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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Racism in the Dock

THE recent decision of the Supreme Court of South Africa which declared Dr. Malan's latest racial legislation illegal, will meet with warm approval in all progressive circles. For "Racism"—in effect, the "Chosen Race" theory—represents one of the most dangerous delusions of modern times: an American anthropologist has, indeed, aptly described it as "*The modern superstition.*" Nor, as in the case of most superstitions, is its theoretical absurdity unaccompanied by active malevolence: the horrors of the late unlamented Third Reich, with its racial legislation culminating in the mass extermination of unassimilated minorities of Jews and Gypsies, are likely to leave lurid memories for centuries to come; it represented, perhaps, the most terrible of all the terrible episodes in the tragedy-strewn records of human history.

To-day, by a curious irony, the last hide-out of the "herrenvolk" ("master-race") doctrine is to be found in what is, at least, nominally, a member of the British Commonwealth, the Union of South Africa. For the past four years, ever since the present regime of Dr. Malan ousted the late General Smuts at the last General Election in South Africa in April, 1948, Malan and his Boer regime have been busily engaged in artificially dividing South African society into watertight racial compartments. In future, the essential "herrenvolk" dogma, that, in theological language, salvation is, exclusively, a function of the bloodstream; that the white race is, *ipso facto*, genetically and intellectually superior to all coloured races; is to form the essential basis of South African society. Were Messrs. Hitler, Goebbels, and Rosenberg to revisit this life, it is in the present-day South Africa of Dr. Malan that they would find their promised land.

In present-day South Africa, however, if the racial theory and practice of Malan and Company is closely similar to that of Nazi Germany, its origins are actually somewhat different. For Nazi "herrenvolk" doctrine was mainly secular and pseudo-scientific in origin: in her brilliant book, *Race and Racism*, the American sociologist, the late Prof. Ruth Benedict, has lucidly derived the racist dogmas of Hitler and Rosenberg, of *Mein Kampf* and of *The Myth of the Twentieth Century*, from the writings of such earlier champions of racial superiority as the ornate Frenchman, De Gobineau, and the Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain. But neither Gobineau, the aristocratic defender of class-privilege on the ground of the superior race, nor Chamberlain, who transformed what was originally a doctrine and justification of aristocratic privilege into a purely racial dogma of "Nordic" supremacy, were practising Christians: pride, respectively, of class, in the case of Gobineau, and of race in that of H. S. Chamberlain, first begat the abortion of the "herrenvolk." European racism is essentially a social doctrine.

The South African brand of racism, contrarily, is essentially Christian in origin. It stems directly from Calvinistic dogmas of Divine Election and Predestination. Dr. Malan is himself a Calvinist Minister, and the grim

creed of Calvin, the most ruthlessly logical of all the Christian creeds, elsewhere mainly dead or dying, is still a power amongst the Dutch majority in the Union of South Africa. In this part of the world, where a white minority virtually depends for its economic existence on its exploitation of a black race of helots, "hewers of wood and drawers of water," the theology of the "master-race" corresponds with a "master-and-servant" relationship, in fact, a thinly disguised form of slavery, in the social and economic spheres. Long before Malan, or even the present Union of South Africa was ever heard of, Church Councils in South Africa had laid it down that conversion to Christianity gave no immunity from slavery to the black races, and that the institution of chattel slavery itself was divinely authorised by the verbally-inspired Mosaic law. If, as we are so often reminded, Christianity has its roots in the Old Testament, so, also, have both the institution of slavery and the dogma of "The Chosen Race." One has only to read certain of the "inspired" books of the Old Testament, notably *Judges*, *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, to observe the truth expressed by a recent writer on the subject:—

"Both the ancient Jews and the modern Nazis know *what* (italics in original) a 'Chosen Race' is; they only disagree *which* (as above) it is; upon the subject of the 'master race,' the Canonical *Book of Ezra* and *Mein Kampf* both speak with a single voice." (Cp., George Maranz—*Le Malediction D'Esdras.*)

Since the days of Cromwell, Calvinists have had the Old Testament constantly on their lips. Dr. Malan's racial legislation marks a long step forward—or, more precisely, backward—in the social evolution of Christianity.

The "master-race" theory itself is not new, nor, of course, is it confined to the white races. Brahmin society in India, the original "Aryan" society, has long been based upon the caste system; and it is to the point to recall that the Hindu word for "caste" is "varna," or "colour," which strips the origin of the caste system of any ambiguity. Actually, the original Aryan promulgators of the racist dogma have, ironically enough, ceased to be *white* men! However, Hitler, who borrowed the Hindu swastika, was actually only trying to introduce the caste system of his "Aryan" ancestors into Europe.

The dogmas of racism are not, however, peculiarly "Aryan" in origin; the Chinese, until quite recent times, regarded all "foreign devils" as barbarians, just like the ancient Greeks. The modern Japanese have claimed to be the predestined conquerors of the world by virtue of their inherent racial superiority, as formulated in Shintoism and openly expressed in the famous *Tanaka Memorandum*, addressed by the then Prime Minister of Japan, Baron Tanaka, to the present Emperor in 1928.

Perhaps inevitably, the white racists in South Africa are busily engaged in creating, by way of reaction, a black "master-race" dogma, which, so far, has only taken a religious form. At least one black Church lays it down as "an article of faith" that Christ was a *black* man! It is not, perhaps, an accident that this Church represents

the formerly invincible Zulu tribe, the former conquerors of South Africa: Dr. Malan's "Apartheid" policy may be reaping a whirlwind in both the political and the religious spheres. Is his neo-Calvinism predestining Africa to the most terrible racial war of modern times?

Racial doctrines which rise from conditions of colonial imperialism can be traced back to the Spanish conquest of the Americas when Spanish (Catholic) theologians were found to declare that: "Indians are as different from Spaniards as monkeys from men." The contemporary champions of "Apartheid" would probably agree with this dictum, applied to their negro and coloured populations. But how far is it true? That no negro culture has yet arisen equal to those of Europe and Asia must, we think, be conceded. Nor has a negro "Darwin," "Shakespeare" or "Beethoven" yet put in an appearance. (A black Napoleon or Bismarck—perhaps?) But how far is this due to unfavourable circumstances rather than to innate racial inferiority? Africa has had many handicaps; an atrocious climate, cultural isolation, the slave trade—for which this country was largely responsible. A Chinese contemporary of Confucius who surveyed the Europe of his day, could have formed similar conclusions about the European barbarians, the social level of whom was roughly the equivalent to that of the Kaffir tribes whom Dr. Malan's ancestors found in South Africa. Would it not be advisable to wait and see before jumping to hasty conclusions? Other peoples who began from a similar level have, subsequently, not done too badly!

Meanwhile, we may hope that the recent court judgment may do something to restore racial sanity and to discredit a brutal and unscientific anachronism leading directly to racial conflict on a, perhaps, continental scale.

F. A. RIDLEY.

A CELEBRATED VICTORIAN PIONEER

THE most comprehensive biography of Florence Nightingale is that penned by Cecil Woodham Smith (Constable, 1950). Her heroine will always rank as one of the greatest social reformers of the 19th century. She was born at Florence in Italy, in 1820 and lived to the ripe age of 90 in 1910. The younger daughter of a member of the upper middle class, the first child to be named Florence, she has been succeeded by countless others. The biography under review runs to nearly 600 pages and contains much information hitherto unpublished. Florence's father was wealthy and she and her sister Parthenope, encouraged by their mother's passion for social festivities, shone in society. But while the sister revelled in parties and dances, Florence became more and more indifferent to the gaities of fashionable life. She imagined she heard a divine voice and she prayed to the unseen power which she called God, for guidance, as to her mission in life. She morbidly supposed that the nature of her mission was withheld from her because of her frivolous existence. Day dreaming of an unpleasant character persistently depressed her and to her parents and sister she appeared abnormal. The "voices" she imagined at the age of 17 were, according to her own account, not confined to the age of adolescence. For forty years later she declared that in the course of her career her "voices" had addressed her four times.

She became convinced that she had an aptitude for nursing the sick and implored her parents to permit her to nurse in a hospital. This suggestion aroused horror and resentment. That their beautiful and accomplished daughter, with every advantage in life, should undertake so menial a task was disgusting and led to serious family estrangement. The mother and sister were so antagonistic

that home life grew intolerable. Nor was their animosity towards a scheme that they declared would be the ruin of Florence's life entirely unreasonable. For, as her biographer states: "In 1845 hospitals were places of wretchedness, degradation and squalor. 'Hospital smell,' the result of dirt and lack of sanitation, was accepted as unavoidable, and was commonly so overpowering that persons entering the wards for the first time were seized with nausea." Even fifteen years later, despite a few improvements, conditions were still deplorable. Unclean beds and clothing, dirty water and little ventilation, with drunken and incontinent nurses, the hospitals themselves produced diseases.

Despite disapproval, Florence tended the sick poor on one of her father's estates, and was at last allowed to nurse a dying relative and an old afflicted servant.

She made many influential friends, including Milnes, afterwards Lord Houghton. He was a gifted, versatile man of letters, who desired to marry her, but, much as she loved him, she refused his offer as she persuaded herself that the sacrifice of her "mission" was tantamount to the sin against the Holy Ghost. For Milnes was an intellectual who entertained all the celebrities of the day, and once, when Carlyle was asked what would first happen if Christ returned to earth, he answered that Moncton Milnes would invite him to breakfast.

With the support of sympathetic friends, Florence was enabled to visit and officiate at an institution at Kaiserwerth. Yet, when she met her relatives in Cologne, they treated her as if she were a criminal. The distressing state of family affairs and her Roman experiences turned her thoughts to Catholicism, where her nursing abilities would be fully employed. She sounded Manning, then a recent convert to Rome, and told him that her troubles would end if she entered the Church. Yet, strangely enough, she was engaged in inquiries utterly at variance with Rome. For in 1852 she was seeking the reasons why unbelief had spread so widely among the working classes in the northern counties, with some of whom she had become acquainted. Several of these were adherents of G. J. Holyoake, the Owenite Co-operator and Freethinker. Also it appears that: "In London during 1852 a mysterious 'West End Lady' called repeatedly at Edward Truelove's bookshop—he was a publisher of freethinking literature, and his shop was described as a fortress of prohibited thought—and held long conversations on the type of book read by intelligent working men. The 'West End Lady' was Miss Nightingale, and her friendship with the Trueloves, in spite of Edward Truelove's subsequent prosecution, lasted for more than twenty years."

Manning asked what she deemed "the attitude of working men towards the Christian faith." She then answered that: "the most thinking and conscientious of the artisans have no religion at all." In the leading manufacturing districts, intelligent workers had "almost gone over to Atheism" and would not read a book favourable to religion. So she wrote a tract in which she strove to prove that Freethought is not incompatible with Deism. As the term "God" seemed unsatisfactory to the Secularists, she used such terms as Absolute, the Perfect, while contending that the moral world was as subject to the reign of law as the physical universe, as interpreted by modern science.

Her manuscript was shown to friends and artisans. It ignored redemption and made no appeal to Christ. Her divinity was God the Father only. Naturally, when Manning perused her writing, he decided she was not an acceptable convert to Rome. Florence was still willing to serve as a sister, but her submission to Catholic dogma was frankly impossible.

Miss Nightingale departed from home and served an apprenticeship at a hospital in Harley Street. There, she overcame all official obstruction by proving her great administrative ability. Not only were conditions immensely improved, but her financial methods reduced expenditure. Still, these successes were but a prelude of her world famous reforms during the Crimean War, when Sidney Herbert, then Minister at War, implored her to recruit a body of nurses to attend the sick and wounded in that ill-starred campaign. For *The Times'* war correspondent's revelations of the awful conditions in the Crimea infuriated public opinion. Unfortunately, Herbert, who was not responsible for the ineptitude of the War Office, was most bitterly blamed, and he did his best to remedy the evil. Florence went to the Barrack Hospital at Scutari, near Constantinople, where she found conditions as appalling as those described in *The Times*. Sanitation was unknown there, and the wounded were dying from diseases contracted in the hospital. When Miss Nightingale entered the building in 1854, "there were ominous signs of approaching disaster. . . . Food, drugs, medical necessities, had already run short, the Barrack Hospital was without equipment and in the Crimea supply was breaking down. Winter was swiftly advancing and each week the number of sick sent to Scutari steadily increased."

Those who saw the impending calamity were powerless to prevent it. The methods of the health department were so alien to energy or initiative that they "removed responsibility and were the death of common sense." In fact, every reform was strangled with red tape.

Having influential supporters in London, Florence and her nurses were courteously received, but the doctors frowned on women in hospitals and, although extensive purchases of supplies had been made, one doctor only accepted the services of the nurses or use of Florence's supplies. Money was available from *The Times* Fund, but the medical staff refused to accept civilian assistance, especially from a fund coming from a journal from whose exposure of the army authorities, the doctors among others, were smarting.

Miss Nightingale saw that she must gain the confidence of the medicos and postponed all offers of help until they asked for it. She was determined to prove that she would act only under medical authority; yet, it was agonising to see the sufferings around her and still remain inactive.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded)

FALLACY OF HINDU THOUGHT

(Concluded)

RELIGIOUS people, therefore, seek to root out, or sublimate, their desires, and thus bring about a perversion in what is natural and healthy. The result is the development of a psychological complex. Surely this ideal of self-mortification cannot be placed on an equal level with the humanist ideal of life. In fact, this is the ideal of life-denial; denial even of the simple necessities of life, and if it has been claimed at the same time, that it enables us to overcome pain or sorrow, it does so only at the sacrifice of all feelings. Spiritualism has therefore nothing to do with scientific thinking. Those who claim that God is admitted even in science do so only because they cannot get rid of tradition. Science begins with doubting everything and does not take anything for granted. What is called scientific attitude is nothing but a spirit of inquiry. And since modern philosophy is based upon modern sciences, such a philosophy cannot be based on an article of faith. Modern philosophy is essentially humanist in spirit and

scientific in method. Humanism differs from old fashioned materialism in that it recognises the autonomy of will and does not regard it merely as a product of matter.

Revolutionary advances made in various branches of science enable us to-day to give simple explanations of such problems as those of the origin and extension of the universe around us, and of the origin of life on earth.

Hindu philosophy makes much of the virtue of detached action. An indifferent attitude is sought to be evoked; but indifference to what?—to all worldly things or to all desires? It is certainly not very human to remain indifferent to the consequences of works done by us in this world. (What is more, such a doctrine may promote moral irresponsibility because with this philosophy a man will seek to wash his hands from all the consequences of his action). Naturally an indifferent attitude towards life is maintained by an ascetic or a yogi who has not to live a social life. In cultural life, of course, in the sphere of new thoughts and ideas which a man may develop from his own knowledge and experience, a man may retire into isolation. But that isolation is not that of a yogi, simply because in their practical application such ideas have important social bearings. And man, after all, is a social animal. "He who does not live in a society is either a beast or a god" (Aristotle). A man gives value to his efforts to achieve practical results in higher spheres of his life, not because such efforts have some utility but because they give him some pleasure too. And this pleasure does not come from any mystical experience but from the extension of his delicate feelings with which he is naturally endowed.

Man differs from animals in this but this does not give evidence to the spirit-being of man. There is nothing spiritualistic in it. Religion misguides our natural urges, whereas science and particularly psychology (psycho-analysis?) tries to give them a practical direction—to externalise these urges and to satisfy them in their usual ways. Religion seeks the repression of these urges—and thereby eradicates them altogether.

God is the directing authority in the Hindu mind—his weal and woe, joy and despair in personal or social life, are all under the supreme guidance of God—they are all mere sports of a Divine despot. Divine Will is omnipotent in human and social life as well as in nature. In nature everything changes—and change or motion is an aspect of this law-governed universe. Movement is the result of a number of forces. Every particle of matter is an event in space-time; life is the result of an arrangement of such events in a particular order. Only in this way can the origin of life be explained. But in Hindu philosophy everything moves in a way predestined by God. Science, however, has nothing to do with such a bluff. Nevertheless the traditional view of the Hindus claims to have a higher spiritual significance and thus overpowers human reason. That is why it is all the more dangerous. Those who think that it is possible to evaluate the systems of Hindu philosophy in terms of materialist and humanist philosophy are not only incorrigible and die-hard spiritualists but are also ignorant about the progressive systems of thought.

GOBINDA DAS GHOSH.

HER SECRET

The nun beneath her laundered hood
Religious is, and chaste and good;
The nun to love these things is taught;
The woman knows her secret thought.

B. S.

ACID DROPS

We note, with not a little amusement, that a second edition of what the *Catholic Herald* calls a "famous" debate has just been published. It is the controversy between Mr. Arnold Lunn and Fr. Ronald Knox held before Mr. Lunn became converted. That Fr. (now Mgr.) Knox had no difficulty in neatly disposing of his opponent should occasion no surprise to anybody who has heard them both, especially as Mr. Lunn was already a whole-hearted believer. The debate might influence an equally credulous religionist—but who else? Do either of these staunch Catholics imagine it would influence a Freethinker?

Although, if hard pressed, Roman Catholic priests—like the Pope—are ready to subscribe to almost the whole of the doctrine of evolution, they are always pleased when evolution can be or is attacked. R.C. journals, for example, are delighted to admit the "anti-evolution" protests from Mr. Douglas Dewar, that die-hard believer in "special creation." We think Mr. Dewar should go all out and convert the Pope—who, more and more, appears to think that Darwin and Lyell were right after all. And weren't they?

It seems that a Miss Vera Barclay has written a couple of books "exposing" the mistakes of evolution in general and Darwin in particular and that she was vigorously criticised in the pages of the *Catholic Herald*, much to Mr. Dewar's disgust, who, on the other hand, is delighted with Miss Barclay's "castigation" of Darwin and his "dupes." We have an idea that, in spite of this, that Mr. Dewar knows evolution is so solidly entrenched that nothing he or anybody else can do could possibly touch it. Do modern scientists even know his name?

At long last, Lourdes has produced another miracle; this has been decided by six theologians—not, as far as we could find out, by doctors. The lady for whom the miracle was performed seems to have been ill from the age of 13 and was on "the verge of death" at 23. She went to Lourdes, received extreme unction and got immediately better. This happened in 1937 and she is now happily married with two children. Needless to say, the report does not give the names of any doctors, nor any evidence. Only what the six theologians say. Still miracles happen very little now. Fifty years or more ago, there would have been dozens of similar miracles.

Our contemporary, "The Observer" (16th March, 1952), reports that General Franco is speeding up his treason trials so that the defendants will be condemned and, presumably, executed before the beginning of the forthcoming Eucharistic Conference in Barcelona. This religious demonstration is to be signalled by an amnesty issued in its honour by the pious Catholic Government of Spain. But cases of high treason, evidently, will not get the benefit of it. It rather reminds one of the trials held in Durham Castle during the Middle Ages, when the Bishop, as representative of the Crown, sentenced traitors to death at one end of the Hall and then, as Bishop, gave them absolution on the way to the scaffold.

Like our own bishops, the Pope is deeply concerned at the shortage of priests in Rome. This is rather surprising, for surely the Pope's influence, which most people in Italy

consider divine, should make young men queue up to be priests. What greater joy can there be than to renounce all sinful pleasures, live in almost poverty, be subject to the restraining laws of God himself and spend one's life grovelling on one's knees and thanking the Lord for the privilege?

The Pope pathetically asks, "Do our faithful pray sufficiently?" We trow not. Prayer seems increasingly obnoxious to "our faithful." What a shame! It's enough to make the Pope get angry even with the Almighty. And "our faithful" seem to be getting laxer and laxer "in their veneration for the august Sacrifice of the Mass." Perhaps they have found it *now* literally nonsense!

Following in the footsteps of so many grand old evangelists from America, including the world's champion liar, Dr. Torrey, we now have a Mr. Billy Graham who managed to get 7,000 people to hear how he was going to bring all England to Christ. For forty minutes he yelled and waved his arms, with the Lord's complete approval, and asked those who were converted to keep standing. The *Daily Telegraph* reporter counted seven after an orgy of hymn singing. But Mr. Graham perhaps is secretly more concerned with collecting from an audience of 7,000 than bringing the grace of God to a measly seven.

He draws a four-figure salary for preaching the Gospel message: "blessed are ye poor." His message? "In a way I have nothing to say. Man must be born again. As that happens the Communists will fall like toothpicks before Niagara." This is what he was telling the representative of the *Evening Standard* when "his wife Ruth came in from lunching with friends at the Savoy." She, like her evangelist husband, evidently believes in keeping away from Communists!

CAREFUL!

If you will say

What none can say,

Or will not say,

Or fear to say,

While it endures,

The world is yours.

If you will write

What none can write,

Or will not write,

Or dread to write,

Your persecution's sure,

Yet will your fame endure.

If you will do

What none can do,

Or will not do,

Or dare not do,

You'll make a mighty stir,

But they will hang you, sir.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

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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.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS

A crowded room signalled the debate held at *The White Lion*, Streatham High Street, under the auspices of the *Streatham Debating Society* on Friday, March 28, at 7-45 p.m. The subject debated: "That Christian teaching logically applied can solve the world's problems."

The respective protagonists were the Rev. Dr. Joseph Crowley, Ph.D., Rector of the Church of *The English Martyrs*, and a former Professor of Philosophy in Valladolid, Spain, and Mr. F. A. Ridley, Chairman of the E.C. of the N.S.S. Proposing the motion, Dr. Crowley analysed the respective roles of Church and State from the standpoint of Thomist philosophy and declared both to be divinely ordained and necessary to each other's existence. He attacked both, what he termed "Pagan Totalitarianism" and, also, the Individualism of *laissez-faire* Economics. He asserted that a happy and harmonious society could only be built on the teaching of the modern social encyclicals of the Popes. Replying to the debate, Dr. Crowley admitted the truth of evolution, but made a bitter attack on Secularism and "Liberalism" which, he declared, had ruined Spain and other lands. He admitted, however, that the growing strength of Free-thought had undermined Christianity and had made a Christian solution virtually impossible.

Replying for the N.S.S., Mr. F. A. Ridley pointed out that there was nothing original or distinctive in the ethical teachings of Christianity. "The Golden Rule" had been enunciated by other religions long before Christianity was ever heard of. He went on to demonstrate that the periods in which Christianity had exercised maximum influence had not been periods marked by progress or happiness. Moreover, Christianity had been professed by so many mutually hostile types that it was impossible to pin it down to any single teaching. In present circumstances, its hostility to Birth Control could only, in our overcrowded world, end by making war and famine inevitable. Mr. Ridley ended by putting forward the Secularist view of Ethics, Society, and the State, as motivated exclusively by considerations of social welfare. An animated discussion followed from the floor, which resolved itself, virtually, into a duel between Atheism and Roman Catholicism. Very frank opinions were expressed by Mr. E. W. Shaw and other opponents of the Motion; one "ex-Catholic Evidence" speaker announced his intention of joining the N.S.S.! Most of the speakers opposed the Motion which, however, was carried by 51 votes to 30. An outstanding evening. A vote of thanks to the speakers was heartily endorsed by all present. A representative of the Streatham Debating Society efficiently performed the duties of Chairman.

"THE FREETHINKER" FUND

Donations for week ended Saturday, March 29, 1952:—

C. W. Mole, 6s.; R.B., 6s. 9d.; W. A. Butson, 5s.; North London Branch N.S.S., £1 1s.; Mrs. R. Dumont, 2s. 6d.; A. Hancock, 1s.

Total for week: £2 2s. 3d.

Total received to date: £483 4s. 8d.

A DIALECTICAL MATERIALIST REPLIES TO MR. CUTNER

IN a printed chat on Dialectical Materialism infallible Mr. Cutner avers to be "open to correction"; though I am sure this will prove to be a mere figure of speech, it shows the precarious position he has been put into by readers to be said to have chosen him, of all people, as an expert. I have a great esteem for Cutner, the free-thinker (which would be greater if he were able to accept gracefully corrections); but, at the same time, I am fully aware of his Freudian inhibitions towards anything connected with Socialism. And, worst of all, Dialectical Materialism — or "Diamat" for short — is called "revolutionary"! What else can you expect but a sneer?

So for the benefit of readers who, in fact, may be interested to know I'll try to outline in simple language — though this involves over-simplification — the difference between mechanical and dialectical Materialism.*

When Lenin was asked the question Mr. Cutner poses: What book did Marx or Engel write on Dialectical Materialism? — he retorted: "What book did Marx or Engel write that was NOT on Dialectical Materialism?" Mr. Cutner cannot see the wood for the trees. . . .

Dialectics was not Marx's invention; it means a discussion between two opponents whose arguments were, taken apart, relatively true. Certain philosophers of ancient Greece thought that The Truth could only be reached in a synthesis of both opposites, not in an "either-or." *Diamat*, according to Cutner, must be "either 'mechanical' or" it is vitalistic, and "as such all genuine Materialists must oppose it." (p. 69.)

There is no "either-or," "black-white," etc., for the dialectician, as he takes any entity as composed of opposites: positive-negative. "White" is the reflection, "Black" the absorption of the whole scale of the spectrum. Dialectical Materialism is MATERIALISM, yet one that does not mechanically accept things at their face-value but knows their complexity and, accordingly, goes to the root of the problem. Both Materialism and Idealism contemplate their objects in a fictitious state of rest; dialectic sees them in continuous *motion*, not as states but as *processes*; everything is continually in a flux, is hourly changing. We start from matter, as the pure materialist does, yet we follow the whole change of chain-reactions; his picture is a lantern slide, ours a motion picture. All findings of modern science — such as relativity and nuclear theory — have corroborated the correctness of dialectics — yet capitalistic thinking is bent on the maintenance of the *status quo*. *Diamat* is revolutionary in that it teaches that we have to change the world and must not wait for changes occurring mechanically. If a grain of seed is left alone, it will rot; unless we rationally *use* it, it cannot sprout.

Even Mr. Cutner does not wait for the people to become, of their own accord, freethinkers; he is engaged in *ideological warfare*. Is he then a *idealist*? According to his "either-or" theory he is.

Diamat, however, teaches that "by acting on the externality and changing it," we, at the same time, change our own nature (Marx). By making tools primitive man refined his brain; this higher brain reacted on his hands

and he became able to invent and manufacture better tools. Thus *diamat* teaches a continuous interaction between matter and thought.

For the pure materialist dead matter is one thing, thought is another. The dialectician knows that boundaries are fictitious; organic matter springs from dead matter, there can be no ideas without matter.

There cannot be anything without its dialectical negation—its complementary opposite†: no light without shade, no plus without minus, no matter without motion, and no thinking without matter. The “either-or” Materialist has got to fight shy of anything reeking of “idealism,” so he has to make do with only one phase of direct current; whilst we, knowing that thought is the result of matter, but in turn becomes the cause of matter of a higher order (so that cause and effect always change place), are using A.C. where there is no room for positive OR negative. Thought is the necessary complement, and the material production of a religionist must be different from that of a Secularist; vice versa, the political and economical outlook of the labourer were the opposite of that of his boss who makes big profits on re-armament, unless the millionnaires, with Press, radio, cinema, clergymen, professors and politicians in their pay‡ would not see to it that public opinion is manufactured and shaped according to their needs. In general, however, the material position defines the way of thinking. Truth is relative, or as the saying goes: One man’s meat is another man’s poison. This also holds good in politics; what stands “to reason” for the labourer is “Communism” for his boss.

The “either-or” people cannot see that a thing can, at the same time, be good and evil, according to the angle from which you look at it. Napoleon, with regard to the results of the French Revolution, was a reactionary setback; but with regard to the feudal remnants of absolutism in Europe he was the standard bearer of progress. The same applies to-day to the Soviet Union whose mere existence as a spiritual rallying point of a war-delaying movement all over the world is of undisputed merit. A simple appraisal of which side would benefit from war—the war-exhausted, devastated and industrially inferior Soviet Union or the hardly-scratched U.S.A., grown rich and second to none in industrial output, and whose armament tycoons have smelled blood—should easily show that the Russians are genuinely against war.§ Internally, however, the present set-up and their henchmen abroad are reactionaries of the worst order who, whilst still paying lip service to Marx, Engels and Lenin, have jettisoned everything that these names stood for. Their phony Socialism has no longer any use for genuine *diamat*, since, as Engels put it, revolutions too are not single events, but processes; their leaders, having grown out of a corrupt society, as time goes by, are corrupting the achievements of the revolution and must be removed through revolutions on a higher level. Communist parties who are unable or unwilling to grasp this have no claim to materialistic dialectics.

When applying the spectral analysis, as it were, to dissecting a given unity into its component opposites or, vice versa, to find out those that make up a synthesis (entity of opposites), we must differentiate between what is essential, what merely formal. Many Conservatives are materialists in essence, but don the religious armour as a safeguard against Socialism; our worshippers of “Reason” are, essentially, idealists whilst posing as “pure” materialists. Anything “pure,” “absolute,” any doctrinaire thinking on the “either-or” line is pre-

dominance of an idea over the complexity and polarity of real life, therefore is idealism, inflexible scholasticism, religion and spiritual clap-trap.

Any democracy is formal, as there can, in essence, be no equality between the influential rich and the rest of the population; monotheism and monogamy are only forms of religion and marital relations, but their relatively pagan and mutisexual cases are maintained. It is true that the form of monarchist government is mainly the expression of the predominance of aristocracy, landed gentry and clergy, but this form can become a mere hang-over in a society of quite different composition; the republican form does not portend the elimination of autocratic residues, and corruption is far more rife in republics. So long as the social set-up is that of exploitation, the form of government does not mean a thing. Baron de Montesquieu (1689-1755) already knew it when he wrote: “To the man who possesses nothing it is indifferent, to a certain extent, under what government he is living.”

These are only some aspects of dialectics. *Diamat* is as complex as life and has as many facets; in fact, it IS the mode of life in its ever-changing motion, its dissecting of unity into integral opposites and its re-uniting of opposites into one whole, its relativity and inter-relations. He who is able to apply *diamat* is in a position to know whatever he wants to know.

P. G. ROY.

* Many of my contributions—so on Determinism (Nov. 20, 1949), Spencer (Mar. 12, 1950), etc.—dealt with this subject.

† Colour photography is based on the “complementary colours.”

‡ Including the good services of the Labour Front benchers who, for the sake of undisturbed profits, advise against strikes in general and political strikes in particular. And yet, when the industrial sharks and their bankers strike at the very subsistence of the workers, industrial action is the proper weapon, and its application proof of political maturity. When German reaction called in Hitler, the General Strike had been *the* means to nip the Third Reich in the bud and to save the world an ocean of blood and tears.

§ Time is on their side, so why should they risk war in which they would lose far more than they could win. The mere existence of the Soviet Union, and China for that, is also an asset in that it disapproves the claim that Capitalism and Christianity are indispensable for the survival and grandeur of any nation.

“THEATRE OF TWO DECADES”

by Audrey Williamson, with a foreword by J. C. Trewin.
25s. net., Rockliffe.

MISS AUDREY WILLIAMSON has long been known as one who writes theatrical history as it should be written—with a knowledge of the past as great as her zest for the present and enthusiastic optimism for the future. Here, in her latest work which, because of its serious approach to the art of the theatre, must necessarily commend itself to freethinkers who are interested in the theatre, she deals with 20 important years from the 'thirties to the present day. The rise of Gielgud, the revival of serious theatre, memorable performances of opera, and the dawn of many careers which have since made history, are here recalled.

Miss Williamson has the good fortune to enjoy what she writes about and, like that distinguished critic J. C. Trewin, who writes a most warmhearted foreword to the work, she manages to communicate that enthusiasm to the reader. Thus one is swept along into the machinery of theatre life, as seen through a number of performances, with the knowledge that all the enthusiasm breathed through these pages has an encyclopædic interest to the student of the theatre. But the dull-as-ditch-water approach so often found in mammoth books of reference is absent here and, to add to the treat, we are offered splendid illustrations from over 60 productions.

PETER COTES.

CORRESPONDENCE
YOU'VE HAD IT

SIR,—I am one of the kind of people you take delight in throwing your cheap jibes and sarcastic remarks at, one who humbly but sincerely bears the name "Christian," and one who believes the Bible to be the inspired "Word of God."

Let me say that I used to pride myself in the fact that I was an Agnostic, but I was an honest one who read the Bible really seeking to know if it could back up the claims it made. I imagined that the best way to study a philosophy was to put it to the test—not to sneer at it. I testify before the God I believe in, and before men that I found from actual experience, after an exhaustive study, and a searching analysis as far as time and circumstances would admit, that the Bible is what it claims to be and does what it claims to do. I have been on both sides and can speak from experience from both standpoints, which surely places me in a position to pass an opinion. I usually find that people who scoff and sneer at Christianity know precious little about it, and what is more, don't want to know anything about it. From my reading of history, famous unbelievers had nothing to trumpet about nor have their modern disciples much to show for their vaunted Rationalism.

The Freethinker, to me, has absolutely nothing constructive to say. It is composed almost wholly of destructive statements, and empty prattle. What message has it for the little child, for the invalid lying in pain, what comfort does it bring to the broken heart, when did it wipe the tear from the eye of the mourner, what saints has it created, what missionaries has it sent with the glad news that there is no God, how many people have been set on fire to found orphanages and schools, leprosariums and hospitals by the glad tidings of Rationalism? Are children made better for it, are homes revolutionised by it, are drunkards reformed and harlots made pure by the message of Rationalism? I can produce unanswerable evidence that these things have taken place under the preaching of what Mr. A. Yates, in page 82 of last week's issue, derisively calls "Christ and Him Crucified."

No Sir, I have found nothing in what you have to say to cause me to doubt the God of the Bible, for I know from practical everyday experience that "He is my Shepherd, therefore I shall not want."

[Any comments?—EDITOR.]—Yours, etc.,
RAYMOND MCKEOWN.

SIR,—Mr. Ratcliffe asks "were the Quakers victims or persecutors?" Right through they were the victims—never the persecutors. The sentence should have read . . . especially *against* the Quakers.

Later on, quoting from the *Cape Cod Guide*, I wrote: "A general form of punishment for criminals in the Puritans' colonies was slavery, and, although fighting against religious persecution for themselves, they even enslaved the Quakers at one time."

Mr. Ratcliffe asks if I will specify incidents: As I said, my article was taken from extracts from the *Cape Cod Guide*, and I have no doubt that if Mr. Ratcliffe writes to The Editor, *Cape Cod Guide*, Middle Street, Plymouth, Mass., U.S.A., he can probably supply him with incidents taken from the old records.—Yours, etc.,
F. A. HORNIBROOK.

THEATRE

"The Same Sky." By Yvonne Mitchell. Duke of York's Theatre.

THIS is the first play of a talented young actress of Jewish origin. It deals with conflicts between Gentile and Jew. It is a play of great sincerity and as drama it is powerful, but I do not feel that it strikes home as effectively as it should. One reason for this is that Miss Mitchell brings us into the intimacy of a Jewish family of foreign parentage, but shows us practically nothing of the kind of family with which they exchanged feelings of hatred. I do not imagine it had to be a nice family, so perhaps the authoress was a little shy in showing it up. This goes to indicate that the one who should write an effective modern play on the theme should be a Gentile, for there are—it seems—feelings of greater prejudice on the side of the Gentile.

Unfortunately, it is not possible in the course of one play to break down the barriers that have kept the Jewish people in a form of isolation for thousands of years. Miss Mitchell must know this and has not attempted to do more than to unite the two conflicting families by the simple blood-tie of a birth, one in which both families are interested because of the death of the father in the war.

The production and casting fall short of the required

standards. Apart from Frederick Valk and Thora Hird as the Jewish parents, and Alaric Cotter as their son (who do extremely well), little is done to create the true atmosphere of a Jewish family. Frances Hyland and Joy Rodgers as their daughters are obviously not Jewish, speak Cockney and have no Jewish intonation. The acting from all the cast is good.

Very good as a first play, if only it had been given a better chance with its staging.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

ACCOUNT RENDERED

When the Great Engineer had designed it
And pressed the great world's starting knob;
He sat back from then, and resigned it,
But we still pay the bill for the job.

A. E. C.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place, Blackburn).—Sunday, April 6, 7 p.m.: FRANK ROTHWELL, "Public Enemy No. 1."
- 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: F. A. RIDLEY.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: W. EGAN, "The Jesuits."
- Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: F. J. CORINA, "The Progress of the Gods."
- South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Ethics of Belief."
- West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: E. W. SHAW, "American Political Institutions."
- R.P.A., Coventry Group ("Rose and Crown," High Street, Coventry).—Sunday, April 6, 7-30 p.m.: Discussion on "Why War?" Opener: Mr. ALEC MACKENZIE.

WHAT DIARIES THINK OF PRIESTS!

THE priest decided to keep a diary to improve his soul. He recorded his failures in charity during the day, and he let them rebuke him. The good man waxed in goodness; till he found he was beginning to take a pleasure in reading his journal. The faults had disappeared, and the record told of fine thoughts and gentle deeds. So the priest was tempted to go out of his way to do things in order that he could write them up. Ah, he would think, this would look very well in my journal; and one day someone might find my diary, and then. . . Well, the priest gave his diary more and more control of his life. Now came the first whispers of scandal. Parishoners started to tell stories about the "good" priest which had little to do with temperance, chastity or godliness. You see, the process had been completed: *Instead of the priest writing up his diary, the diary wrote up the man.* But who would have imagined that diaries actually have a lower opinion of clerics than you or me?

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

THE DIVORCE OF ANAHITA

(Concluded)

WHEN the quarrel had been broken off after a stream of bitter words, Jahveh did not seem so elated as Kadmiel could have wished. The god was beginning to foresee that the task his priest had set him would prove arduous.

"You must not let these little things upset you," said Kadmiel. "Of course there are sure to be many who will resent the authority that it is your duty to exercise. They will wish to continue in the same haphazard way, thinking and acting as they wish. But the people must learn that they must act under your authority and that they owe a duty to you and in that way they will be united and strong."

"I quite see what you are driving at," replied Jahveh, "but I don't think you will get Anahita to see things your way."

Kadmiel knew the weakness of his god, it was a common one with which he could sympathise, and for that reason he saw its danger. A god who was constantly chasing the women would never be respected as the almighty ruler of heaven and earth that Kadmiel had in mind. Somehow the quarrel with Anahita must not be allowed to die down. Previous quarrels had been patched up quite happily in a day or two, but Kadmiel hoped that a final breach would result with a little aid from himself.

For the next week Kadmiel saw to it that his god was too busy to give much thought to Anahita. Jahveh was engaged in establishing his new claimed position as premier deity of his people. "Putting the fear of god in them," was Kadmiel's phrase.

One evening when they were resting well satisfied with their day's work, Anahita appeared before them. Kadmiel was pleased to see that she was in a raging temper.

"How is this that you should offer insult to my cousin Astarte?" she cried. "What does it matter to you that a man who worships in your temple should marry a woman who was a priestess of the goddess of the Zidonians?"

Jahveh rose majestically and replied, "My people shall have no other gods but me. I am their Lord God Almighty and those who are faithful to my service I will richly reward, I will bless their arms with victory and their industry with plenty. To those who oppose me I will be terrible in my wrath and none shall escape my vengeance."

"What nonsense is this? Are there to be no other gods but you?" Anahita was indignant. "Is no one to act but by your authority, no one to worship how or whom they please?"

With some regret, Jahveh saw that Kadmiel was right as usual. Anahita would never be a fitting partner for a supreme deity, in fact it would be absurd for a supreme deity to have a partner. With a commanding gesture he sought to cut short Anahita's tirade.

"And what have you to say for yourself?" she demanded.

"I will not waste words," he said. "It is apparent that the great task that I have undertaken has no place in it for you. From henceforth our union is at an end."

Anahita laughed. "If you are set on your absurd task our union is certainly at an end. But if you think you can do without me you are vastly mistaken. I am of the earth, the natural material things of the world, and try as you may you will never be able to get away from that. Whatever you do, wherever you go I will be there."

When Anahita was gone, Kadmiel came forward, well pleased with the turn of events.

"Now you are free for all eternity," he told Jahveh. "Free to carry out your great liberating mission."

But Jahveh was not so happy as he could have hoped.

The god had been trying to bring his anger to the boil for some days, and had found it difficult to convince himself that a final break with Anahita was necessary. He had seen the force of Kadmiel's arguments yet had hoped that somehow a place for Anahita could be found in the new scheme of things. Now it was done and Anahita was his no longer. It was a lonely prospect before him, but there would be ample compensations. His face brightened as he thought of them.

"Yes," he said, "now I can really be God and not just a god."

Kadmiel nodded approval, he had been apprehensive lest Jahveh should question him as to the meaning of Anahita's parting words.

"One day I shall be the god not only of my people but of all Canaan, the Philistines and the Zidonians, the Moabites and the Amorites shall all bow down to me. One day even the Egyptians and the Babylonians shall own me their lord. Yes," he repeated firmly, reading doubt in Kadmiel's face, "even the Egyptians and the Babylonians."

And with these words he strode away into the hills.

Watching him depart Kadmiel said to himself, "My idea has taken firm hold and great things will be done in his glory. And the more glory to Jahveh the more power to his priest."

L. HANGER.

POEMS OF 1951

MOST poetry-lovers probably viewed with cordial approval the decision of the Arts Council, last year, to offer prizes for the best poems submitted, to celebrate the Festival of Britain. The prize-winning entries have now been published in book form as *Poems: 1951* (Penguin Books, 2s. 6d.). Eight poets were awarded prizes, and it is noteworthy that only three were previously well-known as writers of verse. Two of them, indeed, had never before appeared in print, so that it looks as if there is, even in this supposedly unpoetic age, a wealth of poetic talent still undiscovered or unexploited.

Of the comparatively well-known writers who were awarded prizes, two—Clive Sansom and Jack R. Clemo (of whom I have previously written here) wrote verses with a definite religious motif. Clive Sansom's "The Witnesses" gives, in a series of short poems a view of Jesus, as seen through the eyes of various of his contemporaries—in the main, various people who appear in the Gospel narratives. Jack Clemo, on the other hand, writes a series of lyrics which have a greater serenity than his earlier verses (published last year in his first book of poetry, *The Clay Verge*). Always this young man's writings give a feeling of mental stress and struggle, as if he is fighting within himself. Now, it appears, he is nearing some sort of mental harbour, and that may give his verse a new maturity and a new strength.

I hope that among the readers of these columns there may be many who are able to appreciate poetry, even though there may be few who can share the opinions of the two poets whom I have named. It is good, at any rate, to know that, in spite of the great difficulties of the present day and of the many problems faced by authors and publishers alike in this era of constantly rising costs, there are still poets resolved to write and publishers happy to put their writings into print. If this book could reach a huge circulation, it would encourage the publishers to issue more modern verse—and that, more than anything else, would save modern poets from the depths of despair into which they tend, not unreasonably, to sink.

JOHN ROWLAND.