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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Science and Religion

WE are often being warned that science is prevented from seeing or dealing with certain things because of the "inevitable limitations of scientific method." This is either nonsense leading to confusion, or confusion leading to nonsense; it depends upon which side one makes the approach. Of course, science does not attempt to gauge the nature of a sensation with a pair of scales created for determining weight, nor would it measure sound with a spectroscope. The *tools* used by science alter with the subject-matter under examination. The *method* of science remains the same under all conditions. And the objection religion raises to science is not so much motivated by an objection to the method employed as it is to the nature of the conclusions reached. The proof of the truth of this is that it was always to the actual evidence produced by science that the Christian Church objected. The Church was on much more logical ground when it applied its authority to *all* facts. It commenced its career with a definite teaching concerning man and the world; and for many centuries it held to those teachings. It was as definite and as dogmatic with regard to the truth of the biblical account of the origin of languages, the creation of the globe, or the revolution of the sun round the earth, as it was with regard to the nature of the soul, the power of prayer, and the objective nature of the visions seen by "saints."

It was when, in the face of the fiercest opposition from the Church, science made good its claim to state the truth to the world about the world and man, that two lines of defence were laid down. The first was a tentative one: admitting the truth of scientific teachings that could no longer be profitably disputed. It was the method of the pickpocket when a policeman catches him with another person's purse in his hand "It's a fair cop, I'll go quietly." The Church was content to admit as true what it could no longer profitably denounce as false. But continuance in that plan developed dangers. For science did not stand still, and every advance threatened a diminution of the territory over which theology ruled. Science was unconsciously following the British method of Empire-building—squatting, creation of territorial rights, and, finally, annexation. Unless something were done science would presently leave theology with no territory over which it might exercise rule.

So another plan was adopted. Science was to be given its own field of operations. But there was another field, that of "spiritual experience," the visions of saints and of men like Swedenborg; the "illumination" not to be expressed in precise language; all this it was thought science could not touch, and was to be the permanent stronghold of religion. In a way religion was getting back to its primitive condition, for in effect it was giving over to science all that was known, or ever could be known, even everything considered capable of definite conception, and claiming as its own inalienable possession, everything that would forever remain unknown and incon-

ceivable. So was created the stupid theory of two worlds—one in which things were known or knowable that belonged to science, and another world consisting of, not merely the unknown, but the unknowable, that belonged to religion. The strength of the latter position was that, provided religion kept to things that could not be handled, no one was able to prove that what was said concerning these things was untrue.

But what are the facts of the religious life to which the scientific method cannot be applied? I do not know of one. The conviction that there is a God, the sense of union with God, the belief that one gets help in trouble from an invisible source, the desire for a future life, the belief in inspiration, the belief in heaven and hell, the feeling that one is helped by prayer, and so forth; are these the facts of the religious life with which science cannot deal? If this is what is meant, then I can only reply plainly and categorically that it is demonstrably false. There is not one of these things, from the visions of a Swedenborg to the ravings of a religiously drunken travelling evangelist with which science finds itself unable to deal, and concerning which precise information is not being given to the world day by day.

Always behind such religious expressions rests the assumption that there are certain phenomena associated with religion that lie outside the scope of science. The truth is, however, that scientific knowledge and the application of the scientific method do not meet religion with a bare rejection, they (to use an expression of John Morley's) "explain religion out of existence." Science accepts all the facts upon which religion is based, and absorbs them into the scientific explanation of human history. No scientific student of religion questions the existence of a group of facts upon which religion has built its doctrines. The belief in God or gods is one fact, the belief in a soul and a future life is another fact; so is the belief in inspiration, in the power of prayer, in miracles, in heaven and hell, in rewards and punishments in a future life, in the assumed inspiration of favoured people, in the belief that a better life may be derived from religion. To the true scientist, delusions and illusions, mistaken conclusions, and false inferences, are all facts of human nature that need accounting for as much as do the phenomena with which the science of physics busies itself. It is the non-recognition of this aspect of the situation that leads the religious advocate to spend his time beating the air, and attacking a position which to the scientific Freethinker simply does not exist.

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Science and Life

Let me give one or two illustrations of what I mean. About forty years ago I published a work (*Religion and Sex*), in which the whole of the phenomena of religion was considered from the point of view of an acceptance of the psychological facts, and an explanation of them was offered in terms of existing scientific knowledge. To that work no reply has ever been made, nor do I anticipate that any will be made. That book did not "attack"

religion, it explained it. Meanwhile religious advocates continue to write about religion as though we were living in the eighteenth century instead of in the twentieth. The only "advance" made is that of quietly dropping certain religious doctrines, and writing of religious beliefs in a more restrained manner, and so leaving it to be inferred that the religion advocated is the same as that which has been thrown overboard.

Those acquainted with the facts know full well that science deals drastically with religion. Science is in no doubt as to the origin of either the belief in God and a soul. It *knows*, despite disputes over theories and the particular order of development, that all existing ideas of God and a soul can be traced back to the mistaken interpretation by primitive man of phenomena that are now differently and adequately explained. This being so the problem is no longer one of evidence, it is one of psychology and sociology—that of understanding the condition which gave rise to such beliefs, and the sociological conditions that favoured their perpetuation. Science does not question the existence of certain states of what is called ecstasy, or a sense of oneness with some mysterious and unknown power; it merely points out that religious beliefs have, more and more intimately as we go back in the history of mankind, been associated with the presence of abnormal mental states, either induced by fasting, or by the practice of drug-taking, or by various other methods, all of which tended to induce a conviction of association with "spiritual" powers. And the scientist also points out that all of these states can now be paralleled by states that are admittedly perfectly natural in their origin, and which are dealt with in thousands of instances without ever considering religion in any way. For thousands of years (it is still the case with uncivilised peoples), both bodily and mental diseases were associated with the work of evil spirits. The New Testament is quite definite on this point. To-day science takes these same states and shows them to be due to quite natural and understandable conditions.

In what way do we differentiate between the abnormal mental state induced by indulgence in a drug or in alcohol, and those induced by fasting, solitary meditation, or the starved sexual life of a male or female saint? In what substantial particular do the visions of a shipwrecked mariner differ from those of a monk leading a starved unwholesome life in a desert or in what is practically solitary confinement? Or again, it has been shown by very substantial statistical evidence that the conversions of people under evangelistic influence coincide with the period of adolescence, and that all that then takes place may be explained in terms of the development of new functions, and the awakening of the social side of human nature, misinterpreted in terms of religion. The phenomenon of "conversion" may occur in circumstances that no one would call religious.

So one may go through the whole series of religious beliefs. Religion fits into the framework of modern science. It is religion that can find no place in its ambit for science. There is not a single religious phenomenon—normal or abnormal, good or bad—that falls outside the scope of science. There is no longer room for debating whether religious doctrines are true, that is only the question of under what conditions do people believe them to be true, and under what conditions do they still so accept them?

It would be an easy "get-out" for religion if science were to accept a division of territory. But the demand of science is for the whole of life, for the whole of knowledge actual and possible. As a French scientist has put

it, "Science conducts religion to the boundaries of the universe and bids it a polite goodbye."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE PAPACY AND SOVIET RUSSIA

ALWAYS antagonistic in its attitude towards Communist Russia, the Vatican's hatred has been intensified in recent years. But it seldom or never displays any sympathy with freedom of thought and expression, while its condemnation is almost invariably directed against alleged Soviet intolerance or persecution of the Romanist religion.

Perhaps the Papacy's most vehement pronouncement against Communist policy was the publication in 1949 of a decree of the Holy Office in Rome which excommunicated all members of the Communist Party in every land, as well as those who aided and abetted it in any manner whatever. The decree appeared in the form of replies to questions. "It stated," testifies *The National Register* (Longmans, 1950), "that it was not permissible to be a member of the Communist Party, or to give them support, for Communism was materialist and anti-Christian, and the Communist leaders, though they sometimes proclaimed that they were not opposed to religion, in reality, either by their doctrine or their activity demonstrated their 'hostility to God and to true religion and to the Church of Christ.'" The decree also asserted that it was not permissible for any real Catholic to issue, spread, or even read Communism's pestilent prints or to write for them. In truth, it claimed that this prohibition already existed in Canon 1399 of Canon Law. Consequently, the faithful who were consciously guilty of these malpractices were no longer entitled to receive the sacraments, thereby endangering their immortal souls. Moreover, Catholics who avowed their belief in Communism's detestable doctrines, and especially those who propagate them, as renegades to Romanism, incur "the excommunication reserved in a special manner to the Holy Apostolic See."

This pronouncement emphasised the persistent antagonism of the Church towards the Kremlin. Even in days prior to the Second World War, the Papacy had denounced Atheistic Communism in the encyclical *Divini Redemptoris* in 1937. But the antagonism was intensified when Communist controlled administrations were established within Central and Eastern European States inhabited by a mainly Catholic population. Thus the decree of 1949 is, from a Romanist standpoint, easily understood. In the predominantly Catholic State of Hungary, the trial and conviction of Cardinal Mindszenty in 1949, led to the excommunication of all officials concerned in the case. Shortly after the Cardinal's condemnation, the Pontiff compared the alleged "long chain of persecution" in Soviet dominated lands to Christian persecution in the reign of Nero.

Again, the Vatican stigmatised the Communist sponsored Czech Catholic Action Movement as a nefarious attempt to weaken the allegiance and orthodoxy of earnest, if unsophisticated, Catholics, while the arrest of Rumanian priests led to another bitter attack on the persecuting proclivities of Communists. Then, in September, 1949, the Pope deplored the obstacles that confronted pious Catholics in Poland in exercising their religion, arising from "attacks, insults, and censorship." Evidently, the Vatican feared that the real objective of the Soviet authorities was the complete destruction

of the Catholic faith in all countries predominantly Romanist under their control. Clerical condemnation was intense and apparently, "Vatican comment made clear that excommunication applied not only to orthodox Stalinists but also to dissident sects such as Titoists and Trotskyites. But at the same time it stressed the expression 'consciously and freely' contained in the decree, and made clear that the excommunication did not apply to workers and peasants in Eastern Europe if these were obliged to join Communist organisations by *force majeure*."

As Communism has made noteworthy progress in Catholic countries such as Poland and Italy, the Vatican walks warily. Borderline instances of adhesion to Communist principles are less severely censured than complete conversion, and this concession was presumably designed to embarrass the enemy, while stimulating local opposition towards them.

In every country within the Iron Curtain the Church lost ground, perhaps in Czechoslovakia above all. The bitter onslaught on the compromise proposed by the Soviet authorities is noteworthy. Settlement of the dispute with the Church was unsuccessfully attempted in 1948. Later, negotiations led to a further breakdown. According to the Soviet account, the authorities were willing to satisfy "all the demands of the Church on the one condition that the Catholics would cease from all attempts at upheaval, and conduct themselves as loyal citizens of the State." Again, the clergy had been offered adequate compensation for agricultural lands taken by the Government and had been guaranteed possession of their schools "on condition that the Bishops themselves saw to it that the pupils were not trained in a spirit hostile to the State." If the Soviet spokesmen are trustworthy, the negotiations ended as a result of Vatican instructions conveyed by the Papal delegate at Prague.

This assertion was denied by Archbishop Beran, who contended that the breakdown was due to the hostility of the Government, the arbitrary arrests of priests, the suppression of all Church publications, the confiscation of ecclesiastical estates, and other unfriendly acts.

In 1949 the authorities decided to ignore the Catholic hierarchy and establish its own Catholic Action Committee as the State's official Church. The Bishops then ordered all priests to refuse to co-operate with this Committee on pain of excommunication. The Archbishop preached against it in the Cathedral, but there was such a commotion that the service was suspended.

Naturally the peasantry were displeased, but the Government refused to give way. Attempts were made to reconcile the poorer clergy, while the prelates were denounced as enemies of the people. Yet, the Church still possessed considerable prestige, even if the State had banished religion from the schools. As Mrs. Newsome, an authority on international affairs, avers:

"By a law published in November (1949) a new Department of Church Affairs was set up giving the State full and complete control over all Church affairs, including not only appointments of clergy but the payment of their salaries. In return the clergy were required to take an oath of loyalty to the State."

T. F. PALMER.

THE PHILOSOPHER'S SEARCH

ALL his life the philosopher had sought God. He did, however, not expect to see him as one man sees another. Indeed, he had thought that he would not apprehend him even with the intellect, that he would die an Atheist, but he kept meeting people who spoke of God, or he heard about him on the radio, or read about him.

Once he was, perforce, with a schoolmaster, who assured him that those who had simple faith in God were happier than others. The teacher seemed sad at the time, although he had faith. The philosopher did not know why his friend was sad, but he conjectured about it. The man was ill, and that might have caused his mood. The sadness was lifted sometimes, for the teacher was pleased to talk about the large doses of penicillin he was having, and to hear the physician say his illness was due to a particularly obstinate "bug." These things made him feel distinguished.

A Post Office employee was with them. He had, in years past, lost a leg in an encounter with a surgeon. He was glad of that, for the surgeon had given him a metal leg, full of small holes to make it light, and painted pink. The philosopher jumped when he first saw its owner pick up the leg, for he had previously not known about it. The best thing about the leg was, however, that it could not be cancerous, as the flesh limb had been.

The man with the metal leg was nearly well. He had had no recurrence of the disease that had prematurely ended his footballing days, but had got into the present company by an illness of the kind that had laid low the schoolmaster. His "bug" was, perhaps, not obstinate, for he jested about the schoolmaster's gloom, and he, himself, was cheerful. The philosopher discovered that the Post Office servant seemed to have no lively faith in God, and he concluded, after observing his round face and the long face of the teacher, that nature rather than belief was the cause of the respective moods.

The philosopher had observed another member of the company whom he had not yet addressed, for this man had been in a corner, struggling for breath. His face had been deeply purple, but was now pinker. It was the schoolmaster who now drew attention to the man in the corner, for he spoke to him. He reminded him that he had, when not able to breathe well, asked someone to conduct a priestly visitor outside. This sick man was a Roman Catholic, and, on what he had done being recalled, remarked that he regretted his action, as impolite, and would have done otherwise had he been well. He was born of an Italian father and a Belgian mother, but had spent most of his life in England, and spoke English perfectly. He was resolute looking, wearing, as once Don Juan did, "the magisterial face that courage gives."

He could, however, not introduce the philosopher to God. He told him, indeed, that his own opinions did not much differ from the philosopher's, and he had described himself as a Roman Catholic merely because it had not occurred to him to repudiate his inculcated faith. One old priest had pleased him by talking only of the pleasure he felt in saving money for a pilgrimage to Rome. He had not spoken of religious duties. Another had reproached him as a bad Catholic. "That is what I am," he said. It did not worry him. He did not speak much of his religion, but would chat about the "Decameron," which seemed more to his taste than any pious work.

The philosopher again conversed with the teacher. He had, however, lost interest in the latter's original proposition, for, firstly, he now thought the schoolmaster's

So precious is praise that, if we do not deserve it, we are tempted to accept it with the intention of deserving it, and of becoming what we were supposed already to be.—GEORGE TYRRELL.

experience was, probably, too limited to provide a sufficient number of examples of simple believers and others to justify his assertion. Possibly, also, the habit of teaching young people had caused atrophy of the regard for truth. Secondly, the philosopher considered that happiness from a belief was no guarantee of its soundness, and he preferred to consider this. He hoped, however, he might receive a definition of God, so that, although this might not match the idea of most men, it would reveal something he had overlooked, which he could believe. He soon perceived that the schoolmaster was no simple believer, for he said God was a spirit, but not a person. Nevertheless, one could pray to God and be answered. The philosopher could not get beyond this, so was unable to apprehend the definition, for he thought that hearing and answering involved personality. He remained, therefore, unsatisfied, and events took him from the schoolmaster's company.

He then read in *The Freethinker* that scientists were becoming religious, which would have puzzled him less if he had been able to remember when there were not many religious scientists. He was not sure whether the writer meant scientists were coming to believe in a God, and, if so, whether the object of their belief was regarded by them as a person. He knew that religion was a vague term, as, for example, morality plus emotion. He thought that "God" might be as vague, for some said "God is Love," and even philosophers have been loved.

The philosopher tried to recall recent remarks by scientists about religion. As he had a poor memory and was a deficient scholar, he could recall only a few. Mr. Fred Hoyle, he remembered, had said the universe was created out of nothing, but not by Providence. He did not see how something could come from nothing, but it was clear that Mr. Hoyle was an Atheist, for he had said also that science and religion occupied different worlds, and that he could not even begin to imagine what world religion occupied, but that science was in full possession of the physical world. Then Prof. Young in the Reith Lectures had deprecated the use of the word "soul," which he seemed to regard as a mark of useless animism.

The philosopher was pleased to see that two valiant Christians, a theologian and a scientist, had entered the lists on behalf of religion. He listened to these men, and heard the scientist say God was Truth.

Then the theologian said that God displayed himself in the universe as purpose and will. The philosopher sighed, for he could not see purpose in the universe, other than the several purposes of animals. He thought it better not to call these purposes God, and saw no reason to call truth God, for he thought most Theists prayed to God, but not to truth.

J. G. LUPTON.

CHRISTIANITY AND CHARITY

"EDUCATION, founded on Christianity, has effected the transformation. We have a Christian civilisation. . . . Hospitals for the sick, homes for the aged. . . . All this bespeaks an ever widening consciousness of the truth of Christian tenets. Before the time of Jesus, there were no charitable institutions. . . . whatever guise morality may wear, it is based on Christian ethics." So insists the Unity College of Christianity, Kansas City, as do other Christians, ignorant or learned. This general claim is voiced in Mr. B. Kidd's *Social Evolution*. "As for any conception of duty or responsibility to others outside the community, it did not exist. Morality was of the narrowest and most egotis-

tical kind. It never, among the Greeks, embraced any conception of humanity; no Greek, says George Henry Lewes, ever attained to the sublimity of such a point of view" (p. 145). Mr. H. U. Cecil, in his *Pseudo-Philosophy* (1897) deals with the Irrationalist Trio B. Kidd, H. Drummond (*Ascent of Man*), and A. Balfour (*Foundations of Belief*). Of Mr. Kidd, Mr. Cecil says: "When Mr. Kidd argues that reason is an anti-social force, and that an irrational force—religion—has been the prime factor in progress, we are but listening to the primitive emotionalism of earlier apologetics talking the cant of modern pseudo-science" (p. 4). "One hardly knows what to be most surprised at in Mr. Kidd's exposition—the amazing historical and psychological ignorance which it displays, or the audacity with which this schoolboy's composition is put forward as a philosophical account of the evolution of European society. Nowhere is Mr. Kidd's lack of adequate training for his task more noticeable than here. For his sweeping generalisation on the characteristics of pagan and Christian civilisation, he relies altogether on the precarious authorities of Mr. Proude, Mr. Lecky, and Mr. Mahaffy, unconscious all the while of the logical defects of the first, and the hopelessly subversive contradictions of the second and the third" (pp. 67-68).

Mr. Lecky in his *History of European Morals* said that Christianity brought a new force into the world. Mr. McCabe is of Mr. Cecil's opinion. "It is necessary in the first place to condemn the language in which Lecky praises Christianity in his *History of European Morals*, since he is the chief authority quoted by apologists. After paying extravagant compliments to some of the ideals (carefully selected) of the new religion, Lecky devotes four condensed pages to pagan philanthropies and quotations of admirable pagan sentiments in the two centuries when Christianity was spreading, and he can hardly fill two pages with isolated instances of Christian charity; and if he had attempted, as he does not, to pursue this line of inquiry through the next five centuries which his work covers, he could not have filled one page with Christian schools, hospitals, and orphanages. . . . an appallingly scanty record of service. . . . from the fifth century to the eighteenth" (McCabe's *Rational Encyclopaedia* (1848) p. 448). Mr. McCabe in his *Dictionary of Rationalists* mentions many philanthropists, such as Anderson, Baillie, Beit, Becker, Birkbeck, Bowman, Burnett, Carnegie, Chantrey, Dresden, Farquhar, etc.—Carnegie outstanding any, pagan or Christian.

A Scottish D.D. contends that "a foundling hospital is the organised product of Christian charity. There was nothing in Rome that could provide the equivalent of such an hospital. These were the days of the shameless Messalina, and even more criminal Agrippina; the days when Rome went delirious over the blood of gladiators. . . . and of the marooning of aged slaves on an island in the Tiber. . . . Jesus died for the Ideal. . . . Aesculapius did not die for the Ideal. . . . This fact made Christ and not Aesculapius the real founder of hospitals" (*The Scotsman*, 24 October, 1944). Such is the Christian proof of the Christian claim!

Mr. McCabe, in several of his works, gives decisive disproof of the Christian claims re woman, education, slavery, charity, etc. Another excellent book is J. A. Farrer's *Paganism and Christianity* (1910), the chapters of which deal with Pagan Monotheism, Pagan Theology, Pagan Religion, Pagan Superstition, Pagan Belief in

Heaven, Pagan Belief in Hell, the End of the World, Pagan Philosophy, Pagan Morality (Chapter IX) and Christianity and Civilisation—giving pagan and Christian excerpts, and examples of conduct and practice, with references. The error of Croslegh (*Christianity Judged by its Fruits*, p. 67), that the duty of charity was recommended by pagans "on selfish grounds" is proved false by Seneca (*De Benef.*, i, I and VII, 31); and, similarly Lactantius when he claims for Christianity the honour of teaching the duty of benevolence for its own sake, and charges Cicero with advocating the practice of liberality only in expectation of something in return, again errs. Cicero advocates discriminate charity as against indiscriminate, by which many had ruined themselves, but on behalf of deserving persons, not, as Lactantius implies (by mistranslating *idoneis hominibus*) of persons suitable because able to make a return. He also advocates the virtue of charity on its own merits without any reference to ulterior benefits (*Cicero, De Officiis*, ii, 85)—Farrer, chapter IX, where Farrer deals with charity, self-sacrifice, toleration, forgiveness, etc., and makes comment, among others dealing with the record of Christian conduct, whilst admitting "the better spirit of Christianity as corresponding, with the same among Pagans. But the important thing to notice is that the spirit of charity, toleration, and humanity, which is fondly claimed by the Church as her own special product, was really the product of Philosophy, and especially of Stoicism, and that the Church simply claimed for herself what her utter inability to appropriate would alone prove to have been foreign to her. The borrowed plumage of Philosophy never sat well on the ecclesiastics. If you want to find the true spirit of the Founder of Christianity, you will find more of it in the fragmentary literature of Paganism than in all the works of the Fathers put together; and more, not merely of the spirit, but of its actual expression, in Seneca, Plato, Aurelius, or Plutarch, than in Augustine, Jerome, and all their tribe. . . . There is, indeed, no fact more patent in history than that with the triumph of Christianity under Constantine, the older and finer spirit of charity died out of the world, and gave place to an intolerance and bigotry which were its extreme antithesis, and which have only in recent years come to be mitigated."

Mr. McCabe says: "In the first century (A.D.), under the pagan emperors, more than 300,000 orphans were reared in public institutions in Italy alone!" (*Little Blue Book*, No. 1078, p. 56); and he asks, "what did the Church do for orphan and destitute children when the Empire and its beneficent arrangements were wrecked and paganism was violently suppressed? When you seek in the apologists or in Lecky the answer to that question, you realise the falseness of their claim that the Christian Church was the great inspirer of charity." The answer is (in Lecky, *History of European Morals*, II, 14): "After the year 450, a small foundling hospital in the sixth, one in the seventh, and one in the eighth century, for the whole of Europe, in Rome none until the thirteenth century." It was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that charity began in Christendom on a moderately respectable scale (v. *Little Blue Book* No. 1218, p. 43).

GEORGE ROSS.

The reason for the universe is said to be a "god" whose reason for existence is the universe. This proves that the universe is the reason for its own existence!—ALFRED KIRKHAM.

JOHN T. BRIGHTON, B.E.M.

FEW speakers for the N.S.S. have been more popular than Mr. J. T. Brighton, though perhaps he is better known in the north than the south. He has not only a thorough knowledge of his subject matter, but manages to convey it with a wit and humour all his own. He has carried our message into many towns and villages where Freethought is almost unknown, and has almost always left with goodwill and fellowship.

It is, therefore, with our heartiest congratulations that we greet his acquisition of one of the recent Birthday Honours—the B.E.M.—awarded to him for services "rendered to the mining industry"; and we are sure that all the members of the N.S.S., as well as the readers of this journal, will join us in our good wishes.

Mr. Brighton began working in the mines at the age of 14, in 1909, and apart from his 3½ years in the Army (1915-18), he has always been connected with the mining industry.

He was President of the N.E. area of his Trade Union—The National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies, and Shot Firers—for five years, after having served on the Executive Committee; and he is now on the Board of the Durham County Mining Federation. In addition, Mr. Brighton is a member of the Colliery Consultative Committee.

Always he has worked hard for the prevention of accidents and for better health conditions, sitting on many committees investigating the problems connected with these in the mines. And as if all this was not enough, he became President of their Trades Council, where the associated Trade Unions get together for mutual aid and suggestions for improvements in the mining industry. So much for his many activities in his own profession.

But Mr. Brighton has also been a very active member of the National Secular Society for over 26 years, speaking regularly for 25 years with a "roving commission"; and its Executive has always been aware of his valuable services to the cause. All who have met him will remember his geniality, and his ever-willing readiness to help wherever that help was required.

We again send him our good wishes—and may he long survive to carry on the good work in both the fields in which he has been such a success.

H. C.

TO A REVERENT RATIONALIST

Please don't use ridicule's rapier,
Don't sap with sly word or sneer;
If you civilly, courteously cavil,
The Church will have much less to fear.

Don't use your wit with your wisdom,
Let your sayings be solemn and slow;
Pompous tribute to trumpery trappings
Will make you our friend, not our foe.

Don't wake up mirth in the masses,
Help mask the lie in the text;
Keep your "Go-to-Church-Sunday" straight visage
And you'll find we shall never be vexed.

Be Reverent though you be Rational,
Be serious altho' you could split;
Use periods of pomp like a pundit
And we shan't mind your Freethought a bit!

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

ACID DROPS

Although there is a good deal of protest as to the way religion is being taught in schools, it would be a mistake to think that it is not being very systematically taught. It is part of the school curriculum and every effort is being made to see that the history and science classes do not clash with the scripture lessons. Hymns are regularly sung, children are allowed to listen to the B.B.C. school religious services which, as all who have heard them agree, are the last word in primitive Fundamentalism; and, of course, the Bible is taught as if it were the actual Word of God—no matter how the word "God" is explained. The fight for rational teaching and thinking on religion in schools is as far away as ever.

Considering that Lord Reith made the B.B.C. such a fountain of religion, it is rather strange that such an out-and-out unbeliever as Prof. Young was asked to give the "Reith" lectures. As a writer in the *Christian World* puts it, surely somebody who was "more up-to-date in his theological knowledge and his appreciation of the Christian position" ought to have been chosen? We think that one of the earnest speakers of the Salvation Army or of Jehovah's Witnesses should have graced the B.B.C. platform. After all, the more primitive the type, the greater the joy in the Kingdom of Heaven. And Heavenly bliss should be the main object of Radio Religion.

The late Bishop of Durham, Dr. Hensley Henson, was shrewd enough to see that "if religious teaching is, in any worthy sense, to survive in the schools, it can only be by the consent of the teachers and by entrusting it to them." And in 1943 he said: "I wish the Government would meet the impudent claims of the Papists with a stern and explicit refusal." The "impudent" claims were the demand that the Government should pay for Roman Catholic teaching in the schools without question or supervision. It is good to feel that so far these claims have not been allowed.

Once again the way to make Christianity a huge success in this Christian country has been voiced by the Bishop of Bradford. What is needed, said Dr. Blunt, is "Conversion, conviction and fellowship." He wanted to see a "dynamic" Church, a Church with some "go" in it—not a static Church. What we never can understand is why he appears never to have followed his own prescription. Why does he not carry the war into the enemy's camp, and proceed to prove that the Church is "dynamic" to our blatant Atheists and befogged Materialists? Is the conversion of his fellow Christians all he wants?

Trust most ratepayers to show sound commonsense. They have voted for Sunday cinemas at Seaton, and the voting was in favour, 586; against, 513. The bigots appear to whip up plenty of their supporters when it comes to an ordinary public meeting and thus often win. But it has to be the ratepayers who decide the issue, and all over the country they are inflicting heavy losses on God's followers. Funny, but the Lord rarely intervenes; and if lightning or a fire comes along, it is quite often a church or chapel that gets it in the neck, rarely a cinema or pub. Why?

In the London "Evening Standard" the other day, a correspondent admitted that the Archbishop of York

was right in asserting that Communism was crushing freedom of religion. But, he asked, "What about religion trying to crush the freedom of the individual in this country—as evidenced by the closing of the Festival Amusement Park on Sundays?" He pointed out that it was the pressure of our religious bodies which crushed our freedom—and we are sure that the Archbishop will take good care not to answer that one.

Another great discovery has been announced. At a mass meeting in London, duly attended by the military and the clergy as the principal speakers, it was gravely announced that the greatest need of the hour was Prayer—plenty of it. Not only that, but "there was never a greater need for our nation to be called back to God and to faith in the Bible than to-day." And how was that to be accomplished? Quite easily. It could be accomplished only by Prayer. Lt.-General Sir A. Smith, The Bishop of Soder and Man, and the Rev. A. Redpath, are all solid on this—so, fire away, comrades, and pray, pray, pray!

We always knew that Christianity had several variants, but we now discover that there is in addition a special brand called "Classical Christianity" by the *Christian World*. It appears to have two characteristics not known to the other kinds—Invitation and Judgment. You are invited to come to this glorious religion, and, of course, you can say "No." You can even turn "in scorn" from the wondrous Cross. But if you do—think of the "moral judgment" of God. Why the "sheer moral might of God" is bound to crush such "defiant and recalcitrant evil." That is the dilemma you are up against with Classical Christianity. Alas, we are still recalcitrant.

In "The Christian," the Rev. A. M. Stibbs indicates how the Bible can be studied. The aims of this study should be, "to know God, to co-operate with him, to get to know the Bible, and to learn how to apply the Word," and the only way you can do this is to read it "regularly and frequently, concentrate, be thoughtful, make your own analysis, and seek answers to significant questions." If you do this, "God will be glorified" and "you will be blessed." Some of us, we are afraid, would rather devote our hard-earned leisure either to music, art, or literature, or—football pools.

It may not be believed but cockroaches have absolutely no sense of reverence. They have actually been attacking Bibles sent to South America. Fortunately, Mr. G. W. Luffrum of the British and Foreign Bible Society knows how to deal with such awful blasphemy. He mixes red pepper with the glue in the binding—in fact, about 25 pounds of red pepper is sufficient for 50,000 Bibles. That will teach the varmints.

If he hasn't reached quite the standing—and the cash—of Mr. Peter Brough and his Archie, the Rev. G. Lesser is at least "pulling in" the children to his Sunday school at St. Albans with his vetrioloquial doll. In this way, he finds he can easily explain difficult Bible passages through Johnny the Golliwog—or at least that is what he says. All the same, we wonder how Johnny can explain the flight of Elijah to heaven on a chariot, Jesus turning water into wine, and the wholesale resurrection of Jewish saints when "our Lord" was crucified? We can give Johnny plenty more when he has disposed of these.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Will correspondents kindly note to address all communications in connection with "The Freethinker" to: "The Editor," and not to any particular person. Of course, private communications can be sent to any contributor.

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, giving as long notice as possible.

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

The wet, depressing day no doubt helped to reduce the audience at the Freethought Forum in the Conway Hall on February 8th. As Mr. R. H. Rosetti had not fully recovered from his illness, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, President of the The World Union of Free-thinkers, took the chair at short notice, and with marked efficiency did all that a good chairman is expected to do. A list of invitations to join the panel of speakers, sent to Christian Organisations and individual clergymen, was read to the meeting but in no case was the invitation accepted. Messrs. R. H. Rosetti, L. Ebury and J. W. Barker dealt with the questions. The audience entered into the spirit of the forum, plied the platform with questions, discussed the replies and were far from finished when the chairman had to announce the closure owing to the time limit having been reached. Judging from the reception given to the chairman's closing remarks all present had spent an interesting and enjoyable evening.

"Man's Animal Ancestry" is the subject of Mr. R. H. Rosetti's lecture in the Mechanics Institute, Town Hall Square, Bradford, this evening (February 18th). The local N.S.S. Branch has the arrangements in hand, and it is hoped Bradford readers will help by advertising the meeting, attending themselves, and bringing some Christian friends. As usual admission is free, questions are invited, and the lecture begins at 7 p.m.

The President, N.S.S. is now back in the office, and matters awaiting his attention will be dealt with as rapidly as possible, and with much appreciation for the patience readily shown by those who have been kept waiting.

We understand that Messrs. Watts and Co. are about to publish a new series of non-fiction works under the general title of "Thrift Books" at 1s. each, dealing with the latest developments in science, history, etc. Particulars of the first volumes will duly appear.

CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNISM

RECENT issues of this journal have contained much correspondence upon the respective merits or, conversely, demerits of Communism. On the whole, we consider that the protagonists (in both camps) seem to indicate more heat than light in their approach to this eminently controversial question. To be sure, it has often been remarked that religion and politics are the two subjects upon which rational thinking is too often at a heavy discount.

The present writer has no intention of entering this stormy arena; the more so as he has often more appropriate organs in which to express his political views. *The Freethinker*, after all, is not a political journal and we have never sought to appropriate its valuable and all too limited space to inflict our own political views upon its long-suffering readers and we have no intention of doing so now. Political journals are, in any case, two-a-penny, whereas *The Freethinker* is, we should say, virtually unique in its disinterested quest for truth.

However, whilst it would be *ultra vires* to discuss the specific ideology of Communism, Marxist or any other kind, here, it is highly relevant to this journal to discuss the mutual relations between Christianity and Communism, both past and present. How far, if at all, are these two world-wide forces compatible or incompatible? To avoid any misapprehension, we may state at the outset that we propose to discuss this important question as a historian and not as a politician! And to confine our survey to known facts and not to speculative opinions. We may add that, below, we define a Christian as anyone who regards Christ as either God or, at least, as inspired in an unique way. Whilst a Communist is one who believes in the common ownership of property.

The above broad definitions include, we think, all the numerous and often mutually antagonistic forms of both Christianity and Communism.

The earliest form of Christianity, if we may trust our sole extant authority, the Acts of the Apostles, was Communist: "The disciples had all things in common." Like all pre-industrial forms of Communism, that of the early Church—if it ever actually existed—was one of consumption only and could not have been a Communism of production. What is still more important, it was a religiously inspired Communism. The early Church was convinced that the end of the world was at hand and that individual accumulation was useless since Jesus was shortly to return in glory. Hence, when hard facts caused the "Second Coming" to recede into the uncertain future, the Communist practices which resulted from the belief followed it into oblivion. As a witty French critic once aptly commented, "The end of the world did not come, but the end of their money did!"

As in subsequent centuries Christianity gained in numbers and in power, it progressively adapted itself to the social system of the current Roman world, a system of private property based upon slavery and of centralised administration. After the "conversion" of Constantine (4th century), official Christianity entirely reconciled itself with the existing system of society, of which, indeed, it speedily became one of the principal beneficiaries. In the Middle Ages the Church of Rome owned forty to fifty per cent. of the land of Western Europe, under a feudal system in which land was "real" property. In more modern times, the same Church has owned a similar proportion of Latin

America. Naturally, the theology and ethics of the Vatican adapted themselves to this, from its point of view, providential state of things!

The Reformation, whilst in general favouring a change of property relations from feudal to capitalist models, did not signify any essential change in the attitude taken by the medieval Church. Official Protestantism stood by and for "the sacred rights of private property." Lutheranism actively assisted German absolutism, with its resulting extension of serfdom; Calvinism was closely allied with the rise of merchant capital; whilst the Anglican Church explicitly condemned Communism in its official formula, the "Thirty-Nine Articles," to which, incidentally, all Anglican beneficed clergymen must still swear assent—including the "Red Dean" of Canterbury! In practice, Anglican "Christian Socialism" is quite a recent phenomenon. Usually, the Church of England has been so attached to the property-system as to provoke Karl Marx himself to the famous gibe that the Established Church would rather "lose its whole Thirty-nine Articles of religion than one thirty-ninth of its income."

Such, indeed, has been the general attitude of official Christianity from the era of Constantine to the epoch of the Salvation Army!

From which fact many champions and critics have drawn the conclusion that Christianity is totally incompatible with Communism in any shape or form.

Such a view is, however, historically incorrect. Actually, there have been nearly as many forms of Christianity which were Communistic as those enumerated above, which adhered to private property. In societies rent by social conflicts between the "haves" and the "have nots," both parties adapted Christianity to their social ambitions. One could give scores of examples of such communistic forms of Christianity; Donatists, Lollards, Hussites, Anabaptists (mentioned by name in the "Thirty-nine Articles,"), Levellers, Diggers, Fifth-monarchy men, down to the Doubokhors, Tolstoyans, and other "Christian Socialists" of our own day. All these and countless other sects represented the Christianity of the socially depressed classes of their eras. Naturally, we know much less about them than about the property-holding Churches of the "haves." But that was simply because they represented the underdog, the social classes which, for one reason or another, failed to "arrive."

One ought not to make the elementary mistake of confusing Christianity with only one of its forms, that which became established and official and, as such, managed to serve God and Mammon impartially. What we may perhaps term the Christianity of the submerged classes was fully as socialistic as that of the socially dominant classes was attached to the institution of private property; in both cases, the social milieu was the decisive thing, all the Christian-Communistic sects that we have enumerated above—and the list is far from exhaustive—would have agreed in substance with the famous jingle of the (14th century) English Lollards:—

"When Adam delved and Eve span,
Where was then your gentleman?"

Or, in more secular language, "In the Beginning, where were your class-distinctions?"

In the famous Anabaptist "Kingdom" of Munster (1534-5), the fame of which set all Europe ablaze, complete Communism seems to have reigned.

We conclude, accordingly, that there is no absolute antithesis between Communism and Christianity. Some forms of Christianity could not be reconciled with any

thorough-going Communistic regime. Roman Catholicism could hardly square its ethics, if not its theology, with an appropriate Communistic ethic. The same is probably true of Lutheranism and—despite the "Red Dean"—of Anglicanism also. Similarly some forms of Communism could not be reconciled with Christianity. Anarchist-Communism, with its total denial of authority, could not co-exist at least with Catholicism, as has already been demonstrated in Spain. Marxism, with its completely materialistic analysis, could not, we think, ever be squared with any form of supernatural religion. There are, however, as many forms of Collectivism as there are of Christianity and, we repeat, there is, historically at least, no absolute antithesis between the two.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE LIBRARY TABLE

TWO notable additions have been made to the Thinker's Library—that very excellent series which has achieved such popularity among all those who buy and read worth-while books. Printing and format have always distinguished these handy little volumes—handy because they can be put so easily into one's pocket, and I am sure there can be but few readers of this journal who have not acquired at least a few copies.

In *The Science of Heredity*, Dr. J. S. D. Bacon has given us a lucid exposition in just under 200 pages of what all intelligent people ought to know about a not too easy subject. We are often put off by words—and such words as genetics, genes, chromosomes, drosophila, nucleus, and some others, often make one imagine that he is about to study one of those erudite works only advanced professors of very difficult subjects turn out. I hope Freethinkers will not be put off in this way, for they will find Dr. Bacon's exposition of his subject extremely well written and informative.

To understand such subjects as Determinism and Evolution, it is necessary to have some knowledge of the work that has been done in recent years on heredity—especially ever since Mendel was re-discovered about the beginning of this century. Why is Johnny so like his father or his mother, or is a mixture of the two, and yet totally unlike his brother? Many questions like these must have puzzled us, but have been taken for granted without the least idea of trying to answer the problem.

To put all the evidence in a small book was not an easy task, but Dr. Bacon, beginning with Darwin and Mendel, and dealing in detail with genes and chromosomes and the way they work, and ending with a chapter on the impact of genetical knowledge on the life of man, has given us a fine summary. He has also dealt very fairly with the much debated contribution of Lysenko to our understanding of the transmission of hereditary characters, putting in a plea for "some serious answer to his criticisms of modern genetics." There is no doubt that this must eventually be done whatever we may think of the Russian experiments in this field. Dr. Bacon's book is very strongly recommended as an introduction to the difficult subject of genetics.

In *The Great Revivalists*, Mr. George Godwin (who in a previous volume dealt most interestingly with the *Great Mystics*), appears to have thoroughly enjoyed himself writing about one of the silliest of all hallucinations. There are, of course, differences of degree among revivalists as among the converted, but I for one can hardly see much difference between a man of John H. Newman's intellectual calibre grovelling at the feet of an Italian priest, and the hysterical idiots who found

Jesus at the behest of "the pale, dramatic figure of Evan Roberts," as Mr. Godwin describes him.

The description of the first revivals in the New Testament can be considered as correct, for, when filled with their Deity, the converted of any century nearly always speak "with tongues" and "prophecy." Their pious gibberish, hysterically yelled, is typical of revivals—and it must not be forgotten that the non-Christian religions had theirs too. It is hardly necessary to add that most conversions at revivals are "pathological." Mr. Godwin gives many interesting facts and figures in his chapter on the Psychology of Conversion, and he notices, what has so often been remarked, that for many young girls who get "converted," it is "Jesus, the mystic lover, who takes the place of the lover lacking in the flesh." One can well understand, therefore, why our celibate priests are so hungry for "our Lady," and our unfortunate nuns proudly wear a crucifix and never cease to pray to "our Lord."

Mr. Godwin's description of that great revivalist, General Booth, as a "monomaniac," and one who was "allergic to every sort of pleasure, of beauty, and of joy," will not be liked by the Salvation Army. Nor will his assertion that "there is a sexual component in religion," and that therefore the two emotional states, religious activity and sexual activity, often "appear to move in parallel."

On the "revivalist's technique" the author has some very pertinent things to say—though he might have pointed out that Dr. Torrey, who tried to conquer England, was not only an ignoramus, but a first-class liar and libeller to boot.

Mr. Godwin deals very fully with Booth, and Wesley who, it must not be forgotten, believed "in witchcraft and, hence, exorcism." He also points out how very often a great revivalist is also a great organiser. For example, among many, are Peter the Hermit, Martin Luther, St. Theresa, Jonathen Edwards, Wesley, Booth, and Spurgeon—all great organisers.

An extremely interesting chapter describes a revival not so well known in England, that in Kentucky in 1800; and of course, we get a detailed description of the revival initiated by Evan Roberts in 1904 in Wales. This only lasted about six months though its effects were to last for many years. Roberts himself finally retired, obscure and forgotten.

The Story of Prehistoric Civilisations, by Dorothy Davison is a very finely illustrated work of over 260 pages (not the Thinker's Library), dealing fully with prehistoric "culture." It was written primarily to supplement the gap "in recent literature relating to Neolithic Man," and it certainly well fulfils this need.

It is full of details regarding the various prehistoric periods in which man was slowly evolving a cultural life, as we can see from all sorts of his remains; and the illustrations vividly bring us visual proof of his activities.

Miss Davison shows us how migration affected people, how they settled down, and how much we have discovered through the patient excavation and work of archaeologists. It is an entrancing story. What did these early people think about, how did they live, what was their food, were they subject to our maladies, how long did they live—these and other questions are answered in this fascinating volume of man's primitive ancestors.

If the reader wants to know what the invasion of Britain was like in 2500 B.C., when a company of "small dark-haired men and women drove the first domestic

animals ashore and dumped leather bags full of corn and seed for the first time on English soil," he will find it delightfully described in Chapter XV. "They were our forefathers, remote and crude" and probably their blood is still mingled with ours.

Like the two volumes in the Thinker's Library described above (3s. 6d. each), *The Story of Prehistoric Civilisations* is published by Messrs. Watts and Co., and is excellent value at 12s. 6d. net.

H. CUTNER.

"TRANSCENDENTALISM AND METHOD"

IF Mr. H. H. Preece really believes that his article ("Fact and Theory," *The Freethinker*, December 31st) answers by criticism, then I can only wonder at his lack of appreciating the meaning of words. In his reply the relevant remarks are either contradicted by himself, or are manifestly fallacious.

One of the first essentials in attempting to solve a problem is to grasp its nature, yet Mr. Preece's latest remarks on scientific method show that he has failed to grasp the significance of my criticism that his statement—"Science first frames an hypothesis then devises experiments to test it makes science all guess work or chance"—is idiotic. I have never doubted that science does not *first* frame an hypothesis, i.e., "*first*" meaning the beginning of a series, but science does *first* frame an hypothesis, i.e., in the sense that the formation of an hypothesis is prior to the devised experiments which test its validity. Mr. Preece asks, "If an hypothesis 'depends on facts' how can it be 'the offspring of a well stocked (not stuffed) mind'?" An hypothesis is a mental construction, a provisional supposition, which is not an arbitrary opinion, but a justifiable assumption with some foundation in fact; this accounts for the expectation of some measure of agreement between the logical conclusion drawn from a hypothesis, and the phenomena which are known. The fact that in the "formal" rules for forming hypotheses emphasis is laid upon the necessity for a new hypothesis to be compatible with previously established hypotheses, that a new hypothesis must be reasonable and revelant, fruitful in its application and controllable, and that it must be general in terms and more fundamental than the statement it has to explain, proves that Mr. Preece's original remarks are idiotic.

If he will put the interpretation on my remarks which clearly is meant, he will find that nowhere do I make a judgment on the alleged "shallowness" or "rawness" of his article. If he chooses to refer to his own work as "well garnished with verbiage," for once we agree, but I would add—need you write in such a loose, almost mystical, fashion? To place on record my hesitancy in accepting facile remarks attributed to Russell does not, to me, savour of wasting either time or space. I note that Mr. Preece, in spite of my request, does not give any references where Russell "attempts to explain induction in terms of deduction."

Mr. Preece asks, "what is the subject matter of metaphysics?" The answer will depend on the school of thought to which one belongs. Collinwood maintains that metaphysics is the discovery of the absolute presuppositions underlying a particular age. F. H. Bradley describes metaphysics as "an attempt to know reality as against mere appearance, or the study of first principles or ultimate truths." Traditionally, metaphysics "is the science of being as such." The

materialist appears to mean by metaphysics anything which he fails to understand, or anything with which he does not agree. Has Mr. Preece so low an opinion of the intelligence of his readers, as to suppose that his pathetic subterfuge is combining statements made by Russell and Spinoza, will cut any ice: the attempt to arrive at a *reductio ad absurdum* by such methods is manifestly absurd.

Mr. Preece states (in effect): "Science only follows the method of *starting* with a hypothesis when faced with inadequate observation." He is to be hoisted with his own petard, for science can only determine that certain observation is inadequate *when* it has started, it follows that his remarks are self-contradictory. If he will read my article again he will see that nowhere do I ask him *how* wholes can be inferred if not from parts? I do ask him "from where else can wholes be inferred if not from parts? When I write "where" I do not mean "how."* Do we analyse our experience into space and time, matter and motion? Mr. Preece asserts that we do, this is surprising, for the traditional empirical epistemology asserts that these categories are "atomic," and that by a process of synthesis we arrive at "wholeness," and not vice-versa as he suggests. The Gestalt controversy is concerned with this point, and Mr. Preece taking the Gestalten view appears to support the Idealist school, so here again we have a contradiction:—Mr. Preece writing from an empirical viewpoint while supporting a non-empirical epistemology.

I quite agree with Mr. Preece that "to mistake theory for fact is to stand on one's head and think with one's feet," he ought to know better than to do this, the results of such mental and physical gymnastics are made evident by the remarks which follow the quotation above. He states: "Is not the time as qualitative as the beauty of a sunset," and he answers his own question thus: "It is as transient, intangible or transcendental." I would point out, if he means by "time" what is popularly meant by that term, and he does so conceive time, for he states, "... we may be unaware of the time of the event," then "time" in this sense is not qualitative but quantitative, i.e., it can be measured. Consequently it cannot be "transcendental," if "transcendental" is defined as that which is "beyond" our experience then his remarks are clearly absurd. The significance of my remarks on "experience and ideas" appears to be transcendental to Mr. Preece.

VERNON CARTER.

* I feel that here we have another example of Mr. Preece's deplorable habit of misrepresenting writers with whom he disagrees. F. A. Ridley has had cause to bring this fault to the reader's notice. (See p. 479, November 26, 1950.)

LOURDES IN INDIA

MIRACLE-MONGERING is not a strange thing in India. The latest attempt at it out-beats all previously heard stories. A group of unscrupulous persons intent upon enriching themselves by trading on human misery, credulity and religious fervour, set up a twelve-year-old shepherd boy as one endowed with miraculous powers and in possession of a wonder-drug which would cure all diseases. Tentacles of this gang were working in all neighbouring villages and towns doing false propaganda that the boy was an incarnation of God.

Consequently the remote village of Rantalai, in Cuttack (Orissa) daily drew large crowds of men and women suffering from all kinds of diseases imaginable for the "wonder-drug." Not only the illiterate but also many of the educated have succumbed to the propaganda. The Government of Orissa State in "Secular" India very kindly ran special buses and trains to help people travel to this village. This was going on for nearly five months. At last Dr. Sir C. V. Raman, Indian scientist and Nobel prizewinner, issued a statement denouncing the whole affair and calling upon the Government to take strong measures to stop this mass-hysteria. This put the Government of Orissa in their senses and they appointed a three-man committee with Mr. Pabitra Ramohan Pradhan as Chairman to investigate into the efficacy of the drug.

The committee examined about 1,505 cases and found that only 147 persons suffering from ailments such as simple fever, eye sore, passing headache, intestinal disorder of a trivial nature, etc., professed to have experienced some relief. The committee did not come upon a single case of cure of deafness, dumbness, blindness, cataract, lameness, leprosy, paralysis, insanity, cancer, tuberculosis, asthma, gout, venereal diseases or eczema although persons suffering from these diseases have taken the medicine. On the other hand the committee came across persons who died even after taking the medicine. Hence they turned down the claim of the drug as a panacea as unfounded.

The Government consequently withdrew the transport facilities they had provided. As a result of the influx of people in large numbers and free mixing up of people with infectious and contagious diseases, cholera broke out in the area and so far more than a thousand have died. Dead bodies, it is learnt, are being disposed of in cart loads.

T. S. SELVARAJ.

LENTEN SCENE IN A PORTUGUESE CHURCH

A HUSHED silence falls on the weeping penitents as the sacred orator, a Dominican priest, hired out at £1 per day, with a plate of home-made confectionery and a bottle of wine thrown in, mounts the pulpit, carefully carrying with him the cord of the heavy, red velvet curtains drawn across the High Altar to hide the enormous statue of Christ placed there for the occasion. At the end of a moving sermon, the Rev. Father wipes the sweat from his brow with his big, red handkerchief of Indian silk, turns to the curtain, genuflects and says: "Lord, if my weak voice echoing through this great church, if my weak voice has succeeded in bringing to the hearts of these sinners a true spirit of repentance, then deign, Lord, to appear to hear their vows. Come Lord! Come! Come! Why don't you come?"

Then, by the well-known and effacious trick of rhetoric, entitled "cheek," the orator, all the time pointing to the curtain, gives his audience to understand that they must sob and moan for some minutes in order that God may appear to grant them the necessary pardon. When he has reduced them to a state of hysterical crying, he calls out: "He is coming! He is coming!" Acting as if taken with fear and emotion, he falls down over the side of the pulpit as he gently pulls the cord and parts the curtains to disclose the statue of Christ hidden there, while he cries: "He is come! He is here! He is here!"

N. F.

CORRESPONDENCE

COMMUNISM

SIR,—After reading Mr. Barnard's letter in *The Freethinker*, Feb. 4, on Russian Communism, I was amazed at the information he discloses, especially as there is supposed to be an "Iron Curtain."

If they are such a powerful force what are they waiting for? Surely, now is the time to strike instead of waiting until we are fully armed.

It is understandable if we remember the appalling losses they suffered. Over seven million people and thousands of towns and villages.

They sacrificed everything in the scorched earth policy. Even Mr. Churchill appreciated this. Even before the war finished the American Press slandered and vilified them; no wonder they keep the "Iron Curtain."

When Vishinsky proposed the banning of the A-bomb, a third reduction in the armed forces, and an international committee to be set up to see it carried out the Western Powers refused, instead of agreeing. Then, if Russia had refused to allow inspection of their country, we could then be sure of their intentions.

If we continue this armaments race we shall be economically ruined and that will bring Communism sooner. If we go to war we shall be blotted out completely. People the world over are wanting a higher standard of living that only peace and co-operation with each nation can give.

It is just part of evolution, and Mr. Barnard should understand that.—Yours, etc.,

ANTHONY SCOTT.

SIR,—It would be difficult to imagine a more venomous anti-Russian letter than that of Mr. Barnard in your issue of Feb. 4, 1951. Wherever has he got it all from? He asks, do not we ever read? Well, I've read "The Socialist Sixth of the World," which book I can recommend to Mr. Barnard, but perhaps he would not want to believe Hewlett Johnson's version of Russia. In that case, I would ask him to consult Whitaker's Almanac. There he will find a true and unbiased account of the progress made by Russia during the past 30 years, and then he might note the amount spent on education, health and social welfare against that spent on military expenditure, and compare with other countries. No, Sir, Communism has come to stay, and if we try to destroy it by dropping atom bombs on its people, we must not complain when some are dropped on us in retaliation.—Yours, etc.,

W. ASHTON.

SIR,—“Do those who call themselves Freethinkers know what freethinking is?” asks M. Barnard in his latest tirade. He certainly does not; I cannot see where emancipation of mind comes in when you simply chime in with the general chorus of propaganda and hatred. Free mind ought to enable a person to form an independent viewpoint—even if it be a Minister of the Crown who tells us that the insignificant C.P. is to be blamed when a section of workers comes out to have their wages approximated to the rising cost of living.

If he were level-minded, he could also tell us that General MacArthur, multi-millionaire, is a large stock-holder in Korean investment companies; that he also has a brewery in the Philippines (value 8-10 millions), apart from other mining, industrial and agricultural interests. One of the world's largest sources of tungsten ore is in the Sangdong deposit in South Korea—its entire production goes to U.S. companies free for the next five years. North Korea has the richest iron and gold deposits in Asia; Syngman Rhee has pawned rights in all Korean mines to the U.S. Oriental Consolidated Mining Company. The Korean Oil Storage Company of N.Y. holds the concessions on all oil going into Korea. Japan's former monopoly, the Oriental Development Company, is now the New Korea Co., and this Company, in which Dulles is highly interested, not only owns most of the Korean industry, but has paper claims to rich assets in the North. 2,200 industrial, transport and banking projects, formerly owned by the Japanese, are vested in the Syngman Rhee syndicate and are all optioned to American investors.

It appears to me that a real Freethinker should question the wisdom of all present policies in this country which tend to result in the spilling of our blood for the benefit of dollar hyenas.—Yours, etc.,

TOM HILL.

[This correspondence must now cease.—EDITOR.]

“DISGUST”

SIR,—Under above heading “J.R.” asks this question—“Are we allowed to blaspheme in these columns as much as we like against the Holy Ghost, but never against Karl Marx?”

My answer may surprise him. A few months ago I wrote a fantasy about Heaven in which I poked fun at the Holy Ghost. Although set up in type my article was returned to me with regret and reference to the Blasphemy Law. I replied that I would be agreeable to a “cut.” No good. In unequivocal terms a letter assured me that the present editorial policy of this paper did not intend to run any risk of a prosecution as Foote did, and that “clink” was not a holiday home! So, I can tell “J.R.” that he is wrong in his assumption that one (even a very old contributor) is allowed to blaspheme in its columns against the Holy Ghost.—Yours, etc.,

J. EFFEL.

[It was with regret that we returned an article by such a popular contributor as Mr. Effel; but it contained much more than just a little blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. After all, there are still the Blasphemy Laws on the statute book!—EDITOR.]

LANGUAGE AND LETTERS

SIR,—Your contributors, Messrs. Roy and Ross, give useful and interesting knowledge to explain the origin of languages which are truly the keys and foundation text to all knowledge.

Moreover, *The Freethinker* becomes an educator by promoting the study of words as the means of communicating ideas and facts, spoken and written, to teach arts and science, with plain English, as I was pleased to note, years ago, from articles by Chapman Cohen.

But, with the excellent philology given by eminent professors of the English language, *little learning is devoted to the philosophical and scientific formation of our capital letters of the alphabet with their innate meanings for word-building.*—Yours, etc.,

WM. A. VAUGHAN.

But if all external motives of a social and religious character be put aside, it may be fairly asked if the influence of the moral law upon the conduct of men is really so great as well-meaning moralists try to make us believe. It does not seem to command obedience in any exceptional degree, the regard for it can hardly be called the mainspring of action. It is only one spring out of many, and variable like all others. In some instances it may be a dominant power in a man's life, in others it is a voice calling in the wilderness.—PROF. WESTERMARCK.

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. EBERY.

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.: R. H. ROSETTI, President N.S.S., “Man's Animal Ancestry.”

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 20, 7 p.m.: ASHTON BURALL, “D. H. Lawrence Revalued.”

Glasgow Secular Society (Branch of the N.S.S.) (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: JAS. ROY (Shotts), “Nationalism and Culture.”

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: A Lecture.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: R. TATHAM (Social Science Association), “The Achilles Heel of Socialism.”

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: H. HAMILTON FYFE, “The Problem of Peace.”

West London Branch N.S.S. (The “Laurie Arms,” Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: H. WILLIS, “A Lecture.”

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