of Esperanto. Every time a relevant "translation" of the Lord's Prayer was meant to be the proof of the pie.

In 1664 the Royal Chancellery informed George Dalgarno, of Aberdeen, that his "Philosophical Language" was recommended to the King—

"... for facilitating the matter of Communication and intercourse between people of different Languages, and consequently a proper and effectual Means of advancing all the parts of Real and Useful knowledge, Civilizing barbarous Nations, Propagating the Gospel, and increasing Traffique and Commerce."

All these projects started from a preconceived logical system without reference to living speech; they were cradled by the needs of a scholar-caste cut off from the common aspirations of ordinary people. All natural languages, dead or living, are embedded in cultural levels which modern man had left behind him. What the inventor of Esperanto lacks most sorely is an understanding of what is and what is not relevant; hence the Esperantist adjective continues to execute the archaic antics of concord (plural) and carries the dead ballast of a separate object case; these shortcomings are understandable, since Zamenhof like most of his competitors were continental Europeans bemused by the idiosyncrasies of highly inflected languages; yet in a contracting world an "Interlanguage" has got to cater for the needs of the common people (trade, labour movement), rather than for the needs of scholars. As Bodmer puts it:—

"(They) did not appreciate the fact that China's four hundred millions contrive to live and die without the consolation of case, tense, and mood distinction, indeed without any derivative apparatus at all. . . . What still amazes us is that they could not profit

by the extreme flexional simplicity of English, with its luxuriant literature, outstanding contributions to science, and world-wide imperial status. They had little or no knowledge of the past, and were therefore unable to derive any benefit from research into the evolution of speech" (p. 454).

As a *lingua franca* English has no competitor in the world; owing to the influence of American trade and medicine, of U.S. universities and philanthropic foundations in the Orient, its influence extends far beyond the bounds of the United States and the British Empire. In more than one respect Esperanto is inferior, and in none superior, to English. Yet the stock-in-trade of its champions is, giving English a privileged position over all other languages would be tantamount to perpetuating national discord.

It would be a bold boast, however, to say that the Esperanto vocabulary is more international than that of English. Zamenhof made up his lingo with no regard to Oriental speech, his roots are chosen from the languages of the most important colonial *Herrenvolks*. The only choice for the colonial people left is, as we can see it, to learn Zamenhof's mongrel of hated languages or restrict themselves to the one they already know. Sometimes he chose German forms rather than their Latin equivalents most prevalent in daily speech, and he included words which were apt to increase the difficulties in pronunciation for one nationality without appreciably lightening the burden of others. Apart from the letters of the Latin alphabet, he uses five accented consonants, a novelty open to more than one criticism; the corresponding sounds are equally open to unfavourable comment. Every lift of the pen or pencil in order to affix such diacritical signs involves loss of time and fluency of writing; in this respect he ought to have made use of his knowledge of the advantages of the (Russian) Cyrillic alphabet which has *one* letter for the most compound sounds. Says the reviewer in *Erasmus*:—

"Anyone who has compared the orthography of Russian with that of Polish or Czech will realise how well adapted that alphabet is to a Slavonic language. Considering how tied up we West Europeans get with some of our letters (*j*, *ch* in different languages) one may think it would be good if some Cyrillic symbols were imported into the Latin alphabet" (p. 138).

The essential grammar of English is much simpler than that of the only two artificial languages which have hitherto attracted a considerable popular following; all that needs to be done is to streamline and simplify its spelling and unify its pronunciation to a point where every letter stands for an unchangeable sound (like in Italian). However, English is not the language of any nation with a Catholic majority; this may explain why the R.C. Church is foremost in boosting Esperanto.

PERCY G. ROY.

TWO KINDS OF KNOWLEDGE

IN view of a discussion, currently taking place in the columns of this journal—a discussion, moreover, in which I am perforce taking a prominent part—some readers may feel that what I have to say here and now is by way of justification. I do not think that it is altogether so, since the book which I want to recommend is a book which I should have written about in any event. It is likewise a book which readers of these columns (whatever their theological or scientific views) should find interesting, if only to refute its arguments!

The book is Miss Gertrude Quinton's "Scientific and Religious Knowledge" (S.C.M. Press, 8s. 6d.), which is the product of a lady who teaches in a large Grammar School in the West of England. She explains that the book was written primarily because she had to face the questioning of thoughtful sixth-formers when she had given them lessons in scriptural knowledge; they were the children (as we all are to some extent) of the scientific age, and they wanted to know just how she managed to relate her religious views with the ideas and developments of science typical of this twentieth century. The book is thus, in effect, the *apologia* of a knowledgeable person faced with the fact that her ideas appear to be contrary to the general mental climate of her age.

The book, actually, turns out to be to some extent an appeal for a general recognition of the fact that scientific and religious knowledge are not so much opposed as complementary—two different spheres of knowledge, gained in different ways, and reflecting differently on human life. But they are not, Miss Quinton would say, necessarily divided by a barrier of rationality and irrationality. They are divided by the fact that they are, on the whole, differently acquired. Yet (I am again paraphrasing Miss Quinton's argument) the scientist makes assumptions which he cannot experimentally prove—and they are assumptions no less sweeping in their own way than the assumptions of the religious person. For instance, the scientist assumes that the natural laws which he finds workable as hypotheses *always* work. The fact that the laws of chemical combination work may merely be because in any chemical change we are dealing with atoms in millions. The laws of chemistry, in fact, may eventually turn out to be nothing more than statistical averages. And the assumptions of the biologist may well be similar.

Now I know that this is, in a sense, a piece of special pleading. But at the same time it is not easy to disprove. It can be shown, of course, that some of the assumptions of the average theologian involve jumps that are not logically justifiable. But even the common-sense axioms on which Euclid based his geometry have been doubted; non-Euclidean geometries have been formulated, and have been proved to work.

Much of what I have said in this brief appreciation of what seems to me to be an important book will, I know, be anathema to many Freethinkers. It may be that my own position in the theological sense (which is what many friends and critics seem to be still discussing) has its influence on the way in which I have discussed Miss Quinton's work. But at the same time I feel no doubt at all that hers is an important volume, which states a case that cannot be ignored. Indeed, I think that if some eminent Freethinker (though not, for preference, a Marxist) would write a book comparable to Mr. Cohen's "God and the Universe," discussing the attitudes of such modern Christian thinkers as Prof. Butterfield, "Christianity and History"; Dr. Alec. Vidler, "Christian Belief"; Dr. R. E. D. Clark, "The Universe: Plan or Accident?"; Dr. Fosdick, "The Man from Nazareth"; and Miss Quinton, he would be doing both Christianity and Freethought an inestimable service. After all, we tend to get the impression from most Freethought literature outside the camp of strict Marxism that Freethinkers still live in the mental climate of the 1800's. I am sure that such an impression is a false one. But while such books as this of Miss Quinton's go without adequate answer such an impression is bound to remain.

JOHN ROWLAND.

HELL FIRE THEOLOGY

ON Saturday, September 2nd, at approximately 7.30 p.m., and without the aid of a time-machine, Mr. J. Coulthard and I took a step backward into the middle-ages.

A few days earlier, at the Modern Churchman's Conference, Dr. Inge had made a statement to the effect that the days of Hell-fire Theology are gone, and rightly so; but Mr. Coulthard and I are now in a position to refute this theory. For, in the Albert Road Methodist Mission in Darlington, we were witness to a meeting presided over by the Cliff College Trekkers, a bunch of young men (none over 30) who used all the familiar Hell, Devil, Purgatory and Blood arguments which Dr. Inge had said were now defunct.

We attended this meeting, which was billed as a "public meeting" and not as a "service," with the intention of asking pertinent questions, in fact, taking the battle into the enemy's camp.

We informed the doorkeeper that we were members of the opposition and asked if questions would be allowed. We were given an affirmative answer and took our seats in the hall, which was comparatively full.

The Trekkers were seated in the choir stalls, whilst the two leaders occupied the pulpit. One of the latter, was leading the congregation in "hot choruses" from the Cliff College Song Sheet (Copyright reserved), and giving little pep talks on Jesus in between the songs.

One of the first things we noted in both songs and talks was the predominance of the word "blood." As my colleague remarked at the time, "it was like a butcher's shop." There was much metaphorical drinking of the blood of the Lord, a cannibalistic feature if ever there was one. The doorkeeper re-assured us that there would be an opportunity for questions towards the close, and the meeting went on. Hymns were sung, prayers were said, and then the various Trekkers were introduced, each giving his personal testimony of having been "saved." Then, Mr. Keith Blades, a lanky, bespectacled youth, who appeared to be the leader of the team, gave a remarkable demonstration of Hell-fire Theology, accompanied by much Bible-thumping. This was our meat, and we would have liked to question the veracity of the "Good Book" there and then, but we decided to bide our time.

The meeting wore on and I began to suspect that we would not be given the opportunity of asking questions. I confided my fears to my colleague, whereupon he decided to take the initiative. Various members of the congregation (obviously "planted") were giving testimonies of the bad lives they had once lived and how they had been "saved by Jesus." During a lull, Mr. Coulthard rose to his feet and announced that there were two Atheists present who would like the opportunity of asking a few questions. This was a bombshell. All eyes turned our way and much whispering took place. Mr. Blades, the leader, gave an assurance that we would be able to ask questions later, and carried on with the meeting. He now took the line of "I once knew a man who said he was an Agnostic." He spoke of the death of "that famous Atheist, Voltaire" (who was not an Atheist at all, but a Deist), and how he called for a priest at the end. Members of the congregation who had been "saved" that evening knelt in front of the pulpit, and suddenly the meeting was declared closed.

We rose to our feet, protesting, as Mr. Blades and some of the Trekkers came to us. They were willing to answer questions in private but not in public. Our

protests brought a great crowd around us, however, and we were hard put, answering, and asking, questions. Eventually we left the hall, still surrounded by questioners, and, whilst the Trekkers conducted an open-air sing-song a few yards away, we held our own little meeting.

Out of all this we learnt the following facts:—

1. That the Church is still well organised.
2. That, though the leaders of the Church profess to progress with the times, they encourage their teachers to carry on with middle-ages theology.
3. That the congregations still lap up this ancient theology.
4. That the Trekkers rely on "personal experience" of Jesus (hard facts do not worry them—they "know").

Well, there you are, a flash-back to the middle-ages in the year 1950. I thought it worth reporting to shake the complacency of those Freethinkers who persist in saying that the battle is won. It can only add weight to what H. Cutner has said in *The Freethinker*—that Freethought must continue to wage war on the Bible.

WILLIAM SPENCER.

FREETHOUGHT DICTIONARY

SCEPTIC.—One who doubts the truth of any doctrine or religion. Elsewhere I have advocated the need for debunking pretentious claims of any sort, religious or secular. A common objection is that such a policy, if generally accepted, would create a nation of sceptics and cynics, unable to find goodness in anything; anaesthetic even to the beauty of a sunset.

Well, apart from the fact that a sunset, like religion, is at its best just when it is touched with decay, I fail to see the logic of such reasoning. If "truth is beauty, beauty truth," then the more we root out pretensions the more clearly should beauty reveal itself. Such an argument is on a par with the ridiculous statement that without religion there can be no morality. To again quote a poet, "beauty is in the eye of the beholder," a statement which undoubtedly has a better basis of fact than most poetic asserverations. As children we love Snow White and hate the wicked Witch, but as we progress through life we tend to seek reality and look on Goldilocks and the rest as a mere sentimentality; rather as we look at the trinket containing a lock of great-grandmother's hair. Unless we do this we are blind to truth (and, therefore, beauty); living in a realm of specious falsehood.

Even the church had to seek beauty as man became civilised. As ranters, such men as Billy Sunday and Gipsy Smith are neophytes, compared with St. Paul, and from the obscene rantings of the early Christians to Mariolatry the growth of ritual and advance of civilisation from barbarity march together. This alone is sufficient evidence that man seeks beauty as the sunflower seeks the sun. That he does so in the main by clutching at any plausible falsity and spurning the austere truthful beauty is simply evidence that he is not entirely civilised and still has an arrested intellectual development. A civilised man sees truth and beauty in a Venus de Milo or La Gioconda; the herd sees it in Matisse, Gauguin, triangular eyes staring from square faces set on conical necks, and similar caricatures, all calculated to turn even a nun sceptical.

F. W. RENNIE.

ACID DROPS

Shades of Dayton (or is it Monkeyville?) Echoes come ringing down the ages for here we have Dr. R. L. Mixer, Professor of Zoology at Wheaton, Goshen, Ind., declaring that there were so many missing links in the theory of Evolution that the Bible story must stand. Of course, the poor chap mustn't be blamed altogether for he was addressing a meeting of scientists and religionists, "trying to bring science and religion" together.

But Dr. Mixer was not blindly accepting God's Precious Word. He rejected the six "days" of creation—days here, he insisted, meant millions of years. Thus he could be on the side of the geologists and so, with a foot in each camp, he was a living proof how science and religion were one in thought and deed. Dr. Mixer will certainly wear a crown of solid gold in the glorious hereafter.

We knew that we should eventually be found out. The Rev. L. E. Harris, writing to the *Sheffield Telegraph*, has discovered that "Atheistic Communism" is not his only enemy—"Atheism, Materialism and the rest go deeper than the details of party politics and are to be found in every walk of life." Congratulations to the reverend gentleman for his astonishing perspicuity! We thoroughly agree with him, and if he is not a Communist as he claims but just "Agin Atheism," we hope he will have the pluck to meet one of us, and do a little more than mere talking.

Free Churchmen, like Dr. W. E. Farndale, do not like the dogma of the Assumption of Mary—which, in passing, the *Methodist Recorder* calls "Rome's latest heresy." We adore the word "heresy" here. With Dr. Scott Lidgett at a recent Free Church meeting, he attacked the Pope in the best Protestant language, ridiculing the idea that "the Blessed Virgin" was carried bodily up to heaven or that she could intervene "between man and his Redeemer." For our part, we can only reiterate that anybody who can swallow the Resurrection and the Ascension should have no difficulty in adding to the holy meal a similar dish like the Assumption.

Readers of the "Church Times" simply will not allow the Christian Evidence Society to die in peace. Although the C.E.S. has passed its own dogma that the Virgin Birth will thenceforth be accepted without question by all its members (those who do not will, no doubt, be promptly and perhaps literally kicked out) there are still very pious "protesting priests" who complain that the dogma is not accepted. The Rev. E. J. Pizey, for example, will never again grace its platforms.

He is heartbroken that, after he had last spoken for the C.E.S., the chairman declared that the Virgin Birth was "a biological impossibility; that the Apostles did not teach it; and that the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke were written long afterwards." We hope Mr. Pizey did not make a mistake and speak from an N.S.S. platform! In any case, we applaud the above reasons given against the Virgin Birth; and it just shows that at last our Freethought speakers have knocked some common sense into the Christian opposition.

In this connection we note that Mr. Angus Watson writing in the *Christian World* also insists that the Virgin Birth is "a later interpolation," and that it casts

a reflection on the "mystery of human birth." It certainly does, and this has been the main contention of Freethinkers for centuries. But it also proves the utter unreliability of the Gospels and the way miracles can be forged, inserted into the Gospel story, and then believed in for hundreds of years by millions of people.

Many efforts are being made to get us involved in another national day of prayer—which, in the past, as most readers will remember, was generally followed by some awful disaster. Questions have been asked in the House of Commons, but we are pleased to say that the Prime Minister, no doubt remembering these disasters, and perhaps feeling that his party has enough trouble on its hands, has resolutely refused. "There is a danger in the constant multiplication of these days," are his words. Hear, hear!

The Bishop of London, opening an Exhibition of Religious Literature at the Memorial Hall in London the other day, declared that the best-selling books on religious subjects were written by the laity and not by professional theologians. One publisher thought that Dr. Wand probably referred to Miss Dorothy L. Sayers, Mr. T. S. Eliot and Mr. C. S. Lewis; but if this is the case, it would prove more interesting to learn how many converts these three writers had made with all their best-selling books—Not converts from Christianity to Christianity, but from avowed Freethinkers? Have they influenced *half a dozen* with all their books?

And on their influence, the *Church Times* reports the Hon. R. Wood, M.P., speaking at a recent meeting. He said "We find an abysmal and terrifying ignorance of the Christian faith every day in this country." It seems to us more like the abysmal ignorance of quite a number of our M.P.s who have yet to learn that the people they are likely to meet in the main have been obliged to give up the childish delusions fostered by Christianity—its devils and angels, its hell and heaven, its idiotic miracles and absurd ritual. Perhaps Mr. Wood has just swallowed whole the Assumption of Mary.

This competition business between Lourdes, Fatima and numerous other "shrines," where dear little children met the Blessed Virgin, and understood the perfect rendering she always gives of their modern tongue—she spoke perfect French to Bernadette, it will be recalled—is getting a little monotonous even for the Church. Some darling little believers saw and spoke to the B.V. near Nuremburg a short while ago and every week since, and the police had a devil of a time to disperse the crowd of 3,000 Catholics gathered to see another repeat performance. The Archbishop of Bamberg appears to think the children were naughty liars, and has forbidden any sightseeing, but the public jeered at the priests who told them so. We are, however, on the side of the kids, for of course they saw and chatted with the Blessed Virgin. We give our word.

A writer in the *Church of England Newspaper* "suffered a considerable shock" when he saw a clergyman perform a marriage between two divorced persons. They were the innocent parties, but what of that? Our Lord was against divorce, the Church of Rome is against it, so is the English Church, and this writer is nearly beside himself with horror at such a thing happening. He has no arguments, of course, and one can only be thankful that he has no influence either.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

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.

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 FRIEDENKER (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.

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.

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

SUGAR PLUMS

Birmingham readers are reminded that Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture this evening (October 29), at 7 p.m., in Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street, on "Man's Animal Ancestry." The subject is one that should be interesting to Christians and the local saints can make the bringing of their religious friends to the meeting their good deed for the day.

Mr. H. Cutner's visit to Nottingham to-day (October 29) provides two lectures. At the Cosmo Debating Society, Technical College, Shakespeare Street, at 2.30 p.m., his subject will be "Sex Worship." In the evening, at 6.30, he will speak for the Nottingham Branch N.S.S., in the Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street, on "The Jesus Myth." Both subjects should prove of great interest, for the question of the origins of religion is still hotly debated. We hope to hear of good audiences.

This year is the centenary of the birth of G. W. Foote, and the Executive of the N.S.S. has decided that the annual dinner to be held in the Charing Cross Hotel, on Saturday, January 13 next, shall be a centenary dinner. Further details will be announced in due course, but it can be stated now that accommodation is limited to the room capacity and as usual it will be the late applicants for tickets who will be disappointed.

La Pensée, organ of the Belgian National Federation, for September, quotes an illuminating letter of two centuries ago, as follows:—

"Potsdam, December 2, 1740.

MY DEAR LIETT.-GENERAL VON MARIVITZ,
You must choose without delay from the Catholic institutions in Halberstadt, a priest who can be recommended to me as almoner to the troops. He need not be intelligent; on the contrary, the more stupid he is, the better. I do not want an intriguer and shall hold you responsible for that. Send the priest to Berlin by the end of next week at the latest. I am, Your affectionate King, Frederick."

G. W. FOOTE

(Born 100 Years Ago)

I saw him once, once only, long ago;
He spoke to help some cause for which we fought.
One whispered, "That is Foote"; I had not thought
An Atheist's voice could gentle be and low.
After two score of years I do not know
What cause it was that our mixed audience brought
To a small hall; what policy we sought:
I can but hope we trounced our unknown foe.

But I have read again and yet again
Of his life's cause, that Best Cause of us all,
Freedom to think and speak and write the truth;
To break the superstitions that enchain
The growing mind and hold mankind in thrall,
Especially the seeking mind of youth.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

"THE AGE OF CONSTANTINE THE GREAT"

THAT sub-species, as one might style it, of historical writing known to the Germans as "Kultur-Geschichte" (inadequately translated as "The History of Culture") has many notable contributions already to its credit. Probably, however, no work in this literary genre is, even to-day, more justly celebrated than is the masterpiece of the 19th century Swiss historian, Jacob Burckhardt, *The Culture of the Renaissance in Italy*; a book which belongs to that small and very select group of masterpieces the fame of which is in all lands.

Jacob Burckhardt's great work on the Culture of the Renaissance has long been the property of the civilised world, including the English-speaking lands. Another study* in the history of culture, this time of ancient culture, has, however, only recently (last year, to be precise) become accessible to the English-speaking world in an adequate American translation by Moses Hadas, of the University of Columbia, U.S.A. This is Burckhardt's *Age of Constantine*, a profound and exhaustive study of the epoch-making political and intellectual revolution of the fourth century which witnessed the effective end of the ancient world, the definitive victory of the Oriental creed of Christianity, and the final exit of Paganism and, therewith, of the last remnants of ancient Rationalism from the stage of history.

The era discussed here by the Swiss historian is one of particular interest to Freethinkers as, indeed, for students of religious and cultural history in general. This is so for the obvious reason that the era under discussion represents one of the most dramatic and decisive eras in the whole course of European history. It marked, as we can now see in retrospect, one of the most decisive and far-reaching transformations in human annals; the suppression of the tolerant and predominantly secularist culture of classical antiquity by the theocratic-culture of medieval Christendom. Whilst in the sphere of secular culture, the "Age of Constantine" (275-337) marked the end of classical Rationalism: of "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome"; for if the "Dark Age," properly so-called, did not ensue immediately after the demise of "the first Christian Emperor," at least, its encroaching shadow already represented the "writing on the wall" as the secular Empire and civilisation of Rome, the first secular civilisation in human annals.

* *The Age of Constantine the Great*, by Jacob Burckhardt. Translated by Moses Hadas. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 18s. net.

plunged ever deeper in the tenebrous shadows. "I have described the triumph of barbarism and religion," declared Gibbon in relation to this self-same age; and whatever the precise connection between the parallel advance of Christianity and barbarism, at least the triumph of the former in Western Europe was followed, almost immediately, by the irresistible upsurge of the latter.

Another point of intense interest links this age with our own; one which, naturally, could not have been stressed by our historian writing in 1851, the original date of his book. Like our own age, the early fourth century was an age of revolutionary transition from old and tried patterns of human society and culture to new and unknown ones. This growing precariousness of their civilisation seems to have been evident to the men of the fourth century, as to-day, a similar state of things is evident in ours. We could, had we the necessary space, elaborate an historically striking parallel between the "subversive" forces of Christianity, on the eve of its triumph in the age of Constantine and those of our contemporary Communism in the age of, shall we say, President Truman—the above comparison is historical, not personal! Both creeds filled the "respectable" society of their day with dread. But, indeed, this historical parallel has already been elaborated from the Communist side by no less a person than Frederick Engels, the co-founder of Marxism.

Burckhardt opened his work by a brilliant sketch of the history of the Roman Empire prior to the fourth century. Here, if we may again "read between the lines" from the angle provided by historical experience of a more recent date, we observe the Roman Empire of the Cesars evolve from the demagogic "fascist" dictatorship of its founders, Julius and Augustus Caesar—in one of his speeches Julius Caesar actually used the Hitlerian expression, "new order," about his regime—to the final Oriental despotism consolidated by the great emperor Diocletian (283-306), the predecessor and mentor of Constantine—in the period covered by Burckhardt's own book. Diocletian himself, like his modern fascist anti-types, of humble origin—his grandfather was a slave—finally consolidated the Roman Empire in the form of a strictly totalitarian bureaucratic despotism.

In his famous "Edict of Prices" (301), Diocletian established a rigorous governmental control of prices, in a manner to-day painfully familiar—and which, in an age of unqualified economic *laissez-faire* roused the wrath of his liberal Swiss historian. "Black marketeers" (as we should now call them) were burnt alive—a punishment not, nowadays, available for modern Chancellors of the Exchequer! As part of his centralising process Diocletian subjected Christianity, already a "State within the State," to a severe but ultimately ineffectual persecution; probably the most severe which it ever experienced at the hands of the Pagan empire, in which, traditionally, one of the victims was England's future patron saint, St. George, who was devoured by the pagan "Dragon."

Diocletian reformed the administration of his despotic Empire and established a "Board of Emperors" who abdicated at stated intervals. Diocletian himself, who abdicated in 306, lived to see the end of his own regime. For after a bloody civil war, Constantine, who was proclaimed Emperor by the legions in Britain at Eboracum (York) in 307, overcame his political rivals and became sole Emperor. This celebrated monarch, surnamed the "Great" by grateful ecclesiastical history, has come down to history as "the first Christian Emperor" because, for the first time, he legalised Christianity on

an equal footing with the Pagan cults. Equally well known is his foundation of a new Eastern capital named after him, Constantinople. Apart from which epoch-making innovations, Constantine was a born autocrat, a shrewd politician who carried on the centralising policy of his master, Diocletian, and a successful soldier who was the best general of his time. Apart from which, his personal characteristics, cunning and ruthless, for he murdered his wife and son, and threw his German prisoners of war to the wild animals in the arena—did not conspicuously display any particular influence of the kind usually ascribed to the ethics of the Gospel.

As Burckhardt clearly indicates, "the first Christian Emperor" was never really a Christian at all; that distinction must be reserved for the gloomy Spanish persecutor, Theodosius (also surnamed "The Great"), at the end of the century. Constantine went on calling himself "pontifex maximus" (pagan) "High Priest" to the end of his days, and went on building temples and churches impartially. As our historian demonstrates, he supported Christianity solely for political reasons; since the Church, too strong to be suppressed by Diocletian, furnished the declining Roman Empire with the moral cement then necessary for the tottering administration. This fact indicates Constantine as a far-sighted politician, which was what "the first Christian Emperor" actually was, in history, if not in hagiography!

Such is Jacob Burckhardt's main thesis. Around it the Swiss historian assembles his vast canvas depicting the many-sided outlines, political, cultural, and religious, of an age whose ultimate verdict in favour of Christianity has not even yet been officially rescinded in the Western world. We have here a great historian and a rare historical masterpiece, little, if at all, inferior to its author's world renowned study of the Italian Renaissance which incidentally, began to reverse the decision made by Constantine.

Here is a work of the very first rank upon a theme of peculiar fascination to Freethinkers. Our advice is to beg, borrow, ask in their library for, and in short, do anything except steal *The Age of Constantine the Great*, by Jacob Burckhardt.

F. A. RIDLEY.

IS PSYCHO-ANALYSIS A DELUSION?

With reference to Frank Kenyon's reply to a review of mine which appeared in *The Freethinker* on October 2nd of last year, I should like to state that I have no wish to enter into an endless debate on scholastic lines which is rather apt to get one nowhere. If science needs an answer to a question it looks to experiment and empirical fact to supply it. That, I am sure, is the essence of Mr. Kenyon's own philosophy. But there are one or two points that could be clarified, particularly in the way of definitions, so that we can be more sure that we are using the same terms to mean the same thing.

For instance, the term psycho-analyst. This means, or properly used should mean, a psychotherapist who follows the rigid Freudian technique and subscribes to the Freudian psychopathology and doctrine. In this sense neither I nor Hadfield are psycho-analysts; we both use certain techniques of psychological treatment first introduced by Freud, but neither of us subscribes to the Freudian tenets that Mr. Kenyon attacked so heavily. As I have already written, to us it is like kicking an open door.

Secondly, my quoting Freud as looking forward to a psychology based on physiology was to show that the

orthodox Freudians are on the side of the mechanists: or the materialists if that term is preferred. Far from accepting that, I do not even agree that psychological determinism rules the whole of our mental life. I think there are such things as aims and purposes and the like which are beyond the power of mechanism to explain.

I am afraid my attempt at humour on the subject of consciousness has badly misfired. When I commented that the most important things are not done in one's sleep it was not intended to be taken as an erudite psycho-analytical observation. Just the old-fashioned trick of taking a statement at its face value. If consciousness plays "a relatively small and unimportant part" then to be unconscious (i.e. asleep) should not matter so very much! That is all there is to it.

I am well aware of the dangers of arguing from therapeutic successes (or failures, which tell us much more), especially with a condition so intangible and elusive as a psychological illness, but there are internal reasons for a confidence in analytic methods that do not apply to "faith healing." More than that, the results of the two kinds of treatment, which may have empirical resemblances, are poles apart when examined at all closely by a competent psychiatrist.

There is one final point I should like to make. Mr. Kenyon looks forward to physiology to give us the answers to our psychological questioning. He doubts whether I would welcome such a psychology, based on nerve cell structure, etc. It does not seem to occur to him that if and when such a psychology comes about, the question of my welcome will be completely irrelevant. There will be no "I" to "welcome" anything, but just a mass of reflexes, plain or conditioned as the case may be. No doubt also to be suitably reconditioned or liquidated by those in power in the true "scientifically" totalitarian manner. From such a nightmare heaven preserve us.

H. E.

CARNAL AND EARTHBOUND

It has been said that preachers and moralists attack the faults and failings which themselves they are most liable to commit. As Samuel Butler points it in Hudibras:

"Compound for sins that they're inclined to,
By damning others they've no mind to."

This seems particularly true in the ceaseless diatribes against materialism which occur in modern controversy. Gross materialism, crass, grovelling, blind, earthy and many other derogatory adjectives are used to stigmatise materialism.

"But what gave rise To no little surprise,
Was that nobody seemed A penny the worse."
For all the words Of this terrible curse."

Less or more surprising according to the attitude and prejudices of the person hearing it, but true, is that the attackers of materialism are as much materialists as those they attack.

Not that they are conscious hypocrites, liars or pretenders, or suffering from the unconscious hypocrisy dubbed humbug. Simply the fact that they are live people with bodies and animal appetites necessitates them being materialists, whether they want to be or not; like it or no.

To exist they have to breathe, likewise eat and drink, excrete and have sexual intercourse. They wear clothes and shoes, live in houses, switch on electric light

or burn gas or oil or candles, sit on chairs by fires, sleep in beds and travel by vehicles. They write or type, telephone and read printed books and periodicals. No human activities are possible without material agencies, many of them intricate and complex, involving the employment of large numbers of skilled persons using complicated machinery.

That we are alive at all is a tribute to materialism. For without numerous and elaborate material precautions we should die of exposure, starvation, poisoning, diseases, attacks by beasts and insects of prey and other more insidious but deadly pests and organisms.

Attackers and critics of materialism do not hesitate to call in doctors and accept the care of nurses, swallow medicaments and submit to the operations of surgeons, dentists and oculists. So much so that if persons hating materialism decide to rely upon spiritual aids, prayers, laying on of hands, holy water, unction and faith and the patient dies the law is so materialistic that the nearest kindred are charged with neglect and manslaughter for failing to take advantage of the material agencies available for the treatment of sick people.

This has reached its consummation in National Health Insurance and Pensions. Our legislators are full materialists, seeking to meet every contingency by enactment, trusting neither to luck nor the interposition of unseen powers.

If there is danger of epidemics the public health authorities are grossly materialistic, not praying or anything similar, but paying great attention to drainage, sewerage, sanitation, pure water supply, refuse removal and destruction, with the addition of hospital and sanatorium treatment where necessary; and under medical supervision injections, vaccinations and immunisations; all starkly materialistic.

It starts earlier than that; right at the beginning of each individual life. The expectant mother receives treatment and advice to ensure a healthy baby being born. He is under constant care till he reaches school age, when another set of materialistically-minded authorities take charge of him.

Because in spite of acts of public worship in schools and compulsory religious lessons the mere fact of admitting the need for educating the child is materialistic. Those who desiderate education for children are prepared to expose them to a whole host of material forces. Art, music, literature, drama, history, geography, science are all brought to bear upon pupils, with physical and technical activities in workshops, laboratory, gymnasium, swimming bath and playing field.

Hackneyed indeed is the tag: *Mens sana in corpore sano*: but educationists and teachers and more still their scholars believe heartily in the latter and practise it. We look upon sound upright sturdy active children with delight and boast of them. So milk and meals, medical, dental and every sort of corporal attention is provided at schools. What materialistic places they are!

Holidays, camps and sport, houses, parks and all manner of material amenities are called for by the whole population.

On this question of mental and physical health nowhere is materialism more evident than in our mental hospitals. Vanished are evil spirits, exorcism and all the paraphernalia of mind healing. It is accepted that the patient's mental condition is mainly the result of his bodily state. So mental curing is preceded by attention to teeth, sight, hearing, digestion, nourishment, sleep, fresh air, occupation and exercise, with electro-therapy

and appropriate drugs, also elimination of that plague; venereal diseases.

In consequence of the materialism of mental hospital staffs and treatments the number of patients discharged steadily increases.

We are surrounded by materialism; immersed in it. We live and thrive and flourish on it. Civilisation itself reduced to its most simply stated terms is development and advance and employment of the material forces favourable to humanity and a warfare against those material forces which are inimical to mankind.

Neither can the critic or opponent of materialism escape it. If he abandons civilisation and lands naked on a desert island he will have little time for contemplation of the non-material, the abstract or the absolute. Most of his daylight hours will be occupied in searches for clean water, food, shelter and the materials with which to make clothing and fire. At night he will be too tired to do ought else but sleep like a dog. For detailed evidence of this one should read Robinson Crusoe, a book frankly and rankly materialistic.

The early hermits and anchorites tried the solitary life of non-material abnegation and mysticism. The problems and difficulties were so great that by the Middle Ages we find them congregating into monasteries and convents. There life became candidly materialistic, concerned chiefly with farming, gardening, fruit growing, wine making, fishing, rearing animals, copying manuscripts, cooking, making clothes, building and all the details which filled the time and held the interests of the laity.

Religion as practised in Christian countries is openly materialistic. Vast buildings, stained glass, carving, decoration, pictures, candles, images, incense, vestments, gestures and genuflexions, music, processions, paid priests, printed liturgies, canons, every material display and object which appeals to the five senses is employed by churches to strengthen their hold upon the people; which it calls spirituality.

Even spiritualists in performance trust to material manifestations to persuade unbelievers that their message is credible.

Finally there is the churches' constant and pressing demand for money. The acquisition of wealth and the craving for temporal power have always been regarded as two of the outstanding characteristics of materialism. If so, the churches and their professional champions, speaking in the name and guise of spiritual influences ever have done and still do pursue those two great material aims.

So materialism remains the only ism which holds sway over the whole human race, however little acknowledged. It is the only philosophy of reality, the one understandable without elaborated wordspinning, acceptable to everyone because of its simplicity and its closeness to life as lived by the masses of people.

Besides being intelligible and universal materialism is workable in practice. It works in the experience of everybody who lives.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

Though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously by licencing and prohibiting to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple; who ever know truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter? Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing.

Milton.

RELIGION IN AUSTRALIA

IN 1947 a census was taken in Australia. It was not obligatory for the people to state their religion. Of an enumerated population of 7,580,820 on June 30, 1947, 824,824 did not state their religion. The churches had campaigned vigorously, urging people to disclose their religion, and that figure was less than the 848,048 who failed to reply at the previous census, taken in 1933, when the population was smaller. Nevertheless, "no reply" had more adherents in 1947 than all the religious sects, with the exception of Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Methodists.

Freethinkers, rationalists, atheists, etc., made a poor showing statistically, only 26,328 people disowning religion. One may guess with some confidence that a large number of those who failed to reply are at least agnostics.

At the 1947 census 2,957,032 claimed to belong to the Church of England, 1,569,726 the Roman Catholic Church although 956,510 of that number replied "Catholic" instead of "Roman Catholic," 871,425 Methodist, 743,540 Presbyterian, 113,527 Baptist, 71,771 Church of Christ, 37,572 Salvation Army, the others being of insignificant numbers. Australia has all the "serew-ball" sects, from Theosophy to believers in Joanna Southcott. The population now exceeds eight millions, but there are no indications that the proportions have been greatly disturbed.

Protestantism in Australia is in about as parlous a situation as it is in England, and had it not been for wealthy benefactors of the past it would be in its death agony. It is almost living on its fat. Slick gentlemen of the last century secured glebes for the Church of England wherever possible, thus providing it with a substantial portion of its sustenance. Royalties for "Advance, Australia Fair," Australia's unofficial anthem and cue tune for the Australian Broadcasting Commission's news sessions, help the Presbyterian Church along. But, if the clergymen's laments are substantially based, very little new money is coming in.

Less than twenty years ago the Roman Catholic Church in Australia seemed to be in *extremis*. Then Archbishop Panico came bringing with him the New Look. Priests were forbidden to attend spiritualist seances, racecourses or hotels, and, to use an American expression, it became a "shop-front religion," a thing of glamour and propaganda. Priests often complain of "leakages" from the One True Faith, a certain indication of its declining strength. However, it is the only vigorous religious sect in Australia to-day, and it is a very strong factor in Australian politics.

About one-fifth of the total population of Australia is Roman Catholic, being most numerous in New South Wales, and the majority of their children are educated in schools conducted by their Church. Incidentally, Roman Catholics in Australia, as in other countries, have the highest rate of delinquency in the community, approximately one-third of the delinquents in New South Wales being of the One True Faith. It seems to be a religious sect that every country would be well rid of. The vast majority of non-Catholic children in Australia are educated in schools conducted by the States. Roman Catholic spokesmen continually complain of the "godless State schools," yet these schools turn out better citizens, a tribute to secularism.

Politically, the Roman Catholic Church in Australia is very powerful. There is never much between the major parties at an election, so the R.C. fifth decides the issue. All political parties angle for the R.C. vote. The

Australian Labour Party used to be firmly backed by R.C.'s, who preponderated in its Parliamentary section, although it has a Socialist objective which Roman Catholic delegates have tried desperately to remove. However, at the Federal elections of 1949, the opposing parties accused the A.L.P. of being dominated by Communists, the result being that the R.C. vote migrated and Labour lost the poll.

Catholic Action in Australia follows a similar plan to that in the United States of America, where the R.C. vote is in about the same proportion. It "plugs" the anti-Communist line, infiltrates the trade unions, and bellows imprecations against Russia and all its works. It offers "social justice" to the workers of the world, but in its own way, which closely resembles that of the late Benito Mussolini.

However, it seems that more than a dozen Fatimas will be needed to save the Roman Catholic Church in Europe, and, if its present hysteria in Australia indicates anything, it is also heading for the sunset in the so-called Western Democracies. Which goes to prove that Free-thinkers have not lived in vain.

B. CALCUTT.

PESSIMISTIC COMPARISONS

I am only a drop in the Ocean,
Of the millions which constitute life;
With movement of rather slow motion,
Toil, disappointment and strife.
I am only a blot on the landscape,
Which may any time disappear;
So, how can I count with a heartache,
And carry on—year after year?
I am what folks would call a non-entity,
A person of no great account;
So—if I reveal my identity,
To what does it really amount?
Just like the sand on the seashore,
One grain of which represents me;
I cannot think what I am here for,
I've never been able to see.
I've looked at it this way and that way,
The result always works out the same;
I suppose as I'm here I must stay,
There's no one I really can blame.
I arrived on this earth uninvited,
Asked no permission to come;
Sometimes I feel I've been slighted,
And—yet I have had a good run.
I am only a passenger waiting,
Maybe the train will be late;
But the journey I'll be undertaking,
Won't need a return on a date.

E. W. JAMES.

CORRESPONDENCE

MARXISM

Sir.—I agree with most of Mrs. Matson's letter debunking Mr. Cutner's peculiar theories on war, and distortions of Marxian socialism. But I challenge her to prove where "the followers of Karl Marx are building and rehabilitating their war-devastated countries . . ."

I do not know of any ruling-class (which are the owners of the land and the means of living in their countries) who are Marxian socialists; or even, to use Mrs. Matson's very non-socialist phrasology, "followers of Karl Marx." Perhaps she thinks there is such a place as a "Socialist Country" like Attlee's "democratic Socialism" which is supposed to exist in Britain to-day.—Yours, etc.,

PETER E. NEWELL.

"THOSE CUT THROAT BANDITS"

Sir.—In his article "On Two Critics" Mr. Cutner shakes a spear on behalf of his pet, Edward De Vere. I expected him to lunge, he has disappointed me.

Says Mr. Cutner: "It is quite impossible to say what any genius may do if we only go by his early work"; and no one could foretell from Byron's early poems that he would rise to the heights of "Childe Harold" or "Don Juan; or that

Dickens judged by his "Sketches by Boz" would become one of the greatest novelists the world has produced.

Obviously we should not know genius if it never proved itself, but Mr. Cutner seems to see the exception to the impossible in De Vere's verses. He spots in them a genius that could produce the greatest plays the world has produced.

What Mr. Cutner does not see is that Byron and Dickens did not disown their masterpieces; nor did they publish them under a pseudonym, appending a genuine signature only to kindergarten stuff, which supposedly is the case with De Vere. With something like pride, Mr. Cutner points to the fact that De Vere's verses, "some of much lyric beauty," according to Sir Sidney Lee, were thought good enough to be included in many fine anthologies.

Faint praise! Anthologies, like classical horse-races, include many "also rans."

That Mr. Cutner does not believe *Stratford Will* wrote the plays leaves me indifferent. I am curious, however, to know how one of his perspicacity comes to be so dazzled by *Oxford Ned*.

Mr. Cutner asks me if it would be worth while to discuss Communism with Prof. Haldane or with the Red Dean, or Spiritualism with Shaw Desmond or Hannen Swaffer. Why not? Surely he does not mean that he will discuss only with whom he is in agreement.

Mr. Yates merely differs from him and nothing is gained by Mr. Cutner posing as an oracle.

Principals in debate don't expect to convert each other, but they may hope to influence their listeners or readers. It may be a delusion, but we think these verbal clashes are something more than sounding brass. So we trust Mr. Cutner will keep on trailing his coat. Even if I am "in a minority of one" I like to read after him.—Yours, etc.,

H. IRVING.

[Mr. H. Cutner writes: I did not "spot" the plays in the poems of de Vere. I clearly said that I was convinced by the proofs in a dozen books. Discussion with people like Haldane leads nowhere.]

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

- Enfield.—Saturday, October 28, 6 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, R. BILLINGS and G. WOODCOCK. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—7-45 p.m.: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, R. BILLINGS and G. WOODCOCK. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Wednesday: Messrs. C. McCALL, L. SMITH, R. BILLINGS and G. WOODCOCK. (St. Mary's Gate).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY.
- Oswaldtwistle.—Friday, October 27, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

INDOOR

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon Street; off New Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: R. H. ROSETTI (President, N.S.S.). "Man's Animal Ancestry."
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: J. BINNS, "Ye Gods."
- Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall Library, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, October 31, 7 p.m.: GUILFOYLE WILLIAMS, "The Case for Reincarnation."
- Glasgow Branch (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: W. A. RATCLIFFE, "The Treatment of Criminal Offenders."
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. ("The Fighting Cock"), London Road, Kingston-on-Thames.—7-30 p.m.: A Lecture.
- Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Mr. H. CUTNER, N.S.S., "Sex Worship."
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (The Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. H. CUTNER, "The Jesus Myth."
- Queen's Park Parliament (Rochdale Road, Harpurhey, Manchester).—Sunday, October 29, 3 p.m.: J. CLAYTON, "Secularism."
- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Moral Consequences of Atheism."
- West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: P. O. KING, N.S.S., "Early Christianity and Rationalism."

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