

# THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Vol. LXXI—No. 30

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL  
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Threepence

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### The Church of Moscow versus the Church of Rome

WORLD ideology and even, to a large extent, world politics to-day centre upon the mortal rivalry now raging all over the world and, very particularly, all over the Western world between the Roman Catholic Church on the one side and the Moscow Cominform upon the other. The political and economic aspects of this world-conflict lie, perhaps, rather outside the current scope of *The Freethinker* except, indeed, in the sense that every secularist and humanist is, *ipso facto*, a citizen of the world and in that capacity conforms with the inspired dictum of the old Roman Stoic: "I am a human being, and as such, everything human concerns me intimately."

However, over and above the political aspects of the clash between those two powerful organisations which combine doctrinaire ideology and practical political activity in such a masterly manner, the Vatican and the Kremlin, there is also another most important but, hitherto, almost totally neglected aspect of the current Catholic-Communist clash which is mainly religious in origin and, as such, falls entirely within the scope of this journal. We refer, of course, to that aspect of the present rivalry between the Communist and Catholic world-powers which a witty contemporary French writer has aptly termed: "The Church of Moscow versus the Church of Rome."

The above description of the contending parties at present carrying on such a strenuous fight for world-domination is, however, not only ironic but is actually historically correct. For we must never allow ourselves to forget that, long before Marx and Lenin saw the light or the Communist International had ever been heard of, Moscow represented Rome's most ancient and formidable rival in both the political and ecclesiastical spheres. Long before, not only Lenin and Stalin but, equally, before Luther, Calvin, and the Protestant Reformation, the Greek "Orthodox" Church represented Rome's major rival within the confines of Christianity. Since nominally the year 1058 but, actually since much earlier, the Eastern Greek-speaking Church has been a thorn in the side of the Papacy. Nor did Rome fail to employ all the resources of political terrorism of which the Vatican has always been so prodigal when occasion arose, in order to overcome its tenacious resistance.

We must not forget that A.D. 800 the Papacy deliberately created the Western Empire of Charlemagne, "the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation," expressly as a political antidote to the "Eastern" Byzantine Empire, the political protector of the Greek "Orthodox" Church, the major ecclesiastical rival of the Papacy. Nor do we fail to recall how it was an army of Latin Crusaders blessed by Rome, who stormed Constantinople in 1204 and temporarily overthrew the heretical and schismatic Byzantine Empire. In which connection, it is relevant to recall that it was the self-same Pope, Innocent III

(1198-1216) who sent his crusading armies against both the schismatic Greeks and heretical Albigenses. It was not the fault of the Papacy if the Greek "Orthodox" Church was not as completely wiped off the map as were the unhappy Albigenses.

In the 15th century, the "drang nach Westen" ("migration to the West") of the Ottoman Turks, the militant champions of Islam, enfeebled Eastern Christianity and forced the "Orthodox" Church, in return for indispensable military assistance for the defence of Constantinople, to submit to Rome at the Council of Florence (1439), to which the "Orthodox" Church sent delegates. The immemorial ambition of the Vatican to dominate Christendom seemed to have been fulfilled; Constantinople had submitted and the Protestant Reformation had not yet arisen.

However, the "reunion" of the Eastern and Western Churches proved only temporary. Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire fell before the Turks in 1453 and thus passed out of the Vatican's jurisdiction. Whilst the "Orthodox" Greek-speaking world soon found another political protector, the rising Northern Russian Empire which had been originally converted by missionaries from Constantinople and, from the 16th century onwards, succeeded the Byzantine Empire as the political and military protector of the Eastern "Orthodox" Churches.

Constantinople, "the second Rome," was succeeded by Moscow, "the third Rome," and the Russian Tzars took the place of the Byzantine Cæsars as the major rivals of the Papacy and of the Roman Catholic Church for the political and ecclesiastical domination of the Christian world. From the 16th century onward, the permanent conflict of "the Church of Moscow versus the Church of Rome" has constituted a major factor in world-history and has grown in desperation and in urgency with the continually increasing power of the Russian Empire which has been steadily growing throughout the past two centuries since the days of its effective founder, Peter the "Great."

Since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 overthrew the Tzarist regime, it has been customary to speak disparagingly of the Russian Tzardom which, nowadays, seems to be remembered chiefly by its decadent last days, as expressed in the feeble Nicholas II and by the monstrous Rasputin. Actually, however, the Tzarist regime was amazingly successful if and when judged by results. It raised a tribe of Tartar helots entirely cut off from both the sea and from civilization, to the status of a world-power. In the mid-19th century when the Tzarist regime reached its zenith, Lord Palmerston and Karl Marx were equally terrified lest the "Russian Bear" would simultaneously embrace Europe and India in his capacious hug!

The Tzar, however, was not only a secular despot: "The autocrat of all the Russias": equally, he was an ecclesiastical "antipope," the spiritual as well as the temporal ruler of "orthodox" Christians. When the



famous Russian Anarchist, Michael Bakunin, addressed his "Confession"—one of the most curious documents of the 19th century—to Tzar Nicholas the First (1825-55), he addressed the Tzar as the spiritual no less than as the temporal Father of all Russians. So complete in fact was the Tzar's ascendancy over the Russian Church that the Russian theologian, Vladimir Solovyof, complained that when the Tzar wanted to show his approval of a bishop, he made him one of his *military* aides! Right down to the Revolution of 1917 Roman Catholicism was illegal in Russia. The Vatican supported Poland against Russia consistently.

The Tzars have gone, but the struggle between Moscow and Rome still continues in a new form, at least superficially, though the fundamental issue at stake, world-power, remains unaltered. In the present writer's submission, there exists no fundamental antagonism between Christianity, especially Catholicism, and Communism as such. Catholicism is essentially collectivist in its mental outlook; it was the Protestants who favoured individualism and capitalism at the Reformation: many forms of Christian communism have existed in past ages and, for that matter, the most famous contemporary English-speaking Communist is a Christian clergyman, "the Red Dean." The contemporary struggle between Rome and Moscow is a struggle for power, for power in a sense totalitarian and not merely political in character. From the standpoint of the Vatican, Stalin is the successor of the Tzars and the new "Church of Moscow" is the more dangerous, because more modern successor of the old.

F. A. RIDLEY.

### ROUSSEAU AND MODERN MARXISM

JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU, the apostle of sentiment and intuition, provided in the *Social Contract* a work pre-eminently suited to make men fanatics if it influenced them at all. He meant well, he sang hymns to liberty and he genuflected towards the altar of democracy. When Helvétius wrote, "All becomes legitimate and even virtuous on behalf of the public safety," Rousseau noted marginally: "The public safety is nothing unless individuals enjoy security." But like many another who meant well, he built intolerance in his own despite, and his immediate disciples, the Jacobins, could so desert the spirit of his doctrine that at the height of their power security was precisely what the individual did not enjoy.

Certainly, their prophet being inconsistent, the Jacobins did not lack a textual justification for their narrowness. Rousseau had declared he would banish from the community all who did not believe in God and a future state of rewards and punishments, and he proposed the death-penalty for anyone who after making the required profession of faith appeared to hold it no longer. So, under Robespierre, who considered Atheism an example of aristocratic deviationism, Chaumette and Cloutz were condemned to death on a charge of conspiring to destroy the idea of the Deity and to base the government of France on Atheism.

Rousseau's doctrine of the "sovereign" and the "general will" shows the thin end of his wedge of intolerance, and it has more kinship with bad metaphysics than with political science. The sovereign in Rousseau's terminology is not a monarch; it is not the government (which is, rather, the minister of the sovereign): it is the body politic constituted by the "social contract"—an

entity which "by virtue of what it is, is always what it should be." The will of the sovereign is the "general will," which is always right and is not discovered from governmental deliberation. The body politic has absolute power over all its members, and the sovereign is the sole judge of what is good for the community. This leads to Rousseau's conception of men being "forced to be free": if the individual will conflicts with the "general will," the individual shall be forced to conform.

An important feature of sovereignty as conceived by Rousseau is that it is necessarily indivisible; he rejected the division of power preached by Montesquieu (*Esprit des Lois*, XI, vi), and he insisted further that the State cannot permit subordinate associations. Bertrand Russell has pointed out that this would lead in practice to the prohibition of Churches, political parties, trade unions and other organisations of men with similar economic interests: in short, to the totalitarian State. The theory of the "general will" leads in the same direction, for it is not difficult to extract from it the idea that the will of an inspired leader, freed from appeal to the ballot, is the best expression of the "general will." Rousseau himself confirms this when he writes (*Social Contract*, II, vi): "How can a blind multitude, which so often does not know its own will, because it seldom knows what is good for it, execute of itself an undertaking so vast as a system of legislation."

A doctrine derived from Marx, the founder of "scientific Socialism" and the enemy of intuition, might be expected to differ profoundly from Rousseau's. But here there intrudes something suspiciously like that Hegelian dialectic, borrowed by Marx to explain so much and applicable, if anywhere, to the fate of his own ideas. They have evolved from their original thesis in 1848, through their antithesis in 1925 when Stalin announced his policy of national socialism, to their present synthetic state. To-day, the net result is that what is called Marxism is found to be in harmony with the political philosophy of Rousseau—a striking example of the unity of opposites.

It is worth while considering how this came about. Unlike Rousseau, Marx believed that the scientific method is the only valid method of acquiring and verifying new knowledge, and to that extent he speaks a language more intelligible to Freethinkers than does Rousseau, since even a faulty reasoner is more reasonable than an intuitionist. Like Rousseau, he believed that men were in chains, and his avowed purpose was their liberation. In a student-essay he affirmed: "We shall never be able to fulfil ourselves truly unless we are working for the welfare of our fellows." The service of humanity was his ideal then, and so no doubt it remained till his death. But in middle life the ideal was overlaid by a strain of intolerance, and, like Rousseau, Marx developed a morbid suspiciousness of those around him.

His style, like Rousseau's was calculated to make men fanatics if it persuaded them at all; and as in the case of Rousseau it is the pontifical and irrational elements in his thought that have been taken over by his followers. It seems a law of history that disciples apply only the less genial ideas of their prophet, and that the humane and liberating aspects are either forgotten or else excised altogether as due to the master's misunderstanding of his own intention. A party that achieves political power through the victory of an idea supplants the thinker on the basis of whose writings they originally advanced towards it, and the Holy Writ becomes not the book but the interpretation thereof. Since the interpretation is constantly being revised, and since, in a State based on a book, unorthodoxy is a crime, the crime comes to consist



in being one interpretation behind. Orthodoxy is thus revealed in its simplest terms: one must be in the fashion, and in the new political orthodoxy as in the old religious orthodoxy to have a private interpretation of the sacred writings is a capital offence—once called heresy, now called deviationism.

THOMAS BUCHANAN.

(To be concluded)

### A NEW YEAR'S TALE

IN the year One; when the sun grew weaker, the nights longer, the leaves withered on the trees and frosts seized the earth; all the people were afraid, for being less than a year old, they had no knowledge of such a thing as Autumn. In the depths of the winter when snow fell and storms lashed the hills, they cried out that the world had come to an end and gave themselves up for lost. However, they and the earth survived and the dawning of a new spring revived their fortunes and their hopes.

After the cycle of the seasons had occurred three times, there arose a man named Petris who went about saying, "Three times has the sun nearly deserted us, and three times have we nearly been destroyed. Doubtless a fourth time is approaching—for see, is not the sun already drawing further away from us, and are not the nights growing longer again?" And they agreed and said it was so. "But," they asked each other, "what can we do to prevent it?" Then Petris replied and boasted, "It is within my power to prevent the sun disappearing if only you will do as I say."

At first, the people only laughed at the claims of Petris, but when the winter came and gripped them they were afraid and they called on Petris and said: "If what you say is true, if you have power to control the sun, now is the time to prove it." "Then," said Petris, "do as I say, for you must understand that the Sun is a Great Personage, mighty in strength and holding great power over us. If we wish his favour, we must treat him with reverence, pay homage to him and ask humbly that he bestow his life-giving warmth upon us."

So they did as Petris directed, and by and by acute observers saw that the sun was no longer drawing away from the earth, so they rejoiced and praised Petris as a man having great wisdom and powers beyond the scope of ordinary men. Then they set him apart and he no longer worked like the rest of them, but dwelt in a special house and was their mediator with the all-powerful Sun.

From then on, at the winter solstice, instead of cowering in fear, the people made merry for they said that life was to be born again. And they decorated their homes with evergreens, choosing the holly for its red berries, which was the only bright thing to be found in the woods. When the spring flowers appeared, they again rejoiced and these were the only two festivals they had, though in after years they added many others.

When Petris grew old and it was plain his days were growing to a close, the people requested him to instruct others that they might continue his work after he was gone. After much consideration, Petris chose twelve young men, to whom he taught everything he knew and did.

At first, the people were afraid the sun would be displeased with the twelve successors, but as Petris had guessed, the sun continued to wax and wane as before, so the twelve young men prospered.

All went well for some years until the twelve, and those whom they were training to succeed them in their turn, began to dispute among themselves. Some said that the

truth was that every winter a foul monster sought to drag the sun from the sky and devour it, and to combat this monster they must do thus and thus. Others said it was not so and they argued the matter with no little heat. In the midst of this wrangle, a third group arose who claimed that the premier power lay with the moon, and not the sun. So they disputed, spreading discord and confusion among the people, some ranging themselves on one side and some on another, and because each feared that the other might be right, hatred came among them and they fought to prove the validity of their opinions.

There were some, a very few, who said that the sun and moon, spring, summer, autumn and winter, would each follow its regular course no matter what any man might do or say.

But no one listened to these fools.

LESLIE HANGER.

### BLAKEAN

I am a fly,  
And I have soon to die,  
For on this sticky paper now I lie.

A wing was caught;  
I struggled and I fought,  
But all in vain; my struggles came to naught.

So I must die,  
A young and tiny fly;  
I am too weak to think, but wonder why.

Why? Why? Why? Why?  
Is my last, dying cry:  
What evil have I done, O gods on high?

And these my brothers  
The sticky fluid smothers,  
What is the mischief they have done to others?

We meet our doom  
Within a lofty room  
Where there is space for all to fly and zoom.

I miss old age,  
And shall not know love's rage,  
Who yield the ghost upon this nasty page.

Farewell, my friends,  
My little life now ends,  
But for my death the gods shall make amends.

For life is one:  
No murder can be done  
But all life suffers; e'en the gods atone.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

**GOD AND THE UNIVERSE.** By Chapman Cohen. A Criticism of Professors Huxley, Eddington, Jeans and Einstein. Price, cloth 4s. 3d., postage 3d.; paper 2s. 6d., postage 2d.

**A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT.** By Chapman Cohen. An outline of the philosophy of Freethinking. Price 4s. 3d.; postage 4d.

**THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE MYTHICAL CHRIST.** By Gerald Massey. What Christianity owes to Ancient Egypt. Price 1s.; postage 3d.



### ACID DROPS

**Commenting on falling church attendances**, the Archbishop of York says the Church's greatest need was more clergy, and that an immediate need could be met if the bishops ordained men without regard to their educational qualifications. But where does the Archbishop's almighty and all-powerful God come in? Cannot He give a hand? Or does Dr. Garbett consider a more ignorant type of clergy a better proposition for filling churches? In either case, failure will result, God will do nothing and ignorance will only attract the ignorant.

**Anybody who declares** that Spiritualism is "bunk" or "hocus-pocus" after the evidence produced by Mr. and Mrs. de la Warr with their Cosmic Camera and their team of scientists—according to the *Two Worlds*—must be declared hopeless. It appears that three specimens of tap water were photographed—the first just showing ordinary radiations. The second was "blessed" in a "perfunctory manner only" by an Anglican priest, and the result was not much more than the first. But when the priest "blessed" the third specimen for fifteen minutes turning it into "holy" water—the photograph showed a beautiful Cross of "emanations." In the face of this marvellous evidence, to maintain any kind of Materialism is just lunacy. Or at least, that is what the de la Warrs and their "team of scientists" must think.

**Needless to add** "a panel of qualified investigators" testified to the "anti-fake" measures taken—measures which were absolutely "thorough" and that should settle it. We now know that fifteen minutes of vigorous blessing of tap water turns it into "holy water" with cross complete. And though Spiritualism has been attacked by the Church of Rome as of the Devil and the Father of Lies, what can the Vatican now say? How is it going to explain the Holy Cross?

**Thirty-one students**, of whom fourteen are girls, were going to Jordan on Friday, July 13 last, but so strong has been the influence of Christianity that they shrunk with horror from the double "bad luck"—that is, it would have been bad enough to start on an ordinary Friday but when you add a number like 13 to a *Friday* . . . ! So they began their journey on the Thursday instead, and now no doubt, God Almighty will protect them. What a glorious picture of religion, superstition and credulity it shows in this year of grace 1951 and all due to God's Divine Revelation—thank Heaven!

**In general**, Quakers are looked upon as a shining example of what Christianity can do for erring man—and it is a fact that most of them like to think that they are the salt of the earth. It was, therefore, with not a little malicious pleasure that we noticed a letter from some clergyman's wife in the *Church of England Newspaper* who was not only delighted at some adverse criticism of Rowntree's *English Life and Leisure* but who pointed out the danger of accepting "the Quaker estimate of any situation." This arose, she contended, from the Quakers' "exclusiveness and sense of superiority" which made them "incapable of understanding," and their "extremely narrow and puritanical social and moral views." Anglo-Catholics think the same of Protestants.

**We were also rather pleased** to see that Dr. Trevor Davies was not afraid in the *Christian World* to refer to Prof. Ayer's *Language, Truth and Logic*—a book which

advocates "Logical Positivism" and to point out that this was not "Atheism or Agnosticism" but that it "cut deeper" for "it asserts that all talk about God is simply nonsense." The readers of the *Christian World* have always known that there were some dreadful Atheistic monsters who held similar views, but it must have been a shock, a horrid shock, to have it put so plainly in their columns. And the worst of the matter is that Prof. Ayer is right.

**The Rector of Birmingham**, the Rev. Bryan Green, insists that "religion *does* make sense." Well of course it does for him. After all, it's his job, and one which he cannot give up. He mentions, however, a "middle-class housewife of 50" who told him squarely that "Religion's all my eye," and Mr. Green devotes much space in the *Daily Graphic* protesting that she is wrong. Does he convince anybody? Of course. He convinces himself, and the people who agree with him. For the rest, people are either completely indifferent or are ready to agree that "religion is all my eye."

**A year ago**, the Rev. Austin Lee startled our Christian world by a forcible attack on the Church of England—and he has now resigned for good. In a recent number of the *Sunday Pictorial*, he declares that he "can't stand the humbug"—the Church is becoming a fraud, and it now belongs to one class, "the Middle, from which its bishops are wholly recruited." Mr. Lee obviously does not like the Bishops or their Church but he is still a thorough Christian. "Thank God," he cries, "I've got out before being suffocated." Surely it must be apparent to him that if the Church of England is a fraud so are the other sects of Christianity? And even Christianity itself!

**In the Unitarian paper**, *The Inquirer*, a correspondent remarks with astonishment that, despite excellent music and a sensible "message," only a handful of people attend his local Unitarian Church as and when compared with the crowded Roman Catholic congregations in the same town. He asks why "Liberal Christianity" cannot compete more successfully. We can suggest two reasons: (a) When it comes to putting up a spectacular show, the "old firm" can usually give its competitors points, and (b) what religious people want is certainty and only an infallible authority can give them that. Hence, the current drift to Rome which knows, or says it does, whilst "Liberal Christianity" can only guess.

**Upon Tuesday evening**, July 10, an eminent Anglican modernist, Canon Raven, an ex-vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University, was due to speak upon the B.B.C. "Home" programme on "modern science and the Christian man." Unfortunately, Canon Raven's discourse was delivered simultaneously with the B.B.C. "Light" programme broadcast of the international boxing contest for the middle-weight championship of the world. We are very much afraid that the "modern science" of theology probably attracted a very small audience as and when compared to the vast audience who listened in to this exciting manifestation of "the noble art."

**Pastor George Jeffries** is on the war-path again. Advertisements conspicuously exhibited on prominent sites indicate to the passing Londoner that "miracles are expected" at the pastor's revivalist meetings. However, we are prepared to wager that no one will see a miracle unless he or she went there with the firm intention of seeing one. So, speaking for ourselves, we shall stay away!



# "THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

Miss M. BEASLEY.—Many thanks for all your contributions, which are of great value.

PETER LECKIE.—Your good wishes warmly welcomed.

J. CLOSE.—Your contribution will appear. Many thanks.

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.

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.

## SUGAR PLUMS

A report in the *Sheffield Telegraph* says, "Among converts won by the new Doncaster District Coalfields Mission are people who never had any contact with the Church, and who were utterly contemptuous of religion." Well, we know a large number of people who were once in close contact with the Church but who now have a contempt for its teachings. Many are members of the National Secular Society and readers of *The Freethinker*.

## A GREAT JOURNALIST

ONE hundred years ago—to be precise, on March 17, 1851—was born Robert Blatchford, surely one of our greatest journalists, and one whose centenary should have been celebrated by all who remember the "soldiers" whose swords were ever at the service of humanity.

Fifty years ago, Blatchford's name was one of the best known to all newspaper readers, for he made his journal *The Clarion* talked about all over the country. Unfortunately for his reputation, he attacked religion, and that was a crime for which, like another great Englishman, Thomas Paine, he had to pay very heavily. Christianity was too strongly entrenched then even amongst the bulk of his fellow Socialists for it to be criticised by a mere journalist who had not had even an elementary training in theology.

The reader will find all this discussed and a great deal more in Mr. Laurence Thompson's extremely interesting and well-written biography, *Robert Blatchford* (Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1951) which deals not only with his books, his Socialism, and his *Clarion*, but also tells us a great deal about the man himself. And those of us who tried to find the man from his writings in those wonderful days of our youth when *The Clarion*, with its galaxy of witty writers, meant a weekly treat, can flatter ourselves that we were not far wrong.

The details given by Mr. Thompson—who is, by the way, a son of Blatchford's faithful friend and comrade, Alex. M. Thompson—of the early life of "Nunquam," as he loved to call himself, of his soldiering and of his early struggles to gain a footing in journalism, show us how they shaped his mind and his writing—as his early struggles shaped the work of Charles Dickens. If Blatchford was born with the gift of writing, he had also

## The Freethinker Fund

Cheques and Postal Orders should be addressed to

THE FREETHINKER

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

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

**is now open**

to cultivate it, and only through a hard apprenticeship was he able to get that style which almost from the outset marked nearly everything he wrote. I can well remember the reputation the *Sunday Chronicle* had in the North—though, when I used to get it, Blatchford had long ceased to write for it. But it was his articles perhaps more than anything else which made the reputation of the *Sunday Chronicle*.

His own sufferings and those of the poor made Robert Blatchford a Socialist—though his Socialism was perhaps based far more on sentiment than on economics. Be that as it may, and however much it impressed the readers of *The Clarion* and of *Merrie England*—the book which, we are told, in all probability made more Socialists than any other book—the leaders of "scientific" Socialism appeared to have very little liking for Robert Blatchford. He was bitterly attacked for considering that his *God and My Neighbour* and *Not Guilty* were much more important for Socialists than *Merrie England* and *Britain for the British*. And when later he agreed with the "militarists" that Germany intended making war on England and France and chose the *Daily Mail* to say so, whatever reputation he had among the rank and file of his followers was very nearly extinguished. That he was quite right, and that they were completely wrong, only made things worse.

I have always felt that the bitter attack on Blatchford for exposing the German menace in the *Daily Mail* was in some ways a blind. It was an excuse for the hatred engendered by his uncompromising hostility to religion. The book alone, *God and My Neighbour*, did not tell the whole of the story. For years the controversy on Christianity filled pages of *The Clarion* and made the all-believing Socialists almost weep with rage. Mr. Thompson devotes many pages to the way in which the anti-Christian campaign was received and it is not nice reading. A prominent Socialist, Joseph Burgess, "declared that *God and My Neighbour* and *Not Guilty* had undone all the good done by *Merrie England* and *Britain for the British*." Burgess added:—

"Most of our best Socialists are believers. When I was touring as a lecturer ten years ago in nearly every house that offered me hospitality the walls of the bedchambers were hung with Scripture texts. . . . You are trying to break down creeds, and your disciples are busily setting up another. And they are making their new creed the test of orthodoxy. The terms of the old question: 'Can a man be a Socialist and NOT a Christian?' are now changed into, 'Can a man be a Socialist AND a Christian?' Drop it, Blatchford. Return to your early manner. Preach the simple truths of Socialism. . . . Leave the Socialists alone. . . . Come down from your higher plane. . . ."

This and a lot more because Blatchford thought that Christianity stood in the way of Socialism. He allowed the Christian writers to put their case in the pages of *The Clarion*, and if any one wishes to see the sorry mess they made, he should read the replies by Joseph McCabe, John M. Robertson, Charles Watts, and other famous Rationalists. G. K. Chesterton used the *Daily News* for



attacks on Blatchford, but so devastating were the replies in *The Clarion* that, not having an infallible authority to fall back upon, Chesterton took refuge in the Church of Rome. What did Blatchford think of him? Here is what he says:—

“Chesterton was a subtle thinker, and I have noticed that your subtle thinker often loses his way in his own intricacy. He spins a kind of web round his own brain . . . we are old opponents. But—I always felt—Chesterton was an actor. He played a part and dressed for a part. I saw him one day get out of a hansom in Fleet Street. He had on a brigand's hat (very old and grubby), a brigand's cloak and a mop of oily curls hanging over his collar. . . . And one wet night, after a meeting, G.K.C. sat in a warm room while his wife went out in the rain to look for a cab. And my wife sat in a warm room while I went out to look for a cab. These chaps pose. Belloc dresses like a Catholic priest. Shaw spends his whole life acting G.B.S. on the stage.”

Chesterton had quite early in life found out the wisdom of the negro's answer to an opponent—“What yah say I am, you is.” He knew perfectly well that Blatchford was a plain matter-of-fact writer so he promptly insisted that Nunquam was, in his attack on Christianity, “an Oriental mystic”—and no doubt his fellow-believers agreed though, for Blatchford, a good deal of Chesterton was “Words, words, words.” And he was right.

Mr. Thompson has retold for us a fascinating story, and if the reader wants to know something about the early struggles of and in the Socialist movement and the relationship of some of its early leaders like Keir Hardie, Bernard Shaw, William Morris, Tom Mann, and many others of the old valiant band towards each other, as well as something of the “immortal” writers like Fay, A. M. Thompson and R. B. Suthers who made *The Clarion* a great force in English journalism, I can heartily recommend his book. Fifty years ago, like so many other very young men, the forthright plain-speaking of Robert Blatchford made a deep impression on me. I shared his anger, his arrogance, and pugnacity. I read *Merrie England* and *Britain for the British* and *Julie* and *Tales for the Marines* and *My Favourite Books* and *God and My Neighbour*. And I was with him in his terrific efforts to rouse England to the danger from Germany—not just from a handful of German militarists or Nazis, but from the German people as a whole. And I was with him, if I may say so, in his contempt for some of the Socialist leaders of his early struggles—like Hardie and Macdonald.

Needless to add, Blatchford in turn is hated by many of our “genuine” Socialists; and one can see why when turning over the intriguing and nostalgic pages of Mr. Thompson's *Robert Blatchford*. But whether one agrees with him or not, no one can deny that Robert Blatchford was one of the greatest journalists of our time.

H. CUTNER.

### REBEL OR RELIGIOUS REFORMER?

THE principal references to Mazdak and his heretical Persian sect (6th century), which occur in Greek, Syriac, Pahlavi, Arabic, and Persian literature, are collected by Prof. T. Nöldeke, *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Leyden, 1879), and by E. G. Brown, in his *Literary History of Persia*, 1902. Most of the scattered references you can find in this country are unreliable; Nöldeke is still the best existing source of information on the whole subject. It must be remembered that unfortunately we have nothing from the Mazdakite side to set against the biased narrative handed down from Zoroastrian and Christian authorities, and it is self-evident that an intolerant sacerdotal caste must have been hostile towards heretics that nearly caused their downfall.

Mazdak was the leader of what is generally described as a “communist sect” that towards the 5th century A.D. became a formidable power in the Sasanian empire.

Mazdak is said to have demanded that the rich should share their wealth and their wives with the poor (which can hardly be called a social programme), since all men were born equal. “Larousse,” the French Encyclopædia, in an article on Mazdak, terms him an “hérésiarque persan” who, about 495, made capital of the hatred amongst the artisans against the all-powerful fire priests or *mobeds* whom he demanded to be disbanded. His pupils, the *zendiks*, gained a temporary followership and importance, which was largely due to the state of anarchy then prevailing in Persia. *Kawâdh* (Kobad), who ascended the throne in A.D. 488, finding himself opposed by the nobility and the Zoroastrian priesthood, entered into close alliance with the arch-heretic and professed to have embraced his doctrine. The governing classes were strong enough to depose *Kawâdh* in favour of his brother *Jâmâsp*, but a few years later the king regained his throne. After his restoration he slackened in his support of the Mazdakites whose power appears to have become a new danger spot. In the concluding years of his reign a bitter struggle was waged over the succession, which the Mazdakites endeavoured to secure for one of *Kawâdh*'s sons who was devoted to their cause, while the Zoroastrian priests favoured Prince *Khusrau* as the presumptive heir. The *zendiks* tried to force the king's hand and to persuade him to abdicate in favour of *Phthasuarsas*, their devotee, who had agreed to establish their religion as that of the state (not very “communitic,” as you see). The king feigned willingness to comply with their wish and summoned the leading Mazdakites with their families to assist at the solemnity in the royal gardens and then had them massacred (A.D. 523).

It is remarkable that the reports on the course of events which culminated in that St. Bartholomew's Massacre of the Mazdakites, differ so greatly. Brig.-Gen. Sir Percy Sykes, in his *History of Persia* (1930)—who greatly follows our given account based on the testimony of a Persian official converted to Christianity—asserts that Mazdak himself escaped and was, later, put to death by *Nushirwan* (*Anushirwan*, termed *Chosroes* by Western writers, and *Kisra* by the Arabs). The sect was “crushed for the time being by this awful severity. Some centuries later we have the authority of *Nizam ul-Mulk* for the statement that the *Ismailis* were the descendants of the Mazdakites. *Masudi* states that the title of *Nushirwan*, or the ‘New King’ was assumed after this massacre of the Mazdakites; but it is more correctly derived from *Anûshak-rubân*, signifying ‘of Immortal Spirit.’” (P. 450.)

*Reynold A. Nicholson*, in a pertinent article contained in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics* (New York, 1924)—which I have accepted as my guide—also avers that *Kawâdh*—

“pretended to yield to the Mazdakites and, having appointed a day for the abdication, caused his soldiers to cut down all the Mazdakites who had assembled together with their wives and children in the vicinity of *Ctesiphon* to witness the ceremony; he then gave orders that the surviving members of the sect should be seized and burned, and that their property should be confiscated. Most Muhammedan writers place this massacre in the reign of *Khusrau*, but the truth appears to be that, although it was carried out under *Khusrau*'s direction and probably at his instigation, it preceded his accession (A.D. 531) by two or three years. . . . There is some ground for the suggestion that Mazdak's ideas maintained themselves in secret



and found expression in various Antinomian sects which arose in Persia during the Muhammedan period." (P. 508-10.)

(That some ideas similar to those preached by Mazdak reappeared in other sects, is no proof of continuity, especially not in a period of general religious unrest; at the same time, Christianity in the form of the Nestorian Church gained ground and a son of Anûsharwân himself was a Christian.)

That is what the Encyclopædia Britannica (p. 299) has to offer on this account:—

"In 529 they (the Mazdakites) were refuted in a theological discussion held before the throne of the king by the orthodox Magians, and were slaughtered and persecuted everywhere; Mazdak himself was hanged."

Is it ridiculous to think that a theological discussion in itself could settle problems since a dispute between contestants of transcendental theories can never prove a thing.

What is noteworthy is that it was so easy to destroy a movement said to have had taken deep roots among the populace. This goes to prove—as will be shown later on—that Mazdakitism was more of a spiritual than a political movement. Ever and everywhere Communism has been persecuted and decapitated without avail; in 1927, Chiang-Kai-Shek, the Chinese Cavaignac, slaughtered the leaders of the Chinese Communists, then part of the Kuo-min-tang (Wuhan wing). Social movements, however, resulting from actual, material conditions, continue to create and re-create their leaders. Religious ideas, though the reflection of material conditions, are more of a totalitarian character and die with their leader. Thus with the death of Echnaton his reformation work ended with the resurgence of the Theban priests of Amûn.

P. G. ROY.

### THEATRE

"Breach of Marriage" at the Scala is an indifferently written play on a subject of great importance in modern science. It deals with the increasing practice of artificial insemination in childless marriages.

A young couple, Peter and Ann Stuart, seek the help of a Dr. Baring. As a result of the war, Peter has been paralysed from the waist downwards. Ann wants a baby, and the knowledge of his helpless condition throws a serious nervous strain on them both. The doctor will not act unless the potential parents are healthy, but on examination it is discovered that Peter has glandular tuberculosis. However, unknown to Peter, and with the consent of Ann and her mother, it is agreed that Ann will accept an outside donor unknown to all except Doctor Baring. It is made to appear to Peter that he is the father to be, but he discovers the truth and then the drama starts.

This, as you can see, is very much of a problem play. I have not seen the present production—which is on for only a short run, but I saw the original production two years ago. Certain improvements in the play have been made since then.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

### CORRESPONDENCE

#### INDIA—SECULAR OR RELIGIOUS?

SIR,—Though India is constitutionally a secular State, in practice the implications of Secularism are never observed. Recently the President of the Indian Republic, accompanied by Cabinet Ministers, took part in the religious ceremonies connected with the rebuilding of the temple of Somnath in Kathiawar on the West Coast. This

temple is alleged to have been destroyed by Mohmmmed Ghazni, attracted by the wealth it contained, in A.D. 1026. Just because it was destroyed by Muslims, it is considered a matter of national pride for the Hindus to rebuild it; and this was done under the auspices of the head of the secular State of India and his Ministers, at a cost of about a crore of rupees. Strange, indeed, is Indian secularism!

There have been protests against the action of the President from the progressive and reformist sections of the Press in various parts of India. The Indian Rationalist Association has conveyed its protest to the President and his Ministers in the following resolution passed on June 26, 1951:—

"The Working Committee of the Indian Rationalist Association views with alarm the violation of the spirit of the Constitution of the Secular State of India by the President and other Ministers who participated in the ceremonials conducted for the rebuilding of the Somnath Temple.

While it may be open to individuals to practise religion in their private capacity, it is highly detrimental to the national interest that persons holding High Offices in the State should play prominent parts in public functions as at Somnath, where a retrograde step was taken to revive religious antagonisms and conflicts buried beneath a thousand years of India's history."—Yours, etc.,

T. S. SELVARAJ.

SIR,—With reference to the letter from C. G. Auger in *The Freethinker* of July 8. My record, as well as that of others on the platform, is sufficient answer to anyone who is acquainted with the recent history of Freethought propaganda in this country; but as the criticism continues, I claim the right to reply.

My own speech included a few quotations from the Press (not the *Daily Worker*) about the great religious revival in the U.S.A., which I pointed out was co-incident with a crime wave, also reported in the Press. My moral was, that this is a menace to civilisation, and that the only guarantee of maintaining a civilisation or in the event of an atomic calamity, restoring it, is the preservation of the principles of Freethought.

I have been a member of the Executive of the N.S.S. for about 20 years, and, so far as I am aware, there is not, nor has there ever been a single member of the Communist Party on that body.

As to the "Great significance of the absence of the younger generation," if that be true, it should set Mr. Auger's fears at rest; Communism appeals essentially to the young—Freethought to the mature.

I am looking for another youthful enthusiast, who will be faithful to his first love, as I have been, in order to emulate my departed comrades, who, though old in years, were never fossilised, but were the loving guardians of the Freethought of to-day and of the future.—Yours, etc.,

LEN EBURY.

### LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

#### OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park, Bradford).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

J. CLAYTON'S Lecture Engagements: Haslingden, Friday, July 27, 7-45 p.m.; Great Harwood, Saturday, July 28, 6 p.m.; Burnley Market, Sunday, July 29, 7 p.m.; Sabden, Monday, July 30, 7-30 p.m.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. M. ALEXANDER.

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: L. EBURY and W. G. FRASER. Sunday Evening, 7-30 p.m. (Highbury Corner): L. EBURY, W. G. FRASER and J. CALVERLEY. Friday Evening, July 27, 8 p.m. (South Hill Park): L. EBURY and W. G. FRASER.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, August 4, 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).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: C. H. CLEAVER and F. A. RIDLEY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: C. E. WOOD and J. BARKER.

#### INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon Street (off New Street)).—Sunday, July 29, 7 p.m., CHARLES H. SMITH: "Man, an Animal Run to Brain?"

WANTED.—Small bungalow or house to rent unfurnished or buy, in country surroundings, accessible to London. Box 101.



### A CRIMINOLOGIST AT WORK

FREETHINKERS must be, more than most people, interested in the rules of evidence. For that reason (and for many others also) I am pleased to recommend to their attention a new book on one of the most celebrated crimes in British history—*Oscar Slater: The Great Suspect*, by Peter Hunt (Carroll and Nicholson, 12s. 6d.). The older reader will, of course, remember the case of Oscar Slater, the odd little German of unknown occupation, who was found guilty in 1909 of the brutal murder of an old lady in Glasgow. Especially in the writings of William Routhead, the great Scottish crime expert, has the case been featured. But it is noteworthy for the fact that (largely owing to the efforts of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who was convinced of Slater's innocence) the man was released in 1928, after the Court of Appeal had decided that the sentence on him was unjust.

At this late date it is in the last degree doubtful whether the problem of who killed Miss Gilchrist will ever be solved with any degree of certainty; but the whole puzzle is as fascinating as such puzzles usually are. Mr. Hunt, whose previous book (on Madeleine Smith) was widely praised, deserves the congratulations of all readers interested in criminological matters for having dealt with the Oscar Slater case so clearly and so well. And (this, after all, is of some importance to students of these matters) he has had access to a good deal of hitherto unpublished material, mainly drawn from the private papers of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Of course, a criminological treatise of this kind is bound to have its controversial aspects. There will probably be many students of the crime who will be unable to agree with all of Mr. Hunt's findings. Probably Oscar Slater himself, were he still alive (he died, at the age of 75, in 1948), would be inclined to argue on some of the matters raised by Mr. Hunt. But all the same the book makes fascinating reading. And, as I have suggested, it should appeal to those who are interested in the deeper puzzles of theology, since it shows clearly enough how people are inclined to read the evidence in different ways, according to their predilections and their temperaments.

J. R.

### TOLERATION AND POLITICAL CATHOLICISM

(Continued from page 259)

THE Rev. D. O'Flinn, speaking at the Irish sectional meeting in Maynooth as recently as the early part of the present month, said: "Thinking Irishmen are anxiously looking to the priests to rouse the people from the present condition of national lethargy," etc., etc. Here we get again the conception of priest leadership in matters which, to anyone other than a Catholic or illiterate Hindu, is utterly and completely distasteful.

The great evil of the Catholic system is that it controls the mind and brain of the younger generations through the parents, and thus retains its reactionary grip on generation after generation. Loyalty to the Church is taught at the mothers knee, from the earliest days of the mind formative or conditioning years of childhood. The child is taught that the priest is a being apart from other men, superior in all ways. He or she is taught to honour the priest, to obey him in all things, and to accept clerical leadership in all walks of life. "Duty compels us," says the Bishop of Vincennes, Ind., U.S.A., in his Pastoral letter of 1872, "duty compels us to instruct the pastors of our churches to refuse absolution to parents who having the facilities and means of educating their children in a Christian

(Catholic) manner do from worldly motives expose them to the danger of losing their faith."

The writer is not for one moment suggesting that Catholics should be persecuted because of their religious beliefs. He does, however, sincerely believe that specific legislation should be introduced to prevent Catholics using any public office for the furtherance of Political Catholicism. Catholics are admittedly subservient to the Pope and his priests, and what is that but giving service to a foreign, perhaps international but nevertheless foreign power. We are told that Chinese, Koreans and certain Americans and Englishmen, etc., are really all Communists serving a Red International. What, then, are Americans, Englishmen, Irishmen and others who are Catholics? They serve a Black International far more fanatically than does the Communist his Red one. Internationalist Communism is at least free from the superstitious belief of life after death, with its punishments and its rewards. What are we to expect from the followers of an organisation which teaches that it has not only power on the earth but has power to punish or reward in an endless life which begins after death? The Roman Catholic Church claims to hold the keys of life and death. Its claim is now known to be completely baseless. Yet almost unbelievable tolerance continues to be extended to the adherents of the world's greatest, bloodiest, torturing dictatorship. An organisation which, given the opportunity, will substitute ruthless extermination of its opponents for reasoned discussion. Freethinkers above all people should be careful not to suggest that Catholics are really charming people, quite rational in religious matters, who only attend confession out of courtesy to their family and Catholic friends.

The rottenest fruit has very often a very nice skin. The veneer on cheap imported furniture often hides the canker within, and in both cases destroy any sound fruit or furniture if placed in close contact with them. Catholics are apparently fond of parables. Let us see how they like the parable of the fruit and the furniture.

PETER'S FINGER.

### THE CRUCIFIXION IN CHRISTIAN ART

The Cross was rarely used in Christian Art until the 5th Century as a monographic symbol. After this it gradually came into more general use and the bust of Christ was placed above it or at the centre.

The lamb and the sacred chalice were also represented at the foot. The Quinsextan Council at the close of the 7th Century decreed "That the representation in human form of Christ our God be henceforth set up and painted in place of the ancient lamb." The earliest representation of the Christ on the Cross now known depicts the Saviour in an erect posture, clad in a sleeveless tunic reaching to the feet with the eyes open, head erect, countenance serene, arms extended in the attitude of embracing the whole world. In the earliest figures there is no suggestion of suffering or death, the feet and hands are not fastened, and the Cross merely acts as a background.

Between the 8th and 10th Centuries greater realism is developed, the feet and hands are nailed or bound; sometimes the hands are free and the feet bound or the reverse.

The wounded side is also shown through an opening in the robe. The limbs begin to show contortion and the head droops.

By the 13th and 14th Centuries, the figure represented is that of the dead Christ.—IPSWICH MUSEUM.

### SELF TAUGHT

When Father Dracula to please  
Sat down to strum the organ keys  
The choirboys laughed; but he  
Played them a death tune tenderly.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.