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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Prospects of Anglicanism

THE tremendous ballyhoo—for one cannot honestly describe it as anything else—which followed the passing of the late King has, for the moment at least, died down. However, it is much to be feared that the lull in the chorus of adulation will prove only temporary: for, particularly now that Court mourning has officially ended, we may expect that the Court sycophants, professional and amateur alike, will soon get busy again and that from now on until the coronation next year our ears will be deafened, our brains clouded and our imagination stupified by a deafening crescendo of shameless adulation of monarchy in general and of Queen Elizabeth the Second, the present occupant of the throne, in particular. Actually, whether such stupefying clouds of incense are really gratifying to the nostrils of royalty is, we should say, very doubtful. It is, in our opinion, actually probable that such nauseating demonstrations of human servility as followed the sudden demise of the late King are ultimately more likely to damage rather than to strengthen the monarchy in the eyes of the educated public. Serious institutions do not usually long survive their transformation into circuses.

The actual destination of the monarchy itself is not at present a living issue. For what Charles Bradlaugh once described in a striking metaphor as the present dynasty of "small breast-bested wanderers" has long ceased to possess much political importance. The extinction, literally overnight, of the most popular British monarch since the first Elizabeth, the present Duke of Windsor, indicated clearly enough how slight is, to-day, the substance of power which lies behind the imposing shadow. As an American journal aptly remarked at the time (December, 1936), the enforced abdication of Edward the Eighth indicated plainly that the current role of the British monarchy more and more approximates to that of a mere rubber stamp. Beneath the glittering Court ceremonial lies a political vacuum. The pomp and splendour of the coronation really meant something once: Henry the Eighth, for example, would hardly have gone as tamely as Edward the Eighth! The British monarchy in the mid-20th century is merely the shadow of what was once great; and shadows usually follow their substance into eventual oblivion.

However, whilst the monarchy itself can hardly be regarded as a serious political factor, it still serves as a symbol and rallying point for other more obviously obsolete and outmoded social institutions. The atavistic House of Lords is one such: our oldest trade union—now, indeed, often reinforced by the State pensioners of other more modern trade unions. Of greater interest to Free-thinkers, the State Church, Anglicanism, continues, and at the coronation next year will again demonstrate its indissoluble union with the Crown, when the Archbishop of Canterbury—in the age of modern science and of "The Welfare State"—will anoint Her Majesty with the holy

oil of consecration, just as if modern democracy had never been heard of, nor the Middle Ages ever ended.

If Freethought, as such, is primarily concerned with the criticism of ideas, Secularism is, equally definitely, concerned with the critique of institutions. The anomaly, long extinct in other more progressive parts of the world, of a State-Church represents, obviously, the very antithesis of secularist philosophy. Indeed, nothing indicates more clearly than its present retention in and by the British Constitution how far British society lags behind the more progressive areas of the world, and how fundamentally conservative is the social framework of contemporary British society. For, outside Britain, only a few notoriously reactionary States—Franco Spain is the most obvious example in the present world—continue not only to endow, but officially ally themselves with some particular ecclesiastical institution and specific form of Christianity. State-Churches do not exist in any other part of the British Commonwealth; even in Rome-ridden Eire and Quebec the Catholic Church has never been *officially* established. The two major powers of our era, bitterly divided as they are on current political issues and economic ideologies, yet both accept the fundamental tenet of secularist philosophy, the official separation of the State from organised religion. Whilst in the new democracies on both sides of the (so-called) "Iron Curtain" and on neither; alike in China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and Turkey, the secularist principle is both firmly established and is officially embodied in the respective constitutions concerned. Yet all the above are lands where, as compared with the British "Mother of Parliaments," Political Democracy is a thing of yesterday.

Compare with the above universally diffused state of things, the present mediæval state of things in Britain. Oliver Cromwell ended the Middle Ages in this country three centuries back. Ever since the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 the rule of Parliament has been supreme and scarcely even challenged. Whilst for a generation past, British Democracy has possessed the blessing of Universal Suffrage. Yet we still find the retention of the mediæval conception of the unity of Church and State. Indeed, in this island we are actually doubly blessed: for we have *two* State Churches: Anglicanism in England, Presbyterianism in Scotland. Moreover, our Sovereign is the official "Defender" not of one but of two "Faiths." Queen Elizabeth is credited with a truly elastic theological conscience. South of the Tweed she is an Anglican who "defends" Free Will, which appears to be taught in the *Thirty-nine Articles*—that is, as far as these ambiguous formularies can be said to teach anything *definitely* at all, whilst, north of the Tweed, Her Majesty subscribes to the *Westminster Confession* which teaches Predestination in accordance with the classic doctrine of its founder, the Calvinist, John Knox.

It was aptly observed in a recent issue of this journal that the life-prospects of the various Christian Churches vary considerably. Most of us would regard, for example,

the survival of the Church of Rome as—unfortunately—a safe bet for some time to come. The Church of England, Anglicanism, is in a much shakier state with regard to its survival-value. Theologically, the State-Church is all at sixes and sevens: one finds within its ranks adherents of both Rome and Geneva, not to mention of new-fangled cults like Spiritualism and Theosophy whilst, at the other extreme the R.P.A.—though not the N.S.S.—yet—is worthily represented in the ranks of its clergy. Whilst the *social* foundations of Anglicanism are even more seriously shaken than are its theological tenets. For “The Church of England” is, actually, the Church of a *class*; of the squirearchy, of the landed proprietors, of the English “gentlemen” who emerged successfully from the Civil Wars of the 17th century and who seized power in the political revolution of 1688. And that formerly robust class is now obviously heading for extinction. Death-duties and super-tax have proved too strong both for primogeniture, the favourite economic device of “our old nobility,” and for its theological counterpart, the *Thirty-nine Articles*; Anglicanism, also, would appear to be on the way out.

The Church of England, however, has one remaining asset; it is still “The Church of England by law established.” Its profitable connection with the State still remains. At the coronation, this connection is particularly obvious and will, no doubt, afford the convenient pretext for a publicity campaign by and for the State Church. Secularists must not allow this to pass unchallenged. They must counter with an energetic campaign for Secularism, for the enforced separation of Church and State. It is time that the Middle Ages ended in England as elsewhere.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE RUSSIAN EXPERIMENT IN 1952

THE radical in the West in 1952, when confronted with the Soviet Union, finds himself adopting an uncertain and sometimes ambivalent attitude. He cherishes a sentimental attachment to the early days of the Russian Revolution, “the ten days that shook the World,” and promised salvation and hope to so many. If he criticises the regime of to-day he fears that he is playing into the hands of powerful economic interests who wish to see any form of socialist system destroyed, and that he is perhaps simply the victim of propaganda forces which these interests control. There may be forced labour camps in the U.S.S.R. and a ruthless disregard of individual rights. It cannot, however, be denied that, just as Athenian culture and freedom in Ancient times was bought at the price of ruthless colonial suppression, reaching even to the erasure of subject cities, so liberty in the West co-exists, and depends on, a similar policy, carried out in Indo-China and Malaya, which has a more than remote resemblance to methods practised by continental fascism in Eastern Europe before 1945. Knowledge of such facts tends to neutralise a critical attitude to the Soviet Union.

If it is unwise to view the Soviet Union in the distorting mirror of the capitalist and Transport House Press, it is not unfair to judge it by its own published evidence. Periodicals such as “News” and “Soviet Literature,” which are designed for Western consumption, presumably select material which is calculated to appeal to Western readers. The cultural picture that emerges is sombre and has little over which a freethinking radical can enthuse. Architecture is in a traditional confused classical style, happily oblivious of Walter Gropius and steel-and-concrete functionalism. Painting, which twenty years ago showed

traces of French Impressionism and lyricism, displays a taste for pre-Raphaelite photographic exactitude. In literature, names such as Akhmatova and Zoschenko, respected in the West, are conspicuously absent. An article on Pasternak recently appeared, but only in the role of Shakespearean translator. The application of Marxism is sometimes bizarre, the reversion to a sense of historical continuity disconcerting; “News” recently stressed the fundamentally benevolent rôle of the Tsarist government in the Crimean War. In the economic field emphasis is placed on the conquest of material nature, at the expense of information of a humanistic variety. “News” is strangely silent on new patterns of social justice and human relations, which in a socialist state should be consequent on the proper harnessing of natural forces.

Soviet civilisation seems, in effect, to be suffering from a sort of rigor mortis. Communist parties, when they boost the U.S.S.R. as a progressive force, are drawing on a capital reserve which has not been added to in the past 10-15 years. The classical Soviet films all date from before 1940. “Professor Mamlock,” significantly the work of a German communist, was still the type of film to be expected from a socialist society. “Song of Siberia,” which glorified the imperialist exploits of Yermak, 17th century conqueror of Siberia, a sort of Russian equivalent of the free-booting Elizabethan buccaneer, was not. The idea of the untrammelled individual, free from social persecution and familiar inhibition, stemming from John Stuart Mill and Sigmund Freud, so important to the socialist in the West, at one time seemed, despite harsh political and economic measures, to find countenance in the infant Soviet Republics. The model penal settlement at Bolshevo, greater freedom in the schools, a more liberal attitude to marriage and sexual relations, informal courts of justice, the psychological speculations of Leria in the early '30s, all these mitigated the more drastic aspects of proletarian dictatorship. Now, however, the ruthless control to which Soviet man was originally subjected as an economic unit, seems to have extended to his life as a whole. The abrogation of abortions in the 1930's has been followed up by a quasi-Catholic rigidity over divorce, and an attitude to sexual morals in general that would have delighted John Knox's puritans. According to A. S. Neill, English pioneer educationalist, present day Soviet educational methods would satisfy the most reactionary board of headmasters. The mechanistic views of Pavlov and the derogation of Freud prevail in psychology. In an obituary notice of Mme. Kollontai, sole surviving member until recently of Lenin's politbureau, apart from Stalin, the *London Daily Worker* deceitfully ignored the writings on free-love for which she was primarily famous. The picture, however, is not uniformly grey. A letter published by an English school teacher in “News,” living in Poland, highly critical of certain aspects of that regime, but indicating that radical economic steps towards socialism had taken place, was worth a score of articles on the development of hydro-electric power, since, seemingly spontaneous and uninspired, it showed an individual's reaction to life, if not in the U.S.S.R., at any rate in an associated country. In recent years, Russia has become almost as remote from Europe as Cathay from the Christian mediæval world in the days of Marco Polo. It is thus reassuring to find, in two recently translated novels of Vera Panova, that people there are very much the same as elsewhere. The Soviet world, like the capitalist, is both black and white.

The U.S.S.R. of to-day is, in fact, an amalgam, a new dialectical synthesis arising from the conjunction of Western revolutionary Marxism and the Russian tradition.

Although Lenin was Russian-born, his outlook, like that of so many of the early revolutionaries, was also conditioned by Western exile. The Great Purges of the 1930s, when 80 per cent. of the composition of the All-Union Bolshevik Party was changed, marked the final defeat of the European-minded revolutionaries. Stalin, in proclaiming himself the successor of Lenin, is in one sense truly so, since Lenin formed a bridge between the native and international factions of Soviet communism. Stalin represents a continuation of the indigenous aspects of Russian Communism. The methods by which he has enforced socialism are also in the native tradition, and derive from the time when the nuclear Russian states, the Norse principalities of Novgorod and Kiev, were prematurely overwhelmed and held in fee to the Golden Horde.

The more sophisticated European Marxists have been eradicated. However much the Titoists may disclaim connections with the Trotskyites, the challenge which Tito's Yugoslavia makes to the Soviet Union, and the criticisms of bureaucratic corruption, a stifling cultural "diktat," regimentation—"a nation of uniforms"—which the Yugoslav Party formulates, are in substance those made by Trotsky in the "Revolution Betrayed."

Nevertheless, the achievements of Stalinist Russia must be recognised. The ideas of the early Bolshevik revolutionaries were perhaps too advanced for vast peasant masses emerging from centuries of bovine slumber. The Russian Revolution for the moment has found its own level; eventually the picture may be very different. Despite the present political dictatorship the fundamental economic revolution, "the expropriation of the expropriators," remains intact, just as the agrarian changes wrought in 1789 remained untouched by the march of Napoleon to continental Empire. If present Soviet culture seems naïve, utilitarian, and philistine, it is perhaps better that the Soviet masses should enjoy some form of culture rather than exist in the cultural vacuum, symbolised by the juke box and the jazz-band, to which the urban proletariat of modern America is accustomed. The Soviet worker or peasant, imbiber of a standardised Marxist culture, may be preferable to the methodically barbarised young man in the American bomber-plane, ignorantly and indiscriminately spreading destruction on the dispossessed masses of Asia. There seems, finally, no reason to doubt that there is a rising standard of material living in the Soviet Union, since the economy, whether or not subject to "bureaucratic distortions," is socialist in the sense that it is planned and state-owned. Because of this the pacific intentions of the present Soviet regime are probably genuine, in contradistinction to the contemporary U.S.A., which is experiencing the classical attrition of capitalist economies, with the necessary corollary of large scale rearmament and imperialist expansion. If the Western socialist cannot remain uncritical of the Soviet Union, he should, nevertheless, welcome any signs of liberalisation and opportunities for interchange which may be presented. In making criticisms, which apply largely to the civilised superstructure of life, it is necessary to realise that these can have at the moment little relevance for great populations in the Far East deprived of the basic means of life, and that a society which can make available work and bread for its own masses, is bound to have an appeal for such as these.

A. P. PERRIN, B.A.

[The above objective study, written specially for *The Freethinker* by a Cambridge historian, may serve as a useful corrective to the masses of uninformed chatter, both "pro-" and "anti-Soviet, which are so liberally provided to-day.—EDITOR.]

THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE MYTHICAL CHRIST. By Gerald Massey. What Christianity owes to Ancient Egypt. Price 1s.; postage 2d.

DOES GOD CARE FOR OXEN?

HAS man a moral responsibility to animals? The question agitated my mind at the annual conference, when it was proposed to delete the words "the extension of the moral law to animals" from the subject on protection of animals from cruelty. It was suggested that there is no moral law governing our relationship to animals. I stated what to me was the moral law, namely, "that every sentient living creature capable of feeling pain, should be protected from unnecessary suffering." Indeed it is to me the basis of all moral law. Perhaps the whole conception of moral law can be called into question. Is there such a thing? On what is it based? That there is natural law is evident, the care of the mother for the child, the protective aggressive uxoriousness of the male, are inherent for the survival of the species. But can the care of the weak and suffering have a basis in survival value? I say, yes, for in every age and clime, men have taught the necessity of kindness to man and to animals. Not sages and philosophers alone, but ordinary men and women. Lecky gives examples of this in his *History of European Morals*, when an attempt was made to introduce the spectacle (amphitheatric combats) into Athens, the cynic philosopher Demonax appealed successfully to the better feelings of the people by exclaiming "you must first overthrow the Altar of Pity."

The treatment of animals in Catholic countries is notoriously cruel, not because Catholics are inherently more cruel, but because they will not admit kinship with the animal kingdom. I spoke of love of animals to a Catholic friend, she quite frankly considered me weak-minded, saying—animals have no souls, one doesn't care for them, they were made for our use, and quoted the biblical text, "Does god care for oxen?" No, he does not, the blood of millions of sacrificed animals proclaims this to high heaven, and his priests have ever followed his sanguinary lusts. To-day, the cardinal incants over the toreador and then remains to enjoy the bloody spectacle. Here then is the difference, the Catholic bases his attitude to animals on a theologic doctrine, the rationalist on the evolutionary kinship of man to the animals.

The Hindu re-action to animals shows the same retarding effect of a theologic doctrine; thou must not kill an animal; so we get the horrible stories of Katherine Mayo in *Mother India*. Goats are skinned alive, new-born calves are torn from their mothers and turned out into the boiling sun to die a natural (!) death from heat and thirst.

We have early evidence of the humanitarian effect of Rationalism on the treatment of animals, the Stoics had begun to realise and write of the kinship of man to the animals. "Plutarch," says Lecky, "places the duty of kindness to animals on the broad ground of the affections, and he urges that duty with an emphasis and a detail to which no adequate parallel can, I believe, be found in the Christian writings for at least seventeen hundred years . . . and asserts in the strongest language that every man has duties to the animal world as truly as to his fellow-man."

I think we of the N.S.S. ought to express ourselves more fully in our aims and ask for evolutionary teaching to procure the extension of the moral law to animals. Children should be taught the similarity of man to the animals, they could be educated to feel that the lash of a whip on a horse is like the lash of a whip on their own bodies.

But as I write this, I can almost hear the hoot of sardonic laughter. Korea, South Africa, Malaya: moral law to animals indeed, ought we not first demand the extension of the moral law to Chinamen, Koreans and Niggers?

EVA EBURY

ACID DROPS

Although Spiritualists are making a big splash of their "faith-healing" which, they insist, is always performed by "spirits," medical and non-medical, the Roman Church is by no means behind-hand with their own claims. As an example, we have Cardinal Griffin, who has been ill for some time, pooh-poohing the efforts of his doctors and putting all the credit of his recovery to a "relic," a "martyr's skull." Prayers were offered to it, or to "Blessed Cuthbert" for nine days, and the Cardinal was completely cured. No "spirit healer" was called in, there was no laying on of hands, and the cure was absolute. Nothing but the "relic" did the trick. Still, all Spiritualists would insist that it was a "spirit," the spirit of "Blessed Cuthbert" and not his skull which cured the Cardinal—and no doubt one explanation is as good as another. With the Roman Church holding the fort, of course.

No one more than the late G. K. Chesterton loved to turn the tables on his opponents and, whenever his Church was attacked, he hastened to quote a negro's answer to his enemy—"What you sez I is, you am." The rector of Bucknall, the Rev. E. K. V. Pearce, already famous for his anti-Evolution stand and his attack on God's Word for declaring the earth was flat when we all know it is a sphere, is emulating Chesterton with a vengeance. He vigorously declares that the B.B.C. is violating the ethics of controversy by allowing Atheistic lectures to be broadcast in the name of science, and refusing to permit the devastating replies he and other Church leaders could inflict on the infidels who thus lead the innocent and church-loving people of England to perdition.

In the "Evening Sentinel" of Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent, he quotes "Dr. W. O. Greenwood," a biologist and scientist (we have never heard of him, alas) to the effect that the majority of "physicists, astrophysicists, mathematicians [*sic.*], etc., now contend that the universe everywhere bears evidence within itself of the handiwork of a Creator." Of course, that settles it. Dr. Greenwood says so, so does Mr. Pearce, and how dare the B.B.C. broadcast to the contrary?

Mr. Pearce even goes so far as to say that "if atheists are afraid of free discussion," then "they are already condemned." We had an idea that even our bitterest opponents were always ready to grant that we never shirked discussion anywhere, and that it is the Christian clergy (with a precious example in Mr. Pearce) who run away from discussion. He should know by now that our platform is open to him, and we are sure his will never be open to us. In other words, "What he sez we is, he am."

One more word. We are in favour of free and open discussion on all subjects of vital interest, though we readily admit that it is sometimes difficult to draw the line. For example, there must be large numbers of people who believe in fortune-telling with tea-leaves—are they to be allowed to broadcast and try and persuade people with similar primitive beliefs to join them? As a joke, yes; but that is all. But there are many serious subjects which should have a hearing on the air and are barred by the religious hierarchy dominating the B.B.C. This should be stopped by public opinion—and if people like Mr. Pearce think that they can answer a lecture on Evolution or Materialism by a first-rate exponent, they should be allowed to do so.

THEATRE

"Timon of Athens." By William Shakespeare. The Old Vic Theatre.

THERE are very few angles of human nature that did not come under the theatrical exploitation of Will of Avon. In this case he has chosen riches and the corrupt effect they can have on man.

Some may regard the play as a tragedy, which it is. But it is also a satire, and producer Tyrone Guthrie has stressed this angle of it successfully. Regarded as a difficult play, Mr. Guthrie has handled it so skilfully that an unanalytical mind would not be aware of the many obstacles. There are few producers who could have done nearly so well.

Timon is a generous fool; a playboy of Ancient Greece who squanders his money on lavish entertainment of his friends. These are false friends who seek every possible means to avoid helping him when he goes to them for loans. And finally, driven out of Athens by his creditors, he takes to the woods and endeavours to imitate the cynical philosopher, Apemantus. The difference between them is that Apemantus can live in poverty but Timon cannot.

We are also shown that the State can likewise become corrupt, and that a military leader—Alcibiades—can be banished by the senators for trying to make them see justice, only to return with an army and subdue them.

Whatever differences the Old Vic might have had in the past within its own organisation, they prove undeniably by this excellent production that they are able to rise above them. I do not say that all performances are up to the necessary standard, but the leading parts are well played. André Morell as Timon gives the best performance I have seen from him. His diction is clear and never monotonous. Of the supporting cast I liked Leo McKern as Apemantus and also Peter Coke as Alcibiades, but I felt he could improve his performance by avoiding shouting and galloping through his words when expressing anger.

The Old Vic's best production this season.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

I TESTIFY

Oh, come and hear me, brethren, by fun and games
enslaved,

And learn the thrilling tale of one, from Sin and Satan
saved.

I'd sit in baleful bar-rooms and blue a bob on beer,
And ne'er see Satan in the mirrors, nor his wicked leer.
I'd go to wicked Whist Drives, instead of Holy Halls,
I'd slink about the stage-doors, and squat in sinful stalls.
I'd puff at pipe tobacco, and whiff my wits away,
In cloying clouds of soothing smoke, yes, sometimes twice
a day.

I'd stare at sinful Sunday "flicks," but now I see the light.
And now I see myself as just a big bamboozled blight.
I'd bang a bob on little dogs, that chase the haunted hare,
And never see Nemesis' hounds, behind me, in the air.
Women, wine and song I'd seek; like a lamb that's set for
slaughter,

But now I know much better; I've the Missus and Cold
Water.

I used to be a blister; my family adds: "And how!"
But I've been and got Religion—so just look at me now!

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for Today. By Colonel
R. G. Ingersoll. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 2d.
SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS. By G. W. Foote.
Price, cloth 3s. 9d.; postage 3d.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

J. E. FLOWERS. — Re the points you raise on the historicity of Jesus: (1) The report to the Emperor Tiberius is a complete forgery. (2) Pliny merely mentions meeting Christians, and Celsus pokes fun at the Christian story and repeats Jewish legends. Read Massey's *Historical Jesus and Mythical Christ* in our list of books.

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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 Secretary of the N.S.S. at this Office by Friday morning.

Will correspondents kindly note to address all communications in connection with "The Freethinker" to: "The Editor," and not to any particular person. Of course, private communications can be sent to any contributor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, giving as long notice as possible.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, and not to the Editor.

SUGAR PLUMS

Twenty-one secularists from Leicester came to London for a day's outing on Saturday, June 21. Mr. J. G. Cartwright (Vice-President, Leicester Secular Society) and Mrs. Cartwright called at our office in the morning, had a short talk with the Editor, and rejoined their party at Westminster to travel by boat to Kew. The Secretary of the N.S.S. and Mrs. Morris decided to gate-crash in the afternoon, and received a real Leicester welcome when they contacted the party in Kew Gardens. So they joined them for tea, made the return journey with them afloat, and spent the rest of the evening with Messrs. Kirk and Hassell (President and Lecture-Secretary respectively at Leicester) and their wives, till the time came for catching the train back to the Midlands. Personal contacts with visitors to London interested in our movement never fail to give pleasure to those at Headquarters, it should be remembered.

In the current issue of our Belgian Freethought contemporary, *La Pensee* (Thought) is an article entitled "Rationalism in England." The article begins with a laudatory description of the R.P.A. and its work, and then goes on to pay a generous tribute to *The Freethinker* and to its present Editor, the leading articles of whom, it declares, are "always well-written and closely reasoned, and exemplify a remarkable spirit of tolerance." It concludes by citing a recent re-issue of Mr. Bayard Simmons' fine poem, "Take Care"! Upon this poem our contemporary comments:—

"From the issue of April 6th, 1952, we venture to quote a poem marked by lofty elevation of thought which is worthy of being translated into French for the benefit of our readers." An excellent translation follows. A fitting tribute, as we are sure that our readers will agree, to our leading English Freethought poet.

Considerable attention has been aroused both in Italy and upon the European Continent in general by the "apostacy" of a leading Jesuit professor in Rome. The priest in question, Fr. Tondi, has just quitted the Church of Rome and joined the Italian Communist Party. Fr. Tondi was a scholar of distinction, a member of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and a Professor in the Vatican Gregorian University. Fr. Tondi had been a Jesuit since 1936. On April 20, 1952, he suddenly quitted his lodgings. Five days later it was announced that he had joined the Communist Party. In a public statement, our ex-Jesuit declared that, in Catholicism, "the individual is nothing, he is merely a means to enable the Vatican to dominate the world." "Catholicism," declared the ex-Reverend, "is full of contradictions, obscurities, and flagrant absurdities." We hope that ex-Fr. Tondi will prove a worthy successor to ex-Fr. Anthony, alias J. McCabe.

A point made at the N.S.S. Conference, in the Annual Report, was the desirability of Branches developing their own facilities for providing lectures, in view of the limited number of speakers at the disposal of headquarters. It is encouraging to note, therefore, that the June Branch Meeting at Manchester appointed its own panel of speakers, six in number, consisting of C. McCall, C. F. Smith, M. J. Barnes, James Corsair, G. A. Woodcock and Rowland Billing. They will share the work of a regular outdoor campaign throughout the summer.

A NOTE ON BRADLAUGH

A SENTENCE from these columns caught my eye the other day: "The implicit credo of the 19th-century Atheist was 'There is no God but anti-God, and Bradlaugh is his prophet.'" I cannot say, of course, where the writer got hold of this remarkable "credo"—implicit or otherwise—but I can say that I never heard it from any Freethought writer or speaker, and it is just nonsense to refer it to "the 19th-century Atheist."

Long before Bradlaugh there were Atheists, though it may be true that not all had the forthright courage of the great Iconoclast who never was afraid to proclaim it from the housetops. Although Thomas Paine himself was a Deist, there can be no doubt that most of his followers became Atheists as the direct result of reading the *Age of Reason*. And the same can be said of the remarkable work of Robert Taylor who was at least 100 years ahead of his time. Some of our advanced Christians have not yet reached the positions arrived at in the *Syntagma* and the *Diegesis*, but they will do in time. And certainly Taylor must have made hundreds of Atheists as a direct result of reading his books. Bradlaugh's intimate knowledge of the literary sources of Christianity was no doubt stimulated by the *Diegesis* and he could add very little himself. Indeed, the more I read the many modern scholarly works of research into Christian origins, the more I admire Robert Taylor. He was a clergyman of the Church of England and it must have profoundly shocked, not only his brothers in the Faith, but many Freethinkers of his day, that he should take the advanced position of denying that such a person as Jesus Christ ever existed. That really was too much—as indeed it is for our reverent Rationalists and Jews to-day. Neither will give up "Jesus of Nazareth" at any cost.

But the point I wish to make is that long before Bradlaugh there were Atheists, and he himself was never

just "anti-God." He always proclaimed his Secularism, and so strong were his convictions that he made almost superhuman efforts to get into Parliament so that, speaking for those who followed him, he could have some hand in shaping our laws. And he made a special point of never obtruding his Atheism in the House.

Anybody who has gone through much of the Free-thought literature of the 19th century—as I have—could not help but remark how insistent the writers were on the highest morality they could envisage. Just to deny God Almighty appeared to them a sheer waste of time. In fact it was their Christian opponents who spent most of their time in framing arguments in favour of the existence of God, and nothing like so much time as now on the wonderful teaching of the "Nazarene." These days it is rather different. Christians can be found, of course, who will write erudite works proving that God exists, but they much prefer writing about the Great Teacher's wonderful morality which would, if universally followed, completely change the world. It is not the arguments in favour of God, for example, which will dethrone Marx, but the heavenly perfectability of Jesus Christ and his sublime example. And the curious thing is that so many Rationalists fall for this. They will (sometimes with not too good a grace) admit that "Jesus of Nazareth" is not God "incarnated," but what a Wonderful Teacher!

The truth is that the "implicit credo" referred to above never came from any genuine Freethinkers, and not even from our reverent Rationalists. But I have heard it scores of times—from *Christian platforms*. It was a favourite taunt from the Christian Evidence Society—and I can only express surprise that any writer in these columns should have taken it as "gospel" truth.

Of course, Bradlaugh wrote an "anti-God" pamphlet—quite the best ever written in my opinion. *A Plea for Atheism* is to my mind unanswerable, and was no doubt what Christians sometimes had in their minds when they yelled out the "implicit credo." If they could have answered it, there might well have been no "credo," implicit or otherwise.

When Bradlaugh began his career as a Freethinker he was obliged to think out for himself a philosophical basis for his Atheism, and with the help of Spinoza he made a very good job of it. In a number of debates I have had with scholarly clergymen I invariably used Bradlaugh's *Plea for Atheism* and found it highly entertaining to watch my opponents' reactions. They never were able to answer it.

Bradlaugh never departed from its main arguments. He was a superb debater, and if the reader wants an intellectual treat let him procure, if he can, the two debates he held with Westerby and Browne. In addition there is the written debate he held with W. H. Gillespie, in his day a famous Scottish metaphysician who felt that the Design Argument for the existence of God was invalid, and who took immense pains with what he called the "Argument a priori" which he developed in (I think) a couple of books. Gillespie was attacked by other keen disputants and he published the whole of the discussion with Bradlaugh and his other opponents in a volume entitled *Theism or Atheism*. This work is well worth study, and it proves that Bradlaugh could deal, and deal very effectively, with the most subtle and involved arguments when required. But—and I must stress this—he was just as keen, if not more keen, on the "gospel" of Secularism as the best ways and means to improve the lot of his fellow man.

Let me give one further instance of this. No one in England was more bitterly attacked for defending the right of everybody to read the *Elements of Social Science*, a pioneer medical work on sex problems, and a Malthusian classic. Its author, Dr. George Drysdale, had very advanced views, and they "shocked" the defenders of the narrow Victorian morality then prevailing—even among famous Freethinkers like Saladin. It was not only Christians who attacked Bradlaugh for being so much in advance of his time as to advocate artificial contraception. Some of the most eminent of his Free-thought contemporaries took a hand in the sorry game, and when Christians sneer at him as being "anti-God," they often have in their minds his championship of birth control as well as his *Plea for Atheism*.

As one who has been connected with the Freethought movement for the greater part of this century, I have seen many changes in the methods of propaganda, and I think that our modern Freethinkers are doing their best to keep the flag flying. A glance at the Aims and Objects of the National Secular Society would prove that a mere "anti-God" attitude was never its propaganda—but then a good deal of well-meaning advice comes from people who have no connection with the one Society which has never yet hauled down its flag—the flag of the "best of causes."

H. CUTNER.

REVIEW

BUDDHISM: ITS ESSENCE AND DEVELOPMENT. By Edward Conze. Bruno Cassirer, Oxford. 126 pp. 18s. net.

THE importance of a sympathetic and critical understanding of the "thoughts of the great Eastern peoples and their ways and wills" has increased enormously in our present century. The book before us is a valuable contribution to that end. If history, as Whitehead says, is the "adventures of ideas"—then Buddhism has played a great part in that adventure. Is Buddhism a "religion" or a philosophy? It is both; but primarily it is a way of life; and, it is a way of life, as Dr. Conze makes quite clear, that insists on the importance of *meditation*—to "see things as they really are"—to get to grips with reality. So it is a challenge to the rationalist as to the religious believer. Just think of this summing-up on the first page, of what a real spiritual outlook really means—

to regard sensory experience as relatively unimportant;

to try to renounce what one is attached to;

to try to treat all peoples alike—whatever their looks, intelligence, colour, smell, education, etc.

"Spiritual" here has the primary meaning of Ethical, and, as the author here remarks, "the collective effort of the European races during the last centuries" has gone into channels which by this definition are *not* spiritual. Buddhism, largely through the writings of Schopenhauer, has gained a reputation of being a "radical pessimism." In that the founder's analysis sees suffering in this world of the conditioned and impermanent, as one of its inescapable characteristics, it is "pessimistic." Yet observers who have lived in Buddhist countries, as Burma and Tibet, have placed on record that their inhabitants are spontaneously cheerful and even gay—laymen and monks alike. The world may be a "vale of tears," but there is a joy in shedding its burden! As Conze says, it is best to discard the word "pessimism" and to look the facts straight in the face. In all mentally developed persons, a real moral awakening takes its rise in a sense of deep dissatisfaction and disillusionment with the world as it is. Buddhism began with a ringing call to energy, it sought

to stab man wide awake rather than to put him to sleep; bidding him "keep vigil amidst the sleepers."

Such ideas are the common ground the distinctive approach of *all* schools of Buddhism, which the student will find clearly outlined in the introductory chapter. Then follows an interesting study of "Buddhology," the development of traditional teaching concerning the Person of the Founder from the human teacher to the being, "Tathagata," all wise, omniscient. As J. H. Newman showed long ago, *all* religions pass through stages of development; a sure sign of life! In the case of Buddhism however, we should note an important distinction from Western forms; the Founder in no school is worshipped as Creator or Saviour. "Buddhas do but point the way." This leads to the inevitable query: Is Buddhism atheistic? And, as Dr. Conze says, these discussions generally assume that God is an unambiguous term, which is by no means the case. We can here distinguish at least three meanings of the term: (1) A personal God who created the universe; (2) The Godhead personal or supra-personal; (3) a number of Gods or angels not clearly distinguished from Gods. As to (1), Buddhism is not interested in the question *who created the Universe*. Such speculations are a waste of time. The great *summum bonum* Nirvana, has no cosmological functions: the Buddhist reflects this is not *God's* world, but a world made by our own greed and stupidity; a useful reflection for U.N.O. discussions! And as for Polytheism, says our author (p. 41):—

"In order to appreciate the Buddhist's toleration of Polytheism, we must first of all understand that polytheism is very much alive even among us. But where formerly Athene, Baal, Astarte, Isis, Sarasvati, Kwin Yin, etc., excited the popular imagination, it is nowadays inflamed by such words as democracy, progress, civilisation, equality, liberty, reason, science, etc. A multitude of persons has given way to a multitude of *abstract nouns*."

Since the first landing of the Pilgrim Fathers on the soil of America to the Declaration of Human Rights in the United Nations Charter of our own day, these slogans have been proclaimed as the essential note of a civilised world. Peaceful co-operation and *understanding* between East and West is the only way such grand ideas can be made accomplished facts.

The passage just read is rather an oblique attack on a view of history known as "economic determinism" often fathered on Karl Marx; but I suggest that a critical study of Buddhist ethical philosophy need not involve a retreat from the world as a hopeless social and economic chaos. Buddha's teaching, we should remember, is a moral tonic rather than an anaesthetic; and though it is essentially monastic, it has produced amazing civilisations. In this book we can trace the pathway in teaching and practice of the few simple yet profound ideas in the *Old Wisdom School*; of sorrow, sorrow's cause, and the Path that leads to sorrow's ceasing, to the profound developments in the Mahayana or *New Wisdom School*. For now came the great awakening that the *salvation* of man lies in the paradox that there is no separate self. "As are these—so am I." Man must be judged by his life, not by the consistency of his views, not by purely intellectual standards. Mahayana says that selfhood is damnation; "sin" is nothing but egotism, "and Nirvana means living in the truth that all life is *one*," and surely this *is* the truth that the world needs to-day. Finally, we have here an interesting account of the rise of Buddhist Societies in the West, also a good index and Bibliography.

R. J. JACKSON.

CORRESPONDENCE

SPIRITUALISM

SIR,—Please thank Mr. Cutner for his fine articles on "Spiritualism." His comments were most interesting to me, as, for years, I was a Spiritualist; a regular reader of "Light" and "Two Worlds" and other Spiritualistic literature. I also attended several seances weekly.

Though unable to explain some of the alleged "spirit" phenomena I became sceptical, lost interest, and am inclined to agree with Mr. Cutner's concluding remark: "There are no Spirits."—Yours, etc. C. E. RATCLIFFE.

THE "INDIAN RATIONALIST"

SIR,—I express my gratitude to you for your kindness in sending a message of goodwill to the *Indian Rationalist*.

Ours is a small attempt to serve a great cause. I request you to encourage our humble efforts by continuing to extend to us your co-operation and advice.

We have to struggle against odds in our country. Out here, religion sits enthroned in the citadel of power, and freethought is condemned as crime. We are sustained by the thought that our struggle in this country is part of the world movement for freedom and that humanity is bound to win through in the end, however dark the present hour. The words of cheer from savants like you that reach from beyond the seas are welcomed by us as portents of brighter days ahead.—Yours, etc., S. RAMANATHAN (Editor).

DOGMATISM AND FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—Mr. C. E. Ratcliffe does not apparently agree with my statement that life is idiotic. I again assert, without any trimmings, that life is idiotic. The word idiotic means stupid.

Again and again I have endeavoured to impress upon people two things of paramount importance. First—religious training has brought about a distorted state of mind, colouring a great number of our thoughts, both conscious and unconscious, disturbing and misleading, leading us into many useless bypaths of thinking and discussion. Of this we must ever be aware, for the price of correct thinking is eternal vigilance.

The second: That every individual is just as important as every other individual, and that the whole universe resides in each individual. The amount of knowledge is immaterial to this statement. The injury, suffering or sorrow of a single individual breaks down all theories of progress or of any beneficent factor in nature. It also disposes of Mr. Ratcliffe's "purpose" or "destiny." Origin can, of course, be a universal matter and discussed *ad lib*.

Whence? Why? Or whither? These do not apply, as untold millions of living things, including human beings, are born, live a doubtful life, then die.

Even if it is all a dream, one cannot get away from the fact that if a shin is knocked against a lump of iron it is painful, and difficult to treat as non-existent.—Yours, etc., P. TURNER.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S.—J. CLAYTON: Friday, July 4, 7-30 p.m., Rawtenstall; Sunday, July 6, 7-30 p.m., Blackpool; Monday, July 7, 7-30 p.m., Cleveleys; Wednesday, July 9, 7-30 p.m., St. Anne's-on-Sea.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday evening, 7 p.m.: H. DAY.

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

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m. Sunday, July 6, 3 p.m., Platt Fields, C. F. SMITH, a Lecture.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: F. A. RIDLEY (Highbury Corner).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: MESSRS. WOOD and O'NEILL.

South London and Lewisham Branch N.S.S. (Brockwell Park).—7 p.m.: J. W. BARKER.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, July 6, 11 a.m.: ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Choice of Life and Death."

AN AMERICAN CRITIC

IT is with considerable interest and amusement that I have read "A Defence of Christianity," by Mr. Raymond McKeown, in your issue of May 11, 1952, in which Mr. McKeown enters the lists to wield a lance on behalf of the Bible and Christianity. A lance which has been broken, upon numerous times and occasions, by the knights and champions of Christian Orthodoxy, whenever and wherever their "dearly-cherished" faith was endangered and threatened by the exponents of organic evolution or the various schools of Biblical criticism. The student of religious controversy, without a moment's hesitation, can amply testify to the fact that upon all occasions, wherever such intellectual jousts have taken place, the champions of Christian Orthodoxy have suffered, and suffered disastrously. Although Mr. McKeown, in all his sincerity, has gone forth gallantly on behalf of the "good book" and the reputed utterances of Jesus Christ, he has not contributed an iota to bolster the pretensions of those who stake all upon every word and syllable contained in the "book of books."

To enter into a minute and thorough analysis of the claims and arguments set forth by Mr. McKeown would require more time and space than the limited columns of *The Freethinker* can at present permit. However, I shall, with brevity, try to deal with some of the arguments advanced by Mr. McKeown against his critics, Miss Peckman and Mr. W. E. Huxley.

Mr. McKeown has cast logic and common sense to the four winds when he addresses the following comment to Mr. Huxley: "A wicked, evil God does not produce saints. The cause and effect law operates here, I think. I freely admit one has to take a lot for granted when one is a Christian, but dear, oh dear, what one has to swallow when one disbelieves the Bible, and the God of the Bible." In reply to Mr. McKeown, it should be at least of passing knowledge to him that there have been numerous canonized murderers and inquisitors who officiated and presided over an *auto de fe* and who left no stone unturned in ruthlessly exterminating heresy and ferreting out those accused of witchcraft, ever mindful of the divinely inspired quotations: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" and "Those who do not believe shall be damned." If anything, the saints, in great measure, certainly followed as best they could in the "foot-steps" of the wrathful and fickle Jehovah and his equally fickle but sublime son, who had a place of eternal suffering reserved for those who denied or scoffed at his "divine mission." And with further reference to the above quotation of Mr. McKeown, one not only takes a lot for granted when one is a Christian; one takes everything for granted, from the most absurd to the most supposedly sublime, between the covers of the "sacred volume." Divorced from King James's English and expressed in modern, every-day English, the fallacies and absurdities of the "sacred book" are readily revealed.

"God has provided enough in His World for all; if the wicked, sinful, selfish heart of man corners it, then it's not God's fault." Why not, it may with rightfulness be asked? In this connection it can also be said that the creator and controller of the forces of nature, in his infinite benevolence and divine love, has visited, consciously or unconsciously, plagues, droughts, floods, soil-erosion, etc., which have turned to nil the weary labours of the cultivators of the soil and thereby, in many instances, reduced populations to famines, physical debilities, and the ravages of diseases, all as a result of the divine whim and pleasure. And infinite love and benevolence can be justly indicted

for creating a humanity with definite frailties, and then punishing them for the failings that have fallen afoul of the "divine nature." Yes, Mr. McKeown, we are ever trying to correct or prevent the possible, irrational visitations of the deity to whom you have dedicated yourself.

Mr. McKeown reminds Miss Peckman: Since he has followed God, he has had a "sound mind." By all means. I hope that holds true, regardless of our sharp difference of opinion. But Mr. McKeown, in all fairness, should admit that not all bibliolaters have been of sound mind. As a matter of common knowledge, I feel that many have condoned their anti-social manners and views by quoting "Holy Writ." Of course, Mr. McKeown will pull out his trump-card and say: "One must understand the spirit of the sacred word." Meaning, of course, refuge is taken in allegory in order to escape absurdity.

Mr. McKeown states that he has "reached the sunny uplands of an optimistic and practical faith in God." Just what mystical "exaltation of soul" he has experienced, what transcendental planes of existence he has reached or metaphysical realities he has perceived, it would be interesting to hear. For that, also, one must also have a superabundance of "faith" in order to reach a "higher spiritual plane" in order to apprehend certain unseen realities, realities visible only to the faithful.

Mr. McKeown should dwell, and reflect at great length, upon the following biblical quotation which, if applied to social life would indeed have frightful effects: "For, I say unto you, that unto everyone which hath, shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring them hither, and slay them before me" (Luke xix, 26-27). This vehement, but divine outburst, would reduce social justice to an absurdity.

LEON SPAIN.

WHY THE CHURCH PERSECUTES

In the year 1653 there appeared in France *A History of the Town of Châlons*, by "Claude Perry, Theologian." Under the year 1393 appears the following instructive entry:—

"But in the next year (1393) there occurred the notable event of the sentence passed upon a certain Jacquot Celerier. This man was accused of the crime of heresy and was declared a heretic after trial in the presence of our Bishop, by the Inquisitor of the Vaudois. Jacques de Gatricey, temporal Bailiff of the Bishopric, handed him over to Robert de Cluny, Governor of Chalons, as the official representative of the Duke of Burgundy, who had him burned alive by the executioner of capital punishment.

"The above execution, though quite conformable with justice, may still appear to gentle natures to have been too severe, but justice cannot be too strict when it is called upon to stifle heresies; immediately they make their appearance. The death of an individual heretic saves from damnation a multitude of potential heretics. If all founders of heresies had been dealt with as drastically as soon as they appeared, they would not have been able to work the terrible evils which have accompanied the subsequent expansion of their heresies."

[Translated from *La Raison Militante*, by F.A.R.]

AGE OF REASON. By Thomas Paine. With 40 page introduction by Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 3s. 9d., paper 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1½d.

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

THERE ARE NO CHRISTIANS. By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 6d.; postage 1½d.

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION. By F. A. Ridley. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.