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Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Jacob's Stone

If anybody wanted proof that the Coronation of our Kings was intimately connected with making a King into a God, or half a God, or at least something holy and divine, let him read the history of the Coronation Stone just stolen from Westminster Abbey.

Most people are aware that there was a stone under the Coronation Chair, and that it was, to say the least, "sacred." They may have also a vague idea that it was "pinched" by Edward I, and carried to London, and that Edward would not have done so if the Stone had had no glamour about it. That ruthless King, whose treatment and murder of such a patriot as William Wallace was about as foul and as cowardly as anything ever done by an English monarch evidently had some "animistic" beliefs for, when all is said and done, the Stone was nothing but a stone and had no more virtue in it than any worn-out mile-stone on our highways. From the way the Dean of Westminster spoke about it on the radio after it had been stolen one would imagine that he had not advanced beyond the mentality of Edward I, and that is no credit to him. Of course, the Stone has historical associations but no more so than similar objects in our museums.

There is a pretty story in the Bible about Jacob taking a stone for a pillow when he rested on his way to Haran. He went to sleep and dreamt that a ladder was "set upon earth and the top of it reached Heaven," and Angels went up and down the ladder. Naturally, after these angelic gymnastics, God appeared and told Jacob the usual fairy stories which, if it had really happened, would have proved incontestably that God does talk to man sometimes, and so has the usual vocal organs. Unfortunately, this anthropomorphic conception of God Almighty is rejected even by pious Christians.

However, Jacob took the stone after he awoke, and set it up for a pillar and poured oil upon it, and that is how we get the name of Bethel, which means God's House—though the place where the stone was put up in this way was at first called Luz. This information, given in Holy Writ, may seem rather superfluous, but there are reasons why it was given.

Now, without beating about the bush, learned commentators are agreed that this anointing of the stone is of purely phallic origin, and it can be seen performed every day in India—the phallic country *par excellence*.

Exactly what happened to Jacob's stone immediately after this holy ceremony is not revealed to us, but it is by no means impossible that the stone in the Holy Ark was claimed by the Hebrew priests responsible for the Tabernacle to be the identical one set up by Jacob. There were actually two stones and one of them may have been attributed to Jacob—or, perhaps, the story of the stone of Jacob was written after the stories about the Ark in which it was contained. It will be remembered that the Ark was captured by the Philistines, and they appear to have made the Lord (who was,

perhaps, in it) very angry. The God of the Philistines, Dagon, suffered cruelly at the outrage to God's Ark, and in the end it was returned.

Later, in the Biblical story, we learn that a stone was used for coronations—it was called "the testimony," and any book on phallic worship will give the origin of this word.

We next hear of it in Egypt—if it is the same stone—and then we learn that Gathelus, the son of Cecrops, king of Athens, married Scotia, who was the daughter of the then Pharaoh. He went to Spain, carrying it with him, and from there it went to Ireland. It became the *Lia Fail*, the Stone of Destiny, and on it Fergus Eric and his descendants were crowned. Fergus and the Scots moved eastwards taking the Stone with them, and set it up in the year 840 in Scone. When the kings of Scotland were crowned, they sat upon a wooden chair above it. They were also called the kings of Scone. Eventually, it was "removed" (stolen or pinched would be nearer the truth) by Edward I, and at Westminster it has remained until it was "removed" (according to our Scots friends) the other day, and it is fairly obvious that it will not be returned to England without a devil of a row. In the matter of its "sacredness," the Scots can learn nothing from the English.

It should be added, of course, that there are several versions of the history of the Stone, differing greatly in details. Even the Mahomedans insist that Jacob's stone is in the Mosque of Omar and therefore its history, as related by the unbelieving Christians, is quite false.

The Rev. E. Cobham Brewer (who was, it is claimed, a well-known Rationalist in his day writing under the name of "Julian") gives this couplet:—

Where'er this stone is placed, the fates decree,
The Scottish race shall there the sovereigns be.

By the Scottish race is meant the dynasty of the Stuarts and their ancestors, and our own King is, of course, a descendant. But whatever genealogical tree can be made for George VI, it is best seen in the one sent out by that fantastic sect of Christians who call themselves—and the British people—British Israelites. They have no difficulty in proving that the King is descended from David by taking many Bible names literally thus showing that our Royal Family are genuine Israelites. Almost anything, of course, can be proved from the Bible, even aeroplanes, I think—Elijah going up in a fiery chariot should prove this to all except such inveterate sceptics as myself. The word Saxon obviously comes from "Isaac's son," while Dan, one of the lost tribes of Israel, is discovered in the Danes, and the name Dan-ube is a striking proof that the Grand Old Book never fails.

What I have never been able to understand in all this ludicrous nonsense is how the brown-skinned Semitic Israelites, who must have looked like Arabs do now, managed to turn into blonde, fair-haired Saxons overnight, so to speak. Perhaps I am asking too much, for God's ways are always mysterious.

Be this as it may, it will prove very interesting to see what will happen to the Coronation Stone if it is found or given back—at the moment of writing, it has not turned up—and what will happen to the “culprits,” if anything? After all, it does belong to Scotland, and nobody is in the least hurt at its “removal.” And the one point that does arise from it is the almost unbelievable Animism which still pervades our Christian authorities. I can only repeat what I said at the beginning—the Stone is just an old and absolutely worthless piece of stone. The world will not be a whit the worse if it never turns up. H. CUTNER.

AN EMINENT HISTORIAN'S REFLECTIONS

PROF. G. M. TREVELYAN, O.M., stands in the front rank of contemporary British historians. He is a splendid humanist whose *Autobiography and other Essays* (Longmans, 1949, 12s. 6d.) covers an extensive literary field. As an historian, Dr. Trevelyan sustains the tradition of his father, Sir George Trevelyan, and that of his great uncle, Lord Macaulay.

Prof. Bury succeeded Lord Acton as Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge and, at his death, this important appointment was conferred on Dr. Trevelyan and he held it until his retirement under the age limit and then, with the demise of the celebrated scientist, Sir Joseph Thomson, F.R.S., he was recommended for the post of Master of Trinity by Winston Churchill, a position he still holds.

In addition to his contributions to England's history, Trevelyan has written a fascinating biography of Grey of Falloden, an appreciation of George Meredith and three volumes on Garibaldi's outstanding services in the creation of united Italy. But our historian's widest appeal has been in his historical studies of his native land. Our social evolution was always a favourite theme and the immense sale of his *English Social History* both pleased and surprised him. “I was delighted and touched to find,” he avers, “that so many of my fellow countrymen read my account of their ancestors with interest and sympathy. I was indeed astonished at its success. The *History of England* has sold 200,000 and the *British History of the Nineteenth Century* about 68,000. But they were used in schools and colleges, and I did not therefore expect so large a sale for the *Social History*, which is less adapted to the examination system. But actually it has sold well over 392,000 copies and of these the far greater number were disposed of in this island, the American sales not being particularly large.”

In his address on *History and the Reader*, Trevelyan courteously criticises the dictum of his learned predecessor, Dr. Bury, who declared that “history is a science no more and no less.” Against this assertion, Trevelyan observes that the pioneer historians of ancient Greece, Herodotus and Thucydides, treated their writings both as a science and an art. Again, he urges that: “Three men stand out as the creators of the norm of modern historiography: Hume, Robertson and Gibbon. Gibbon is the greatest, but Hume and Robertson were his predecessors; and those two Scots have a very high place in the history of history in these islands. They made the history-reading public in Britain, which Gibbon inherited from them. In Gibbon the perfection both of the science and the art of history were reached and have never been surpassed.”

When concluding this very suggestive and instructive address, Trevelyan deplors the fact that the present

enormous increase in the cost of printing and publication, with the paper famine, so many of the distinguished historians of the past will not pay the cost of reprinting, and he instances the works of Lecky as a case in point. Still, he hopes that this loss may eventually be made good. It is also a calamity that so many invaluable and irreplaceable books and manuscripts have been destroyed by enemy action in recent wars.

In his Presidential Address to the Historical Association in 1947, Trevelyan discusses the largely unavoidable influence of an author's bias in historical narratives. He considers that however dispassionate the historian may appear, there must ever remain a remnant of bias which, owing to the writer's prepossessions, can never be completely eliminated. Indeed, Trevelyan himself has been accused of Whig bias, however unconscious, by Esme Wingfield Stratford in that writer's *Charles, King of England*.

The greatly erudite Lord Acton censured the many sectarian historians who have palliated the crimes committed by their own country or party, while denouncing in unmeasured terms the same offences on the part of their adversaries. This he held to be highly detrimental to morality. “The strong man with the dagger has been followed by the man with the sponge,” he complains. Yet, while agreeing with Acton in principle, Trevelyan demurs that: “If the historian stops to exclaim over every wrong deed he records, his history will become too like that of Gildas, a book of lamentation, a commination service, in short a bore.”

It is certainly the bounden duty of the historian to condemn evil, but the period, with its special circumstances, passions and preconceptions, must be allowed for. In the case of Christian persecution, we see the acceptance for centuries of this damnable doctrine of the persecution and, if possible, the extermination of heresy, as divinely inspired, and this is the sole justification of the creed-ridden men who practised it. As Trevelyan shrewdly remarks: “This infamous doctrine, after being accepted in Europe without demur for a thousand years inevitably led to the Wars of Religion, the mutual persecutions of Protestants and Catholics, Alva and the Smithfield fires, Titus Oates and the English conduct in Ireland, Louis XIV's dragonnades and the resulting anti-clerical persecutions during the French and later Revolutions. European feeling and thought had, been poisoned at the source fifteen hundred years ago when European religion became connected with the totalitarian doctrine of exterminating the unbeliever.”

In his essay, “Stray Thoughts on History,” our historian mentions Toynbee's *Study of History* as the work of a writer even more erudite than Acton, who declares that in man's leading achievements, “challenges and responses is the factor that counts above all others.” Yet, as Trevelyan observes, challenges frequently fail to elicit responses or, when responded to, result in changes entirely unexpected. “History,” he claims, “can record the facts, but neither philosophy nor science can tell us why they occurred, nor why Caesar, Mahomet or Shakespeare were born at their appropriate times.”

Among the other charming essays in Trevelyan's volume is one entitled: “The Calls and Claims of Natural Beauty.” There is a most illuminating description of “Social Life in Roman Britain,” while a further study deals with “The Coming of the Anglo-Saxons,” and to these we may return. There are also delightful studies of Cromwell's Statue and Walter Scott's influence on history, while three of Trevelyan's valued friends who have recently passed away are commemorated as “Friends Lost.”

T. F. PALMER.

PREDESTINATION

(Concluded from page 5)

IT would be difficult if not impossible to determine how much the Christian conception of predestination was influenced by Greek and Roman beliefs regarding fate; but the conception like the rest of the Christian scheme seems to be almost entirely Jewish and is fully supported by the Old Testament as the above passage from Romans shows. An examination of the Jewish apocrypha and pseudepigrapha reveals some interesting expressions of the conception; and the Old Testament and these writings show that the Jews like most other races believed that man's life is determined by a supernatural agency. After a discussion of how God distinguished one day from another and differentiated seasons and feasts, Ben-Sira said in Sirach, XXXIII, 10-15:

" Likewise also all men are made from clay,
And Adam was created of earth.
In His great wisdom God distinguished them,
And differentiated their ways.
Some he blessed and exalted,
And others He hallowed and brought nigh to
Himself;
Some he cursed and abased,
And overthrew them from their place.
As the clay is in the power of the potter,
To fashion it according to his good pleasure;
So is man in the power of his creator,
To make him according to His ordinance.
Over against evil (stands) the good, and against
death life;
Likewise over against the godly the sinner.
Even thus look upon all the works of God,
Each different, one the opposite of the other.' '*

One of the best comments on the old simile of the potter and his clay is Omar Khayyám's colloquy of the pots, in which

" Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
I think a Súfi pipkin—waxing hot—
' All this of Pot and Potter—Tell me then,
Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?'
" ' Why,' said another, ' Some there are who tell
Of one who threatens he will toss to Hell
The luckless Pots he marr'd in making—Pish!
He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well.' "

Here is an excerpt from " Fragments of a Zadokite Work," so named from the Sons of Zadok, a Jewish religious party which was formed in the 2nd century B.C.:

" And power and might and great fury with flames of
fire [therein are all the angels of destruction]
For them who turned aside out of the way,
And abhorred the statute,
So that there should be no remnant,
Nor any escape of them.
For God chose them not from the beginning of
the world,

And ere they were formed He knew their works.' †

The divine despotism elucidated by Ben-Sira and the writer of the fragments was an idea ingrained in the Jewish race and, it should be added, in the Arabic race also, as the Koran shows. The same despotism, it seems somewhat astonishing, is still taught as one of the benevolent principles of Christianity in this age superior to all others in enlightenment and lack of common sense.

Predestination would naturally be a good cause for endless theological disputes; and, while its illogicalness might be accepted by primitive or barbarous people or by those taught not to think for themselves, the doctrine itself would come to be regarded as unreasonable by thinking men; and this happened long ago in the history of Christianity. The sceptic Pierre Bayle asked the question in his " Clarifying Discourse on the Manichaeans " (*"Eclaircissement sur les manichéens"*) appended to his *Historical and Critical Dictionary*: " Must we not say in clear terms that predestination is one of the mysteries which overwhelm human reason the most, and which demand the most inevitably that it humiliate itself before the authority of God, and that it sacrifice itself to the Scriptures?"

Predestination as a Christian dogma reached one of its most extreme forms in Calvinism; and Bayle quoted in the above discourse what the gentle Calvin said in a " Short Reply to the Calumnies of a Certain Bungler by Which He Has Tried to Defame the Doctrine of the Eternal Predestination of God," which reply is contained in his *Opuscles*. Having stated that it was " a dirty, stinking calumny " (*"une calomnie par trop vilaine et puante"*) to hang on a man like him who had served the Church so well the crime of making God the author of sin, Calvin said, apparently speaking of himself: " And he confesses that it is an incomprehensible secret, that God wills what does not seem to us at all reasonable: and yet he affirms that we should not investigate too curiously or rashly, since the judgments of God are a deep abyss, and that it is much better to adore in all reverence the mysteries and secrets which are beyond our capacity, than to search too closely and to be too forward." With predestination or without it, an all-powerful god who was the creator of the world would necessarily be the author of both good and evil; for he would be the author of everything; and the calumnies against poor Calvin could be justly directed against all the theologians who have created all-powerful gods; and they would then be not calumnies, but truths.

WILLIAM RITTENOUR.

HELL'S BELLS

What does the swaying steeple say
As it rocks and reels to the bells' brass bray?
" Come—Come—Come!"—but could well be dumb,
Who's to heed in the city's hum?

Like gramophone disc with gummed-up groove,
Down the octave the measures move,
Roaring drunks bawl ribald verses,
To add to the noise the sick man curses.

The bells were devised, the erudite say,
To frighten the Fiend in an earlier day.
So it may be, but the drooling din
May drive a dozen worse demons in.

To the nerve-racking noises of modern life
Add a nine-bob peal, like a nagging wife—
And the lessons there for the Infidel;
It may help to show him the shape of Hell.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

* Translated by G. H. Box and W. O. E. Oesterley in *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* edited by R. H. Charles.

† II, 4-6. Translated by R. H. Charles in the book cited.

ACID DROPS

The Dogma of the Assumption of Mary is still being discussed in Catholic journals—proof that, however sheep-like are Catholics and however ready to believe anything, they find it hard to swallow a yarn for which there is not a scrap of evidence. Bishop Marshall of Salford tried recently to show, for example, that anyway the Assumption was known from the 6th century and that should be good enough for anybody; while the *Universe* disingenuously points out that, even if St. John didn't write about it, it was because he was writing about "our Lord" and not about "our Lady." And it goes on to say that after all St. John "nor any other New Testament writer tells us that she was born, or the names of her parents." This kind of irresistible logic proves the absolute truth of the Assumption.

In the Soviet zone of Germany during the past Christmas, "shrines," dedicated to Stalin and Lenin, have been ordered to replace the usual cribs with the infant Jesus. They must be kept properly decorated with flowers. It is, of course, hard to eradicate religious "adoration" of any kind, but opponents of "Atheistic Communism" may find it difficult to explain these "shrines."

That valiant defender of out-worn creeds, Mr. Arnold Lunn, has discovered that such awful heresy as "religion does not matter" is dying if not already dead. Instead "only a great religious revival will save Western civilisation and culture from destruction"—by which he means his own religion, of course. In other words, belief in the Assumption of Mary with its Heaven and Angels, Hell and its Devils, the thoroughly stupid miracles of Jesus, and his still more absurd "Virgin Birth"—belief in these and many other things still sillier, is going to save Western civilisation! If any proof were needed as to what religion can do to a man's intelligence read Mr. Lunn.

Writing in the "Christian World" a "Catholic" endeavours to reply to some of the objections which are rather half-heartedly made by Protestants against the Assumption and Adoration or Worship of Mary in the Church of Rome. He says: "Catholics would not fall into the trap of calling the Assumption, or any other miracle, a scientific impossibility." We should think not indeed. Only a Materialist would have the cheek to say that a miracle was impossible; and Catholics backed up by the Pope are not standing that. They only swallow an idiotic absurdity when it is proclaimed a dogma by the Pope, and what is wrong with that? The yards of sheer twaddle churned out by Catholics, not so much in defence of a dogma, as of the Pope who proclaims it, has now reached fantastic proportions.

For some reason which we find difficult to understand, the Rev. C. H. Dodd is being constantly put forward as a kind of Protestant Newman—a wonderful theologian. If the kind of thing we have been getting on the radio from him on the Advent of Christ is the best he can do, we can quite understand Roman Catholic contempt for heretics. Dr. Dodd appears to take the New Testament and particularly the Gospels as "history," though he is forced to admit that "the passages on this subject (Advent) in the Gospels are certainly not easy to understand." And, drowned in a plethora of words, Dr. Dodd's talk did not make it any easier.

What Jesus meant in "coming again" which, at one time, used to be quite clear, requires hours of talking about adding confusion on confusion; but in the end, Dr. Dodd comes to the conclusion that "we also expect Him to come in this menacing situation to which history (*sic*) has brought us." What a lot of toil and sweat and wasted time would have been saved if that had been said at the outset. Dr. Dodd simply dare not give up the "Second Coming."

Television is at last to have a Sunday school, and already the great possibilities this will bring to the Church are greatly welcomed. There must, of course, be "competent teaching of the full faith," and with this the children will naturally be brought in touch with the Faith. What a howl there would be if Television admitted "competent teaching," not necessarily of Free-thought, but of Science and its utter ignorance of the Christian scheme of Salvation! And that is bound to come some day.

Santa Claus or Father Christmas, or whatever the good male fairy is called, is in bad favour in Communist countries, and in Red Hungary he has been replaced by a cold-looking gent called "Little Father Frost," who might or might not be a frost to the young people there looking for the inevitable present. Still, as a rose by any name would smell as sweet, and also because Xmas is a pagan festival—what does it matter who brings gifts down the chimney? It's the gift we want.

The Pope wants to get all the publicity he can from his latest harangue on "peace," but most of what he said was hopelessly boring. He could have made all his points, that is, all the points worth hearing, in less than five minutes. People don't want peace because anything he or Jesus thinks—they hate war because it is so utterly senseless, and because of the frightful misery it brings in its wake. And it solves nothing. Still it's "news," and the Church of Rome must have free publicity.

After nearly 11 years of excavation, the Pope has announced the glorious news that the Tomb of St. Peter has been found "beyond all doubt." There are some bones nearby, but they cannot be identified. It need hardly be said that this momentous discovery of the tomb of the mythical St. Peter is based upon no evidence whatever. It is just as much hopeless nonsense as the Assumption of Mary. In fact, when the Pope broadcast the news, he hastily switched off to the more important "world event of the Holy Year." That, particularly from the financial aspect, was a great success. It was also a magnificent publicity stunt, the Roman Church getting a tremendous advertisement—for nothing.

A number of tracts are being published by Messrs. Mowbrays at 6d. each, which are, we are informed, "the product of the Mission to London." The *Church Times* reviewer is very disgruntled at the one entitled, *Who Was Jesus of Nazareth?* which he considers the most disappointing of the lot. It appears that its author, Bishop Stephen Neill, "never seems to give a clear answer to the question which forms the title of his pamphlet." Bishop Neill has our heartfelt sympathy for the question can be only truthfully answered in one way—Jesus was a Myth. And no self-respecting Bishop, even if he agreed with us, would be allowed to say so.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

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E. W. JAMES.—Greatly regret your verses are not quite suitable. We note you have a letter from George Bernard Shaw. If any reader is interested in this, your address is Silverlands, Wheathamstead, Herts, and we understand you will be pleased to hear from him

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three-months, 4s. 4d.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: **THE TRUTH SEEKER** (U.S.A.), **COMMON SENSE** (U.S.A.), **THE LIBERAL** (U.S.A.), **THE VOICE OF FREEDOM** (U.S.A., German and English), **PROGRESSIVE WORLD** (U.S.A.), **THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST**, **THE RATIONALIST** (Australia), **DER 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.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

SUGAR PLUMS

Bradford readers can hear an interesting, instructive and witty address by attending the Mechanics' Institute, Town Hall Square, this evening (January 14). Mr. J. T. Brighton lectures for the local N.S.S. Branch on "Can We Be Saved?" It is a repeat visit from Mr. Brighton and those who have heard him before will not hesitate to be in good time for a good seat for a good evening.

Judging from applications made for the forms for withdrawing children from religious instruction in schools, it would seem to be one of the New Year resolutions made by some parents, and we take the opportunity for reminding parents that the forms are available from the offices of the National Secular Society, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and are supplied free.

We note that Mr. Paul Tabori has written a biography of Harry Price, "a Ghost Hunter"—and *Psychic News* heads its review, "Harry Price Debunked the Magicians." It slides over, as gracefully as it can, the plain fact that he also "debunked" many "genuine" mediums; and readers will remember, we think, that he also debunked the stupid yarn, so widely spread, that the ill-fated commander of the airship R. 101 returned in spirit form. Harry Price debunked that fairly and squarely.

But this exploded lie has got too far ahead to be completely captured. It reappears every time, or almost every time, that Mrs. Garrett is mentioned in *Psychic News*—with her portrait so as to give it additional authenticity. And it will continue to be quoted long after both Harry Price and Mrs. Garrett are forgotten. A spiritualistic lie, like a Christian one, generally has seven-league boots—or should we say is like a rocket aeroplane—impossible to overtake.

It is interesting to note also that Spiritualism can now claim to have "debunked" the Assumption of Mary. One of our writing mediums, Miss G. Cummins, has for many years produced "psychic" scripts emanating from the Palestine of Jesus' day, most of them describing Jesus as a boy and man, and also the adventures of Paul and Mary. The Virgin led a very quiet life, it appears, and died at or near Ephesus; and Miss Cummins was given no details whatever from the spirits about the "Assumption." What does surprise her is that Mary is not mentioned in Acts at all—a surprising omission if she really was the Mother of God. Perhaps the real reason is that Mary was nothing but a myth—like Jesus.

THE PEACEFUL ATOM BOMB

THE resolution passed by the Executive of the National Secular Society seems to have touched Mr. Cutner on a raw spot, although it is difficult to see why. The resolution does not deny, or even challenge any right to his opinions or publication. It does not question his right to queue up with the advocates for using the atom bomb, it just dissociates itself from his attitude. All manner of opinions are expressed in *The Freethinker* and that is good, but the leading article is usually a pointer to the cause or movement served by the paper and Mr. Cutner's article was the leading article in that particular issue.

As hitherto, the leading articles in *The Freethinker* had been in harmony with the propagandist views of the N.S.S., the Executive felt it was imperative to make it clear that the policy of the Society was still in line with its traditions on the question of war. Has that hurt anybody except Mr. Cutner? and has he really any grounds for feeling hurt?

Everybody who joins the National Secular Society can read on the application form for membership that the Society stands for "the promotion of peace between nations, and substitution of Arbitration for war in the settlement of international disputes."

That was the attitude of the N.S.S. towards war when wars were fought by rival armies and navies in the battle zones. It has not changed its attitude in view of the increasing horrors of war, and the extending of those horrors to the civil population.

Perhaps Mr. Cutner will tell us the difference between the horrors of a population atom-bombed in the cause of peace, and a population atom-bombed in the interest of war.

R. H. ROSETTI, President, N.S.S.

"JOURNEY THROUGH UTOPIA"

II

JOURNEY THROUGH UTOPIA is a chronological journey successively, it presents ancient Utopias, Utopias of the Renaissance, of the English (17th century) Revolution, of the (French) "enlightenment," of the 19th century, and modern (20th century) Utopias. There are a few omissions, e.g., there is no mention of the "sun-state" of Iambulus, the "Thomas More" of Greek antiquity—but the range covered is vast. Most of the Utopias here recorded are authoritarian in character and would now be described as socialistic or (like the most famous of all, Plato's *Republic*) fascist in character. In connection with which last the author makes the interesting comment that Aristophanes' charming lyrical comedy, *The Birds*, contains what is really the first recorded Utopia, one of a strongly Anarchist cast, rather than

Plato's absurdly boosted "police state," which is really an idealisation of Sparta, the militaristic "Prussia" of the Greek-speaking world.

Miss Berneri's own original researches have been wide as well as deep and have revealed several little-known specimens of Utopia; one of the most interesting chapters in her book deals with an imaginary Utopia domiciled in the then unexplored Australian continent by Gabriel de Foigny in the late 17th century. Freethinkers will be particularly interested in an excerpt from Denis Diderot, Atheist "philosopher," Materialist, and Editor of the great "Encyclopedia," which gave its name to the whole European 18th century Freethought movement, of which Diderot ranked with Voltaire as the leading exponent. Diderot located his Utopia in the charming Pacific island of Tahiti, then newly visited by French seamen, who found in this island paradise a veritable Garden of Eden "but certainly not before the Fall," as a French historian of Utopias dryly remarks!

In general, it appears to emerge from the author's narrative that most Utopists were stay-at-home commonplace people, escapists rather than genuine adventurers of the mind. A few, however, lived lives as extraordinary as the imaginary worlds which they created. For example, Campanella, the unfrocked Dominican, who began his career as a rebel against Spain, for which he suffered excruciating tortures in the dungeons of the Inquisition, and who ended it by casting the horoscope of the infant "Sun King," Louis XIV. Or Gabriel de Foigny, another unfrocked monk, whose amorous adventures, faithfully reproduced in his Australian Utopia (mentioned above), caused him to be expelled from Geneva by the Puritanical successors of Calvin.

At present, an anti-Utopist current seems dominant in present-day literature. Miss Berneri herself ascribed this to a current decline in enthusiasm for the state-conditioned existence which so many Utopias seem to favour. A more weighty reason seems to be the hostile attitude taken up towards Utopian thought by Marxism and other contemporary social philosophies; in present-day Marxist circles, "Utopian" is a term of derision. Did not Marx himself denounce the whole Utopian brood as "petty bourgeois" dreamers who sought (in his words) "to save society behind its back." This attitude is now general in Communist circles. No doubt, it will be a passing phase.

Whatever may be the sociological value of Utopias, and that is too vast a subject to enter upon here, it must be conceded that most Utopias make depressingly dull reading, as an earlier French historian of Utopias, Charles Gide, has feelingly observed.

"This literature," he writes, "is extremely dull and monotonous. It is strange that the imagination should prove so feeble in calling up the vision of a new economy. . . . The lands we shall explore are melancholy lands peopled by phantoms."

This, no doubt, is largely true. Still, the term "Utopian" embraces an entire literature and appears to conjure up a permanent fascination in and to the human heart. Of this vast literature, *Journey Through Utopia* gives a masterly account of interest to all sociologists and, very particularly, to Freethinkers who tend naturally to criticise existing institutions. In warmly recommending this brilliant and important book to readers of *The Freethinker*, we may end on a personal note by deploring that this has had to be the last as well as the first book of this talented author and stimulating thinker.

F. A. RIDLEY.

SOME SOURCES OF THE JESUS MYTH

WHEN one looks carefully into the story of Jesus as recounted in the Gospels, it will be seen how often it follows the pattern set in some of the stories both in the Old and in the New Testaments. For example, Joseph has twelve brothers. Jesus has twelve apostles. Joseph was sold for twenty pieces of silver to the Ishmeelites; Jesus was sold by Judas for thirty pieces of silver. Joseph is thrown into prison with two other prisoners; Jesus is crucified between two malefactors. Joseph gives hope to one of the prisoners; Jesus promises Paradise to one of the malefactors. Joseph is made second to Pharaoh; Jesus is made second to God. Joseph saves the people from famine; Jesus saves the world from the Fall.

Joseph gives his brothers a feast; Jesus takes the Last Supper with his Apostles. Joseph puts Benjamin before his other brothers; Jesus marks out John as the Disciple he loves. These are only a few of the parallels from the O.T.—most readers could find out others for themselves.

The story of Paul has also some striking resemblances to that of Jesus. For example, when Paul arrived in Jerusalem (Acts 21, 17) he was received gladly; Jesus was also received with joy when he went to Jerusalem. The Jews tried to stir up the people against Paul in the temple and to kill him; the chief priests and the scribes tried to take Jesus "by craft" and kill him. Paul was bound with two chains before the chief captain; Jesus was bound by the captain and officers of the Jews. A multitude of people followed Paul crying, "Away with him"; a multitude of people cried to Pilate when he asked what he should do to Jesus, "Crucify him." The chief captain wanted Paul to be examined by scourging; Jesus was scourged before being crucified. Paul was brought before the chief priests to be examined; Jesus was brought before the high priest to be examined. The high priest Ananias commanded the people near Paul "to smite him on the mouth"; the people near Jesus spit in his face and smote him (Mt. 26, 67). The Pharisees said of Paul, "We find no evil in this man"; Pilate said of Jesus, "I find in him no fault at all." The Lord stood by Paul and said, "Be of good cheer"; an angel from heaven came to Jesus, "strengthening him." Paul was brought before the governor in Cæsarea; Jesus was also brought before the governor (Pilate). Felix and his wife Drusilla heard Paul; Pilate and his wife heard Jesus. Agrippa came to Cæsarea to examine Paul; Herod Antipas came specially to examine Jesus.

Here again are a few only of the remarkable parallels between the story of Jesus as narrated in the Gospels and that of Paul as given in Acts. Which came first? According to the Church, the Epistles of Paul were written before the Gospels, but Acts was written by Luke after all the Gospels were produced. It is a pretty problem for Apologists to settle—if either of the stories surrounding Jesus and Paul is true, which is the one that copied the other?

Dr. ANTONI CZUBRYNSKI (Warsaw).

GOD AND ME. 2s. 6d. Second Edition. These "letters to God" show the author as a satirist as well as a Free-thought critic.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. 4s. 6d. Five editions of this important work have been printed and the value of the book on this important subject is enhanced by its simplicity of style.

GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT. 3s. 6d. The author introduces what he considers to be the right mental approach to such fundamental Freethought subjects as: Morality, Life, Mind, Evolution, and the "Next World."

THE BLESSED VIRGIN

"There were always a couple of priests, monks or frati sitting on the chairs before the counter in animated discussion about the events of the day, the last miracles performed by this or that saint, and the efficacy of the various Madonnas, La Madonna del Carmine, la Madonna dell' Aiuto, la Madonna della Buona Morte, la Madonna della Coléra, l'Addolorata, la Madonna Egiziaca. Seldom, very seldom, I heard the name of God mentioned, the name His Son never. I once ventured to express my surprise to a shabby old frate . . . over this omission of Christ in their discussions. The old frate made no secret of his private opinion that Christ owed His reputation solely to His having the Madonna for His Mother. As far as he knew, Christ had never saved anybody from the cholera. His Blessed Mother had cried Her eyes out for Him. What had He done for Her in return? "Woman," He said, "what have I to do with Thee?"

"Perciò ha finito male, that's why He came to a bad end."
(Axel Munthe, "The Story of San Michele, c.8.)

CORRESPONDENCE

"EASILY ANSWERED"

SIR,—Noting in "Acid Drops" the reference to the *Catholic Times'* assurance that Fr. Ripley "easily answered" the questions put to him by Merseyside Freethinkers, may I, as the chairman on that occasion, be allowed to make a few brief comments. It is true, of course, that this popular cleric answered the questions to his own satisfaction, simply by ignoring his questioners' objections to the irrational assumptions on which his Church's conclusions are based. It was seen at the outset that there was little common ground for reasoned discussion, and the speaker's disarming simplicity seemed to have lulled his hearers into a somnolent and tolerant mood. Sensing this and knowing the Catholic Church better than most of those present, I fear I overstepped the function of chairman and intervened on several occasions during the discussion. In his discourse, Fr. Ripley referred to the amazing unity of the Catholic Church. I questioned this and pointed to the number of modernists who have been excommunicated. If unity there be, it has been achieved in the manner of a Hitler or a Stalinist. Then, on the question of apparitions, Fr. Ripley did not seem to appreciate the common sense inherent in the suggestion that the Virgin Mary could be more usefully employed in appearing in the Assembly of the United Nations than terrifying three little girls in Portugal.

Again, the speaker's "clear" evidence for the truth of the Resurrection depends on 500 witnesses—referred to solely by Paul in one of his epistles—and since Paul was not a witness the evidence was clearly second-hand. Fr. Ripley's sense of certitude was not in the least disturbed when informed that in the Church of England Report on Christian Doctrine there is an appended note which reads: "Some of us think that belief in the Resurrection belongs rather to the sphere of religious symbolism than to that of historical fact."

One question stumped our theological expert: "Where did those people who are said to have risen from their graves at the Crucifixion go to? Did they go to their homes and claim their property, or return to their graves?"

Perhaps the *Catholic Times* knows!—Yours, etc.,

JOHN McMANUS.

MARXISM

SIR,—Mr. Barnard said in *The Freethinker*, November 26, 1950, "Marx's false theories and absurd prophecies and with his meagre intellectual equipment." I would say that Mr. Barnard appears in the same light as his own words he uses about others, "afflicted with the common imbecility of human nature." Let Mr. Barnard study *Economics* by H. D. Dickson in the *Highway Magazine*, January 1937, who styles himself a bourgeois economist, on "some of the valuable and enduring parts of Marx's contribution to economic thought." "Marx's doctrine of the Fetishism of Commodities is extremely useful for the interpretation of the existing social system." "Marx was thus one of the first economists to direct attention from the merely technical to the social aspects of economic categories." "Surplus value" discredited but "however it may be explained or explained away is an empirical fact." H. D. Dickson finally concludes on the Materialist Conception of History, as "one of the most important lessons to be learned from Marx, even if his forecasts of the actual course of economic development is incorrect in detail, his method of

interrelating all the facts . . . is still the most considerable contribution to social science of the last hundred years."

A book, *Some Makers of the Modern Spirit*, edited by John Macmurray, 1933, includes Marx with St. Thomas Aquinas, Luther, Newton, Rousseau, Goethe, Darwin, Jeremy Bentham, Nietzsche and Marx. How did Marx get in this with his "meagre intellectual equipment" mention by Barnard? This book says "Marx produced an evolutionary interpretation of social development which could be treated not by argument and logic but by facts and experiment."

"There appears to be signs that his outlook in thought which meets the need of our age and so will come to influence the mind more than any single thinker." Even in religion, Marx's explanation of its opium effects have been wrongly construed but I hope to write you on some bright religious satire of Karl Marx later.—Yours, etc.,

PETER T. LECKIE (Canada).

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting held January 4, 1951

The President, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Griffiths, Ridley, Morris, Johnson, Ebury, Woodley, Corstorphine, Barker, Hornibrook, Mrs. Venton.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented.

New members were admitted to Bradford, North London Branches and to the Parent Society. Progress was reported in arrangements for a Freethought Forum in the Conway Hall on February 8, the difficulty of getting clergymen to join the panel of speakers for answering questions was emphasised.

Further co-operation in bringing the matter of Secular Education before the public was discussed and agreed upon.

Inquiries to be made into the spending of public money for the purchase of religious equipment in a London Welfare Centre.

Final details concerning the Annual Dinner was announced.

Invitation for the venue of the Whitsun Conference from branches are due up till January 12.

Various items of correspondence from different parts were dealt with and decisions given.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for February 1, and the proceedings closed.

For the General Secretary,

R. H. ROSETTI.

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

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute, Science Room).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: J. T. BRIGHTON, N.S.S. Vice-President, "Can We Be Saved?"

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 16, 7 p.m.: R. C. FITZGERALD, LL.B., F.R.S.A., "Should Crime be Punished?"

Glasgow Secular Society (Branch of the N.S.S.) (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Debate.

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: ELIZABETH MILLARD, "What is Thought?"

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: A Lecture.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, B.A., "A Humanist Manifesto."

THE REIGN OF LAW (II)

PLAINLY there is a kick in Ridley's allegory contrasting the Church of Rome and the Church of Moscow. But further consideration shows that he is straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. In an extended metaphor a triviality becomes an enormity, and as a generalisation applied to world-wide relations between millions of people it becomes a tragedy. Just as with the idea of the Church as the Body of Christ, as with family relations on the analogy of an individual, it gives complications in political ideology with theological implications. This gnostic allegory involves morality, in the charge of immorality with the concept of evil as personal justification, in the question of the sanctity of law.

We began with Plato's mis-statement of democracy and Aristotle's militaristic ethical politics. Theory was divorced from fact in prevailing beliefs and customs implicit in the mystery of the ecclesia, which developed into ecclesiastical organisation with gnostic ideology. Mystery cults became mystery religions and the clash between Christ and Mithra heralded the medieval dualism of Church and State, with sacred ritual and militaristic pageantry. And we came to the Church's assertion of divine law. All this was necessary, to get a clearer notion of how the basic terms are derived. To think of forms of government is Plato's philosophy of Forms; political action is Aristotle, with reality as actuality; but to think of election is gnostic idiom with reality in the *vox populi vox dei*, expressing the will.

The separation of Church and State is as logical in Christian doctrine as much as it is medieval in history. The theory is said to appear as early as the 6th century, while the State disintegrated and the Church remained united. From the 9th century to the end of the Middle Ages, canon law with ecclesiastical authority, reigned supreme; it had power over monarchs; the State did not make it; it was a juristic puzzle, and it influenced civic law. In A.D. 123 the famous legal fiction theory was applied, by Pope Innocent IV, to secular law. According to this, there is real presence in a social body conceived as an organised unity with a will of its own; a spiritual as well as a corporate unity; with corporate will it is a real person with corporate personality. It is the personification of a social group, with real presence in its will. So, gnostic idiom becomes legal fiction.

The consequence appears in the fourfold definition of Aquinas, with eternal law as against natural law, and moral law as against civic law, with law prior to the State as the soul is to the body and as good is to evil. And, as the metaphor stands the position is not substantially altered in the concession theory, or the theory of representative government. It is logical if analogy is the basis of logic; for each of these concepts of law derive basically from personal relations; the analogy of family relations is seen even in science. But if fiction is legal assumption, in literature it is romance. With a social body conceived allegorically as an individual, the corporate will is as fictitious as the soul, and the State is as much fiction as the law itself, which is analogous to the individual will. It is a matter of personal concern.

State and Church was analogous to body and soul but divine right of kings challenged the authority of the Church. The Glory of God gave the pattern for Machiavellian glorification of the State; the king utters the will of the State and as with Louis XIV *l'etat c'est moi*. In this changeover, the Middle Ages, with guilds and international trade, gives no analogy to modern

economics and politics with financial and industrial complications. When Jesuits expelled from France went to Prussia, at the same time as Voltaire and Lamettrie, Frederick the Great built up what Goebbel called an incorruptible bureaucracy, known to others as Prussianism, and claiming to be champion of the German people, the atheistic philosopher king made use of the method of the Jesuit College of Propaganda with Voltairian irony.

In law, the French Revolution only brings us to the other horn of the democratic dilemma, to the sovereign will of the people, *vox populi vox dei* of the mystery. With delegation of responsibility in representative government, in the social contract of Rousseau, the general will brings back gnostic idiom, as Bentham's greatest good of the greatest number does Aristotle's highest good. With Prussianism in Hegel's philosophy of history, Marx turned Hegel the other way up with class war in historic materialism. But Hegel standing on his head looks silly and the dictatorship of the proletariat gives us a Russian instead of a Prussian incorruptible bureaucracy. With Bentham *contra* Plato and Marx *contra* Bentham, power politics still leaves us with the juristic puzzle, the medieval reign of law.

Karl Marx, in his technique of revolution, used the tactics of Plato's ideal, the philosopher king, as the champion of the masses, as well as the dialectic of Hegel, with biblical moralising in declamation against the seven deadly sins in the selfishness of the profit motive, in the theology of Aquinas. In his surplus value theory, the transformation in a commodity, of use value exchange value surplus value; while its substance remained the same; is as mystical as the transubstantiation of wafer and wine into body and blood of Christ in Catholic theology. The material of this transformation is as mystical as the democratic mystery, and his personification of economic categories in historic materialism actually uses the jargon of Pope Innocent IV which has been hallowed by law, just as the biblical moralising has been hallowed by custom.

Hegel is not the only one standing on his head. If democracy is self-government, it is the art of being governed. The cross on the ballot paper symbolises Christian credulity in acceptance of law, and in the ideology of election, with theological obsession of good and evil, it is to believe in being compelled to do what we like. The idea of the separation of politics and religion is as typically Christian as it is medieval. Then, both politics and theology were sciences, but to-day, with Einstein, in an age of science, it is absurd even to separate space and time, and there are no such sciences. Politics was superseded by political economy; said to begin with Adam Smith. But his *Wealth of Nations* was one of two books. In the other, he argued that evil may come from the best of intentions, and in this, that good may come from evil motives. Good and evil is personal opinion.

Karl Marx said he came to his principle from the study of law; so did the Church. If the Church is the Ghost of the Empire the State is its lifeless body; the ghost still walks—in politics; with law as a ghost of a god. But *semper idem* is not *semper simile*; the Vatican is politically astute but Marxism is blissfully unaware of its own crude theology. The Christian goes to his Bible and Marx went to the British Museum, but if law is not a living judgment it is the verdict of the dead.

H. H. PREECE.