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IEWS AND OPINIONS

Christian Civilisation

It is almost impossible to open a newspaper or journal without finding some reference to "Christian Civilisation." It is, so to speak, contrasted with "blatant materialism" or "Atheistic Communism," and shown to be infinitely superior. It is done by a very simple trick—you pick out all the good things in our civilisation and call that "Christian"; and you pick out all the bad things in everything else, and you have "blatant materialism" or "Atheistic Communism." In other words, everything good is Christian, and everything bad is—whatever Christianity is opposing at the time.

Few people, of course, stop to think out what the two words "Christian Civilisation" really mean. If there is plenty of food about, good wages, a chance to enjoy oneself in a cinema or at the seaside, that is all due to Christianity. If a war happens, if there is a disaster in a mine, or famine stalks the land, that is due to "imperialist greed," or the "bloated capitalist" deliberately withholding safety measures, or attempting a "corner" in wheat. If a strike takes place, that is naturally due to "Atheistic Communism."

Sometimes the opponent of Atheistic Communism, especially if he is a fervent believer in Christianity, is smart enough to see that the "Atheism" is much more dangerous for Christianity than the Communism. It is, therefore, Atheism which is the enemy of Christian Civilisation. In an Atheistic State, without the help of God Almighty, all the "higher" spiritual feelings must be atrophied. An Atheist, who proclaims a love of art, of poetry and of music, simply cannot be an Atheist. He must have a "kink" of some kind; or he may be secretly a Christian, or even a Christian without knowing it. You simply cannot mix Atheism and Culture.

The clever Christians who talk like this realise that an Atheist can never be a Christian. On the other hand, a Communist can be as good a Christian as the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury. During the past hundred years, large numbers of fully-believing Christians called themselves Communists—typical examples are the Red Dean of Canterbury, and the late Conrad Noel—and those of us who remember the hot controversy which followed Blatchford's *God and My Neighbour* in the pages of the dear old *Clarion* will agree how Christian Socialists and Christian Communists bitterly assailed its Editor, and prophesied that giving up Christianity meant killing the *Clarion* which was almost true.

But we are still far from quite understanding the precise meaning of the term "Christian Civilisation." Is it the Christianity of "Bloody" Mary? Or of Elizabeth? Was James II (perhaps the biggest cad who ever disgraced the throne of England) a typical Christian monarch, a fully bloomed product of Christian Civilisation? Was it Christian Civilisation which was responsible for the horrors of industrial England early last century, the savage prison sentences and the utterly foul prisons, the public hanging of boys and girls for stealing?

No doubt our Archbishops will repudiate this kind of Christian Civilisation; they might even repudiate the condition of things fifty years ago, when John Burns and Tom Mann and William Morris and Robert Blatchford and many other great fighters led the way to a better order. They may even try to excuse the past by insisting that Christian Civilisation has not yet been rightly reached. We have the example of "our Lord" constantly before us but we seem to be always rejecting his teaching. In other words, as the late G. K. Chesterton used to say, Christianity has never been tried. What we must have to begin with is "a change of heart."

I am as much intrigued by this term "a change of heart" as I am by "Christian Civilisation." What does it mean?

When I was a boy, the Salvation Army used to work very hard to procure this "change of heart" in drunkards, wife beaters, child torturers, and brutal convicts. Specimens of these gentlemen used to be prominently displayed dressed generally in their favourite rags, and they would pathetically implore us to come to the Throne, to God Almighty, to Christ Jesus, and be saved. Only through being Washed in the Blood of the Lamb could you get the necessary "change of heart." One of my adult friends told me, however, that very often the chief reason for a drunkard giving drink up was that he hadn't any money to buy it; that the wife-beater's wife had either left him, or that she was dead; that the child torturer's children had probably grown up, or were big enough to retaliate and bash the brute on the nose; and that the brutal convict was far too old to continue his dismal profession. The "change of heart" had nothing to do either with Jesus or the heart.

How difficult it is to make oneself understood can be seen in the correspondence which followed a chance observation of mine—that I preferred the old "a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye" to "give the other cheek" preferred by a few of our reverent Rationalists. I was immediately assailed as an atom bomb advocate and, of course, a warmonger. Some readers who call themselves Atheists attacked me as if I were already dropping atom bombs on the poor defenceless proletariat; and to cap all, I actually admitted (horror of horrors) that I was an anti-Marxist—which I am. This was the crowning outrage. And I am solemnly told my case is one for a "change of heart." Or, in other words, if I and people who think as I do, do not immediately change, we are responsible for the Third World War when it comes. The logic of this leaves me helpless, but none the less unable to understand what is the actual meaning of a "change of heart."

It seems to me, when I coldly analyse a good deal of the hysterical twaddle which accompanies the defenders of our "Christian Civilisation," "Give the other cheek," and a "change of heart," that I am up against our old friend the Scapegoat. For something like 1,500 years at least, almost every calamity that befell our Christian Civilisation was put down to magic, to the machinations of witches, sorcerers, and their incantations

and spells, unless there were Jews about; then the Jews it was who were responsible for the calamity, whatever that was. Most people have given up witchcraft or, at least, are not inclined to blame it for the plague, or floods, or famines, or the death of their livestock; a few still have a lingering belief that the Jews are always to blame—like the Nazis who refused to give the credit for the defeat of Germany in the First World War to the armies of France, England and America, but blame it entirely on the Jews in Germany. And I think it is not unfair to say that a good many people here, every time a war breaks out somewhere, have blamed, or they want to blame, Churchill, the Warmonger.

Thus it is the Atheist-Communists who are entirely to blame for everything that is going wrong in our world to-day which only a Christian Civilisation can put right—so long as the Christian Civilisers are not pressed too hard as to what is meant by the term. If it is not the Atheist-Communists who are to blame, it must be everybody who prefers the "an eye for an eye" philosophy—never under any circumstances those who prefer the "give the other cheek" teaching even if they themselves never follow it. And one can always fall back upon either the Jews or Churchill the Warmonger. But a Scapegoat there must be.

It seems to me that in the philosophy of Freethought there is something which brings with it a breath of sanity. The struggle by Man for Utopia has been going on ever since history has been recorded at least and, if we have not found it, the reason may well be due to a thousand causes. Whatever our differences, Freethinkers can at least give their best to bring about what Jeremy Bentham taught, the Greatest Happiness for the Greatest Number.

H. CUTNER.

PIOUS PUBLISHERS

PIETY amongst publishers is, of course, not so surprising as honour amongst thieves, but it has inevitably become rarer since the days of Byron when a fabulous story credits John Murray at least with the knowledge of who was Barabbas. Religion is less marketable since credulity falters. It was therefore with some surprise I found that a week was to be devoted to an exhibition of religious books at the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street. It was under the auspices of the Religious Book Publishers Group. I was astonished by the names of some firms that had somehow qualified. Several had produced my mortal works and, by the same token, had indicated that they were not cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd in Christian orthodoxy. At the same time there was a good deal of stretching to fit them for this galley. Thus J. M. Dent & Son Ltd. were represented by Renan's *Life of Jesus*. More recently the same firm have produced a volume entitled *Twenty-Five Nugles*. What would Hodder & Stoughton say to that? Not permissible, except before fair Eden did invite the snake! I thought there was a touch of humour in the Oxford University Press tending Parson Woodforde's diary. This 18th century cleric was notoriously avid for pie—not in the sky, but upon earth. "August 18, 1764: I have made a promise to-day concerning a certain thing (in eating); which every time I break that promise I pay 1s."

Of course, the sole question with the publisher, when offered a religious book, is Iago's, will it put money in thy purse? In this connection a good story is told of an American publisher who made a bid for Dean Inge's autobiography. The Dean, instead, offered a *Life of Christ*. The publisher cabled back that he could only

offer half the price for the life of the Dean's Lord, and negotiations ceased. It is delightfully related by Ernest Rhys, editor of *Everyman's Library*, that once Joseph Mallaby Dent, the founder of the firm, aspired to have a book in his own list. He prepared an anthology of the sayings of Jesus. The format was so poor that Rhys spent some days in improving it. When he suggested a little remuneration was due, old Dent tearfully remonstrated—H. G. Wells said he was the only publisher he ever saw in a lachrymose condition. "I thought," he said to his friend Rhys, "you were doing it for the love of Our Lord."

There were two addresses daily at the exhibition, and I heard first Dr. Donald Soper (of Kingsway Hall and Tower Hill fame). He was indeed a dismal Donald. He agreed with the Archbishop of Canterbury that we were in the post-Christian era. The man in the street did not read any religious literature. If he criticised Christian doctrine and practice, he seemed to have spent energy and time in reading his own literature, but took no time in reading theirs. (This made me ask inwardly how many parsons read the literature of freethought.) We were living in the first pagan age. People did not read their Bibles; did not observe Sunday; did not go to church. Christian faith was considered as irrelevant. It was no more harmful than digging your garden on Sunday, but no more useful. Ninety per cent. of religious books started at the wrong place. This statement could hardly have stimulated sales in the hall below, and was difficult to reconcile with the reverend gentleman's sad admission that his own attempt to provide popular religious literature had not been popular. Presumably he started in the right place. I suppose the reference was to two small volumes, *Questions on Tower Hill* and *Answers on Tower Hill*.

Dr. Leslie Weatherhead, like Dr. Soper, probably had the smallest audience for a very long time. It did not exceed 60. The minister of the City Temple did not seem to have spent much time in preparation. He quoted at some length from a work of his own published 20 years ago. Religious writers cited were Richard Baxter, Philip Doddridge, and Legh Richmond, whose *The Dairyman's Daughter* (1809) had a sale of two million copies! All these books are dated and dull. I doubt if Dr. Weatherhead ever read them, and if he did, how much of their theology did he endorse? After this, it was certainly justifiable to praise Dorothy Sayers' apologetics as "exciting." The tit-bit of Dr. Weatherhead's address, however, was a new discovery about the life of his Lord. Mr. Cutner please note:—

"Jesus was always a deeply religious man when He was in the carpenter's shop for 20 years. He must have been a supremely religious thing to make a window that fitted or a door that closed silently."

Surely 20 years at the bench throws the orthodox chronology out a bit? This reminded me of the question of the young Thomas Carlyle: "Did God Almighty God come down and make wheelbarrows?" At any rate, doors, windows and wheelbarrows, seem more dignified for the Deity than "sweeping the shavings from the workshop floor," as a modern hymn envisaged.

What would have interested me was an attempt to synthesise the contents of the various volumes displayed. This would have been some job, seeing that they included St. Augustine's *Confessions*, Sir James Frazer's *Folklore in the Old Testament* and a book entitled *The Story of Evolution*. If any book, as regards Christian theology, could be regard as an atomic bomb it was Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859). There is one notable difference in the comparison. The clergy could turn a blind eye

to Darwin, but a blind eye to an atom bomb is no better protection than a seeing one.

In the centre of the hall was a strange spectacle—a figure in white, holding a scroll in its hands. At first I thought it might be Moses, but I recollected his only works were on stone. Then might it be Jesus, whose only reading seems to have been the Book of the Law? It was not quite the conventional representation. The *British Weekly* has explained, and I endorse its comment:—

“This unfortunate (and very cleverly executed) paper ‘statue’ is said to represent Truth. It looks remarkably like a traditional figure of Christ. Around its head white birds (doves?) are flying, each with a scroll in its beak, presumably carrying truth to the far corners of the world. It is precious; it strikes one as a mistaken attempt to give some element of the dramatic and symbolic to a ‘religious books’ exhibition. It is unnecessary. The exhibition justifies itself and makes this imposing blunder look altogether out of place.”

I guessed at doves, as symbolical of the Holy Spirit, as the one god-ites, as Lamb called the Unitarians, were left out in the cold. Amongst the publishers mentioned on the leaflet were Burns Oates and Sheed and Ward, but I saw no Roman Catholic publications. Perhaps they had decided that their orthodox books must not be placed cheek by jowl with those of the heretics.

Dr. Wand, Bishop of London, opened the exhibition. He told his audience that he had heard that ten times more sermons were now being sold than before the war! Congregations continually diminish, on the admission of parsons themselves, yet people who will not listen are eager to read sermons, though probably the price would be considerably above what they would put in the offertory plate. To Dr. Wand's fable should be applied a story of the Duke of Wellington. He was once accosted by a stranger with the words, “Mr. Smith, I believe.” The Duke's answer was at once rapped out: “A man who can believe that can believe anything.”

Perhaps one of these days we shall have a religious newspaper exhibition, displaying, say, *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Evening News*, and other journals that figure, so to speak, as Seventh Day Adventists in support of the Christian faith!

WILLIAM KENT.

A GOSPEL GLOSSARY

THE study of words, their derivative roots and innate meanings are essential for the proper understanding of the English language for the communication of general knowledge both written and spoken; and, a glossary is a vocabulary of words with their explanatory meanings. This subject, applied to Bible reading, is intensely interesting and gives a literary insight to show how parts of the sacred (secret) scriptures are made up, being a revelation to ordinary readers, combining historical facts worth knowing.

Wine; Spirit: Capable of distention or swelling, as producing a belly, virility, divinations good or evil; Lev., XX, 27; Deut., XVIII, 2; I Sam., 28, 7; Acts, XVI, 16; particularly referring to Jewish women as “divine mistresses,” in I Sam., 28, 7, filled with the spirit of ecstasy; hysteria, meaning literally, the womb, in Hebrew, the abode of life, spirit, *womb*, in texture and shape, skin wine bottles for fermentation; those vase-shaped amphora or ampulla, belly shape, for holding

liquid used during coronation of kings, conferring divine influence and priestly enthusiasm; god inspired, as “the inflater,” breathing into; Lev., XX, 27; receiving the spirit of God; what the divine writers meant, being, “pleni deo,” like the divining damsel, Acts, XVI, 16, literally a python, Greek for womb, hysterikos; Latin, *uter*, a belly-shaped skin bottle; English, *uterus*, *womb*.

“The Virgin cries, ‘The God, behold the God!’
Straightway her visage and her colour change.
Her hair dishevelled and her swelling breast,
With throbbing heart filled with sacred fire,
As the inspiring God seizes her frame and soul.”

—Virgil, *Aeneid*, VI, 46.

To Stuff, Cram: Hebrew; to fill with victuals, as Solomon's provisions; I Kings, IV, 23; the rich and gluttons of Babylonia described as “young bulls,” and their residences as “fattening stalls,” Jer. L, 26. The case of obesity, “boose,” meaning a stall, booth. “The strong and mighty One,” Jer., 46, 15, is the *Apis*, bull of Egypt, symbolical of a mighty King, God. The Phœnicians worshipped their god as the strong and mighty One, which the Hebrews termed “*Abiry*”; stout-hearted as in Psalms, 76, 6; and the remains of the mighty stone monuments as Phœnician temples at *Abiry*, a town in Wiltshire, confirms the fact of Phœnicians in S.W. England building sun temples, their *Abiry*; now the town of Avebury.

The track of these root words with their innate meanings, some beginning with the ancient hieroglyphics which the Jews learned when in Egypt, then from the Hebrew, onwards, as *alluph*, the Hebrew word for oxen, and then the Greek *elephas*, used when Grecians first saw an elephant, as did the Romans who called the huge elephants bores, oxen; hence, bull-elephant and cow-elephant, their young are calves.. *Alluphant*, elephant, meaning big oxen; Hebrew *aleph*, an ox; Aleph, the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet; “A” signifies god, big, strong and mighty *One*, and the *on* is the Egyptian Sun City. A peculiar rendering in the Bible of the Hebrew word “bray,” shows that Samson never slew the Philistines with a donkey's jaw-bone. The word bray, to bruise, beat to pieces, Proverbs, 27, 22; also means a hole, Judges XV, 18, out of which water flows; so that the Samson story confuses bray with an ass, and jaw-bone is the name of a place, *Lehi*.

There is no need to study ancient languages to understand these fantastic terms. We thank the scholars who have done the work of interpretation in glossaries, lexicons and the like books, as Richard Payne Knight's *Inquiry into Symbolical Language*, Dr. Parkhurst's Hebrew and English Dictionary, Edward Moor's *Oriental Fragments*, by which the reader will learn what is the meaning of a barber God, shaving somebody's feet with a hired razor; why women stitched pillows to men's elbows; also, funny expressions like, doors of your face, long noses, God's sign of virginity, Numbers, V, 15-18; men and women “grinding” is nothing to do with corn but a symbolical term for sexual intercourse; stones, as witnesses, testes, as in human anatomy, so that a man deformed or injured in the testicles must not worship in the House of the Lord.

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

Wholesome, honest and mannerly pastimes be as necessary to be mingled with sad matters of the mind, as eating and sleeping is for the health of the body. As rest is for labour, and medicines for health, so is pastime at times for sad and weighty study.—ROGER ASCHAM (1515-1568).

THE MODERN MALTHUSIANS

FROM time to time in reading *The Freethinker* I have come across suggestions by believers in the doctrine of the Rev. T. R. Malthus that he alone had the key to the troubles of this wicked world. Personally I am not surprised that even a clergyman was forced by the wretched conditions of his times (1766-1834) to examine the problem of poverty, and one has only to look at the slums of our industrial towns and refer back to the condition of the working class in those times, to realise that his suggestion of family limitation had some justification in his eyes.

It is safe to say that, could he have visualised the tremendous growth of population in Great Britain as the result of the Industrial Revolution, he would have been even more a "Prophet of Woe" than his followers make out.

At the same time it must be admitted his theory that poverty is due to too many mouths is justifiable if no effort is made to grow more foodstuffs, though it is an extremely "comforting" doctrine for those who have all the good things of life, and savours of the survivors of a shipping disaster who congratulate themselves on pushing off the raft all those who were too weak to hold on.

Now I did not start this article with the idea of popularising Malthus, but rather of pointing out that his doctrine has evidently favour to-day among the Powers, and if the excess population is the cause of so much misery then the preparations which are being made for their destruction bid fare to give us a New Jerusalem (that is if there are any survivors), after the next war.

Mind you, I have still to be convinced that with a little common sense and putting on one side for a time the doctrine of supplying tin buckets to the peoples of the world, food production might not be sufficient for all. I am fully aware, of course, of that imbecile attempt to supply us with margarine from Central Africa by growing pea-nuts, and whilst all of us bear the cost of such feather-brained schemes, there are no doubt a number of people who did well out of the venture and who are congratulating themselves on "backing a winner."

From time to time the world has been warned by Lord Orr of the danger of falling food supply, but I see not the slightest indication among the powers-that-be of facing up to this question except by synthetic foods and by a rigorous food control, the latter permitting of a limited amount to you and I, but bearing no relation to the amount of unrationed foods at a dearer price which may be bought by the wealthier.

Strangely enough in this country we are importing foreign labour for employment in the factories at a time of food shortage, and at the same time offering rewards to parents who bring more children into the world. This means that those people who control our destinies feel that the future is to be made safe by having a much larger population, and have thrown over the idea of large populations producing misery and starvation.

There is a comforting idea that by selling ironwear world-wide, we shall have the money to buy foodstuffs, but exactly who is to grow the latter is one of the puzzles of our times. Certainly the growers will have to go in for increased production or they themselves will be starved because they are not left enough to live upon, and I can only suppose that what is called the "subjection of the black races" is due to the working out of this particular fallacy.

One thing Malthus had overlooked, however, was the destructive instinct of the human race. He had lived

through the Napoleonic times with the resulting high taxes and shortages with which we are so familiar to-day, but his world was at least sane enough to congratulate themselves on the end of warfare and to look forward to better times, even if Malthus thought them impossible.

The clash of antagonisms both on the Continent and later in the U.S.A. civil war were "half-day excursions" compared with the era which was ushered in by 1914. Previous to that time the loss of life in battles had been trivial compared with the populations supporting rival armies.

Then following the 1939 war we had the "cosmic joke." Mankind has invented a method of destroying not only armies but whole populations, and is steadily perfecting this, not only by bombs but by methods for wholesale poisoning and disease. Among the religious people there is naturally a strong idea of an Omnipotent God who loves and watches over us. Even the infidels have the idea that all things work together for good. Both sections of the human family are faced with a problem.

When Bernard Shaw wrote that this planet is "The lunatic asylum of the universe," he was unaware of the extent to which this imbecility might lead us, but of the correctness of his title there can be no possible doubt.

Naturally, having read this far you may ask, "What has this to do with Malthus?" Well, the reply is that it has proved that gentleman's conclusions and unconsciously the world is proceeding to destroy itself, and to that extent remove the pressure of population upon food supplies. Readers of H. G. Wells will remember the pessimism of his later works. He, in common with other scientists, thought in terms of a world supplying itself with both luxuries and necessities by a planned economy, which is a recognition of the necessity for food, clothing and shelter. Others, of a different political opinion, believe that production will follow demand without planning, dominated by the profit motive.

I need hardly say that although a Freethinker, I agree with Mr. Rowland on getting together with anyone interested in survival, and if all our best wishes fail we shall at least be relieved of any question as to what posterity will think of us because there will be no posterity!

Finally, the only difference between Malthus and the Moderns is that he desired to limit the number of people brought into the world, whereas our modern politicians are busily inventing more costly methods (once people are born) of wiping them out in ever-increasing numbers, and meanwhile making it more costly to live. But what a win for Malthus who wrote over a hundred years ago that there were too many of us!

T. D. SMITH.

HEREDITARY GENIUS

IN the prefatory chapter to the 1892 edition of his epoch-making book, *Hereditary Genius* (first published in 1869), Francis Galton states that at the time the book was written, the human mind was popularly thought to act independently of natural laws and to be capable of almost any achievement, if compelled to exert itself by a will that had a power of initiation. When Charles Darwin—a first half-cousin of Galton—received a copy of the book from the author, he wrote to him: "You have made a convert of an opponent in one sense, for I have always maintained that, excepting fools, men did not differ much in intellect, only in zeal and hard work, and I still think this is an eminently important difference."

Although the popular opinion of mental faculty to which Galton refers may not be as rife to-day as it was in 1869, the assumption is often made that "one brain is as good as another" and, even when the differences are too obvious to be ignored, deficiencies are attributed, not to any defect or inferiority of the machinery, but to the lack of suitable opportunities to make it work. Environment is considered to be the all-important factor, and hereditary factors count for little, or not at all. The present reprint of Galton's *Hereditary Genius*,* comes as a salutary check to all who hold such views.

Galton was one of the first to turn to the use of statistical methods in relation to human phenomena and, while his investigations indicated that environment counts for much, they also indicated that hereditary counts for more. Pearson, who advocated Galton's views, stated that the influence of environment is not one-fifth of that of heredity, quite possibly not one-tenth. Though this is probably an overstatement of the difference, there can be no question that innate constitution sets a very rigid limit to what can be achieved by training and environment.

Referring to the use of the word "genius" in the title of his work, Galton states that there is not the slightest intention on his part to use the word in any technical sense, but merely to express an ability that is exceptionally high, and at the same time inborn. "It was intended," he says, "to be used in the senses ascribed to the word in Johnson's Dictionary, viz., 'Mental power or faculties. Disposition of nature by which any one is qualified to some peculiar employment. Nature. Disposition.'"

Seeing that there is nothing either in the history of domestic animals or in that of evolution to make us doubt that a race of sane men may be formed who shall be as much superior mentally and morally to the modern European, as the modern European is to the lowest of the Negro races, Galton set himself the task of considering by what means the formation of such a race might be brought about. His primary object was to investigate whether and in what degree natural ability was hereditarily transmitted. For this investigation it was necessary to gain a general idea as to the transmission of ability. He first of all compiled a list of the English Judges since the Reformation. Their kinships were analysed, and the percentage of their "eminent" relations in the various near degrees were tabulated and the results discussed. After doing this, a series of lists were taken in succession of the most illustrious statesmen, commanders, literary men, men of science, poets, musicians, and painters. Then a large group of eminent Protestant divines and the Senior Classes of Cambridge were taken in hand and finally, to show that the views expressed applied to muscle as well as to brain, the inquiry was turned to famous wrestlers and oarsmen.

As a result of his painstaking investigations Galton was able to show that a man's natural abilities are derived by inheritance, under exactly the same limitations as are the form and physical features of the whole organic world. "Consequently," he says, "as it is easy, notwithstanding these limitations, to obtain by careful selection a permanent breed of dogs or horses gifted with peculiar powers of running, or of doing anything else, so it would be quite practicable to produce a highly-gifted race of men by judicious marriages during several consecutive generations."

To those who think this modern age is near the acme of perfection, and that there is little or no room for im-

provement on the lines indicated above, it will come as a bit of a shock to learn that the average ability of the Athenian race in the time of Pericles (over 2,000 years ago) was, on the lowest possible estimate, as much above our own at the present day as ours is above that of the African Negro. "This estimate," says Galton, "which may seem prodigious to some, is confirmed by the quick intelligence and high culture of the Athenian commonalty before whom literary works were recited and works of art exhibited, of a far more severe character than could possibly be appreciated by the average of our race, the calibre of whose intellect is easily gauged by a glance at the contents of a railway bookstall."

To the student of history, however, the above estimate need cause no surprise. As Galton points out, the long period of the dark ages is due, in a very considerable degree, to the celibacy imposed by religious orders on their votaries. "Whenever a man or woman was possessed of a gentle nature that fitted him or her to deeds of charity, to meditation, to literature, or to art, the social condition of the time was such that they had no refuge elsewhere than in the bosom of the Church. But the Church chose to preach and exact celibacy. The consequence was that these gentle natures had no continuance, and thus, by a policy so singularly unwise and suicidal that I am hardly able to speak of it without impatience, the Church brutalised the breed of our forefathers."

Galton goes on to describe the policy of the religious world in another direction, which had hardly less cruel effects on the nature of future generations. He refers to the persecutions which brought thousands of the foremost thinkers to the scaffold, to the dungeon, and to suffer exile. After brutalising human nature by her system of celibacy applied to the gentle, the Church demoralised it by her system of persecution of the intelligent and the sincere. Those she reserved to breed the generations of the future were the servile, the indifferent, and the stupid. As Galton says, it is truly a "wonder that enough good remained in the veins of Europeans to enable their race to rise to its present very moderate level of natural morality."

Hereditary Genius, a nineteenth-century classic, comes to us in these uncertain days as an inspiration for the present and a guide for the future, and is a work which no student of sociology can afford to ignore.

FRANK KENYON.

THE BOOKS OF BEWILDERMENT

The world would look fairer, all evil be gone,
If we'd wake to the wisdom of Matthew and John.
On the other hand, list how the other lot bark
—Who follow the faith of St. Luke and St. Mark.
A gospel for dustmen, and eke for the duke
—If you pick the right pieces from Matthew and
Luke.
It doesn't tell me what it seems to tell you
While I look at John, and you look at Matthew.
For books that bedevil and keep the Truth dark,
There are none to touch Matthew and John, Luke
and Mark.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

* *Hereditary Genius* (Watts, xxx + 379 pp. 10s. 6d. net)

ACID DROPS

Another fine example of tolerance is shown by the Scots Catholic workers who want "Christian" electors never to vote for a man who has no respect for their religion. They strongly protested against Mr. Aneurin Bevan's rather contemptuous reference to beliefs held "sacred" by Scottish Catholics. Of course, contemptuous reference to beliefs held by Protestants and Jews and Muslims would *not* matter.

We rather like to give notice to religious grovelling, so here is another pious item. 300 people knelt in Liverpool the other week in rain and mud to receive the "blessing" of some Franciscan Fathers. This kind of grovelling would be of course enforced if Catholics had their way. Fortunately they haven't.

A Catholic writer in the correspondence columns of a Hampshire newspaper claims that the Roman Catholic Church has 500,000,000 adherents. In 1948, the number claimed officially by the Church was 350,000,000, so obviously conversions have been coming in thick and fast since then. Or perhaps this optimist has added a few noughts to celebrate Holy Year!

"Materialism was the enemy of to-day" is the cry of Fr. Crane of Oxford addressing the Catholic Social Guild, and he ought to know. Only he tacks on to it the "Communist creed," which has nothing to do with Materialism proper; otherwise so many Christians would not proudly call themselves Communists. But he does recognise one other thing, and that is, "something like 90 per cent. of the people of this country" think little of God—though he is not claiming that this 90 per cent. are *all* Communists. Talk about muddled thinking!

We could hardly believe our eyes but it is the Silver Jubilee of Mr. Misery Martin's terrific fight for a Christian Sunday—a fight, it does *not* grieve us to say, he is losing more and more. By the way he seems proud of being hailed in addition to "Misery" by such delightful sobriquets as Bluenose, Dismal Jimmy, Kill-joy, Meddlesome, Mugwump (but why the wump?), Snooper, Twerp, and Wowser, out of which he deserves "Misery" more than any other.

Needless to add he has produced, in addition to these cognomens, a series of "devotional" booklets for Christians "which have had a total circulation running into millions," according to the *Christian World*. Ah, but where are his converts? There's the rub and the test. Still, he has been not only in Horfield Gaol, Bristol, for his opinions (shame!) but also an honoured guest at a recent Royal Garden Party. So there are compensations in being such a misery-monger!

The British Council of Churches Commission is calling for more "controversy" in B.B.C. religious services. This is most intriguing, for it is precisely what we Free-thinkers have demanded for years. But perhaps what we call controversy would be looked at by the B.C.C. as rank unbelief, and that would never do. There is not a single cleric on the B.B.C.'s religious staff who would be prepared to discuss openly the Myth Theory of Jesus with a competent writer on this very controversial subject. And we can't blame him. The B.B.C. would be inundated with furious and very pious protests. Real controversy is barred, and even a controversy about con-

troversy would be barred under the present Charter of the B.B.C.

The building of large blocks of flats and estates ^{now} always meant a heaven-born opportunity for the Church to carry its Divine Message to the more or less "pagan" people who live in them. Our parsons have seen this for some time and here we have one of them, the Rev. J. S. Crole, of St. Olave's, Stoke Newington, insisting that "a supreme need is that children should be taught the Bible" in this community life. It would prove most interesting to see how he would do it. How would he explain those lovely stories of Jesus chasing Devils out of pigs, yelling to a storm to stop as it was frightening his disciples, changing water into wine, and then parachuting upwards into "heaven" to sit on his own right-hand side? Does he really believe that any child, properly taught history, anthropology, and science, could swallow this kind of hopeless nonsense?

Most people are now just fed-up about the fairy tale of the Assumption of Mary, but no matter how silly is a Papal Dogma, intelligent theologians like the Rev. B. Grimley, D.D., Ph.D., can always be found in the service of the Church, and they are ready to defend it with "rational" arguments. This rev. gent. believes in oral tradition, and so the Assumption must be true. As he says, the Church "is a reliable witness to her own story" and what more can one want? The Church also guarantees the Bible and the Bible guarantees the Church, and it surely does not require a Doctor of Divinity and a Doctor of Philosophy to get that one across. Any trembling nun knows as much. But, of course, hardly anybody else would read the erudite Dr. Grimley.

There does not appear to be the same certainty in some Christian circles about the "waning Sabbath," as it is called, as formerly. For example, the Rev. W. M. Evans frankly admits in the *Christian* that "there is no Biblical authority for trying to legislate a Jewish Sabbath on a Christ-rejecting world." This is very doleful, as is the statement that in Acts the word "sabbath" is "related only to unbelieving Jews." Mr. Evans claims that the first day of the week is only kept because of the Resurrection "and the hope of the future in Christ." We strongly advise Mr. Misery Martin to get on the trail of Mr. Evans, and bring him to see the Light. We can't.

So at last some of our persistent propaganda is bearing fruit. In the *Sunday Sun*, in an article discussing religious broadcasting, the writer asks, "What then do people want?" If public reaction to radio debates on other serious subjects gives a clue, they want religious discussion. They want to hear all sides, the Christian, the Agnostic, the Atheist." And he adds, "If Christianity is the true revelation by God to man, what have the Churches to fear from opposition?" But if it is *not* a true revelation? There's the rub—and the Churches know it.

The Free Church of Scotland accuses the B.B.C. of allowing "blatant Atheism" to be broadcast. Being Christian gentlemen, the Free Churchers must have heard the "blatant Atheism" during a doze after a hearty meal. That does not excuse their display of Christian intolerance, but we must remember that a religion like Christianity, that has to be protected from the mildest breeze of criticism, naturally attracts the petty-minded and intolerant type.

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

A. G. BEDANE.—Thanks for suggestion re Dr. A. J. Cronin. Mr. Seibert, we are glad to say, is making progress.

ROBERT DODD (and others).—Our contributors and correspondents are allowed a free hand, and if anything strikes a reader as being untenable, we do our best to allow him to air his views in these columns. Personal abuse is, however, not argument. If correspondents keep their letters short, it will give a chance to everybody.

COMMANDER M. C. BROTHERTON.—We agree in the main, but sometimes the writer in question gives a point of view Freethinkers should consider.

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.

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

Mr. H. J. Blackham, General Secretary of The Ethical Union, is speaking in the series "Man Without God" on the Home Service programme on Thursday, November 16, at 10-30 p.m. We wonder if the B.B.C. has made a serious mistake. Mr. Blackham is a man without God right enough, but he will make his position quite clear, and not confuse listeners with a string of ambiguous quotations, or express mournful regrets that he has no God.

In the King's Hall Cinema, Acerington, this evening (November 12) at 6-30, Mr. J. Clayton will lecture on "Jesus Christ—A Myth." Mr. Clayton is well known as a speaker, always with something interesting and instructing to say, plus an enthusiasm which is attractive either in the open or indoors. Why not get a Christian friend to attend with you?

The Manchester Branch N.S.S. has, with one exception, finished its open-air work for this season. The exception is on the Blitzed Site at St. Mary's Gate, where Mr. G. Woodcock will continue to hold lunch hour meetings at 1 p.m. The season has been most successful and useful, and thanks are due to all those speakers who contributed to the success. The Branch is on the look out for a suitable hall for indoor meetings, and the Branch Secretary, Mr. R. Billings, of 181, Culcheth Lane, Newton Heath, Manchester 10, would appreciate information of any such hall being available for Sunday evenings.

The Merseyside Branch N.S.S. had a good audience in The Coopers' Hall, Liverpool, last Sunday, and Mr. R. H. Rosetti's address held the interest to the end. There were many questions and some opposition, most of it wide of the subject, but with good intentions. The Local Secretary, Mr. W. C. Parry, 476, Mill Street, Liverpool 8, would like to receive names and addresses of any readers wishing to be acquainted by post with forthcoming lectures and other branch activities.

GEORGE BERNARD SHAW
(1856-1950)

He stands on Mount Olympus and surveys
A pigmy world, a race of purblind men;
The thunderbolts hurled by his Jovian pen
The groundlings dazzle and the gods amaze.
No spot eludes his all-embracing gaze;
The nearby forest and the far-off fen,
The teeming city and the silent glen,
To him yield up their hidden, secret, ways.
Yet has this god a kindly human smile—
The tolerance that understanding breeds;
He knows that folly is not fraud nor guile;
That in mankind deep-hidden lie the seeds
Of future good; that in a little while
Earth's garden will bear more than noxious weeds.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

A NOTABLE WORK

WE welcome this first cheap edition* of one of the most important and useful books which have been published in this country during the past few years. Originally published in 1947, Mr. Manhattan's book has already established itself in the international arena as an able, timely, and heavily documented analysis of the political and historical role played by the Vatican throughout the past generation in world politics and sociology as such. *The Catholic Church Against the Twentieth Century* represents not only a contribution of permanent intellectual value to the history of our times but, equally, a most valuable weapon for practical use wherewith to combat the growing menace represented by militant Catholicism in the social and political spheres.

As the title of his book clearly implies, Mr. Manhattan has not set himself the inexhaustible task of dealing with the world-role played by the Vatican throughout the ages. His aim has been the less grandiose, but equally useful task of delineating the actual role discharged by the Catholic Church in a single age and century, our own. However, before settling down to his self-chosen task of analysing the respective relations between "the Catholic Church" and "the Twentieth Century," our author prefaces his proper subject-matter with a lucid and well-informed account of the permanent ecclesiastical machinery of the Church of Rome, in succession, its permanent organs of government, the Papacy, the College of Cardinals, and the leading Roman "Congregations" are past in review. Nor is the important role played by the religious orders ignored; indeed, to write the actual history of the modern Catholic Church whilst ignoring the greatest of these orders, the "Company of Jesus," would be rather like writing a critique of "Hamlet," whilst ignoring the central figure of the play, "the Prince of Denmark."

From our historian's opening chapters there emerges the picture of a huge bureaucratic machine, a vast clerical octopus, whose all-embracing grip extends over most of the known world and which, whilst a religion in form, is in substance a world-wide political organisation; the most powerful and permanent of all totalitarian regimes, which aims at perpetual domination in both the visible and invisible world, and the "concentration" camps of which, unlike those of secular despotisms endure for ever and only *begin* with the grave; a world-wide corporation of priests operating under the perpetual dictatorship.

**The Catholic Church Against the Twentieth Century*, by Avro Manhattan. Cheap Edition, 5s. Watts and Co.

the elective but absolute monarchy of the Papacy, the product of elder ages in the world's history, confronts "the 20th century," an age which, for the first time in recorded history, possesses a civilisation based throughout upon ascertained science and in which the supernatural, with all that it implies, has retired from the centre to the circumference of contemporary civilisation, and is, to-day, hard put to even maintain itself upon, as it were, the margin of contemporary world-history.

The Catholic Church against the Twentieth Century, such is our author's theme; by far the major part of the book before us is concerned with the many-sided reciprocal relationship between these respective forces, particularly during the between-the-wars generation—1919-39—when the Vatican made the last to date, but by no means the least of its many successive efforts to break down the liberal framework of modern secular civilisation and to prostrate mankind anew at the feet of a medieval clerical theocracy.

The "hero"—a sinister hero!—of our history or, at least, its central figure is the late Achille Ratti—Pope Pius XI—1922-39—who reigned over the Catholic Church and effectively reorganised her policy during the major portion of the era covered in the book before us. Ratti, described by Manhattan as "a man of authoritarian temper and no friend of Democracy," had been Papal Legate at Warsaw in 1920, when the Bolsheviks had forced their way to the gates of the city, then the Eastern bulwark of "Christian Civilisation" against the peril of "Atheistic Communism" from the East. Ratti never forgot that critical moment in the history of Catholicism and it was from him that the Catholic Church derived that primary fear of Marxism, Communism, or "Atheistic Bolshevism," which has been her fundamental bugbear from that date down to and including our own. Marxist historians themselves might describe Ratti's anti-Socialist phobia to his social origins and upbringing since he was the first Pope of bourgeois (middle-class) ancestry to have been reared in a capitalist environment, at least since the far-off days when the Florentine banker-pawnbroker, Leo X—1513-22—(Giovanni de Medici—family arms, the three golden balls!) provoked the Reformation by his ruthless exploitation of "indulgences."

When, a little later (January 1922), Ratti succeeded Pope Benedict XV as Pope, this very able and ultra-reactionary pontiff set to work to reorganise the Catholic Church so as to meet the new peril. For which purpose, Pius XI ruthlessly jettisoned the traditional Catholic political parties as outmoded in face of the new menace. In their place, Pius called to his aid a new secular ally who was then just making his entry on to the contemporary stage of history.

This secular ally was Fascism which staged its "March on Rome" in October 1922, the same year which saw Cardinal Ratti of Milan become the 261st successor of St. Peter as Bishop of Rome, and which was to spread in the course of the next two decades over a great part of the formerly civilised world. The world-wide machinations of Pope Pius XI to crush modern liberal, socialist, and communist civilisation with the aid of the "secular arm"—and sword—of Fascism on the international field constitutes, as it were, the basic leit-motif, the fundamental base of Mr. Manhattan's luminous—and voluminous—pages. Indeed, this eminent historian might have relevantly added the apposite sub-title to his work: "the Catholic-Fascist plot against modern secular civilisation."

In succession, we follow the intrigues of the Vatican with Mussolini, the "godfather," as it were, of Fascism, whom the Pope himself described as "the man raised up by providence"; with Hitler, the Catholic-inspired author of *Mein Kampf*, the predestined crusader against Russia in the Roman world-strategy; and with Franco, upon whose behalf the world-over-propaganda-machine of the Catholic Church went into action throughout the Spanish civil-war; not to mention Rome's crooked dealings with pagan Japan—the Oriental Fascist bulwark against Chinese Communism; with American demagogues like Father Coughlin, such minor Fascist luminaries as Salazar of Portugal, Dollfuss and Schusnigg in Austria, the senile Petain in Vichy France and, nowadays, Peron in the Argentine.

Indeed, this era of Catholic-Fascist alliance may be held to constitute an entire epoch in both ecclesiastic and in secular history. To be sure, it was not a new tactic in the history of the Papacy. In the chequered and blood-stained annals of the Papacy, Rome had often before called in secular crusaders to her aid; the medieval Normans, and Spain in the era of the Jesuit-led counter-Reformation, were cases in point which will occur to any student of the Catholic Church in world history.

What did Rome actually gain, and hope to gain from this unholy alliance with the pagan fasces (the lictors' rods of ancient Rome from which Fascism derived its name) and the swastika? The Papacy recovered some fragments of its former "Temporal Power" in the grant to the Pope of "The Vatican City," plus a large sum in cash from Mussolini as compensation for the remainder—a good deal more than the legendary "thirty pieces of silver"! In a few backward lands permanently, and over large parts of the world temporarily, Rome witnessed the downfall of her modern rivals; Atheism, Freethought, Socialism, Liberalism, at the hands of the Fascist torturers and executioners. But, in its grand aim, the annihilation of modern secular culture and the enslavement of Humanity to a clerical-fascist co-operative of exploitation, the grandiose world-strategy of Pius XI and of his trusted lieutenant and successor, the present Pope, ended in failure. Not only did Fascism eventually crash, but the prime *raison d'être* for the clerical fascist alliance, the Western advance of "the Spectre of Communism" has come perceptibly nearer Rome—as the Vatican is now only too painfully aware as, to-day, the successor of Ratti searches feverishly for new, more "democratic" allies, not, unfortunately without success.

Such in barest outline is the historic canvas so laboriously filled in by our author. A monument of painstaking scholarship and a permanent memorial to one of the most discreditably episodes in the entire history of the religion. Never since its medieval extermination of the Albigenses, has the Catholic Church sunk to lower moral depths than in its struggle "against the Twentieth Century," as Manhattan describes it. His book is, at one and the same time, a valuable contribution to the political history of our tragic epoch and a formidable weapon in anti-Catholic controversy. No Freethinker, no one cognisant of the danger still represented by the persistent drive of the Vatican towards world-power, no serious student of contemporary history can afford to neglect this fine book. The very reasonable price at which it is now issued by Messrs. Watts should ensure for Mr. Manhattan's masterly survey of the Vatican plot against modern civilisation the wide audience that both its subject-matter and its own intrinsic merits deserve.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE MIRACLE OF THE ASSUMPTION

ALL the years I have known my friend F. A. Ridley I have always been surprised at his logic. He has often asserted that the Catholic Church is rational, and though he has been studying ecclesiastical history for years, I am just as surprised at his lack of appreciation of Catholic theology. And even now, with a full awareness of his political obsession, I am still surprised. In his article "Freethought and War" he made the collapse of civilisation and world government a moral issue, and said that this should have precedence over anti-religious polemic. And in his "War for Christian Civilisation," with a fear-haunted atmosphere of war hysteria, he said that not to consider it would be a gift horse to the Church.

He apparently agrees with the logic of St. Thomas Aquinas, that moral law is superior to civic, political, or secular law, and yet he continues with anti-religious polemic, and, concerning the dogma of the assumption of the Virgin Mary, he continues to search for a political explanation as to why the present time should have been chosen for such a pronouncement. In considering "Authority in Religion," he plays upon the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope. But if he agrees with St. Thomas, and that the world to-day is faced with a moral problem, it seems strange that he should so soon forget, and be considering scientific and historical evidence, or the lack of it, instead of moral issues, and at the same time re-asserting Rome's logicity.

But he should have considered; first, the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope was decreed by a Council, which shows that the Pope is not the supreme authority in the Church; second, it was decreed that the Pope is infallible only in faith and morals. Now, it is the Pope that makes the pronouncement in the case of the assumption dogma, so, the question at issue is one of faith and morals. It now becomes a different picture from that painted by Ridley. He gives Anglican authority rejecting the dogma on lack of evidence, scientific and scriptural. But if there were evidence it would not be a matter of faith, and this rejection amounts to a sacrifice of theology in acceptance of science; truly a sacrilege, as Ridley noted.

But this raises the moral question, for acceptance of science is acceptance of the atom bomb, which has had almost universal moral condemnation. The Vatican, in condemning the bomb, also condemns the science. But Ridley, searching for a political explanation, fails to see the moral issue, and in asserting reason is against faith, forgets that he himself has said that war is a negation of reason, and that Rome is more logical. What the Vatican is saying is that simple faith that can believe in absurdity is preferable to scientific knowledge that can produce a monstrosity. And, just as Ridley accepts St. Thomas as to the moral issue, so will the Church get support from the simple faith it justifies, as to this moral issue.

Ridley says a *bodily* assumption implies Heaven as a place. Does it? Ridley's science is a bit out of date. The solidity of bodies was a problem to Isaac Newton and he gave a strange explanation—that we exist in the sensorium of God as objects exist for us in our sensorium. But Newton's space and time is replaced by Einstein's events in space-time continuum. So also the solid atom. Since Clerk Maxwell we have an undulatory theory but with no ether. Since Rutherford we have electron theory with units of electronic energy. With controversy between these two theories, with Planck's quantum theory and Heisenberg's indeterminacy, it has become as to Shroedinger, waves of probability. And instead of

a Universe doomed to run cold, we now have one bursting with radiant energy.

Ridley says science knows nothing of God, immortality, soul or Heaven. This is playing the Christian at his own game, meeting ignorance with ignorance. But St. Thomas went further than that, in his *Analogy of Being*, he argued that we can know nothing of existence because we can only think by analogy; and our scientists and philosophers agree. Science, it seems, cannot even explain itself. A Universe bounded yet infinite, space-time curves round on itself, waves of probability, statistical average; no wonder Whitehead said, in elucidation it becomes meaningless; and Russell is forced by his own logic to say knowledge is uncertain and that we know nothing of a physical world. And this, mark you, by his own logic, not in answer to Catholic theologians.

A generation or two ago there was talk of warfare between science and religion, but to-day, an age of science is an age of miracles; and Aquinas is quite a vogue. Scientific experts say that science is concerned with the unknown and talk about scientific miracles. In a voluminous literature, the assertions of, and interpretations of, scientific authorities, is reminiscent of the bandying of biblical texts by Christians, or of theological reiteration of, and interpretation of, the Christian Fathers. Scientific specialisation is accompanied by philosophic confusion, and the theologian finds himself in a convivial atmosphere, in which morality is a theological prerogative. There is no science of morality and the authority of science is no substitute for the authority of religion.

At one time Chapman Cohen tried to give us a natural morality, arguing that morality had nothing to do with religion. To-day, with science painfully unable to explain what it does know, Ridley, painfully certain of what science does not know, says that the Vatican claims to *know*, but where he gets it from I don't know. Christianity has always been concerned with belief, and here we are concerned with faith and morals. Arguing absurdity of the dogma of the assumption or of miracles is as nothing to the Vatican's charge of the diabolical immorality of the bomb. Nor will it do to absolve science on the grounds that it is not responsible for the use made of it, for that only raises the question as to the moral nature of man.

In what Ridley calls anti-religious polemic, we should face up to our opponent's case, not stand up skittles to knock down. Here we have the other leg of St. Thomas's logic; another kind of reason with justification, not explanation, of beliefs, in concern for ulterior motives. This involves both the Heaven and the bodily assumption, for, as the moral is to civic or secular law, so the Eternal is to the natural, as Good is to Evil. Some Freethinkers have gone to some trouble in attacking sex in Freudian psychology, but we seem to accept good and evil in that of St. Thomas. But if we cannot deal with the psychology of Aquinas we shall be more than lost in Loyala's mysticism.

H. H. PREECE.

THE REAL RELIGION

I am really a great admirer of tangible religion, and am breeding one of my daughters a Catholic, that she may have her hands full. It is by far the most elegant worship, hardly excepting the Greek mythology. What with incense, pictures, statues, altars, shrines, relics, and the real presence, confession, absolution—there is something sensible to grasp at. Besides, it leaves no possibility of doubt; for those who swallow their Deity, really and truly, in transubstantiation can hardly find anything else otherwise than easy of digestion.—BYRON, Letter to Moore.

ON DARWIN'S THEORY

EVEN now, 91 years after Darwin's epoch-making book, *The Origin of Species* was published, it is still discussed, lauded and criticised.

It was in the second half of the 19th century that many traditional religious beliefs were shaken by startling developments in scientific thought. As early as 1830-33 Sir Charles Lyell in his *Principles of Geology* had demonstrated from the "records of the rocks" the immense age of the earth in conflict with the biblical account of its creation about 4000 years B.C.

It was some twenty years after his *Origin of Species* that Darwin published his *Descent of Man* in which he stated that man was the result of evolution and that both man and ape sprang from common stock.

No one believes in Adam and Eve now. That story does not account for negroes, and if they left two sons on the earth where did we come from because two men can produce no offspring. The alternative is to believe in Darwin's theory which would account for negroes, pygmies, etc.

From the outset many broadminded churchmen have accepted the discoveries of science and though the latter have progressed much since Darwin's time they have in no sense solved the mysteries of life and the universe.

Darwin wrote many books on subjects as varied as *Geological Observations in South America* and *The Structure and Distribution of Coral Reefs*, but it was the *Origin of Species* which caused his name to attain great celebrity and could be said to have effected nothing less than a revolution in biological science.

Darwin's theory suggested that the world was not made specially for man so it is difficult to see how Christians can believe in it. But then it is difficult to see how Christians do anything.

J. G. BELLAMY.

THE ENGLISH CRAZE AND ALL THAT

I HAVE read many articles in opposition to Esperanto, but few that contained so many inconsistent arguments as that written by my namesake (Percy G. Roy) in *The Freethinker* (October 29). The factors he uses in opposition to Esperanto are forgotten when support is given for other languages.

First he supports "Interlingua" (basic Latin), "which any well-educated European can read at first sight" and later argues that an international language should "cater for the common people." As the common people are unfamiliar with Latin, which is essential to an understanding of Interlingua, a language designed for those who know Latin, his support for Interlingua contradicts his own argument.

Next he states: "All these projects (constructed languages) started . . . without reference to living speech." This is followed by the statement that Zamenhof chose his roots "from the languages of the most important colonial *Herrenvolks*." He belittles the use by colonial people of Zamenhof's "mongrel of hated languages" yet supports another "mongrel" derived from the same languages and which is the language of to-day's greatest *Herrenvolk* in regard to colonialism—U.S.A. and Britain.

Percy G. condemns the use of accents in Esperanto because of the waste of time in affixing them, as if he did not require to cross his "t's" and dot his "i's" when writing English.

In conversation or correspondence with some ordinary people in every Western European country, and Hungary, Palestine, Egypt, Singapore and Japan, I have not heard or read one statement from any of them to support the argument that the grammar of English is simpler than that of Esperanto, despite the fact that some of my friends could speak both languages. However, the military and economic power of Britain and the U.S.A. ensures that English receives preference in many countries as an auxiliary language. The Esperanto Movement cannot afford, even if it possessed, the millions of pounds needed to propagate the language as Britain propagates English in many countries by means of the British Council. France, Russia and Britain have proved since 1945 that it is the power behind a language that encourages some people to learn it. Esperanto, while possessing many advantages for the learner, cannot compete with English, French and Russian on the basis of simplicity alone, but its use is spreading among those people who prefer friendship to power politics.

The Roman Catholic section of the Esperanto Movement has received a Papal Blessing (whatever that means) three times since about 1908. That does not mean that the Church supports the Movement in general. Although Percy G. refers to the R.C. Church being foremost in boosting Esperanto, the evidence available does not substantiate his argument. The Movement is not strong in Catholic Ireland, Spain and Italy. It is stronger in Protestant Holland, Germany, Denmark, Sweden and Norway.

Before the rise of Hitler, a Freethought Esperanto group was very active in Europe. But as Hitler, Mussolini and Stalin have done much to hinder the spread of Esperanto, it has been difficult to keep such groups in existence. However, the Socialist Esperantists continually oppose all dictatorship and advocate freedom of thought.

J. S. ROY.

CREMATION: A RATIONAL PROCEDURE

THE growing preference for cremation may be attributed largely to the spread of a more rational attitude towards death and the corresponding growing disbelief or indifference to theological dogmas.

Cremation "by-passes" the cemetery and the superstitious practices connected with burials. It avoids the large aggregate cost of the plot and its upkeep, the casket and cortege, embalming and the engraved monument. Above all, it obviates the cruel emotional strain of the interment for the close survivors.

When cremation is resorted to, the body should be removed to a crematorium for immediate private disposal. The process of disintegration, by that procedure, is quick and aesthetic instead of protracted and ugly as in burial. Because of the inevitable distortions in death, the remembrance of the appearance of the deceased when alive is preferable to the viewing of the facially-painted remains. After the grief of the close of kin has subsided, a secular memorial meeting could be held in a pleasant atmosphere.

The ornamentation, expense and elaborate ceremonies usually connected with burials are not a true gauge of affection or respect. These, obviously, are but outward manifestations without necessary reference to the inner feelings of the survivors.

Loving remembrance and esteem by the living is the closest to immortality one can hope to attain. To a finer mind that should be a sufficiently attractive prospect.

IRVING LEVY.

BEHOLD A LEGEND!

I WAS interested to read Mr. T. D. Smith's article debunking the legend of the building of Buckfast Abbey by the monks. I can corroborate his statement that the claim is made because I was once invited to Buckfast Abbey by a young Catholic friend who had been "adopted" by the monks together with other Catholic schoolboys during the war years. I was assured that the Abbey—the whole thing—was the work of the monks. Incidentally, I was attending a Training College at the time and the food we had there compared very unfavourably with the food enjoyed by the monks. Not that I begrudged them that—but the irony of the situation was so striking. Catholics are so bitterly opposed to materialism—and it is popularly believed that those following religious vocations are generally ascetic and despise the material side of life. Yet here are monks living in the greatest luxury. The dining hall is most magnificent. Yet at the same time people are led to believe that Catholicism is the arch-enemy of materialism—using materialism in its popular sense. It is perhaps as well to recall Archbishop Temple's reminder that "Christianity is the most materialistic religion in the world." He was then referring to man's need of bread and the material conditions of life, the close relation between body and spirit, and the emphasis upon the word made *flesh*.

But, of course, Temple was an unusually honest man. In the present campaign to vilify unbelievers as Communists, materialists, reds, irresponsibles, etc., Freethinkers should find this quotation of Temple's rather useful.

C. R. ENGLISH.

CORRESPONDENCE

MUSEUM PIECES

Sir.—Re the Bournemouth Arts Club Exhibition now at the Russell-Cotes Museum Gallery, the Curator, Mr. Sylvester, is reported as expressing his pained astonishment and asking us how it is that "there is nothing in this exhibition to indicate to a Korean that he is in a Christian community."

The answer is perfectly simple, and obvious enough, surely. Artists no longer paint religious subjects—moronic saints with arrows sticking all over them, Adam and Eve scenes, moon-faced madonnas, angels flying about dressed up in old-fashioned nightgowns, etc., etc.—because there is no demand for this sort of stuff nowadays, and artists, just like the rest of us, have to sell their wares or starve.

In the Dark Ages, when all Europe was dominated by religious superstitions the Church created and maintained this demand by commissioning competent painters to decorate its buildings but even the Church of Rome has long ago found some other (presumably better) use for its fabulous riches, the secrets of which are so fearfully and jealously guarded.

The only interest these old pictures hold for modern people is their museum interest: they interest us because they are rare and reflect a bygone mentality. Mr. Sylvester must remember that just because these paintings are exhibited in his museum that does not indicate that they have to be museum pieces!

Incidentally, our worthy Curator must have read the declarations so frequently reported in the press recently of high dignitaries of the Church telling us that this country is *not* a Christian community any longer, since only ten per cent. (some estimates give five) of the population take any interest in religion.—Yours, etc.,

M. C. BROTHERTON, Comdr. R.N.

"GRAND OLD NAME OF INFIDEL"

Sir.—Reading recent correspondence about the meaning of the word "Atheist" and the reasons why some people are Christians for the very reasons (such as the Inquisition, the use of the atom bomb, cruelty of man to man, etc.) which compelled others, logically, to become heretics, I was reminded that the "Grand Old Name of Infidel" deserves to be cherished. Somewhere I read, years ago, in general literature that Infidel is a grand old name. Intended as a term of abuse

it has become a Holy of Holies, for not one man in ten thousand is worthy to be called an Infidel, a man to whom you would trust your very lives, as to the noblest and best of mankind. Therefore I modestly avow myself "one who strives to imitate infidels."

I forgot where I read that when I was 17 or 18, about 65 years ago, and I also forget the exact wording, but I have given the sense of it, as it has stuck in my memory.

Perhaps some of your readers can tell me the author; I think it was Carlyle, in his letters.

The words remind me of the advice given me by an orthodox relative when I was very young and which I have also remembered because the concluding moral of them has proved to be true over and over again in my long life:—

"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and escape hell fire—it is so simple—but in the ordinary affairs of life and especially in matters of business always trust a Jew before a Christian and an Infidel before both."—Yours, etc.,

F. PARSONS.

POLITICAL LIARS AND FORGERS

Sir.—I should like to draw Mr. Cutner's attention to the opening paragraph of Mr. J. D. Smith's note in your October 22, 1950, issue.

Also I would call Mr. Cutner's attention to the fact that political liars and forgers are equally numerous.

The art seems to have come into being with the art of letters; and England has not been lacking in her share of the brood. They are still with us.

Every Freethinker of any age in the movement should remember the campaign of lies spread by our "national" daily Press, about the International Congress of the World Union of Freethinkers, held in London in 1938.

As I see it, a Press that could not tell the truth about that Congress in 1938, is not likely to tell the truth about the U.S.S.R. in 1950.

In the past, being in sympathy with some lines of Mr. Cutner's researches, I have thought that Mr. Archibald Robertson's strictures on his controversial methods were a bit hard; but being drawn to examine them more closely in the last seven months, I can now better appreciate Mr. Robertson's point of view.—Yours, etc.,

ALBERT R. THORNEWELL.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—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.

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

INDOOR

Accrington (King's Hall Cinema).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON, "Jesus Christ—A Myth."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: H. ROBINSON, M.A., "The Foreign Policies of States."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall Library, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, November 14, 7 p.m.: DORIS CHAPLIN, "The Psychological Approach to Delinquency."

Glasgow Branch (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. WM. GOLDIE, "Scotland and Its Education Acts."

Kingston Branch N.S.S. ("The Fighting Cock," London Road, Kingston-on-Thames).—7-30 p.m.: A Lecture.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. ROGER PAGE, "Penal Reform."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Mr. M. BENNETT, "War and Communism."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: Mr. S. K. RATCLIFFE, "Mysticism—Genuine and Bogus."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: Mr. R. J. JACKSON, "Early Adventures in Freethought, Philosophy and Religion."

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