

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### "Thou Shalt Not"

THE modern development of the scientific interpretation of the Universe and of human history has undoubtedly dealt religion a whole series of heavy blows. Conspicuous amongst such successive disasters which religion has experienced at the hands of scientific thought, is the conception of evolution itself; a concept implicit in ancient Greek and Indian philosophy, but which Western science has only put on a demonstrable basis inside the last century. Even to-day, the full impact of evolutionary thought upon the static institutions of the past—institutions which include, but are by no means confined to specifically religious institutions—has not yet attained its maximum effect. For, as and when judged from the standpoint of evolutionary philosophy in which "nothing is constant except change," what was of utility yesterday becomes an anachronism to-day and will become an absurdity to-morrow.

The unwritten "law" of evolutionary change applies, of course, far beyond the technical confines of religion: legal, social, and ethical institutions all alike fall under its effective operation. In the sphere of ideas the consistent evolutionist must inevitably become an intellectual revolutionary. It is the savage who remains the natural conservative—that, precisely, is why he remains a savage!

In the sphere of ethics this is particularly the case; and it is here, perhaps, even more than in the more technical domain of speculative theology, that the traditional "dead hand" of religion is particularly destructive. For in the sphere of ethics religion has always been predominantly negative. Positive injunctions such as the "Golden Rule," represent merely the proverbial "exception which proves the rule" and in any case, such *positive* injunctions usually originated in secular philosophical circles and are only then later taken over by religious reformers and given a belated religious sanction. (For example, "The Golden Rule" itself actually originated, it would seem, independently in the secular philosophical schools of ancient China, India, and Greece, long before it made its appearance in the pages of the New Testament.) The normal religious approach to ethics is a purely negative one: "Thou shalt not" do this, that, or the other. In all cases, "not" is the operative word.

The above state of things is strikingly demonstrated by the ethical-religious code which Christianity—and, also, in a modified form, Islam—inherited from the pre-Christian Hebrews, the so-called "Ten Commandments." Here, again, it is the negative prohibition which predominates over the positive injunction. Most of the "Commandments" are actually more concerned with telling their hearers not to do something rather than enjoining any positive line of conduct. "Thou shalt not kill, covet, steal, commit adultery," etc., etc. No doubt, in the very early stage of tribal development in and for which the "Ten Commandments" were actually written down, moral injunctions, to be at all effective, had to be closely linked up in the minds of their recipients with binding taboos of

immemorial sanctity: for example, long ago, that eminent French historian of religion, M. Salomon Reinach, demonstrated the origin of the still existing Jewish prohibition against eating the flesh of swine as a primitive totemistic survival from an age when the pig was the original sacred totem of the Hebrew tribes. To be sure, the original "Ten Commandments" may have expressly mentioned the prohibition.

Thus, as and when viewed from an anthropological standpoint, the famous "Ten Commandments" supposedly delivered to Moses, the "law-giver" of Israel, amid thunder and lightning upon Mount Sinai, actually represent a primitive moral code barely as yet emerged from the still more primitive stage of totem and taboo, culturally akin, perhaps, to say, the Fiji Islanders of the Pacific when they first came into contact with Europeans. As such a primitive code, our "Ten Commandments" had, no doubt, a relative justification and effectively served their purely local purpose of social utility.

However, as and when compared with the ethical discipline and legal codes of the most advanced races of antiquity, such as the Greeks and Romans, they were already very primitive. Whilst in our modern world at long last painfully emerging into an age of science and of really scientific thought, they represent a gross anachronism. All of which, however, does not prevent university-trained clergymen who, one assumes, must know *something* of science and history, from droning out these ancient incantations Sunday after Sunday, just as if Darwin and Frazer had never written, or the Idea of Evolution never demonstrated!

However, unsatisfactory as it is to centre one's ethical code upon negative injunctions, it is not in its negative character that the principal disservice of religious ethics to human progress consists: rather is this last to be found in the "eternal" character—a character static and involving the complete denial of evolution—which almost all religions, with only negligible exceptions, ascribe to their ethical codes as emanations from a world supposedly beyond such sordid phenomena as evolution and change. That *any* moral code, regardless of changing social and intellectual conditions, can be equally valid for every time and place, this chimera of an eternal and unalterable morality represents the supreme fiction for which religion is responsible and, in practice, has inflicted indescribable misery upon successive generations of the human species.

Again, by way of an apposite example, let us look at the "eternal" code of morals "revealed" to Moses by Jehovah, the God of Israel, upon Sinai. Actually, there is nothing "eternal" about the "Ten Commandments": in every clause they indicate their human origin as the congruous products of a particular time and place. The modern science of Biblical Criticism plainly indicates them, not as the supernatural dictates of Omnipotent Wisdom, but, actually, as a legal-ethical code of man-made laws suitable to a nomadic tribe of Bedouin who, as a result of conquest and migration, had settled down in Canaan and were in process of adopting the sedentary and static existence of an agricultural people.

It was precisely for this type of society that the "Ten Commandments" originally legislated. In themselves, they did not differ essentially from a score of similar tribal legal codes which have since been swallowed up in the night of Time. What enabled the Hebrew code, in particular, to survive and, ultimately, to acquire world-status, was the historical "accident" that it was eventually taken up and canonised by religious creeds of universal diffusion such as Christianity, Judaism—themselves the product of conditions quite unforeseen by the primitive Hebrew legislator who first wrote down our "Ten Commandments"—and Islam. But for this historical "accident," the legislation ascribed to Moses would long since have become as forgotten as that ascribed to Minos, Solon, Romulus, Lycurgus, and other semi-mythical legislators of antiquity.

Actually, as practical guides for a modern industrial civilisation the "Ten Commandments" are grotesque. Modern Law, as Mr. Pickwick complained, may be "an ass" but, at least, it does not, as did "Moses," place a man's wife in exactly the same category as his "ox": nor is there much sense in solemnly enjoining a modern industrialist not to "covet his neighbour's ass." This last beast is rarely met in modern communities, and whilst two-legged asses are certainly more common, it appears superfluous to issue a special injunction not to covet them: in any case, who would? "Thou shalt not steal" obviously presupposes that the social institution of private property is eternal; a very problematical assumption in view of current sociological trends. Whether "adultery" is a crime is, again, a speculative question upon which the last word is far from having been said. Whilst as for "Thou shalt not kill," Christianity itself has usually honoured it "in the breach rather than in the observance."

"Eternal," that is, religious, morality is then an eternal fiction. A creed which denies progress in ethics, *ipso facto* denies the fact of change, of human evolution. By reason of this fundamental antagonism, religion becomes the enemy not only of science but, equally, of social as well as intellectual evolution.

F. A. RIDLEY.

### SCIENCE AND FREETHOUGHT

[We have much pleasure in announcing that the distinguished Australian scientist, Mr. R. L. Worrall has agreed to write a series of monthly articles for *The Freethinker* under the general title: "The Scientific Basis of Modern Materialism." Mr. Worrall is the author of the internationally-known works, *The Outlook of Science*, and *Matter and Energy*, and is a contributor to *Nature*, *The Lancet*, and other scientific journals; the following is the introductory article to Mr. Worrall's series.—EDITOR.]

ON the wall of a Cambridge science building, Eric Gill has carved a large crocodile. Explaining its meaning, the famous Russian physicist, Peter Kapitza, said jokingly to Ritchie Calder: "It is the crocodile of science. The crocodile has a stiff neck. It cannot turn its head. It just goes straight forward—like science—with gaping jaws."

Now the joke has worn a bit thin. After all, as Calder points out, it was scientists who, in the first place, pressed politicians to make the atom bomb, not the other way about.

What, you ask, has this got to do with freethought? Everything. If science cannot be relied upon to guide us away from race suicide, what body of thought *can* be relied upon? Freethought? That remains to be seen. This article, or rather your response to it, may give some indication as to whether the freethought movement can undergo a metamorphosis, and so adapt itself to changing circumstances. To tell you the truth, if readers of *The Freethinker* show no sign of emerging from their chrysalis of close-

woven anti-theology, I shall not feel able to write my proposed series of articles, on recent advances in scientific thought. What would be the good of introducing a live crocodile to a dead movement? And anti-theology is almost as dead as theology itself.

I suppose I should start off with physics, it being the basic science, if I am going to give a selective sketch of the powerful new tools of thought and action that science is now forging. Would you be surprised to know that physicists and electrical engineers are at work on something as big as atomic energy, weighed in the balance by human values and social possibilities? It is so. The construction of giant electronic machines, capable of working out logical sequences and answering staggering mathematical questions, is a scientific achievement no less significant than the tapping of atomic energy.

In the last few years, electricity has been harnessed to take over an incredible array of complex computations, making possible a technical advance so rapid that the tempo of the last few decades would seem like a snail's pace, by comparison. Note that I used the phrase, a *technical advance*. I did not say that super-calculating machines would set the pace for a great advance in our modes of thought.

Thought, you see, is at a bit of a discount in many social circles, scientific as well as political. Pep, punch and power. Gadgets, guts and guns. These are the yardsticks by which progress is measured by those in the know—whoever "they" may be. Clear thinking for the sake of calm judgment. Analytical insight for the sake of intellectual syntheses. Scientific investigations for the sake of emotional harmony. These take a back seat in most social institutions. Except in freethought circles? We shall see.

Do not think I am minimising the significance of science, or deprecating the pace of scientific advance. I leave that to the woolly-minded enemies of science, who play into the hands of charlatan-mystics and career-prophets. What I am driving at is the need for a broader view of science than you find in most laboratories. Freethinkers could, it seems to me, develop such a view, for constructive purposes.

*Constructive* is the operative word. I incline to the view that confining yourself to destructive attacks on established religion is like whipping a dead horse, while close behind you gaped the fanged mouths of mad mysticism and robot amorality.

Freethought should surely be free thought—thought which is free to examine the findings of science against a background of social needs, to criticise interpretations of scientists from historical and philosophical angles, to rescue scientific ideals from the clutches of those who have no ideals.

If that is so, freethinkers will have to learn methods of scientific thought, as well as the main facts of scientific advances. You cannot criticise science as a complete outsider. If you are going to gather material from science, constructively and selectively and critically, in order to build something better than religion, you have to feel more or less at home in the world of science, and be sufficiently equipped to know your way around. Freethought is—or should be—rational thought, and rational thought is impossible to-day without some scientific knowledge.

Where to begin? With science as a method of thinking, I would say, but that subject requires more than one article. Here I want to conclude with reference to electronics and neurophysiology, out of which a new science of brain-mind is emerging, destined to revolutionise psychiatry, and perhaps mean as much to mental health as antiseptics did to nineteenth century surgery.

Physics lies at the root of the new study of brain function and mental disorder, analysis of which is largely in terms of spatial and temporal relations. Space-time patterns of brain activity, wave-lengths and frequencies of brain rhythms, directions and reversals and redistributions of nerve impulses, circuits and short circuits—these constitute the basic elements of the new science of brain-mind.

Of the greatest importance, therefore, is a sound grasp of modern scientific ideas about space and time, such as I have developed in *Energy and Matter*. There is no escape from basic physics, if you want to be really at home in any particular science.

All this is highly relevant to freethought, since it is an investigation of how thinking occurs at all, of how the external world is reflected in perceptions, and of the manner in which the brain operates to produce mental order—or disorder. That is the situation to-day. Tomorrow, the new science will be inquiring into how complex concepts develop, such as those of religion, on the one hand, and on the other hand, of freethought.

R. L. WORRALL.

### RELIGION, ZIONISM, AND THE STATE OF ISRAEL

CONTRARY to the generally held view, Zionism did not grow out of the Jewish religion. Rather did it grow as the result of the disillusionment Jewry experienced in the last century after the feudal ghettos had been broken down to give way to a normal intermixing of Jews and Christians. Zionism echoed the powerful nationalist movement which spread over Europe after the great 1848 Revolution. Orthodox Jewry viewed the development of the Zionist movement with the greatest suspicion. It was only when the Zionist movement began to make important inroads into the consciousness of the Jew in the beginning of this century that certain sections of orthodox Jewry decided to create a Religious-Zionist Grouping. This development took place in 1902, when a body of religious Zionists formed what is called the Mizrahi Organisation in Vilna. The headquarters of this organisation was transferred from Pressburg to Jerusalem in 1920.

Ten years later, at Kattowitz, a world organisation of Orthodox Jewry was founded to combat the Mizrahi Organisation which, being Zionist, failed to give its individual attention to purely religious questions. This organisation is called the Agudas Israel.

In Israel to-day, the secular Zionist movement is slowly but surely undermining the position once held by Orthodox Jewry. The Mizrahi and Agudas Israel are now allied in a United Religious bloc, which is holding out desperately against the incoming forces of Secularism. Orthodox Jewry is now paying the price for having cold-shouldered Zionism in its youth.

The Army, the Kibbutzim (collective farms), the Immigrant Camps, and the overcrowded cities are hardly the environment for a Judaism adapted to European conditions for many centuries. Despite the strong hold which the rabbis exercise over Sabbath observance, marriages and divorces, food and Army instruction—it is a hold which exists only through the bureaucratic interpenetration of the Government with religious elements. It is a hold which is slowly easing, both as a result of popular dislike of control from above, and the deep-seated hostility which the non-clerical parties show towards their political enemies and rivals.

Recently, the religious section of the Zionist Movement has suffered from splits within its labour body. The

Religious Workers have found that their political differences with their mother-party are greater than the Orthodox Jewish ties which bind them. This movement, called Hapoel-Hamizvachi, has gravely weakened the solidarity of Religious Jewry. Then, the more extreme sections of the United Religious bloc, centred in the Agudist organisation, have been threatening "fasts," "demonstrations," and other forms of Gandhi-like civil disobedience, because the Government has conscripted Jewish women for a period of service in the Armed Forces.

The centrifugal forces which tend to break up the Religious bloc have, however, been reduced by a lamentable case of frame-up which occurred in Jerusalem a few weeks ago. The effects of this frame-up will have profound repercussions throughout the Jewish world, and will set back the powerful Secular-Zionist onslaught on the bastions of Orthodox Judaism.

The case of the bomb "plot" to blow up the Knesset (the Israeli Parliament) by an alleged group called the Brit Kanain (Religious Zealots) has boomeranged in a very unexpected manner. The police arrested a group of pious Jews who had as much intention of blowing up Israel's first Parliament as Jehovah's Witnesses of bringing the Wrath to Come by means of six carefully placed sticks of gelignite in the House of Commons—and subjected them to inhuman indignities. After a few days, this miniature "Reichstag Fire Trial," as a British Agudist leader described the horrid farce, rebounded against its perpetrators; and a Committee of Inquiry had to be set up composed of Members of the Government.

Whoever was responsible for the frame-up, whether it be some of the more militant anti-religious elements in the Government or police, it has been a very "expensive" affair. The indignation aroused in all quarters of the Zionist movement and World Jewry, has temporarily unified the warring religious factions now that they have something really monstrous to protest about.

I cannot help feeling that the Secular-Zionists may ultimately become the greater danger to Freethought and Reason than the slowly dissolving die-hard religious element. For, after all, the rise of the new state-religions, Shintoism in Japan, Fascism in Italy, Nazism in Germany and Stalinism in Russia have hardly been conducive to the free development of national thought and unbiased research. All the evidence points to the opposite conclusion—the sprouting of totalitarianism which, by definition, absorbs all the functions which traditional religion performed, will undermine not only the whole superstructure of medieval theology but also the foundations of twentieth-century Freethought.

Israel may serve as a warning to the complacent. The end of traditional religion, the break-up of the old edifice of philosophy and theology is not necessarily the beginning of an Age of Reason and Intelligent Inquiry. It may well be that the ghost of Alfred Rosenberg with his semi-mystical political and racial philosophy will hover over the pyres of a burning civilisation. The price of Liberty and Reason is eternal vigilance against both its ancient reactionary enemies and its modern totalitarian foe.

"AKIBA."

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAPACY.** By F. A. Ridley.  
Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

**THE FAULTS AND FAILINGS OF JESUS CHRIST.**  
By C. G. L. Du Cann. (Second Edition.) Price 4d.;  
postage 1½d.

## ACID DROPS

One of our "noble" lords, Lord Winster, has—rather belatedly—discovered that "the perfunctory character of religious instruction in schools" is a prime cause of "lawlessness among the post-war young." But why is it that neither he nor those who think like him ever try to explain the fact that most of the inmates of our prisons are thoroughly religious, and that the non-believers are so few that the Home Office will not provide for a "Free-thought" chaplain for them? There are crowds of religious chaplains, of course, for the all-believing burglars, wife-beaters, child-torturers, and murderers. Would Lord Winster explain?

The "Universe" hates the word "totalitarianism" applied to the Church of Rome, and points out that "our Lord never submitted his rules to the consideration of a standing committee." Really! What about the various "Councils?" Were not "our Lord's" rules discussed at the Council of Nicea, the Lateran Councils, the Council of Trent, and some others? Were the "rules" never in these "considered?" What nonsense even a well-informed journal like the *Universe* can so often write!

We always love to have passages specially brought for our consideration in the hope that we shall be converted. Here is the *Guardian* which, in a leading article, deals pityingly with "the Rationalist, in particular the half-educated Rationalist," and at the same time bringing to our notice something St. Augustine said—the St. Augustine whose credulity, superstition and fear can hardly be equalled even among the readers of the *Guardian*. We only wish, however, that more Christians, educated or not, would read *The Freethinker*. They would soon realise that the Christian mysteries and miracles which are supposed to impress us are nothing more than sheer twaddle—and, of course, the *Guardian* would then lose numbers of its subscribers.

How easy it is to get a letter into our weekly journals, no matter how valuable is space, so long as it boosts up Christianity! For example, recently in *Picture Post* appeared a long screed in which the idea that the Christian legend is called a "myth" is completely squashed. It appears that the late Lord Justice Darling—was he not called the Hanging Judge?—insisted that the "overwhelming" evidence for the Resurrection proves it to be "absolutely true." We doubt very much whether *Picture Post* would allow a reply to show that Darling was talking undiluted nonsense—if he ever did make the statements attributed to him for which, indeed, no evidence is produced. But a boost up for Christianity is always a winner.

One of the insane sects of Christianity, Jehovah's Witnesses, is notorious for its rejection of everything in opposition to the Bible, so it is not surprising that recently one of its members in Chicago preferred his baby daughter to die rather than allow a blood transfusion to save its life. The only thing he could do, he said, was to have faith and pray—"That is all there is in it." And, naturally, what is not in it, is his daughter's life. After all, will she not get to Paradise? The case is being settled in the Chicago courts, but no doubt Jehovah will have his way.

"It brought any society into disrepute to have a number of laws which were obsolete, which most people knew

nothing about, and which could not be enforced." No, dear reader, this is not a quotation from *The Freethinker*, but a description of the Church of England in 1951 given to the Church Assembly by the Archbishop of York and reported in *The Times*.

Our contemporary, *The Sunday Express* (July 1, 1951) featured an instructive article upon the longevity of animals, including Homo Sapiens. The worthy tortoise apparently leads the centenarians with a maximum age of 150 years. Next comes man, with 115 years as his hitherto ascertained maximum. However, at this point, the writer of the article pauses in confusion to consider the case of Methuselah who, so Holy Writ assures us, nearly reached his tenth century—of course, the Holy Book could not be lying, but our scribe consoles himself by reflecting that "the Bible uses a different computation to that in common use." It certainly does! In celestial mathematics two and two usually seem to make five.

An American Catholic magazine recently recounted the innumerable services which "Our Lady of Fatima" has rendered in past ages to European civilization. First and foremost amongst which, we are told, she saved thirteenth-century Europe from the "nihilistic heresy of the Albigenses." Actually, we had always understood that the Holy Inquisition was entitled to the credit for this, and that by the time it had finished roasting the Albigenses in its bonfires, there was precious little left of "the nihilistic heresy" for "Our Lady of Fatima" to get busy about.

Why, asks the leader writer of the *Daily Herald*, are the Churches losing ground? and he answers his own question with the observation that, "in the age of atom warfare the Churches offer only platitudes and pious hopes." But, after all, is that so very surprising? Christianity itself originated in the age of the bow and arrow and none of the sacred scriptures gives us any information about the manufacture and use of atomic bombs.

The Communist Party has familiarised the world with "Five Year Plans." Now, however, the Anglican Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Greer, is going to give the Communists a taste of their own medicine. For in September, Manchester Diocese will launch a "two-year blitz" against Communism. It seems quite providential that Dr. Hewlett Johnson elected to move, a few years ago, from his then post as Dean of Manchester to his present Deanery in Canterbury, otherwise the Manchester diocesan crusaders would have been obviously embarrassed by "The Red Dean" of Manchester saying Communism was Heaven whilst his Bishop said it was Hell.

After all the row in the Church about Freemasonry, it is most reassuring to learn that the Archbishop of Canterbury belongs to the masonic brethren and duly, no doubt, has to swear to the Great Architect of the Universe, to say nothing of the numerous little Gods appealed to in the Freemason "mysteries," just like any Theist who does not believe in the Divinity of Jesus. All the same, according to the Rev. R. C. Meredith of Windsor, in "the higher degrees" belief in the Lord Jesus Christ "was required from members." As the principal Lodge in France is considered by the Church of Rome to be thoroughly Atheistic, we wonder what happens when English brothers of the higher degrees meet the French Atheists? Do they indulge only in theological arguments?

**"THE FREETHINKER"**

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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.

**SUGAR PLUMS**

The Rev. Noel Davey, Editorial Secretary of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, speaking at the Annual Meeting of the Society, said that since 1939 the cost of printing had increased by 106 per cent., of binding 108 per cent., and of paper 264 per cent., with further increases to come. We quote those figures to show the necessity for *The Freethinker* appeal. Donations, large and small, will be used solely to meet our increased costs of production. We have no intention of adopting a humble begging attitude. *The Freethinker* is going on, and we ask those who are interested to join the ranks of the fighting Freethinkers and help provide the necessary financial ammunition. Cheques and Postal Orders to *The Freethinker*, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

One of America's stout old Freethinkers is George Seibel who, at 79, appears to be as active as ever. He has a versatile pen and has written on various literary subjects as well as novels, and may be well remembered for a fine volume on the religion—or we should say the non-religion—of Shakespeare. He is, in addition, a strong anti-Baconian. His latest work, *Book and Heart*, proves him to be a poet of no mean order—as one would, after all, expect a lover of Shakespeare and Goethe to be if he wrote poetry at all. These forty poems represent a selection of Seibel's work over a period of 60 years, and all who love the musical handling of words and fine technical excellence with certainly enjoy *Book and Heart*. He has no use for that kind of "poetry" known as "modernistic" for which many of us who love the old masters must be grateful. This beautifully printed little work is published by the Lessing Circle, Pittsburgh, U.S.A., at one dollar.

Next week we are devoting space to Robert Ingersoll, who died 52 years ago. In addition to the leading article, one by Robert H. Scott—whose broadcast address on atheism made him famous in America—will be specially appreciated by our readers.

Sweden has just abrogated many religious injustices in its new religious freedom law. To be a religious instructor in Sweden meant membership of the Church of Sweden, but now, so long as a teacher keeps to the curriculum, he can belong to any sect. People can resign from the Church if they wish, while children, who are supposed to follow their parents' religion, can leave it after the age of 15. The Free Churches have also much more freedom than hitherto. But the point for Freethinkers is—will this religious freedom help religion, or help to disintegrate it? Most of us know the answer.

**The Freethinker Fund**

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To find space for the numerous articles awaiting publication we shall acknowledge all contributions by post instead of printing lists.

**is now open****THE PAUCITY OF PARSONS**

THE Lord Bishop of Southwell has been concerning himself with the present, and future, dearth of parsons in the Church of England. Very properly, I suggest. For if a bishop will not concern himself with this grave famine, who will? Certainly not the godless laity of England in this materialistic age when all that matters to the ordinary man is money for himself and more of it.

It appears to his Lordship that there are not "enough men of the right kind" coming into the Church. I respectfully agree. I also think that there are far too many men of the wrong kind, "such as for their bellies' sake creep and intrude and climb into the fold" as that censorious Christian poet, John Milton, scathingly wrote; parsons certain of preferment through influence. Yet both the right and the wrong kind are diminished in number since 1914, when we had 22,000 Anglican priests. There are now only 13,680. At this rate, Crockford's Clerical Directory will soon be so slender that it will be unable to get enough advertisements to make a profit. A dismaying prospect indeed!

I cannot too warmly admire the exposition of my reverend Father in God upon this subject. His Lordship can expatiate for some 2,500 words on the ministry of Christ without mentioning the name of Christ once, though "the Church," of course, appears more than once in most paragraphs, the Church being (equally, of course) merely the Anglican Church. The Bishop of Southwell, adroit as Agag, preserves respectability by keeping Jesus well out of it altogether. It is as if he were to write upon duck's disease without mentioning ducks or disease.

The annual intake of 600 deacons is said to be the Church's "minimum requirement." But that minimum is not forthcoming. Only about 450 men are likely to be ordained this year. Why? The Bishop does not tell us. No Bishop will tell us. So I will tell. Someone ought to tell.

The reason—I blush to relate it—that the Anglican clergy don't get enough money. They half-starve in miserable semi-gentility. Men of God (like men of the world) must eat and drink and be clothed and be sheltered, of course; man cannot live by prayer, fasting, meditation and parish-admiration alone. Unfortunately, modern men of God (like the rest of us) crave for much more than a bare subsistence. Most of them want cinema seats, television and wireless sets, restaurant meals, a car with petrol to run it, public school and University education for their children, with clothes and jewellery above charwoman-standard for their wives, as well as tobacco and perhaps an occasional drink for themselves.

We may say of these worldly longings: "Wrong, no doubt, as most things are"—as the cynical Disraeli said in a different connection. But very human. Parsons ought (of course) to want nothing but the glory of God and the honour of labouring in His Vineyard for the barest of bare subsistences. But what poor Anglican parson is made like that?

The Church itself does not starve. The capital assets and total yearly income of the Anglican Church are very large. The Bishops get plenty. There are comfortably large stipends for some other clergy. Not for the small parson, however. It is indelicate of me to mention this truthful and unpalatable fact. I have already blushed for my indelicacy (which every Anglican bishop will agree) is in the very worst taste. Still I swear by Queen Anne's Bounty that it is money that talks. Raise the stipend of every Anglican parson to an M.P.'s salary of £1,000 a year, and the number of young men receiving "a call from God" will be quadrupled from the day of announcement. Raise it to £2,000 and the Bishops' Selection Boards will be snowed under by battalions, and brigades of Christian soldiers marching as to war at the double into the Church for ordination. Raise it to £5,000—free of tax—and I will seek ordination myself.

But my Lord Bishop of Southwell, like the rest of the prelates, will not face these impregnable facts. He prefers that the average Church rector, vicar and curate continue to be sweated and that he should attribute the decline in priestly recruits to the fact that public schools, grammar-schools and Universities "have failed the Church." The truth is that it is the Church which has failed these institutions by not continuing to provide comfortable livings for boys and young men of the type who like safe, soft and snug jobs, as the Church once did provide them.

One remedy, as I have shown, is more cash—which is the sovereign remedy for most ills in a gregarious money-worshipping community such as ours. There is another, still more indelicate, which I blush still more to mention, especially as his Grace of Southwell rigidly abstains from mentioning it. May I—dare I, in this connection?—refer to Jesus Christ and his rough-and-ready method of recruiting the Ministry?

He only got 13 (himself and the Twelve Disciples) instead of the 13,000 odd which the Anglican Church gets. Still he managed—not entirely successfully, we must admit. Nor did he rely on the "schools." He simply "called" men to "leave all and follow me." He did not trouble if his recruits were educated men. Nor did he face up to the cash difficulty; instead of giving his disciples enough to keep their wives and children on, he roughly bade them "give up their wives and children for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake" and take no thought for food, drink or clothes or the morrow. Although most wives (so far as my earnest observation goes) would be better given up, I hesitate to recommend this course to the Anglican clergy for, from what I know of clergymen's wives (which is considerable), I am assured they would never believe that "the Kingdom of Heaven" was not, in their individual husband's case "another woman" and they would at once drag their unhappy spouses into the nearest Magistrates' Court for "neglect to maintain." Life was simpler in the Palestine of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the Bishop of Southwell might call a few fishermen like Peter, James and John, or a tax-collector or two like Matthew. What prevents him? He is too greedy. "The Church needs the best. The Church does not want the leavings or failures of other professions" he cries. (Note that word "professions"! ) But Jesus managed without "the best"; he managed with a lying cad like Saint Peter, a treacherous devil like Judas Iscariot, a doubter like Thomas and a lot of cowardly deserters like the rest of his Apostles. And Jesus took the "leavings"—"Leave all" he said to the fishermen—and as to "failures," there is no evidence that any of his disciples had been brilliant worldly successes. A "failure" or a "leaving" of the world might be, for all the Bishop and I know, a shining spiritual

success. There are texts to that effect: "The stone which the Builders rejected has become the headstone" and "the last shall be first" and some others. Alas! the Bishop's attitude is: "We will not be parties to lowering the standards of qualification or training required." Was it "qualification" or "training" for which Jesus Christ looked?

But Jesus and the Bishop of Southwell aimed at different targets. Which of them (do you suppose?) prophesied these results on the fewness of the labourers? "The Church will be grievously hampered . . . the whole cause of Christian civilisation cannot fail to be dangerously weakened at the most critical moment in its history." In these words, the Kingdom of God has gone: the cause of Christ has gone. Christianity has become a mere "civilisation" facing "the most critical moment in its history" which last vague stuff means, as we can all suspect, the Anglo-American-Russian cold war.

Then what in the world is to be done? Certainly the Bishops will not accept my first suggestion of paying the clergy a more than adequate stipend. Nor will they accept Jesus Christ's more desperate remedy of clergy with no wives-and-children, no homes, no money and no thought-for-the-morrow. Their Lordships will do nothing but talk in the modern way. They will chat over the situation which they will call "a problem." They will deplore its existence, and believe that it is the fault of the age and an insoluble economic impasse. Then they will leave it alone, turning with a sense of relief to Church-machinery and Church-administration and finally to that favourite topic of both Anglican and Roman bishops, the wickedness of that worst of human crimes, adultery. Adultery which must be so much more diabolical in the eyes of the Almighty than the contemporary mass murders in Korea in the name of Peace which no contemporary Christian prelate dare denounce in the name of Christ!

So the famine in half-famished parsons will go on. We laymen must comfort ourselves with the fact that, at least, there is no paucity in Prebendaries, no dearth in Deans, and a profusion of Prelates on the Episcopal Bench. It would be lamentable indeed if God's call went unheeded in the higher (instead of the lower) ecclesiastical ranks and we were short of Bishops instead of half-starved curates. Fortunately, the danger of this does not seem to be unduly great at present, I am happy to say, the status and stipends of Bishops and Archbishops being what they comfortably are.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

### TOLERATION AND POLITICAL CATHOLICISM

IN discussion with a Freethinking friend who was until some few years ago himself a Catholic, I was somewhat perturbed but not altogether surprised to hear him assert quite emphatically that his Catholic friends were no different from his other non-Catholic friends, in that they seldom discussed religion, or for that matter practised religion. He did rather spoil his case when he said that, "of course, my Catholic friends are people of some education and therefore are persons of good taste." In spite of the rather pointed quip, I went on to ask him if his friends, to his knowledge, attended confession? He answered that "of course they did, but only in a very informal manner, and not because they felt bound to attend, but only because they felt under a sense of obligation to their families and friends to attend."

It is precisely this attitude of unthinking, unreasoning tolerance among well-meaning, but none the less stupid,

non-Catholics that is allowing the Italian-Irish Mission to regain a very strong foothold in this and other basically free countries. To regard Catholics as casual adherents of just another sect of Christianity is a fundamental error which will cost real lovers of freedom a very heavy price in the not so distant future, unless some firm anti-Catholic measures are drafted into the British Constitution. When leads are given by a potential Queen of England and her Consort, such as courtesy visits to the Holy Father, it is obvious that the snobbish and other simple-minded creatures who form such a large part of the population of Britain, will consider it quite the thing to be rather nice and sociable to our Catholic friends. Catholics being what they are will, of course, make the utmost capital out of such gestures, and "use" our naïve brethren to the utmost.

Labour M.P.s being what they are (with a very few exceptions) are the last people to risk losing a single Catholic vote, by proposing any anti-Catholic measures.

Catholics who attend confession are, without any doubt potential if not actual enemies of freedom. Time and time again—as history records and proves—the confessional has been used as an instrumentality in elections. Indeed, in Quebec it appears to amount to a recognised expedient, so to use the confessional. One of the most notorious examples of this political usage of the confessional occurred in Ireland in the South Meath election of July, 1892, an election which was set aside after an exhaustive hearing by Mr. Justice O'Brien on the grounds of priestly interference, when in the words of the decision "the Church became converted into a vast political agency, a great moral machine, moving with resistless influence, united action and a single will. When opposition to the clerical candidate was denounced by bishop and priest as a sin and the *confessional and sacraments were utilised to secure votes.*"

It was at this trial that the Hon. Mr. Healy who appeared for the defence claimed that the Church, as the supreme arbiter of morals, can always define that any political action is sinful and then it falls within the spiritual jurisdiction of the confessional as fully as any infraction of the decalogue.

It will be noted by the reader that in a democracy such as England still (basically) remains, there are boundless possibilities under various constitutional forms, open to those who control the confessional to enforce any form of political pressure they wish to apply.

Bellarmino said that "the confessor stands in the place of God as judge and he is not to be satisfied or give absolution if he knows by report that officials (or M.P.s) discharge their duty badly (as decided by the priest) until he gets a definite assurance that there will be a change of policy." Palafox warned confessors "that if they did not exert themselves against all wrongful governmental measures (as decided by the Church) they would become accomplices in the sins."

"PETER'S FINGER."

(To be concluded)

**THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION.** By Chapman Cohen. New Edition. Price 6d.; postage 1½d.

**GOD AND EVOLUTION.** By Chapman Cohen. Price 9d.; postage 1½d.

**GOD AND ME** (revised edition of "Letters to the Lord"). By Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 3s., postage 2d.; paper 1s. 6d.; postage 1½d.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### FREETHOUGHT AND COMMUNISM

SIR,—In his semi-valedictory article in *The Freethinker* dated June 3, Mr. Rowland displays a surprising lack of understanding of freethought.

It is nonsense to infer "that Marxist Communism is, after all, the logical end of freethought." Freethought is older than Communism and Christianity. Buddha was a freethinking atheist and he certainly did not regard his fellow-men less charitably than the grovelling Christian "saints" and ascetics meanly concerned about their miserable "souls."

Mr. Rowland is unjust to the memory of the great freethinkers who made the world better by their presence, and his unkind innuendo can only be put down to wilful blindness or ignorance. Let him ponder the words of Coleridge: "Not one man in ten thousand has goodness of heart or strength of mind to be an atheist."

Believers in the fatherhood of God still form the overwhelming majority in the so-called Christian nations and it is no use to saddle the responsibility for the present state of world affairs upon a handful of freethinkers. It should be obvious, even to Mr. Rowland, that a communist is not necessarily an atheist. What about the Red Dean?

Belief in the fatherhood of God has endured long enough for impartial students of its effects to draw their own conclusions. Christians behaved like savages in the wars of the Crusades and other wars. For Mr. Rowland to suggest that no international agreement made now is considered binding is a gross exaggeration.—Yours, etc.,

E. A. McDONALD.

## OBITUARY

With sorrow we announce the death of Michael Landers resulting from being knocked down by a motor vehicle. He was one of that type of Freethinker who went quietly to work in spreading the message of freethought. He was a regular reader of *The Freethinker*, and an admirer of G. W. Foote, Chapman Cohen, and the present President of the N.S.S. His domestic life was of a very happy nature in which he was one of a circle of Freethinkers who lived freethought and impressed those of opposite opinions by their conduct as citizens and as a family. The funeral took place on Saturday, July 7, in the beautiful Slough Cemetery, Bucks., when by special request a Secular Service was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti before a large gathering of relatives and friends.

## LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

### OUTDOOR

Blackburn (Market).—Sunday, July 15, 7 p.m.: J. CLAYTON.  
Sabden.—Monday, July 16, 7-45 p.m.: J. CLAYTON. Lisburn.—  
Wednesday, July 18, 7-45 p.m.: J. CLAYTON. Hapton.—Thursday,  
July 19, 7-30 p.m.: J. CLAYTON. Rawtenstall.—Friday, July 20,  
7-30 p.m.: J. CLAYTON.

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. 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: Debate between TOM SARGANT and  
L. EBURY, "That Christianity is more Rational than Atheism."  
Affirmative: T. SARGANT. Negative: L. EBURY. Sunday Evening,  
7-30 p.m. (Highbury Corner): L. EBURY. Friday evening, July 20,  
8 p.m. (South Hill Park): J. M. ALEXANDER and F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday,  
July 14, 6-30 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).—Sunday,  
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, July 15, 11 a.m., ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON,  
M.A.: "Some Fables of History."

## SAY WHAT YOU MEAN

A NEGRO was asked which did he prefer to work for, an American or an Englishman. "The American, sure thing," he answered. For the Yank would say "G'long to hell outa there, you black son of a bitch," and maybe land a kick. "You sure know that he sees you, but the Limey doesn't know you're on the earth." I am inclined to agree with the coloured psychologist that the English are the "greatest ignorers" in the world.

I was pleased to see Mrs. Eleanor Trask's letter of appreciation in last week's *The Freethinker*. I sent out a dozen copies of my recent "Say what you mean" article to individuals occupying positions in the world of education. The answer was the same lemon as the despised "nigger" got from the same kind of people. But my words do not "fall on stony ground" when I have one fan. I can assure Mrs. Trask that though my constitution is sound, "true facts" (Mr. Attlee) which our sponsors must always "try and emulate" (H. Cutner) still give me a pain. "Oh, cursed spite," etc. So I keep on trying, and if I have few converts I get plenty of fun out of my futile attempts to change the sorry scheme of things.

In a former letter, Mr. P. C. King was kind enough to say that my writing amused him, and suggested facetiously that I should be engaged permanently to put writers right. I now return the compliment; his later letter—concerning alternatives—certainly made *me* laugh.

"I feel it is my first duty to justify myself," says he. Why? The question at issue is not one's *amour-propre*. Mr. King said "there is a fourth alternative." I said, and I repeat, that is not a correct expression. No mention was made of the phrase "the *only* alternative," and I do not propose to discuss that here. I once spoke of the Virgin Mary as the fourth person in the Trinity, but I would not have felt it my first duty to justify or explain myself. As to being "pedantic and formalistic," I am continually being reproached for my prodigal use of slang!

When Mr. King says "then Mr. Effel must say . . ." I feel like my old pal Bonar Thompson when a Marble Archer starts in with that approach. I must say that I will not allow anyone to say what I must say—and then allow myself to be led up the garden of irrelevancy.

My friend says that in the use of "either" the case I mention (Crowds on either side) is "descriptive of the mental processes involved. I don't look straight up the river and squint outwards; I look first at one bank and then the other and thus record in my mind, at different moments in time, that each bank is crowded. I don't think of both banks at the same time."

In the name of Jung, who, listening to a commentary on a boat race wants a description of mental processes?

By profession I am a photographer, and have to be a keen and rapid observer. I do not twist my neck from side to side, in schizophrenically different moments in time. I have to see all and get my picture "in the can" in a split second.

As Mr. King goes on, he gets louder and funnier. "On either side, as I walked up the lane, the hawthorn was in bloom" I am told is "certainly more elegant than 'both sides, etc.'" But we are discussing logic, not aesthetics.

Supposing a pupil brought that gem of literary elegance to me, I would at once put a blue pencil through the first three words. "As I walked up the lane, the hawthorn was in bloom" would give the meaning. Nobody would ever think of the hawthorn in the centre of the tar

macadam. But, soft ye, laddie, tell me what the heck the blooming hawthorn is blooming well doing when you are *not* walking up the lane. Eh? Certainly, the W.P.B. is on either side of the desk.

It is with genuine regret that I plead guilty in misleading readers on one point; I do *not* habitually say "It's me." I said, and still say, that I would not check a child for saying that, and I dragged in Looee Cat-oars for swank and to show that I think French the more logical language. But what was good enough for the Master is surely good enough for me. So I say "It is I, be not afraid."

Enough for the day is the Effel thereof.

J. EFFEL.

Tail-piece: B.B.C. recent announcement (actual words): "PRINCESS ELIZABETH, AT GLASGOW YESTER-DAY, SAW SOLDIERS WOUNDED IN KOREA."  
Some long vision!

## REVIEW

*A short history of our own times (1919/50) by Esmond Wright (Watts & Co. 1s.)*

IF Mr. Wright had been the special correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* or any other respectable Conservative journal, we might have taken this book for a collection of his reports throughout the years. It has no individual historical approach and reads like plain reportage. It lacks profundity or originality of thought. What, for instance, is one to make out of this? "In 1930 the failure to disarm was due more . . . to the all but irreconcilable interests of the Powers than any will to war." What does provoke wars but irreconcilability of interests, or is Mr. Wright seriously suggesting that modern States go to war to amuse themselves? Or this: "workers (in Italy) were strongly socialist but split into a variety of syndicalist and anarchist groups." Anyone who is so confused as to identify syndicalism or anarchism with socialism should give up writing history.

Mr. Wright states as facts events that either did not occur or occurred differently. On page 41 he says: "Spain became (1931-36) a workers republic of the most idealist type," whereas it was during that time a liberal radical bourgeois administration without one socialist in the Cabinet! Again, on page 61, we are given the extraordinary travesty of history that "Trotsky proceeded to make terms with Germany." The Russian plenipotentiary at the 1918 discussions of Brest-Litovsk was Joffe, and it was Lenin, as head of the Government, who said Russia *must* make peace, however harsh the terms; Trotsky was one of the dissidents who had eventually to come round to Lenin's view. On page 64 we are told that the Moscow trials of August, 1936, the court martial of Tukhachevsky and the generals, and the trials of 1937 were all on the charge of Trotskyism. Only in the 1937 trials was the charge of Trotskyism brought forward—for the first time.

Mr. Wright begins his book with the Versailles Conference and ends it with the outbreak of the Korean War.

P. C. KING.

## THEY NEVER CHANGE

"There have been priests in Ireland for thousands of years. Nobody knows the name of the religion expounded by these priests, and even their god is long since deceased. In fact, numbers of gods and religions have found followers and emoluments and temples in this country since then, and have disappeared again, leaving no traces other than the fairies, which are worshipped in mountain places by incurably conservative peasants. But even though the gods and the religions change and disappear, the priests remain, always the same, and to my mind they seem to get sturdier and fatter as the centuries pass."—LIAM O'FLAHERTY, *Tourists' Guide to Ireland*.