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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

"By the Grace of God"

THE recent change in the British monarchy due to the tragically sudden death of the late King George the Sixth, at a comparatively early age, presents us with a good opportunity to consider the whole question of the monarchy from a secularist angle. To be sure, the question is not a new one in Freethought circles. For the close association of the British monarchy with the Christian religion is still indicated by and on every coin of the realm by the title, "Defender of the Faith," originally given to King Henry the Eighth (1509-47) for defending Catholicism against the Reformation, and still preserved by his successors, rather ironically, for defending the Reformation against Catholicism!

That monarchy, as and when considered as a social institution, derives at least in part, from religion and, in particular, from the God-Idea, from the concept of "almighty God, the King of Kings," is known to all students of comparative religion. Whether, indeed, "The State" derived ultimately from "God," as the Russian anarchist, Michael Bakunin, proclaimed in his famous work, "God and the State," or vice versa, as sociologists of other, perhaps more orthodox schools, have predicated, it is at any rate certain that monarchy has usually been derived from a supposedly divine mandate: the earthly sovereign derives his absolute supremacy over his subjects from the Universal Monarch who was "the only ruler of princes." The doctrine of the "Divine Right" and, we may suppose, in its earlier stages, of the divine origin of the earthly monarch accompanies the institution of kingship like its shadow. From the West African potentate who is still supposed to derive his legal right to rule from his occupancy of the fetish-consecrated tribal stool, right up to the present consecration of British monarchs in Westminster Abbey by Christian priests with the holy oil, the institution of monarchy displays its permanent association with the supernatural, and its ultimate derivation from supernatural origins.

However, the universal principle of evolution embraces even the most conservative institutions, including monarchy, in its transforming scope. Whilst some weirdly archaic customs, such as the still existing coronation ritual, indicate that monarchy preserves its continuity with its supernatural past, a modern constitutional monarchy, such as exists in, say, the British Commonwealth and the Scandinavian lands, bears little actual relationship to the original monarchs, the god-kings of the ancient East. The French political theorist, Benjamin Constant, made the acute observation that a constitutional monarchy, such as that which already existed in Britain when he wrote in the early 19th century, whilst it represented a monarchy in form, yet actually resembled a republic in substance. With but rare and rapidly diminishing exceptions the kings and queens of to-day bear a far closer political resemblance to the not very powerful president of a European republic than they do to such earlier monarchs as the ancient Roman Caesars or to the absolute monarchy

of "The Sun King" ("I am the State"). Louis XIV (1643-1715), before the French Revolution put an effective end to "the Divine Right of Kings to govern wrong."

When we turn from the general to the particular, from monarchy in general to the British monarchy, one observes the principle of political evolution also actively at work. Long before 1789 first domiciled republican principles upon the European Continent, the English people had already summarily settled their account with the Stuart Dynasty and its attendant dogma of Divine Right which, as the present writer has observed elsewhere, was, prior to the "glorious revolution" of 1688, "virtually the 40th article of the Anglican Church." It is well known how, after the death of the last Protestant Stuart, Queen Anne (1702-14), the governing classes thrown up by the revolutionary sequence in the 17th century, brought over the present Hanoverian Dynasty from Germany to fulfil a political role which we may, perhaps accurately describe as that of rubber stamps for the new revolutionary regime set up in 1688.

The accession of this German dynasty which Charles Bradlaugh was later to describe as "small breast-bested wanderers," represented the end of monarchy in its traditional absolutist sense. (One of George the First's principal "qualifications" for the Throne from the point of view of the Whig "Mayors of the Palace" who engineered his accession, was that he spoke no English!). When, later on, George the Third made an attempt to govern as well as reign, he not only lost America, but very nearly lost his throne as well.

To-day, the British monarchy is, as an institution, popular and respected. Its abolition does not form part of the programme of any currently significant political party and no serious republican movement is known to exist. However, this state of things is still comparatively recent. The obituary notices of the last two Hanoverian kings, George 4th and William 4th, who preceded Victoria, would have provoked a criminal prosecution to-day, though they did not appear in any radical predecessor of *The Daily Worker*, but in the eminently respectable *The Times*! The then ambassador of Tsarist Russia did not expect the British monarchy to survive the young Victoria, and it was not, in fact, until towards the end of her long and highly successful reign that Victoria and, along with her, the British monarchy, acquired its present dignified status.

To-day, in 1952, Republicanism in Britain is scarcely "practical politics," as it was, for example, even as late as the generation of Bradlaugh and Foote. We doubt very much if there is a single constituency in present-day Britain where, assuming an election to be fought on the sole issue of the monarchy, a republican candidate would save his or her deposit. However, it is probably safe to assume that the great majority of secularists regard the republican form of government as a more adult, a more rational and democratic form of government than any system of hereditary monarchy. But it must, we think, be conceded that

a monarchy like the British or Scandinavian is in a different category to other types where the monarch is deep in politics, usually for reactionary ends. It is, in any case, difficult to see how, what is, in effect, a federation of mutually independent states like the British Commonwealth, could survive without some common personal link.

Granting all the above, the least, we submit that secularists can demand is that the monarchy shall complete its evolution by divesting itself of the surviving relics of its religious origins, whence there ultimately derives the frequently disgusting flunkeyism that follows monarchy as its sinister shadow. It is high time that "the Will of the People" succeeded "the Grace of God."

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR OF RELIGION

ONE of the most terrible tragedies of European history was the desolating religious conflict in the seventeenth century. Central Europe where, after prolonged barbarism, civilisation had been restored, was reduced to a state of poverty and despair. This appalling conflict began with a Calvinist rebellion in Bohemia, which spread until many European States were involved, although German territories suffered most severely from the war. As Dr. Fisher states in his *History of Europe*: "It is, indeed, impossible to exaggerate the miseries which the helpless peasants of the German Empire were compelled to endure in these iron times. There was marauding, there was starvation, there was even cannibalism. Whole villages died out." Moreover, important cities themselves were reduced to mere shadows of their previous state.

The chief initiator of this devastation was the Jesuit-trained German Emperor, Ferdinand II, who detested and despised his Protestant subjects, and these pestilent heretics he was determined to convert to Romanism, banish, or destroy. Throughout his Austrian dominions this crowned Jesuit mercilessly persecuted the Protestants and, with the restoration of Catholic ascendancy, a revolt arose in Bohemia and the pitiless conflict began.

During the Counter-Reformation the Roman Church thus recovered many of her lost possessions and she was determined to regain control of regions still in the hands of Lutherans and Calvinists.

For some time there had been conflicts between Catholic and Protestants and, when Ferdinand issued a decree prohibiting Bohemian heretics from assembling for religious observances, their leader, Matthias of Thurn, persuaded his Calvinist supporters to defy the Imperial mandate. Then, after a stormy conference in Prague, as our historian avers, two truculent Imperial Ministers and their secretary "were thrown from a window into the castle ditch, an act of premeditated passion designed to notify to all whom the affair might concern that the patience of Bohemian Protestantism was exhausted and that the Calvinists at last were prepared to strike."

Ferdinand was the Emperor of the so-called Holy Roman Empire. This title was conferred on Otto I in A.D. 926 by Pope John XII and gave its possessor, after due election, a predominant position over other German princes. But if the Protestant German rulers had insisted on the observance of toleration before Ferdinand's election, the awful holocaust which followed might have been avoided. Even so, the Lutheran princes lent the Calvinist Bohemians no assistance and, such was the hatred that existed between the two Protestant parties, that at one period the Protestant Saxons fought on Ferdinand's side. On the other hand, the Jesuits were

bent on the restitution of the wealthy sees, with their rich revenues, which had been appropriated by the Protestant princes and, therefore, encouraged and supported the military overthrow of the heretics.

The Bohemian Calvinists were never a powerful community and in default of reinforcements by Hungarian and even Turkish troops proved powerless when assailed by the Imperial forces. The really important German Calvinist State was the Palatinate, whose ruler the Palsgrave was offered the Crown of Bohemia after the insurgent Calvinists had deposed Ferdinand. The Elector Palatine, Frederick V, was the son-in-law of James I of England, and popular opinion in this country strongly favoured intervention on behalf of the persecuted Protestants abroad. But James I declined to send armed aid to the Palsgrave who was signally defeated in a battle near Prague, and sought safety in flight. The Bohemian Calvinists were now left to the tender mercies of the infuriated Ferdinand and the Church. Persecution became now so systematic that Bohemian Protestantism disappeared to the point of extinction.

Nor was this all, for the Palsgrave's dominions were transferred to Maximilian, the head of the Catholic League. This arbitrary proceeding revived the struggle for the Palatinate was the most fiercely Calvinist State in Germany.

Denmark was induced to enter the fray, ostensibly as a Protestant Power, but perhaps with her King's eye on the possible pillage of Catholic possessions. An alliance with Saxon princes was arranged and the war went on.

Thus far, the Catholic successes were under the leadership of Maximilian of Bavaria, and the Emperor Ferdinand began to fear a possible rival to the Imperial throne. It was consequently considered expedient to appoint another military commander and then the famous soldier, Wallenstein, came to the front, and he and Tilly soon overcame their antagonists and the Protestant cause seemed completely lost.

Appearances, however, proved deceptive. The unruly armies of Wallenstein plundered Catholic and Protestant alike, and adherents of both parties began to suspect that the Imperialist leaders, as well as the Jesuits, were far more interested in temporal gains than in spiritual aspirations.

The French statesman, Cardinal Richelieu, also grew uneasy at the increasing power of the German Holy Roman Empire, so detrimental to France, and he secretly planned a Swedish invasion of Germany to reanimate the Protestant cause. Sweden's heroic King, Gustavus Adolphus, led an experienced army into Germany and proved a highly successful commander. As his right to the Swedish throne had been denied by Ferdinand, and a greater influence over the Baltic was desirable, Gustavus as a sincere Protestant was all the more anxious to lessen the Catholic power. Wallenstein had become master of Northern Germany and Protestantism appeared completely eclipsed when Gustavus' rapidly victorious campaign and his crushing defeat of Tilly's much larger army at Breitenfeld in September, 1613, with the advance of the Swedish forces to Prague "in the East and to Mainz and Worms in the West, the final defeat of Tilly on the Leche and Gustavus' entry into Munich, constituted a dazzling achievement, which long fixed the admiration of Europe. In less than two years the fortunes of the two creeds had been violently reversed."

This series of successes was, indeed, spectacular, but the Catholic population suspected Sweden's designs on German territory, while the unavoidable exactions of

Gustavus' army were bitterly resented. A foreign army, poorly provisioned, and compelled to subsist on an alien community can never hope to become popular. Then Gustavus himself received a fatal wound on the blood-stained field of Lützen in 1632, and the combat did not end until 1648, with the Peace of Westphalia when, let us hope, the last of the Wars of Religion came to a close. Yet, the peace failed to secure toleration to the Protestants of Bohemia.

T. F. PALMER.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF BUDDHISM

THE study of Buddhism is important to the *sociologist*, for this great reform movement in India in the sixth century B.C. was one of the greatest and most radical reactions in favour of the universal rights of man as belonging to the individual, as opposed to the crushing tyranny of the so-called divine privileges of birth and rank. It is the work of an individual man who became known as the Buddha; the "Enlightened One," and his early disciples, who rose up in Eastern India against the Brahmanical hierarchy; and by the simplicity and the moral power of their teaching opened out a new era in the history of Indian ethical ideas.

The Buddha's First Sermon to his five disciples, called the "Noble Eightfold Path of Deliverance," has been summed up so well in the words of Sir Edwin Arnold:—

"Man has no 'fate' except past deeds;

No hell but what he makes:

No heaven too high

For him to reach whose passions sleep subdued."

It is most interesting to study the laws of polity by which the early Buddhist Sangha (Church or Community) was governed: they betray a remarkable maturity of development. They must have passed through many stages before reaching that completeness which characterise them in the Vali scripture—Vinaya-pitaka. We may suspect that many of these legal institutions did not surely originate in the Buddhist Sangha itself. There must have been borrowing and adaptation, for, as Humbolt has said: "Man ever connects on—from what lies close at hand." The general background of primitive *Paribrājaka** life, together with the political theories and practices of the ancient Indians should therefore be explored in order to discover, if possible, the origins of these institutions.

The leading note of early Buddhist polity, as we shall see, was one of republican church government. This striking fact has been pointed out by Dr. Oldenberg:—

"The Order of Buddhists presents, so long as the Master is alive, a union of teacher and scholars after the Brahmanical model. The transition of such a community so to speak, from a monarchical type to a republican, its passing somehow when the Teacher dies, into a confederacy of independent members existing side by side, is wholly unknown to the religious systems of the Brahmans. This very transition has completed itself in Buddhism."

When, in course of time, the original community of Bhikkhus was broken up into several monastic communities (Sanghas) belonging to different *āvāsas* (Buddhist colonies), the republican idea was consistently maintained. In an early Buddhist Sangha there was no one answering to an "abbot." One who aspired to such a position in an *āvāsa* was condemned as a fool. For the conduct of the affairs of the Sangha—its trials, deliberations, and other business—a learned and virtuous person among them

*Paribrājakas—wandering ascetics of different sects who live outside the organisation of society.

would be appointed president. But his character was strictly representative. "If he is charged with a mission, he takes it upon himself properly; and in the business of the Sangha he does what they tell him; when a number of Bhikkhus despatches him somewhere, he obeys their command, but he does not think thereon: 'It is I who do this.'" (Mahavagga X, 6, 3).

The point was debated as to whether the Acariya should be unquestioningly followed was raised at the Council of Vesāli, and was ruled out. There is no place for such obedience as is insisted on, for instance, in the *Règula Benedicti*, in the whole corpus of Vinaya-pitaka. Deference is limited to respectful attention to seniors. In contrast, if we consult Gibbon in his *Decline and Fall*, chapter XXXII on the Christian Monastic Institution, we find:—

"A blind submission to the commands of the abbot, however absurd or even criminal they might seem, was the ruling principle, the first virtue of the Egyptian monks; and their patience was frequently exercised by the most extravagant trials."

In contrast, the vow of *obedience*, as Rhys Davids points out, was never taken by the Buddhist monks or nuns; mental culture, not mental death, was the aim set before the Buddhist ascetic by the Founder of his Order. Each one is to conquer self by himself; and the observance of no ceremony, the belief in no creed, will avail him who fails in obtaining this complete mastery over himself. Outward respect and courtesy is exacted from the novice, but his own salvation, and his usefulness as a teacher, depends on his self culture; he is to obey not his brother but the Law; his superior has no supernatural gifts of wisdom or of absolution, and by himself must he stand or fall.

R. J. JACKSON.

(To be concluded)

"MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING" By William Shakespeare. Phoenix Theatre

THIS is perhaps the most outstanding Shakespeare play shown in the West-End since the war. The piece is one of Shakespeare's lightest, and its presentation is well studied and pleasing. Not least deserving of merit are Mariano Andreu's costumes and scenery; he has a good eye for blending colour and uses it to full effect.

Moreover, the changes of scenery, effected before the audience, are really ingenious. For instance, we have the outside of a church, and almost by the swing of a door we enter inside and have a complete change of atmosphere.

We see John Gielgud in humorous vein as Benedick, and Diana Wynyard plays opposite him as Beatrice. Their performances are excellent and are worth a visit irrespective of the rest. Dorothy Tutin, who came to the fore in last season's *Old Vic*, gives much character to Hero. Paul Schofield, after his success in *Ring Round the Moon*, now distinguishes himself by withdrawing somewhat into the shadows in the rather small rôle of Don Pedro. Lewis Casson gives an impressive performance as Leonato and Robert Hardy aptly fills the rôle of Claudio. George Ross is a fine actor, but I am not easy about his present performance as Dogberry and would like to see him exercise some restraint.

John Gielgud has directed as meticulously as usual, but I would like to see a production of his in which the players do not move in such a manner as to suggest that they have been drilled into taking up their positions. However, Mr. Gielgud is almost beyond reproach and his contributions to this play are of high value.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

ACID DROPS

The tragic death of King George VI must have been felt by nearly all his subjects, but the indecent haste with which the religious section of the B.B.C. rushed in to capitalise on the event must bring nothing but the greatest contempt from all but the most hopeless of our Fundamentalists. Naturally, no one expected that the more humorous programmes would have been broadcasted as if nothing had happened; but, on the other hand, the public might have been spared the wailing and whining which went on unceasingly under the aegis of religion. If the B.B.C. could have compelled everybody to go in for the traditional sackcloth and ashes, it would have cheerfully done so.

Hour after hour we were forced to listen—if we wanted to use the radio—to a spate of Memorial Services, Prayers, Hymn-singing, Epilogues, Valedictories, Talks by parsons, bishops, archbishops, moderators, and a cardinal. One sermonising gentleman we heard, went off into a rapturous eulogy of Jesus Christ as the greatest ever, completely forgetting the King. As the *Daily Express* surprisingly said, it was all nothing but “gloom, gloom, gloom.” This was surprising because there is nothing too silly in the Christian religion which is not heartily believed in by the *Daily Express*. Perhaps the writer forgot about Lord Beaverbrook. But, of course, it was right. True religion has never been anything else but fear and gloom.

There was one thing deliberately ignored in all this by the B.B.C. It is that the public pay for its set-up. It is their fees that make broadcasting possible. But has any member of the public any right whatever, though it pays the piper, to call the tune? Not a scrap. Under a Charter granted it by a democratically elected Parliament, it has become completely and defiantly Totalitarian. And this is particularly the case with its religious section. The way in which the B.B.C. closed down on the death of the King, and then forthwith forced on to the paying public its rubbishy “gloom, gloom, gloom,” under the name of religion, was a disgrace to democracy. We wonder whether any member of Parliament will have the guts to say so when the question of the renewal of the B.B.C.’s Charter comes up for discussion?

The accession of Queen Elizabeth the Second has been accompanied by what we may perhaps describe as a spate of mystical numerology. Because Queen Elizabeth the First presided over a particularly outstanding period of English history, therefore, her present namesake and successor must inaugurate a new “Elizabethan” age. “What’s in a name?” asked the greatest Elizabethan writer. The secret of prosperity, according to the Sunday Press.

Broadcasting upon the evening of Sunday, February 10, the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Griffin, held up the late King George the Sixth as a model of Christian virtue, whom all Christians—including, presumably, all Catholics—should admire and imitate. With all due respect to his late Majesty, this seems a trifle peculiar advice from a Roman Cardinal. For, from the Catholic point of view, the late king was a heretic, a schismatic, and “defender of the (rival) Faith.” If heretics can be models of Christian virtue, why did the Catholic Church burn so many in order to save their souls?

It is not often in this journal that we find ourselves in agreement with our Holy Father, the Pope. However, we must applaud his pronouncement in favour of Sunday sports delivered to the “International Association of Sports

Journalists.” The grim old Calvinistic Sabbath, in which any sort of pleasure was sinful, represented one of the most terrible aberrations of the human spirit. As Lord Macaulay declared in an immortal phrase; “The Puritans objected to bear-baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators.”

The final outcome of the egregious Mr. Beverley Nichols’ investigations into religion in England, in spite of the fact that he found one medium “uncannily” accurate, is that he remains, as he was at the beginning, a member of the Church of England. Did anyone expect anything else? He devoted a few minutes to a study of the case for Free-thought, and evidently felt that was enough. And, anyway, judging by those of his articles we have read, we feel that after all the Church of England had better have him.

That indefatigable searcher after crime and “gospel truth,” Miss Dorothy Sayers, has now produced a play with the startling title of “Christ’s Emperor.” The monarch in question was none other than the Roman Emperor Constantine (A.D. 275-337), usually described as “the first Christian emperor.” May we remind the learned author that Constantine was not a very good Christian, since he was only baptised just before death and went on building Pagan temples to the last day of his life. Also that he murdered his wife and son and made a regular practice of throwing his German prisoners-of-war to the wild beasts in the arena. We do not think that “Christ’s Emperor” was any particular credit to Christ or to Christianity.

Martin Borman, Hitler’s former deputy, managed, somehow, to escape from the fate which overtook his colleagues and is believed to be alive “somewhere in Morocco.” Recently, somebody produced what purported to be a photograph of the missing Fuhrer. Now, however, we are told that the photo is that of a Franciscan monk, named also Martin. No doubt it is not a coincidence that “spiritual” and secular Fascists are so much alike as to be easily confused.

Our American contemporary, the *New York Herald*, makes the following comment on the recent Indian elections: “India’s aboriginals who worship everything from snakes to the sun, are busy these days trekking through the jungle to pay their respects to a new god whose name they have been told is “vote.” We are all in favour of democracy—who is not nowadays?—but we hope that our Indian friends will not treat it merely as their new fetish in place of their old.

“If we were disestablished,” declared Dr. Fisher, the present Archbishop of Canterbury, the feeling would be at once that England had repudiated the Christian Faith.” However, we notice that, with the modesty of a true Christian, His Grace did not mention the financial aspect of disestablishment and the not inconsiderable change for the worse that this would imply for himself and for his episcopal colleagues in the Anglican hierarchy at present subsidised by the State.

ZEALOT

I pound on my pulpit with passion.
Dispelling the dread demon, Doubt;
But few can conceive what I really believe—
And I haven’t time to find out.

A. E. C.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Will correspondents who cite books by name please give, where possible, dates of publication and author's name? This will save *The Freethinker* staff a good deal of trouble, also dates of articles cited.

HAROLD SHAW (Derby).—We don't deny that the matters to which you refer are of importance to Socialists. We must again point out that as we are not a political paper such problems are outside our scope.

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

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

The Conway Hall meeting on *The B.B.C. versus Democracy* took place as advertised on February 14, at 7 p.m. In his opening remarks the Chairman, Mr. F. A. Ridley, drew attention to the gross lack of elementary democratic principle displayed in practice by the B.B.C., an organisation which was always appealing to democracy. A body run by public funds, has become, in fact, a religious-controlled monopoly which exclusively "puts across" the views of the minority of orthodox Christians and refuses to admit any free discussion on religion, as also on other minority opinions. The old American slogan, *No Taxation without Representation*, fully applied with regard to the B.B.C. The points stressed by the Chairman were then emphasised and elaborated in four fighting speeches by Mrs. Janet Chance, Messrs. Victor Morris, E. W. Shaw and Len Ebury.

A keen discussion then indicated the audience's interest in the subject and many controversial points were raised. The question was raised whether it was really accurate to describe the B.B.C. as a "government department." However, whatever its internal organisation may be, the fact is, as the platform pointed out in reply, the Corporation is set up by Act of Parliament, paid for by public funds, and its governors are appointed by the Crown. Several speakers disclaimed any desire to turn over broadcasting to "Free enterprise." In his concluding remarks the Chairman announced that on March 13, the N.S.S. would hold another meeting in the Conway Hall in order to demand the Disestablishment of the Church of England. It is hoped that representatives of other Rationalist bodies will be amongst the speakers on March 13.

Our Continental contemporary, the German *Freidenker* (*Freethinker*) reminds its readers that the month of February is particularly rich in notable Freethought anniversaries, such as the following: February 12, 1837, Ludwig Borne died; February 17, 1600, Giordano Bruno was burned at Rome; February 17, 1827, Pestalozzi died; February 17, 1856, Heinrich Heine died; February 21, 1677, Spinoza died; February 23, 1616, The Holy Office declared that the Earth did *not* move round the sun; February 22, 1732, George Washington, the founder of the first secular State in the modern world—U.S.A.—was born.

"THE FREETHINKER" FUND

Donations for week ended Saturday, February 16, 1952:—
F. H. Snow, £1; R. Aksed, 9s.; Fred Brown, £1; A. Hancock, 1s.
Total for week: £2 10s.
Total received to date: £459 15s. 8d.

INDUSTRY

An Allegorical Story

THE priest saw the van which brought the four men to the lamp-post. It crossed his mind that four hefty electricians were a big crew to repair one street lamp when perhaps the trouble was no more than a broken bulb. He heard one of the electricians say to his comrades, "Shall I tell you what I think about women? Women to me are loot!" The man seemed to have no bones in his face, and his mates did not seem to be impressed with his boast. They lolled about waiting to make some remark of their own. The priest shut the window and went to his desk where he was writing a history of the Church and its championship of the working classes. It was going to be a daring book.

But, somehow, during the morning the priest found that for five or ten minutes at a stretch he couldn't remember what he was supposed to be doing. For five or ten minutes life was shockingly superfluous. At one point he wondered if he ought to go to Istanbul, for no other reason than that he'd always longed to go there. "I don't see," he told himself, "what else I could do." Then he pulled himself together and reminded himself how much he despised the bishop's decrepit chauffeur who could only say "Tut-tut" to a broken-down automobile. The bishop kept the man out of charity.

The priest went to his lunch at the usual time. He noticed that the workmen were now sitting on the pavement. One of them, a hulk of a fellow, looked as if he moved his little eyes independently of his face behind a papier mâché mask. The priest shuddered. For once he ate his meal out of charity. His housekeeper tried so hard to cook things to please him; but for once the priest had no appetite.

When he got back to his room he was exhausted. He had to lie on his bed and he fell into a doze. He dreamed that his grandfather was sitting at his typewriter. The old man's beard was floating out in front of him as it had done when the ancient took his afternoon dip in the village duck pond. (Oh dear! what a step up in the social scale the priest had taken when he joined the Church!). In his dream the priest was annoyed with his grandfather and he asked him sharply when he thought that the book which he was typing would be finished. The ancient glared at the priest angrily, and he said, "Not in your time, young man, not in your time." The priest thought he saw worms in the tunnels of the old man's eyes.

The next thing the priest knew was that his room was being burgled by a man with no hands and when he tried to call the police he found that he had no voice. He woke in panic, and he had to do it—he had to go to the window.

They were no longer sitting on the pavement. Two of them were lolled on the garden wall of the house opposite. The one with the boneless face was encircling the lamp-post with his arms. The man with the darting eyes was holding a lighted match for the postman. . . . How plain our postman is, the priest thought, and don't they say that the nasty things come through the post in plain wrappers? . . . He knew it was irrational to let his

anger take control of him; but what about those imbecile experiments when scientists cut off the legs of dogs and then say the animals show a marked decline in intelligence. Cannot science make one angry?

His anger grew because he couldn't . . . he couldn't work so long as the workmen went on doing nothing outside his window. He tried to stop himself from hating. He looked at other people in the street. . . . A woman with a stream-lined pram. On the race from the cradle to the grave? Did God, then, taken seven days to make the world because he wasn't keeping his mind on the job? . . . But suddenly one of the electricians lounging against the wall noticed the priest. He was an athlete with fair hair who wore his belt half-way down his trousers; but now he was a man who'd swallowed a shark. He opened his mouth to show large pointed teeth.

Then they were all laughing at the priest. He was the joke. Clearly they couldn't work while he gaped at them from his window. Then they were scowling. The priest could see them muttering. He could guess what they were saying. They were saying, "The bastard! look at him! Why can't he shove off and let us get on with our work?"

So the men and the priest were caught, trapped, interlocked. They glared at each other because they couldn't move . . . this side of madness. Yet it was growing dark. Soon it would be time to light the street lamps. . . .

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

SCIENCE v. SUPERNATURALISM

IN perusing Mr. Rowland's article "Religion and Science," one is struck by the assumptions made. For instance, "The usual arguments so often advanced by atheists and agnostics to the effect that science is essentially irreligious," "scientists cannot be in any way religious men." Is J. R. in earnest in presenting such a mixture as argument? I claim that the first part of the quotation is true, just as the second is obviously false. Scientists are and always have been in their mental attitudes and reactions, the same as other humans, capable of holding the most diverse and even contradictory views at one and the same time, and the real question, as I have pointed out before, is not what personal views scientists or others have held or do hold either on religious or any other questions. And when it is confidently affirmed that many of the greatest figures, drawn from the contemporary world or from the world of the past, are more religious than would have been thought possible in the 1890's, really! I have been acquainted with a considerable amount of religious apologetics by scientists, particularly since the publication of the *Origin of Species* (1859) and would be at a loss to mention a time when scientists professing Christianity did not claim that their faith was in harmony with the scientific discoveries of the day. But all this is beside the point, as is the question as to whether T. H. Huxley and J. B. S. Haldane are or were qualified theologians. The question is, to put it in a nutshell, does Huxley's scientific attitude on, say, the demon-possessed porkers need revision owing to more recent scientific discoveries, or is it as true now as when Huxley replied to Gladstone in the "Nineteenth Century"? And the same test applies to anything Haldane has said or will say. In discussing this question it is surely not necessary to quote the views of some scientists, however eminent, to prove that religion is in accord with present-day knowledge. Does Mr. Rowland himself, for instance, believe in the demonic religion of the synoptics, in a heaven just above our heads where God spoke from at the baptism of Jesus, and where Jesus ascended to? And that Stephen saw into? Does he believe that the wind bloweth where

it listeth, that it is sentient and can be influenced by rebukes? Or in the creation of the sexes as recorded in Genesis and supported by Jesus and made the foundation of his teaching on divorce? It is the answer to these questions, a very small section, that gives the answer to the relation of science and religion to-day, for if J. R. finds the things quoted incompatible not merely with science but also with common sense, the reader of these discussions will form his own judgment as to the merits of the case.

JAMES H. MATSON.

EXTRACT FROM "THE MEANING OF MATERIALISM"

By JOHN M. ROBERTSON (1902)

"TO what conclusions, then, do we finally come as regards 'the meaning of materialism'? Let us try to put them formally and concisely:—

1. The attitude of mind and the scientific method commonly labelled 'materialism' are simply the attitude and the method which alone have delivered science from superstition and made its continuous progress possible.

2. In rejecting the barbaric fantasies of spiritism—the necessary process of negation which gave rise to the word 'materialism'—thinking men have never pretended to reduce the universe to what the spiritists call 'matter'; rather they have sought to conceive of the entire universe as consisting in an infinite variety of modes of one existence, of which the only honest ideal abstraction they can make is the broad conception of infinite Continuity. Coherence, Law.

3. In putting forward that conception they do not profess to have 'explained' a universe which they regard as infinite; rather they are rejecting as an imposture the conservation of the ancient pretence of explaining it by affirming the countersense of 'Infinite Personality plus Infinite Matter.' Materialism, so called, is an honest avowal of the limits of knowledge. It is spiritism that arrogantly and ineptly undertakes to conceive of infinitude in terms of the relatively trivial measure of 'mind.'

If, then, the student is bent on acknowledging the truth wherever it may lead him, he will not go about to rehabilitate the credit of spiritism by methods which utterly disguise its history and its errors, but will recognise that 'materialism' has performed an inestimable service by logically driving spiritism out of the field. That service once recognised, 'materialism' ceases to be a significant term: only in relation to spiritism had it meaning; and when spiritistic delusions are abandoned we are left to speak, not of materialism, nor of Monism, which is merely another antithetic name, negating Dualism, nor even of Naturalism, which is in turn the negation of Supernaturalism, but simply of science and philosophy, or, let us say, science or philosophy, since true philosophy is but a higher generalisation on scientific lines. *But so long as the delusions of Spiritism are thrust upon us, the name Materialism has substantially the same value and justification as Monism or Naturalism.*"

(From volume entitled *Explorations* (Watts).)

(Sent in by A. W. DAVIS.)

NEW CHIEF

The Lord's been neglected, of late,
In the War against sceptic and bad man;
To keep wide Prosperity's gate—
The Church has to flatter her Ad. Man.

A.E.C.

THE BIBLE AND TELEVISION

IS Television the ideal instrument for the effective propagation of religion? In U.S.A., they appear to think so, to judge from current practice. Now, we learn, the B.B.C. has appointed a Mr. Colin Beale to "go into the whole question" here. So, soon, we may expect to see the whole Bible story televised. What a treat it will be, for example, to see our old friend Balaam's talking donkey, if not in the flesh, at least on the screen. Perhaps the B.B.C. will give him—or should it be "it"—the job as announcer. The change, we imagine, from some of the present pundits would not be conspicuous.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE CIVIL WAR IN ISRAEL

SIR,—Your strictures on the Religious Bloc in Israel are certainly to be welcomed ("Civil War in Israel"), but your references to Mapam are, I feel, inaccurate. Mapam members of the Israeli Parliament condemned most emphatically the demonstrations organised by the extreme Right and virtually Fascist party Cherut and nobody in Israel has suggested that Mapam supported these demonstrations.

The attitude of Mapam to the question of negotiations with Germany is based on purely Jewish considerations. We feel that these direct negotiations between Jews and Germans implies a condonement of the present neo-Nazi regime in Western Germany and an atonement for German crimes in the past. While the Germans are still unrepentant for the enormities committed by their nation against the Jewish people, we feel that Jews cannot morally engage in these direct talks. Furthermore, we consider that the motive for these talks lies in the desire of the Western Powers to embroil both Germany and Israel in military alliances. This involves a political rapprochement between Germany and the Jews and recognition by Israel of the Bonn regime.

Yet Germany must pay reparations to Israel and the Jewish people: Mapam therefore considers that these reparations should be obtained through international authorities.—Yours, etc.,

R. GAFFIN

(Nat. Sec. Socialist Zionist Party—Mapam).

TRANSUBSTANTIATION

SIR,—In your issue for November 25 are these words: "Bread and Wine are changed into living tissues by swallowing and digestion. If this is not Transubstantiation, what is Transubstantiation?" The first is true, but it can only be done in a natural way—not supernaturally. What is Transubstantiation? It is the Roman Catholic belief that when the Priest takes Bread and Wine and prays and blesses them in his Mass these elements are changed into the **Flesh** and **Blood** of Jesus Christ. The Communicants partake, worship and adore. The Protestant does not believe this but partakes in remembrance of a beloved Master. The Protestant does not believe in Transubstantiation. The Rationalist calls it a myth. There is very little, if any, difference between disbelief in this matter and calling it a myth.

This belief cannot be proved by Christian Theology and the Protestant is free not to believe it. There is no authority or reason why the Roman Catholics should try to make Protestants, or anyone else, believe in it. And also there is no authority or reason why Roman Catholics should try to make anyone believe that a "human soul" is placed in a human embryo in its early stages. Theologically it is putting God into an unfinished temple! Neither should women be regarded as the procuresses of "souls for Heaven," nor as the procuresses of "work-slaves" or cannon fodder for any State.

Neither have the Roman Catholics, nor any other Christian sect, nor any other religion, any "authority" or reason to try to get anyone to believe that human male seed is sacred. That God regarded the seed of Onan as sacred and punished him for "spilling it on the ground" is not proven and cannot be proven. I am quite sure that our beloved G.B.S. believed neither in Transubstantiation nor in the sacredness of human seed. And I am quite sure that no believer in Birth Control believes in the latter—including many Roman Catholics. And it is very difficult to understand why any Protestant should believe that a "human soul" is placed in a human embryo in its early stages. There is no theological *proof* of it, and the Abortion Law Reform Association are not the only ones who do not believe this "fairy-tale."

Why do religions place so many myths, which they cannot prove, before the Human Race?—Yours, etc.,

RUPERT L. HUMPHRIS.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m. Speaker: G. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon, J. M. ALEXANDER and W. G. FRASER.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street).—Sunday, February 24, 7 p.m.: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY (Editor, *The Freethinker*), "The Awakening of Asia Politically."

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: Brains Trust. Mixed team of experts.

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1). Tuesday, February 26: GUILFOYLE WILLIAMS, B.Sc., "Intuition and Intellect."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Miss E. MILLARD, "Off the Record."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (Onward Hall, 207, Deansgate, Manchester, 3).—Saturday, February 23, at 3 p.m., Mr. R. S. W. POLLARD, J.P. (Chairman of Marriage Law Reform Society, London), "Civil Liberties To-day."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Mr. G. PARKER, "From Thomas Paine to Modern Liberalism."

South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, Ph.D., F.R.S.E., "Man and Nature."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: BERT WILLIS, "Charlie Chaplin—Anarchist and Humanist."

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SKULL OF POLITICIAN

I

"IT might be the pate of a politician" comments Hamlet. "One that would circumvent God."

Politicians have not greatly changed during centuries. Except that some lose or weaken their faith in God, while those who retain belief in a deity have realised the impossibility of circumventing the Almighty. So finding it more feasible and profitable, politicians devote themselves to circumventing each other and the people they represent—or misrepresent—and rule over. Results are more disastrous than if politicians confined themselves to circumventing God.

Growth of political interest, fervour at times amounting to fury, is itself disturbing. One wonders whether impetus comes from masses of people themselves or from politicians prompting, if not inspiring, them. Whichever it is, political consciousness is so potent as to be powerful not only nationally but world-wide. This reaches culmination in assertions of Russian Communist politicians that they think for the people.

It is a staggering claim. Charles the First had his head cut off for less. Milder dictatorial pretensions have provoked revolutions. Surprising it is what multitudes of people will endure when trained or propagandised to it.

Problem of controlling and limiting prerogatives of governments and politicians has always exercised philosophers. For that the official Opposition exists in the British Parliament. It gave rise to the theory of checks and balances in political parties of Whig and Utilitarian thinkers, and practice of the Balance of Power in Europe.

In "Sartor Resartus" Carlyle animadvertes upon memoirs of politicians who boasted of holding the reins of government but more often it was the spigot of taxation. Truer is that remark to-day.

Earlier in the same passage Carlyle paraphrases Hamlet on God circumventing politicians by sneering at how these ministerial conjurers outwitted those ministerial conjurers.

Yet Carlyle fell victim himself to the hypnotism of politicians; worship of megalomaniac men.

For they take many forms, one as king. So Carlyle wrote a life of Frederick the Great of Prussia, making little concealment of his admiration for that ruthless and unscrupulous but essentially political monarch.

Carlyle launches out fuller in "Heroes and Hero Worship." Not that his list contains politicians as such, but many are near them, having large resemblances. The state of mind denoting hero-worship easily transfers from other outstanding figures to politicians. Especially now that politicians, not satisfied with being instruments of government are also seizing means of directing public opinion, as radio, press, education and issue of official information disguised under the cryptic phrase "Public Relations."

On Carlyle's apotheosising men of action, Augustine Birrell in "Obiter Dicta" criticises that Carlyle deteriorated to glorifying bullies and tyrants who spend their lives hoodwinking the people till the latter revolt, then no less ignobly shoot them down.

This inevitably leads to the most serious and terrible characteristic of politicians; their power to make war and readiness to do so.

II

"War is a game, which, were their subjects wise, Kings could not play at."

As true now as when written in the eighteenth century it was true through all the centuries before. Kings must

be interpreted in a general sense to mean any and all rulers: princes, emperors, presidents, premiers, fuehrers, gauleiters, dictators, commissars of the people and everyone who exercises authority over them equally with kings.

Unfortunately the problem has become enormously magnified; a thousandfold more difficult by the increased ability as well as eagerness of politicians to circumvent the people additionally to each other. Facilities by which the masses may be led, cajoled or driven along paths politicians desire them to go have become fearfully efficient, terrifying only to a less degree than the mechanisms of war now available to the bellicose minded, which promise complete annihilation, entire as well as swift extinction of the human race.

Despite his perverse temper and variations of mood and utterance, Carlyle continues to give cogent points. He speaks of thirty men of Dumdrudge torn from their homes and work in one country and sent armed to fight thirty men of Dumdrudge in another country. Neither belligerents know why they are to kill each other, because politicians will not tell the truth.

If they do they cease to be successful politicians; cease to have any hold over their dupes, then Dumdrudges would leave off fighting, with the advantages gone which war gives to politicians. Especially fear of war, induced terror that others will attack. This is the most potent weapon in the hands of governments. By its agency national hates and unnatural antipathies are created.

For it is absurd to suppose that races or nations would fight or want to unless egged on by their governments. One has only to look back at wars to see that. Difficult to envisage, nearly impossible to presume that millions of British, French, Germans, Italians, Russians and other nationals would leave work and homes and of their own volition march forth to fight. They only do when told to by war-thirsty governments.

These have gained shocking opportunities of so doing by creation of armies numbering millions of conscripts. Worse, they are prostituting scientific inventions to the purpose of waging further more destructive wars. If not trying now to circumvent God politicians attempt to suborn humanity and bend the forces of nature to those ends.

Hamlet looked upon the empty skull and essayed to guess what thoughts were in it when alive and conscious. We have more to do and harder: to penetrate the pates of politicians, not to discover what is in them—that we know too well. We must inculcate quickly and with insistence newer, nobler and more valuable ambitions and ideas to be fixed there beyond circumvention.

In these days of ferment and changes, when politics seem moving from democracy to dictatorship of the proletariat the latter appears to mean despotism by their party bosses. So again the proposition should be stated emphatically and enforced: that politicians are the servants of the electors, not their masters.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

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