

THE FREETHINKER

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Where Do We Go From Here?

IN succeeding Mr. Chapman Cohen as Editor of *The Freethinker*, I am only too conscious of shouldering a heavy task. Since the now distant date of its foundation in 1881, this journal has known only two editors; both men of, in their widely different ways, outstanding mental and literary calibre. To expect to emulate either the brilliant style, coruscating wit, or remarkable literary flair of G. W. Foote, or the profound philosophical grasp, keen analytical insight, and unsurpassed lucidity of Chapman Cohen, would be a well nigh impossible ambition. We may regard it as extremely improbable that there exists any journal in the English-speaking world which has been fortunate to command the services of two such outstanding successive editors. That it was *The Freethinker* which did so, affords a striking proof of the dynamic power inherent in the ideals of Secularism and Atheism.

However, whilst individuals, even the most gifted, come and go, the cause of mental emancipation, of human progress, remains, and remains in all its urgency. Never, indeed, since the pioneers of rational thinking, the great Materialist thinkers of ancient Greece, first set out to apply the principles of rational thinking, of scientific determinism, to the mental chaos of primitive animism, has the need for the supremacy of reason and of rational thinking in current world affairs been more desperately urgent than it is today. In a world given over to power politics, ideological strife, and racial wars of colour and caste, even science, once so ardently hailed as mankind's saviour, has been prostituted to the basest war-mongering ends and, in the form of "H" and "A" bombs and similar devilries, now threatens to destroy the very civilisation which has alone enabled mankind to master Nature on this unprecedented scale. In an age overshadowed by such an impending calamity only a rapid and vast extension of human sanity and rational self-control can hope to save mankind from proximate disaster.

In this broad sociological sense we may, indeed, affirm that the philosophy of Secularism is, to-day, actually more necessary than ever before. We repeat, more necessary, since the social crisis of our times is incomparably more urgent than was the case two generations ago when *The Freethinker* was first launched in a Victorian world which, despite the then current power of religious bigotry and the stormy, controversial arena in which the paper's founders waged their bitter struggle for intellectual existence, yet possessed a social optimism and a confident anticipation of progress which our age seems largely to have lost. We may, perhaps, express the difference in an adequate sentence if we remark that, whereas in and to that generation science implied progress, to our generation it instinctively suggests atomic war and conjures up the resulting spectre of universal social dissolution.

In the contemporary struggle for a saner and more rational world which now represents mankind's only

possible alternative to universal collapse, *The Freethinker* and the secular movement of which our paper represents the fighting standard bearer, has a part to play, a role which is not only important but is, literally, unique. Political papers are two a penny and scientific journals scientific, that is, in the technical and professional sense, are also not uncommon. *The Freethinker*, however, remains unique as an organ of critical protest not dominated by any creed nor enslaved to any rigid "party line." It disposes of no "glittering prizes" wherewith to attract the unscrupulous adventurer and the unprincipled careerist. It has no ulterior aim beyond that proud boast of Secularists the world over—"We seek for truth." It combats its enemies, it assails the foes of human progress and mental emancipation solely with intellectual weapons. Of too few contemporary organs of public opinion can the above be said. Ever since its foundation in 1881, *The Freethinker* has lived up to its name and has fearlessly and in face of the most bitter opposition asserted first, last, and all the time, that unvarying first principle of human progress: the right to think freely; to call each and every human institution, regardless of the claims of authority, to the final court of appeal, the bar of human reason; the only arbiter of truth available to us in the only world that is open to our critical investigation.

In the course of the two generations throughout which *The Freethinker* "ploughed its lonely furrow" the primary enemy, religion, has itself submitted, willy-nilly, to the universal law of evolution and has itself undergone vast changes, changes for which the Rationalist movement is, we think, entitled to claim a substantial share of the credit. When we find bishops of the Established Church belatedly repeating the Biblical criticisms of Thomas Paine and Walter Cassels and erudite professors of theology portentously announcing truths which have been the commonplaces of Secularism since the days of Bradlaugh and Huxley, we have, assuredly, some right to regard ourselves as amongst the moulders of, not only the opinions of the general public but, equally, of theological opinion also. Theologians are so ungrateful that we should be rash to expect any verbal acknowledgment, much less, of course, any tangible reward for our, shall we say professional assistance! However, the world, even the world of theology is on the move and there is every reason to believe that the movement is destined to continue. The dynamic impact of Freethought can never be exactly measured by the numbers of its professed adherents. However, when we find Deans, "gloomy" and otherwise—throwing over dogmas wholesale to the critical wolves, and Jesuits writing learned treatises to prove that, long before Darwin, St. Augustine was the first promulgator of evolutionary theory, we do not despair of, one fine day, eventually hearing that Anglican bishops regard Bradlaugh as a pioneer of "rational religion" and that the works of John M. Robertson and Joseph Turmel have come to hold an honoured place in the curriculum of theological seminaries! Startling as such a change would appear, it would actually not be much greater than the profound impact

already made upon Christian theology by Rationalist critiques.

Christianity is to-day upon the way out. Secularist criticism is, of course, not the only cause for the current decay of organised religion, but it is not the least influential cause of that decay and it would be ridiculously false modesty upon our part to refuse to recognise the ultimately far-reaching effects of the devastating barrage of critical annihilation to which a whole succession of great Freethinkers from Paine's *Age of Reason* to the latest works of Chapman Cohen, have subjected the entire mental framework of religion.

The fight continues! And *The Freethinker* and the Pioneer Press have still a memorable role to play in its conduct. Nor is it only a fast-disintegrating Christianity that we have to face and to overcome. "New foes arise threatening to bind our souls with secular chains." Superstition is not confined to Christianity, nor Totalitarian tyranny to the Churches of Rome and Calvin. Enemies both old and new threaten the hard-won gains of the past and seek to deny the autonomous jurisdiction of the human intellect. Against all such, we will continue to direct our attack until our goal is attained; a secular democracy freed from the dead hand of the supernatural, in which human affairs are man's exclusive concern, to be decided exclusively by human reason. Under its new regime, as under the old, this journal will continue to fight for this sublime objective. To hasten its attainment, we confidently appeal to our readers, old and new, for their continued co-operation, for both their moral and material support, for their regular contributions in ideas and in suggestions for greater efficiency; *the* place for Freethought—For all shades of it!—is surely in the columns of *The Freethinker*.

Where do we go from here? The road is forward.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SHAW'S RELIGION

MY recent article in *The Freethinker* "St. Bernard Shaw" has aroused the attention of a Mr. Yates—but unhappily not to Shaw's religion.

He concentrates on myself whom he sees (heaven help his defective eyesight!) as a "Shavian fanatic," a "fantastic eulogiser" an exalter of Shaw to "a state of consummate excellence," a panegyrist, "without judgment or restraint," and idolator of Shaw "fain to represent a social paragon" of one who wasn't, an "enthusiastic admirer" and so on *ad nauseam*. Such apparently, is judgment and restraint!

This indictment is quite false and quite silly. In the course of reviewing an inadequate book by a friend whose opportunities were unique, I did it is true, throw a small violet on a dead man's grave already piled with magnificent floral tributes from the whole republic of letters. A competitive and censorious world has long "exalted" Shaw to a "state of consummate excellence"—this ridiculous English is not mine—and I have no need to gild refined gold or paint the lily. I, indeed, honour the man because he was both good and great, both in jest and in earnest, because it is mean to grudge honour to the honourable and because he was, and is, one of the greatest English writers. But as to "representing a social paragon" I did not even mention any social aspect of Shaw at all. And far from being a Shavian fanatic, I happen to be resolutely opposed to Shaw's theories of communism and doubtful of much of his economics.

More, I do not even myself subscribe whole-heartedly to Shaw's religion. But he was one of "the choice and

master-spirits of the age" by general consent and it will take more than the barren and cantankerous dissent of Mr. Yates to disturb that emphatic verdict.

However, Mr. Yates's views upon Shaw in general, upon me, my review of a book, and even of Shaw's religion (which last he prefers to judge at second-hand through the inadequate medium of my few brief remarks upon it) are of secondary importance. What is of first importance is Shaw's religion.

And the importance of Shaw's religion is just this. It was—provisionally—good enough to serve Shaw in his lifetime. Here was a talker and writer with a first-class brain (as the late Lord Birkenhead used to be fond of saying) with a deadly serious, and absolutely honest and sincere outlook on the subject of religions, an habitual thinker capable of originating new thought, giving us the product of his long and profound meditations and his wide reading untrammelled by convention, or moral cowardice. To say the least, such a product is bound to be of value. And it was a master-hand that expressed that product in the preface to *Androcles*, in *Back to Methuselah* and other compositions relating to his religion and irreligion.

Nor is that all. Shaw steadfastly lived his religion throughout a very long life, in addition to thinking it out. Few men do either of these things. Shaw's religion is his own. He communicates it not to make converts to it but in order that we may (as we must) make, as he did, our religions (or irreligions) fit our individual selves. "The Golden Rule is that there is no Golden Rule."

I called Shaw a saint. Mr. Yates thinks this was praise—"without judgment or restraint" he says. Obviously he knows nothing of saints. For, as anyone may see, by reading the Lives of the Saints or by meeting one, saints are, in general, extraordinarily difficult, unusual, unpleasant, and seldom entirely good people. For instance, St. Peter was a cad and coward; St. Paul a holy horror. Personally, in general, I dislike saints. I called Saint Bernard Shaw a saint (of his own religion, not of the Church) not to praise him but with deliberate judgment to use the Flaubertian *mot juste* about him. A saint is exactly what Shaw was. He was quite ruthless (one might almost write, selfish) in his saintliness, in his devotion to the light within him. That he came to literary and worldly success (because of it or in spite of it?) is not to the point. Not all saints are martyrs. "racked with torture, haled to slaughter, fire and axe and murderous sword." Occasionally, if rarely, saints succeed. Shaw did.

Even good Catholics who keep the term "Saint" for those dead ones accredited to sainthood by the Church are not forbidden to recognise a live saint if they meet him or her. But if a Freethinker is so free as to cry: "A saint!" when he sees one, Mr. Yates accuses him of "putting his own construction on the term" and wants to bind him down to the Catholic Church's canonised list more strictly than the Church does. The Church has never professed that every saint is canonised.

I also called Shaw "the greatest Freethinker of our time." So he was, quite obviously. So general opinion thought him. He thought freely on all subjects (not merely religion) and became one of the eyes, ears and tongues of not only the English-speaking, but the whole civilised world.

To Mr. Yates free-thinking is divorced from general freedom of thought and this divorce-decree is absolute. To him a Freethinker means only "one who denies revealed religion." And he, being shockingly hide-bound

in his own so-called and very circumscribed free-thinking, wants to check the wider—and literal—meaning of the term “by a definite ruling on the part of the recognised Secular Authority.” But the King’s English will not come to heel so easily as that. Does this pompous nonsense mean that, defying the dictionaries, Mr. Rosetti as President of the Secular Society (speaking *ex cathedra* on some Day of Pentecost, I suppose) or Professor Heath as R.P.A. Chairman, is to “rule” that the word “Freethinker” shall shed its wider meaning and shall only mean “atheist,” no more, no less? Shall “the Secular Authority” excommunicate all who continue to think, speak and write freely and be Freethinkers in the widest sense? But neither Mr. Yates nor anyone else can control the English language and “Freethinker” will go on having its generally accepted meaning. Besides are we to understand that the Yatesian freethinker denies only revealed religion and therefore accepts unrevealed religion (which, by the way, qualifies Shaw to enter the Yatesian fold)?

The fact is that there exists a narrow-minded, bigoted type of atheist incapable of original mental activity of any kind beyond a blank, bleak and bare denial of all orthodox religions. It is absurd to call such a person a “thinker,” let alone a “Freethinker.” The bigotry of irreligion is quite as bad as religious bigotry. And the great men of Freethought, throughout the ages, have been as free from bigotry as the little men have been prone to it. The great world will not deny the title of freethinker to such leaders as Voltaire and Shaw though one believed in an Unknown and the other in a Life Force. And even though Mr. Yates purses Pharaonic lips at the sacred name of Freethinker being prostituted from the holiness of complete atheism! I do not “put my own construction on the term ‘Freethinker’”: the world—including such writers as Dean Swift, Gray, Thackeray, Lord Morley and Shaw—except for the very strictest of small atheistic sects, is with me. There is also the Oxford English Dictionary, that monument of learning.

If only Mr. Yates would read his Shaw! And in addition a very little elementary Christian theology! He talks of “what Mr. Du Cann calls the life-to-come, the Communion of Saints, the Immaculate Conception” and the rest as though I were the “only begetter” or god-parent of these concepts. As though their meanings had not been taught to every little Christian child by the Roman, English and Greek Churches for generations. “I don’t for the life of me know what it all means” plaintively cries Mr. Yates. Then he should learn. Get thee to a Sunday-school, Mr. Yates! Acquire the necessary trifling ecclesiastical knowledge necessary. Then you could profitably read, and perhaps even understand, the contribution which Shaw’s heresies make to these subjects, instead of denigrating Shaw’s work unread and—confessedly—not understood.

No wonder Shaw’s religion is “an enigma” to Mr. Yates. The wonder is that he has the hardihood to accuse the clearest of modern writers (unread) of not being crystal-clear on this subject. But Shaw knew the Christian faith thoroughly, analysed it exhaustively and put down his conclusions upon it clearly and definitely enough. No really illuminating critic of Shaw’s religion—a Monsignor Ronald Knox for example—would say Shaw’s heresies were not “clear.” I admire them as I admire some men’s Buddhism, other men’s Christianity and other men’s Agnosticism and I admire them as much as I despise other men’s degraded variants of these philosophies.

For this I shall have to be damned with Shaw instead

of being saved with Yates and can only comfort myself in this melancholy and desperate plight by the classic line: “Better to err with Pope than shine with Pye.”

G. G. L. DU CANN.

THEATRICAL NOTES

[We hope these weekly criticisms from the theatre world will interest all lovers of the drama—among whom we count most of our readers.—EDITOR.]

IN this Festival Year of 1951 there is a liberal selection of good entertainment; intellectual for those who like the classics, and entertaining for those who want amusing.

Of the latter, Jimmy Edwards, Joy Nichols and Dick Bentley in *Take It From Us* give us a show with great variety and fun. They are followed up very closely by *The Lyric Revue* (Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith), which is about the liveliest revue of its kind that London has seen for a long time.

At the Aldwych Theatre there is Chekhov’s *Three Sisters*—a play of boredom which is a little boring. The attraction is the star cast of Celia Johnson, Margaret Leighton and Renée Asherson. Miss Johnson gives a fine and restrained performance as the eldest sister; Miss Leighton is an exuberant second sister and Miss Asherson (who came to the fore in *A Streetcar Named Desire*) is the third. Diana Churchill and Ralph Richardson are also in the cast. Another Tennant play with a starry cast is *Waters of the Moon* at the Haymarket. The play is something in the style of the Chekhov piece but is purposeless and far from perfect, its saving graces are Sybil Thorndike, Edith Evans, Wendy Hiller and Kathleen Harrison.

One of the most outstanding theatrical events is the two Cleopatras, from Shaw’s *Caesar and Cleopatra* to Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*. Vivien Leigh proves by her two performances that she has advanced considerably as a great dramatic actress in the last few years. She is able to cope easily with Shaw’s girlish Cleopatra, but at times she cannot quite reach the necessary dramatic depths of the Shakespeare play. Laurence Olivier, respectively as Caesar and Antony, is as near perfect as such a great actor can be. An education and an experience.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

CHANGE OF LIFE

When quickening years at length reveal
That Youth, in terms of Time, is done,
We say that life has scarce begun,
And claim the standard is not real—
Demanding: “What is Time?” We feel
As vital as at twenty-two,
Or with bravado say we do;
But there are signs we can’t conceal:
The sagging flesh, the thinning hair,
The aches and pains, the wear and tear. . . .
But now the time, they say, is near
When self-delusions disappear,
When we shall gather years with grace,
And greet old age with smiling face.

F. L. MAYELL.

BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL. By Chapman Cohen. An Appreciation of two great Reformers. Price 3s. 9d.; postage 3d.

CHALLENGE TO RELIGION (a re-issue of four lectures delivered in the Secular Hall, Leicester). By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 6d.; postage 1½d.

ACID DROPS

The Vicar of St. Peter's, Croydon, is just heartbroken that the Church cannot get rid of his brother in Christ, the Red Dean of Canterbury. He bitterly complains that the Dean has done nothing "to the danger of the State" or "preached heresy," and so cannot be bundled out of the Church. Besides, "he is a difficult man to stand up to"—and so Dr. Johnson will remain faithfully in his post and never, never lower the flag of Red Communism.

The Archbishop of York said that the Festival of Britain will be a pageant without a soul unless religion has its rightful place in it. Clerical impudence is without limit. The Festival is organised from public funds, the public pay to see what they have paid for, and Dr. Garbett would, if he could, turn it into an open air gospel shop; that is what he means by religion having *its rightful place* in the Festival. Still, after the surrender to the sabbatarians in the Amusement Park it might happen, and it looks as though the people would deserve it.

Congratulations to Southend Educational Committee! They were sensible enough to "refer back" a motion by Alderman S. F. Johnson demanding the barring of talks on evolution, by the B.B.C. Perhaps Alderman Johnson agrees with that famous American "Fundamentalist," the late William Jennings Bryan, who, upon being asked how he reconciled the Creation story in Genesis with the available geological evidence, made the historic reply: "I would rather trust in the 'Rock of Ages' than in the age of the rocks."

In a recent discussion in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland upon the abduction from Westminster of the Stone of Scone, one clerical speaker affirmed that the Church of Scotland exists "to bring to the people of Scotland the bread of life, and not to offer them a stone." But did not the Holy scripture declare: "I asked for bread and ye gave me a stone"?

At least one clergyman has frankly admitted that merely teaching the Bible in school is not going to make children either into Christians or little saints. He is the Rev. Charles Haig, and in the Newcastle *Evening Chronicle* he sadly admits that now "the Secularists can take heart." What he wants are teachers who actually believe in the Bible heroes like Abraham and Moses, and of course in Jesus Christ, the last not just a figure in ancient history like Alexander or Julius Cæsar, but as "the living Lord who claims our obedience." This is a wicked, wicked world, and fewer and fewer teachers are prepared to go to such lengths. For most of them, especially those who have been to college, Jesus is much more like a super Sunday schoolteacher than Alexander the Great. And isn't he?

How times have changed! Hardened as was the old-time thief, he nearly always drew the line at pinching anything from a church—he was quite sure that the all-seeing eye of God Almighty would have been there ready to blast him with a lightning glance. Nowadays, the gold and silver ornaments and other treasures make a burglar's mouth water, and as the all-seeing eye is never there, the pickings can be had nearly for the asking. This has brought a stern admonition from the Archdeacon of Sudbury who stylishly calls them "lewd fellows of the baser sort"—though we can hardly see the connection between lewdness and larceny. He hasn't much faith in

the Lord for he suggests a wall safe for the treasures, "not just a wooden box of the flimsy kind." And for once we are in hearty agreement.

Really this won't do! In the *Catholic Herald* recently appeared a letter from the Head of St. Joseph's School demanding to know "who or what is" a Fr. Ryan? That is, we have here a Roman Catholic actually challenging a priest of God! Of course the challenge is not on "doctrinal" grounds but "is he an authority on teaching?" Well, we always understood that a priest is, for a true Roman Catholic, an authority on almost anything. In any case, if once this authority is challenged, where will it cease? No, the whole might of the Church of Rome must now be forced on to Mr. Richard Burke for his temerity, and he can thank his lucky stars that Freethought has not only put out the fires of Hell, but also banished the slow agony in boiling oil reserved for heretics in the past.

All the same, the unlucky Mr. Burke has made some points. He insists that learning the Catechism by heart is for most pupils at school not only "parrot" but "archaic." And he adds, "It is parrot to learn by heart masses of stuff which is unintelligible to the average child because much of its language is *archaic*." The beautiful, simple Catechism of the Church of Rome "unintelligible"! Unintelligible even though it has been prepared by God's own representatives! We certainly have come on apace.

Then there are in the same journal contributors who rather tearfully try to explain "leakages." One of them, a Miss W. Oura, has written a *Life of Christ* which she thinks will stop all leakages, only the naughty publishers stone-heartedly refuse to publish it. It would cost at least 20s. a copy, and she simply cannot understand the absurd notion that people won't pay this sum for a genuine *Life of Christ*, when they spend so much on football pools. Are we to understand that even Catholics prefer football pools to a *Life of Christ* written to prevent leakages? Even Catholics?

This church-going business is producing some queer arguments. Some children at a—more or less—religious quiz recently, wanted to know why children should go to church while Dad and Mum stay at home listening, no doubt, comfortably to the wireless? The Rev. S. E. Barnett promptly answered that this was all wrong—"Discipline must be backed up by example." County Councillor Elizabeth Smith, B.A., was, however, entirely for using force on the children. They should be compelled to go, whatever their parents did. And no doubt she would heartily endorse making the punishment fit the crime if they didn't go. Fortunately, the good old Christian fathers, mothers, and spinsters of the Victorian age have almost vanished in spite of relics like Miss Smith. Most children now prefer Sunday cinemas.

Pleas for more Christianity in Local Government are put forward by Lord Ammon who once sat for North Camberwell as a Labour M.P. As an old Wesleyan, he is very troubled at the lack of interest in religion "in a good many walks in life" as well as in Local Government, and he "is not at all happy" about it. In fact "the drift" (away) "worries him." Yet he himself has been a local preacher for 50 years! Have his own sermons done nothing to stop the rot?

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

We are very sorry that it is impossible for us in these days of paper shortage to print every letter sent in, and we hope that those correspondents whose letters do not appear or are curtailed will understand our difficulties. We can only beg again that their contributions should be *short* and we will do our best to insert all that is possible in our very limited space. We hope that contributors will also understand why we cannot print their articles as often as we and our readers would like.

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.

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.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 19s. 2d.; half-year, 9s. 7d.; three months, 4s. 11d.

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.

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

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

We report a pleasing incident concerning Mr. J. Clayton and his lecture circuit around Lancashire. A number of Lancashire friends have presented him with a motor-cycle as a mark of their appreciation for his work from the N.S.S. platform, and to help reduce his personal inconvenience by enabling him to travel to outlying districts independent of the usual means of public transport. We join in thanking those friends responsible for such a thoughtful and useful gift, and congratulate Mr. Clayton on having won their esteem.

From the Indian Rationalist Association comes an excellent pamphlet on *India's Population Problem and Birth Control* (9, Broadway, Madras, 8 annas). It contains a number of articles by eminent Hindu writers, and it emphasises the misery caused by an almost unrestricted growth of the population of India. This is about five to six millions every year, which means that during the past ten years, some 40 millions have been added—almost as many people as there are inhabitants in this country. Can anyone wonder at the appalling starvation which is bound to follow? Both the birth and death rates are very high, and there seems little hope for India unless the principles of birth control are rigorously taught and applied. Can this be done?

Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, who contributes an article on "The Population Problems of India and Pakistan," realises that it must be done, for mere industrialisation is not enough. And he is supported by the Indian National

Congress which advocates "family planning and a limitation of children." Some methods are shown and clearly explained by Miss Paranjpye, M.A., who considers that "control of population is the only solution." And there is an article by the Hon. Amrit Kaur, India's Minister of Health, who, following Gandhi, believes that the proper course is to practice birth control through self-restraint; and another by M. Ziauddin, who objects to birth control. Other articles are just as interesting and offer various views. It may safely be said that it will take many years before India will properly tackle her problems of population.

In the film "Born Yesterday," notable for the very fine performance of the young lady who takes the part of a "dumb blond," there were many shocks for Christians—at least, for Christians who knew something of "infidel" writers. The dumb blond has to be "educated" and her tutor introduces her to three of the most famous of all Americans. And who were they? Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine and Robert Ingersoll—all infidels—and they are actually quoted. The famous passage from Ingersoll where he says he would rather be a humble French peasant than Napoleon is given; and the girl is advised to read the *Age of Reason* before the *Rights of Man*. As Shakespeare—another infidel—says, "Thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges."

FREETHOUGHT AND RELIGION

WHEN Mr. John Rowland says that "Marxist Communism is, after all, the logical end of Freethought," he is only saying what, at least, some Secularists believe, though as far as I am concerned, it is just unmitigated nonsense. Communism is acknowledged by even its most ardent supporters as "dictatorship," while Freethought has always been violently opposed to any dictatorship—even in its own party. Many of the rifts and breakaways among "Freethinkers" have been solely caused by attempts at dictatorship; and it has always been repudiated by those of us who believe in the principles of Freethought.

Moreover—and here I speak for myself, of course—I strongly resent having saddled on Freethought what should be partly put to the credit of Communism as an economic theory. In this article, I am not discussing the pros and cons of either Socialism or Communism as economic theories, but may I be permitted to point out that we Freethinkers are opposed to *all* forms of religion? We even object to the word itself. Now, no genuine Christian can be a true Freethinker if he bears this in mind. He cannot come to us with his Cross, Devils, Miracles, Saviours, and Gods. But he can be a Communist. If I remember aright, the Rev. Conrad Noel wrote a *Life of Jesus* in which he emphasised Jesus as the greatest of all Communists, and in Communist ranks can be found believers in all kinds of religions—not only in Christianity, but in Buddhism and Islam. This is not just a debating point, it is an historical fact, and it smashes to smithereens Mr. Rowland's claim that Communism is the logical end of Freethought.

No one can deny that, after two world wars and the different ideologies which pervade the East and West, the struggle for existence with rapidly expanding populations in a world which cannot expand causes almost everywhere, the fight for raw materials and markets for industrialised goods, the long droughts and terrible floods which cause destruction, and many other calamities, the world is not,

for the greater part of its population, a pleasant place to live in. War, disease, and poverty add to "natural" disasters, and cause dreadful suffering. And people like Mr. Rowland look around, see what is happening, and immediately shriek for a scapegoat. Like the ineffable Mr. Douglas Hyde, he has discovered it. It is the repudiation of religion, the denial of God Almighty, the blatant Atheism and ignorant Materialism which so many people profess which are responsible. Go back to God, he cries—let us praise him on our knees with song and prayer, the more the grovelling, the more we shall get in return. Poverty, hunger, disease, war—they will all vanish. God Almighty is the Loving Father. He will feed, nourish, and cherish us. But we must worship Him humbly, and regularly pray to him for guidance. Let me confess when I read this kind of balderdash, I do not altogether wonder why religion extracts such a heavy toll on intelligence from believers.

What is the truth? Simply that wherever religion had full sway in history the most revolting sadism followed. The people who believed in God Almighty spared no one. Can anybody read the trial of Joan of Arc without horror? Here were a bunch of Churchmen, bishops and priests, egged on by the all-believing English—do not forget that the English and French, though enemies, belonged to the same Church—who condemned a poor girl to be burnt alive as a witch. The same kind of gang later took a young man called Vanini, condemned him also to be burnt alive for Atheism, but first tore his tongue out with red hot pincers. The same kind of gang murdered a boy of 19 called de la Barre for not bowing when a religious procession passed him. Does Mr. Rowland want me to give more? Has he heard of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew when thousands of Protestants, young and old, were murdered by Catholics with the most revolting cruelties? Were these people Freethinkers? Were they not as earnest believers as is now Mr. Rowland?

Does religion give us "a change of heart?" I am by no means clear what this is, but certainly this change of heart was not very apparent in the latter part of the 19th century when the whole might of the Roman Catholic Church (and surely its followers all believe in God), was turned against a Jewish officer called Dreyfus. Has Mr. Rowland read the way in which a gang of true-blue Catholic French Army generals and their followers lied like the very devil to get a poor chap condemned for a crime which one of their own Catholic officers committed? In that sorry affair, how is it that the Atheist Emile Zola, the Atheist Clemenceau, and a few other unbelievers, are now recognised as the only "gentlemen?"

Religion egged on by the Bible was responsible for the death of at least a million witches. It is easy to write a sentence like that but can even Mr. Rowland assess what it meant to the victims of this appalling cruelty? The people who murdered little girls as witches were all religious; and they even "executed" animals for the same crime! What good did religion do to the murderers?

When the Duke of Alva invaded Holland, and he certainly believed in religion, how many Dutch people did he murder, torture, loot? Does Mr. Rowland know what happened? Does he know the details? And can he tell me who among the people of Europe then were more religious than the soldiers of Spain?

If we come to our own country, what has he to say of the implacable fury with which Thomas Paine was assailed by thoroughly religious people? The three countries he helped—how did they treat him? The Deists—for all practical purposes Unitarians—in the French Revolu-

tion, though he was a Deputy, wanted to guillotine him. The Wesleyans and other religious bodies in England would have cheered if he had been hanged. And the Presbyterians in America made the end of his life a perfect misery—they would have loved to lynch him. And for nearly 150 years Mr. Rowland's religious friends have attacked in the foulest way, his immortal memory. Has Mr. Rowland read of the way in which Charles Bradlaugh was treated when, as a properly elected member, he tried to take his seat in Parliament? Is it not a pleasant picture to read how twelve officials literally threw him out of the House of Commons to the accompanying cheers, hoots, and joy of the rest of the members, nearly all of whom were thoroughly religious? Will Mr. Rowland tell us in this one incident how wonderful was the beautiful and restraining influence of true religion?

It would, of course, require many books to deal with the crimes of religion, and its baneful effect on human character. I have given only a very few as they come to my memory. But if Mr. Rowland wants it I could give him ten thousand cases which for sheer horror can find no parallel outside religion.

Rightly or wrongly, I regard Communism as a religion, and if it really is responsible for the moral deterioration in contemporary life, I am not surprised, knowing as I do what religion has done and can do. All the same I, as a true Malthusian, cannot put down everything bad to the mere dissemination of an economic theory. There is something much graver behind it all—the Population Problem. But that is another matter. For the rest, I can only repeat what I may have said before—I simply cannot understand anyone going back to religion after having once tasted the freedom of Freethought.

H. CUTNER.

ANOTHER MIRACLE

AFTER the Miracle of Fatima, where the sun danced a fandango, one would have thought that the district would have reached the limit of its miracles. But, as the following proves, we were wrong:—

"In Nazaré, a fishing village a few miles from Fatima, on December 15, at 12 midnight, the church sacristan was aroused from his sleep by the loud pealing of the bells in the church tower. Rushing to find the cause of this strange happening, he entered the temple to find Jesus Christ himself saying mass. Filled with fear and awe, he dropped on his knees and heard the mass to the end. Jesus Christ then made a signal for him to approach, handed him a lighted taper with the command that he should go and drop it into the sea. He hastened to obey but on his way met Our Lady in her blue star-bespangled cloak. She stopped and asked him where he was going. On explaining his errand she said: "Don't do that, or you will set the sea on fire!" He threw down the taper and Our Lady, putting forward her dainty foot with which she usually smashed the serpent, put out the taper thus saving the world from destruction by fire.

A few days later, a hunter finding an unknown bird flying over Fatima captured it and sent it to the Lisbon Zoo to be classified. There it was decided that as the bird answered to no known species it must be the Holy Ghost himself, wherewith it was released and allowed to return to its heavenly quarters."

N. F.

I remember, in my plough-boy days, I could not conceive it possible that a noble lord could be a fool, or a godly man could be a knave. How ignorant are plough-boys! Nay, I have since discovered that a *godly woman* may be a —!—ROBERT BURNS.

CORRESPONDENCE

RELIGION AND FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. John Rowland, in his amazing "farewell performance" on the subject of "Religion and Freethought," reserves his right for more "farewell appearances." It is to be hoped that he will at once exercise that right to defend two or three statements which he has seen fit to include in the "farewell performance" apparently in the hope that he will thus escape challenge.

The almost incredible ignorance of life displayed in the declaration that "you cannot, as far as I can see, deny that one who disbelieves in God is less likely to look charitably towards his fellow man than one who has a belief in God's Fatherhood," is calculated to put a very great strain upon the charity of almost any reader whose upbringing was in a "godly" home.

A writer in *The Freethinker* should know better than to make so sweeping a statement about the "likelihood" of something about which there is plenty of evidence to the contrary all around us in real life.

Although the standards of charity prevalent among unbelievers may often cause them to be silent upon the subject, there must be thousands like myself who, if pressed, would agree that belief in God has, within their own experience, been a most fruitful source of family discord and spite.

Something, it is true, depends upon the sort of God believed in; but the Christian God, as proclaimed in almost all the Christian creeds and confessions that are available for any person interested, is a Father who, having started by a ruthless and sweeping damnation of His children to eternal torment, was at length persuaded to relent to the extent of arranging for the torture of a guiltless "well-beloved Son" to satisfy what Protestants describe as the "Divine Justice." God then proceeded to excuse from damnation such of His other children as could be induced to believe a variety of unintelligible dogmas (e.g., the Athanasian Creed) and to accept the theory that every kindly or otherwise praiseworthy act performed by an "unbeliever" is "without doubt in the nature of a sin" (see the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion).

Mr. Rowland's conclusions about the "international aspect" of belief in God are as disregardful of the evidence of fact as is his pathetic trust in religion to promote international goodwill. Starting with a display of the "charity" of believers like himself, he dismisses the "average Freethinker" as living in the past.

The past has the disadvantage—from the point of view of Mr. Rowland—of not being readily susceptible to investigation by the "spiritual" faculties which would enable him, without the trouble of weighing evidence, to "know" what happened. One of my earliest and clearest recollections of Godly charity in international affairs was provided during the Boer War by a Methodist clergyman (missionary on leave) who told his congregation in a village chapel that "the good pure Boer is pure myth." I remember it so well because of the scandal created when my own father interrupted the sermon at that point to shout "Question!"

I will not attempt to abuse the hospitality of your columns with numerous other experiences which give the lie direct to the dogmas which Mr. Rowland "cannot understand" how anyone can dispute.

May I just express the hope that, in whatever contributions from Mr. Rowland you may admit to *The Freethinker*, you insist that he makes specifically clear *when* he is purporting to offer rational or factual observations, and *when* he is attempting from his harbour of refuge to supply "spiritually apprehended" knowledge for the benefit of the poor "average Freethinker" whose "narrow outlook" he deplors.—Yours, etc.,

TOM COLYER.

SEX PERVERSION

SIR,—Norman Haire quite rightly points out that sexual deviations do not occur exclusively among the adherents of any particular religion.

He might have gone further, and pointed out that such anomalies have no connection at all with any religion (or lack of it).

Modern research has shown that the two sexes are not sharply differentiated entities, but that elements of both sexes are present in all of us to a greater or lesser degree, varying from individual to individual. In the normal person, sex feeling for the opposite sex dominates, but the sex feeling for the same sex does not altogether disappear.

In some abnormal people, the delicate balance of feeling for their own and the opposite sex is disturbed either because they were born that way, or through some circumstances of environment.

There is set up in such a case a conflict between the physiology and the psychology of the individual, and the unfortunate person if a man, is not manly, and if a woman, is not womanly.

This is the true and scientific explanation of sexual "perversions," and it can at once be seen that it has not the remotest connection with the religious (or irreligious) beliefs of the persons concerned.

—Yours, etc.,

S. W. BROOKS.

THE N.S.S. AND POLITICS

SIR,—Mr. Sidney Smith, writing on the public meeting of the N.S.S. at the Conway Hall, says:—

"It appeared, from the demonstration, that the N.S.S. is controlled by people who put Communism first and Freethought second, and who are prepared to use the Society for their own political ends, whilst neglecting the true interests of the N.S.S."

This statement is both silly and untrue. The Executive of the N.S.S. is elected at the Annual Conference to carry out the aims and objects of the N.S.S. There is not a single Communist on the Executive. We believe in freedom of speech, and we do not dictate to our speakers what they are to say. If a man chooses to use the word Communism, in the course of his remarks, we are not going to join the Heresy-hunting Crusade, now so popular in America, and call for his blood.—Yours, etc.,

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

PATERNAL SOLICITUDE

We must emphasise the Press information that Pope Pius XII has sent his benediction by telegram to S.S.-Obergruppenfuhrer Oswald Pohl, who had been condemned to death for his unparalleled crimes. The court declared that probably never before in history had appeared a murderer of his degree. Not only did he personally order the deaths of more than 56,000 Jews but he selected prisoners for "medical experiment." He claimed at the end to be a good Catholic, and Christ's Vicar sent him his paternal blessing.—*Geistesfreiheit*, May, 1951.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Market Place.—Sunday, June 17, 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.: JACK CLAYTON. Other Engagements: Higham, Tuesday, June 19, 7-45 p.m.; Worsthorne, Thursday, June 21, 7-45 p.m.
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park, Bradford).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.
- Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. WOODCOCK.
- Also Lectures at Platt Fields, Sunday, 3 p.m.: Alexandra Park Gates, Wednesday, 8 p.m.; St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site, Sunday, 8 p.m.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: J. M. ALEXANDER. Sunday Evening, 7-30 p.m. (Highbury Corner): L. EBURY. Friday Evening, June 22, 8 p.m. (South Hill Park): J. M. ALEXANDER and F. A. RIDLEY.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A. SAMMS.
- South London and Lewisham Branch (Brockwell Park).—6-30 p.m.: J. M. ALEXANDER.
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: C. E. WOOD and F. A. RIDLEY.

INDOOR

- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 17, ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Choice of Humanists."

Notice To Subscribers

Owing to increase in Postage Rates by 50% as from 1st. June, 1951, it will be necessary to increase subscription rates as from that date. The new rates will be as follows:

One Year	19s. 2d.
Half Year	9s. 7d.
Three Months	4s. 11d.

WANTED.—Ingersoll's Complete Works (Dresden Edition). Lists of other Freethought publications welcome. E. W. Shaw, 195, Chipperfield Road, St. Pauls Cray, Kent.

LANGUAGE ASSOCIATIONS AND "RACE"

(concluded from page 215)

Professor G. Sergi, in *The Mediterranean Race*, 1901, is saner. "It seems to me that the existence of a pure Germanic stock cannot be demonstrated whether in prehistoric or in photo-historic times" (p. 17). He believes that "at their origin the Germans were not a distinct people from the Celts or from the Slavs, with both of whom they were often united and often confused" (p. 18). I strongly commend the sociological study and investigation by J. M. Robertson, with all his varied qualifications, as a survey, commentary and criticism of race theories, and a logical debunking of the Germanist School of history in England—and in Germany. He says: "The theory of race pedigree, in fact, crumbles to nullity in the case of Celts and Teutons just as it does in the case of Hebrews, Moabites, Midianites, Ischmaelites, Heraclidæ, and Romans. . . . Every name in turn is found susceptible of conflicting explanations" (*The Saxon and the Celt*, University Press, 1897, p. 63). He turns his back on speculation as to race qualities for a formula, and finds his "formula in the principle that organisation and civilisation are products not of 'race' but of the conditions in which races live" (p. 87). Functioning requires a suitable organ or organisation, and a suitable environment. "The Teutonic genius for union" does not stand examination. U. von Hutten, 16th century, declared that absolute disunion was the special characteristic of Germans, and the unification of Germany, after its 1870 war with France, was a combination of some 300 States, large and small. Sir H. Johnston concluded that "anthropology is the best corrective of intolerance, cruelty, sentimentality, and race arrogance!" (*Views and Reviews*, 1912, p. 32). "The most complete German colony was England" (p. 101). It is interesting, if not edifying, to read the pronouncements, and claims, and "race" characters, "inborn, immutable, and permanent" of Germanism or Saxondom, from its teachers and preachers, including Freeman, Kingsley, Froude, Stubbs, Goldwin Smith, Carlyle, Hill Burton, Green, Lightfoot. Samples are: "Our historical civilisation is English, not Celtic" (Stubbs); Freeman claims all merit as due to the Anglo-Saxon blood, the others counting "as nothing"; Canon Taylor, against that, plainly states: "The Saxons, the Angles, the Goths, developed no high civilisation of their own"—the bauble reputation, bubble, in the Canon's, mouth—; "The Kingdom of England is God's own Kingdome" (Brithwald the monk); "When God wants a hard thing done, He tells it not to His Britons, but to his Englishmen" (Milton); "England is the favourite of Heaven," and (following Herr Mommsen's dictum that "the Celt is politically useless") "ten centuries of wail without achievement are surely proof enough that the Celt is politically weak," and the claim that all famous Irishmen are Saxons (Goldwin Smith); "the blind hysterics of the Celt," and England as "the eye, the soul of Europe" (Tennyson); "The German was loyal, as the Celt was dissolute" (Motley); "England as "the Vicegerent of the Almighty on earth" (Parrott); "Our social civilisation is perfect. . . . A thorough English gentleman is more than a Guizot or a Sismondi could comprehend" (Dr. Arnold); "Complete extermination or expropriation is the only successful method of conquest. The Anglo-Saxon race has thus established itself in the greater part of Britain and in Australasia" (Dean Inge); "The Anglo-Saxon is the only extirpating race on earth" (Sir C. W. Dilke); and many others in chorus to England's "mission and destiny

to govern and rule the world." The ignorant, arrogant, pan-English, anti-British, Royal Society of St. George, London, joins in the gentlemanly chorus, in its official organ, misnamed *The English Race*, with its pronouncements such as "The English are the King People of the Earth," . . . "the pre-eminence of our race" (Dec., 1914, p. 77); "the only people who understand the meaning of fair play" (p. 25); "the disunited, free, and independent Englishman, whose word is his bond" (Aug., 1915, p. 21); "England's rightful place is first . . . English, Irish, Scots, and Welsh are equal in that all are governed alike [sic] and subject to the same [sic] laws, but there the equality ceases" (Aug., 1915, p. 24). "Nations they [Scots, Irish, and Welsh] are not, and never have been, but satellites around the sun of England's ancient glory, drawing their warmth and life from her heart . . . vagabond and parasitic races" (Nov., 1915, p. 18). "The English discovered Canada" (April, 1914, p. 16). Scots and Irish are presented as "yelping jackals" in editorial article (Dec., 1909).

Such is the popular, and such is the "gentlemanly," position re "race." Japan especially likes to be known as *kunshi no koku* (country of gentlemen). Grandiloquent Germanist Professor Freeman, self-certified as of the Faith against Buckle, says: "Of all doctrines the most opposed to any kind of Christian teaching is that which sees any exclusive virtue, which acknowledges any exclusive privileges, in particular races or families" (*Compar. Politics*, p. 167). That makes one think of appeal from Fullup, drunk, to Phillip, sober.

As for the so-called Aryan race and the very extensive belief in, and common references to, "blood" descent, Sergi points out the defects in archæologists as anthropologists (*Med. Race*, p. 23) and of philologists and of historians (p. 248). Dr. O. Schrader, of *The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Aryan Peoples*, is a philologist; and Prof. V. Gordon Childe is an archæologist. The versatile J. M. R. says: "The Sanskrit language is found to be a late instead of an early system . . . and the 'Aryans' of the Vedas, instead of representing a primeval civilisation and creed . . . are pronounced to be themselves an offshoot from a presumptive European stock" (*Sax. and Celt.*, p. 31). The Oxford Pamphlet, No. 5, "Race" in Europe, by Julian Huxley (Clarendon Press, 1939, 32 pp.), proclaims that "British Race, German Race, Anglo-Saxon Race, Jewish Race, are all devoid of any scientific significance" (p. 11); "In England and America the phrase 'Aryan race' has quite ceased to be used by writers with scientific knowledge" (p. 21). The word "Aryan" was first used by Sir Wm. Jones (1746-94) correctly as a name for the speakers of a group of Indian languages. Max Müller, in 1888, condemned his own previous speaking of an Aryan race or Aryan blood. "The Jews of the Bible were of mixed descent. . . . Jews do not constitute a race. . . . Biologically it is almost as illegitimate to speak of a 'Jewish race' as of an 'Aryan race.'" (pp. 23-24).

"Race" and "blood": "The use of 'blood' as equivalent to 'relationship' is itself based on an elementary biological error. In fact there is no continuity of blood between the parent and offspring, for no drop of blood passes from the mother to the child in her womb. . . . The false conception gained scientific currency from a mistake of Aristotle" (p. 12). A nation has been described as "a society united by a common error as to its origin and a common aversion to its neighbours."

GEORGE ROSS.