

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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A FEW weeks back, Mr. Bayard Simmons reviewed what he regards as one of the most remarkable sociological studies of recent years: *The Geography of Hunger*, by Josue de Castro. The present writer concurs with Mr. Simmons' estimate of this notable study, and the following paragraphs record his personal impressions of an outstanding contribution to the still adolescent science of sociology.

In *The Geography of Hunger* its Brazilian author makes a double contribution to contemporary economic science: in the first place, he seeks to establish the fundamental cause of that universal "hunger," that spectre of shortages which has hitherto dogged

the steps of Humanity as its sinister shadow; whilst, in the second instance, he presents us with masses of detailed information upon the past and present relations of human beings to the permanently unsolved problems of the food supply. Our author is no novice in statistical studies of this kind, for he was for some years in the service of the United Nations, and his scientific competence is vouched for by the eminent British scientist, Lord Boyd Orr, who contributes a preface to the book, to the importance of which as, also, to the scientific eminence of its author, he testifies in no uncertain manner.

In the author's terminology the term "Hunger" is used in a comprehensive manner, as permanent malnutrition rather than in its literal sense of downright starvation. When used in this wider sense, Dr. de Castro has no difficulty in demonstrating that Hunger is a world-wide disease of mankind: America, Africa, Asia, even Europe, the master continent of the 19th century, all are, in more or less complete degree, starving continents. And if that is so now in our machine-age of potential plenty, it was so even more in the pre-scientific, pre-industrial past. Then, scarcity was a natural and unalterable law. Dr. de Castro quotes an authority who states that the civilisations of antiquity and, indeed, all pre-industrial civilisations, "were endowed with such a limited economic surplus that they could not have continued to exist except on a basis of extreme inequality in the distribution of wealth. In the last analysis, all ancient civilisations were only small islands of culture, rising out of an immense sea of poverty and slavery." With which dictum, conceived in strict accord with the "economic interpretation of history," our socialist author is obviously in complete agreement.

Is an almost universal poverty and an economic "struggle for (an unequal) existence" so inseparably connected with it, a permanent "law" of human evolution, or merely a passing phase of social immaturity? Here the learned author descends from his academic pedestal and, quitting the Delphic tripod, plunges "in medias res," into the heart of that most burning of current economic questions: the permanent relationship between the growth of population and its current relationship with

"the means of existence." Our author is no Malthusian, "neo" or otherwise. As a theoretician as well as a historian and geographer of Hunger, Dr. de Castro energetically refutes the Malthusian theses and, indeed, if we grant his conclusions, hits the Reverend Robert for the proverbial "six."

This is the most controversial part of this new kind of "geography." A veritable Brazilian thunderbolt is hurled from the New World into the Capitol of Malthusian Orthodoxy. Is universal hunger the result of over-population, as Malthus and his present-day disciples declare; or, rather, the cause of that self-same over-population,

as our socialist author argues, with chapters, verses and statistics to back up his case? To formulate the same question more theoretically: is Malthus' famous "law" that increase in the means of subsistence can never keep up with the current increase in population, a permanent, inescapable "law" of social existence, from which there is no escape, as the Reverend Malthus, the "Jeremiah" of economic science, declared; or is the famous "law" merely a descriptive summary of human social immaturity hitherto, as our author elaborately seeks to demonstrate? Here we will merely remark impartially that Dr. de Castro appears to us to have made out a very strong case; and we shall await with interest what our Malthusian contemporaries have to say in defence of their so drastically criticised doctrine.

In the course of his more detailed review Mr. Simmons has already sufficiently indicated what is the thesis endorsed in the book before us upon the relationship between what is there argued to be cause and effect, hunger and over-population: permanent hunger, such as is still, as it has always been the permanent lot of the vast majority of mankind, stimulates in a compensatory manner the sexual urge for reproduction. Contrarily, amongst well-fed nations the birth-rate automatically falls. This inversion of cause and effect places our author and the Malthusians in diametrically opposed camps, where we propose, for the moment, to leave them.

However, as our geographer abundantly shows, whatever may be the case in a hypothetical future, in our melancholy present, hunger, in the sense here used of permanent malnutrition, is rampant and universal. Its causes lie partly in a technical immaturity still only overcome in exceptional areas, and partly in a faulty and in a parasitic social organisation. Colonial imperialism and agrarian feudalism are scathingly indicted by our author as major formative influences in the causation and maintenance of hunger on its present well-nigh universal level. If Dr. de Castro is no disciple of Malthus, neither does he subscribe to "the white man's burden" kind of imperialism as preached by Mr. Kipling and his surviving disciples. Our "geography" indicates many black spots on the "all-red route" of the Empire; Anglo-Saxon

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

A NEW KIND OF GEOGRAPHY

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

Imperialism, both British and American, comes in for some sharp strictures. However, it was reserved for Nazi Germany to transform hunger completely into a fixed instrument of policy; the ghastly results of which policy are now known to all the world and are here scientifically analysed.

With regard to agrarian feudalism, its huge latifundia, with their parasitic "absentee" landlords, these are here indicted as a potent cause of human misery. In Europe, agrarian feudalism is on the decline except in Spain, "where Franco has restored the Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella" and, to some extent, in Italy. Whatever one may think of dictatorship in the abstract, or of Communism in the concrete, it can hardly be denied that the abolition, since 1945, of agrarian feudalism in Hungary and in Eastern Europe represented a definitely progressive feature in our post-war world.

The planet which we inhabit, concludes our author, can, and eventually will support a much larger population

on a much higher level of existence. This is an encouraging thought, particularly, we may add, to Freethinkers and Secularists everywhere. For Rationalism is rarely compatible with a permanent state of semi-starvation. Freethought presupposes *mens sana in corpore sano* ("a healthy mind in a healthy body"). If—if Malthus said it—the bulk of mankind must always live in a hopeless state of semi-starvation, then Freethought, we may as well admit, will always be confined to a small minority; indeed the projected *History of Hunger* to which our author, quoting Michelet, refers, would include some most instructive chapters on the recurring role of hunger as the creator of religion.

For which reason, as well as for its own intrinsic merits, we think that Dr. de Castro has not only made a notable addition to our knowledge of "geography," but that he has, further, written a message of hope to all those secular thinkers who hope eventually to see a world purged of want and of its inseparable allies, fear and superstition.

And Those My Enemies

By MICHAEL J. BARNES

(Concluded from page 59)

By application of such reasoning as this, I do not doubt but that the Church of Rome could find anything from a prohibition of sardines to a recommendation of Jeyes Fluid contained in "the sources of revelation."

From the aforementioned pronouncements one would hardly be led to suppose that the Church of Rome cherished within her chaste bosom the slightest spark of tolerance towards the religious rites of non-Catholics, yet should there remain any doubt upon this point the sixth chapter of the "Book of Decretals" wherein it states: "The rites of unbelievers, namely, of Pagans and Heretics, are not in themselves to be tolerated, because they are so bad that no truth or utility can from thence be derived to the good of the Church," should be sufficient to dispel it.

It may be answered that the Church of Rome to-day plainly does not endeavour to exterminate the rites of Protestantism, despite the "Book of Decretals" and the infallible pronouncements of the general councils, but that is only because the Church of Rome here in England has not, as yet, got the power to do so, being in a minority she cries for tolerance, and complains of persecution, it is said, that only the persecuted insist on tolerance as a Christian duty, and this is doubly true in the case of the Church of Rome, for in Spain where she exercises an immense power, nine Protestant churches have recently been attacked or bombed, their ministers assaulted and their furniture and hymn books burned, the last attack, so far as I know, was made on a Protestant Chapel in Oreuse, which was blown up by a bomb in March, 1952. (See H. of C. *Hansard*, 1952, No. 212, C.2302(13).)

The punishments with which the Church of Rome "corrected" heretics, when she was in a position to do so, are well known and could hardly be exaggerated, and the law that provides for their extermination and the confiscation of their goods is infallibly enunciated thus: "We excommunicate and anathematise every heresy which exalteth itself against this holy, orthodox and Catholic faith, which we have set forth above; condemning all heretics, by whatsoever names they may be recognised . . . and let the secular powers, whatever offices they may hold be induced and admonished, and, if need be, compelled by ecclesiastical censure to exterminate from the lands under their jurisdiction all heretics who shall be denounced by the Church . . . Catholics, having exterminated the

heretics, may, without contradiction, possess their lands and preserve it in the purity of faith." (Fourth Lateran Council, Canon 3.) That heretics are to be punished by death is again proved by the condemnation of John Huss by the 15th Article of the Council of Constance, and St. Thomas, known in the Catholic Church as the "Angelical Doctor," states in answer to the question "Are heretics justly punished by death?": "Yes, because forgers of money, and other disturbers of the state are justly punished with death; therefore heretics, who are forgers of the faith." (Qn. 22, Art. II, 3.)

The scriptural justification for this infallible pronouncement is found by the Church of Rome in Luke ix, 55, which narrates the fate of Ananias and Sapphira (St. Augustin, Cap. 165, Manich Cap. 4). Lest any misguided apologist should care to question the validity of my authorities I will clarify the position as it stands so far: the Council of Trent at its 25th session, declares concerning the Fourth Lateran Council, held under Pope Innocent III, that it was a general council, and in the 24th session of the same council it is declared to be a sacred council.

Now, the oath of the priests binds them to the creed of Pope Pius IV—the creed of Pius IV binds them to the Council of Trent, the Council of Trent binds them to the Lateran Council, and the Lateran Council binds them to the extermination of heretics. I hope I make myself clear.

With regards to the last proposition, that the Church of Rome only awaits a propitious moment to put these doctrines into effect I will quote a more recent authority, although many ancient are available: "And notwithstanding, the fact that in the extraordinary condition of these times the Church usually acquiesces in certain modern liberties, She does not because she prefers them in themselves, but because She judges it expedient to permit them until in happier times She can exercise Her own liberty." (Leo XIII, Encyclical *Libertas*, 1888) and Fr. Mizzi states that he is "pleased" that the doctrines of the Church of Rome have not, and cannot, change. I wonder why? Perhaps he will be good enough to explain.

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The Present Status of Materialism

By G. H. TAYLOR

WHEN told by one of her Prime Ministers that he intended writing a history of England, Queen Victoria is said to have replied: "But surely that is not necessary. I understand Lord Macaulay has done it already."

Equally naïve would be the idea that because materialism has been stated and restated in the past it needs no further exposition. On the contrary, it is only during the last twenty years or so that materialism has been expounded to fulfil the requirements of a complete philosophy. In an American philosophical symposium of 1949, *Religion in the Making* (a quite secularist, non-Christian, even anti-Christian work), its editor writes: "The resources of philosophy, hitherto largely employed against materialism, may now be used in its favour, but it will not be the old materialism tied in with outgrown science and bad epistemology." The latter deals with knowledge-claims; it inquires which of our ideas are veridical, whether our perceptions report an outer world and so on. It is one of the two main departments of philosophy, the other being ontology. The latter is to be preferred, as a term, to metaphysics, which has suffered debasement through ill-usage at the hands of people short of a word.

This verdict on materialism by the editor of the symposium quoted may be backed up by a similar pronouncement in an excellent work which appeared in 1946, *Science versus Idealism* (Cornforth), in which the author remarks:

"It was particularly on the ground of the theory of knowledge (epistemology) that modern idealism made its most effective challenge to materialism." This challenge has now been met, and we may briefly sketch the development of materialism in the age of science, which has thrown up several divergent schools, probably analysable as follows: (1) Mechanistic Materialism, (2) and (3) Emergent Materialism and Dialectical Materialism, chronological priority here being debatable, (4) Physical Realism, or Neo-Materialism as its chief protagonist, Sellars of Michigan Univ., has called it.

The first two had no theory of knowledge whatever, the Dialectics a somewhat rough and ready one and the Physical Realists a most comprehensive one. The Mechanists had none because they thought it was not important, the Emergentists had none because no one ever systematised their philosophy, that of the Dialectics is based on *Anti-Duhring*, and I think most effective so far as it goes, and the fourth came as a development of Critical Realism, which was an offshoot of the Neo-Realist line in the Mach-Russell tradition.

Mechanical materialism was of these the most vulnerable to attack, and I doubt if many responsible thinkers to-day accept that label: exceptions would possibly be provided by the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism.

One should not think of these different schools of materialism in terms of true and false, but rather in terms of the more adequate and less adequate. We should inquire, not which is right and which wrong, but which is the most comprehensive, which allows fewest loopholes for the harassed religionist, which most effectively closes the gap against the supernatural, which is the most up-to-date in the light of twentieth century science, which takes account of the most facts and is therefore the best armed to meet its anti-materialist rivals, such as idealism, vitalism and other forms of interactionism, panpsychism, teleology, etc. The early Greeks wrote the first chapter of materialism but many more are still to be added. And the process

of adding them is not so much the replacement of the false by the true, but the process of clarification and completion.

Inside the four classes I have named may be categorised all twentieth century materialist philosophers, even though there are some who don't fit quite neatly (such as Alexander's *Space, Time and Deity*), but their deviations from type are not great enough to warrant the erection of any more categories. It must not be overlooked that they have a vast amount in common, irrespective of the particular form in which their materialism is cast. The common ground is as follows. They are agreed on the fundamental position of materialism. They reject supernatural agencies. They reject the foundational separation of mind from matter, and therefore reject immortality and free will. They agree in the contention that nature itself is capable of evolving all that has evolved, without having to be poked by the finger of God in any way, without having to be moulded, or guided, or pulled, without having to be inoculated by a Life Force, without having to be ejected out of God's mind, or otherwise controlled or interfered with by any power outside itself. Materialism says there is no final cosmic Purpose at work; all the scheming, all the planning, comes from man, who is an evolved product of nature like everything else. Instead of one great transcendent Purpose there are a lot of finite piecemeal purposes, and they are lodged in organisms which have evolved, namely, men and women. So far from being the parent of evolution, purpose is the offspring.

That, then, is the broad basis of materialism in any form, and when we turn to its several variations it is, of course, arguable that there can only be one materialism because there is only one science, and materialism is the philosophy built on science. And eventually I think this must be so. Since philosophy is to be built on science it must share the exactitude of science. It must not be a philosophy of how things may be, but the philosophy of how things are. Otherwise, if philosophers are to enjoy a sort of poetic license they can speculate in all sorts of weird and wonderful ways like the German philosophers of the 18th and 19th centuries, making the universe a novel and Man its hero. No-one expects all poets to write the same poem about the moon, but we do expect all astronomers finally to discover the same facts about it—when they have ironed out their domestic differences. Very well; let the poets write the myths while the scientists endeavour to arrive at exactitude. And because materialism is a scientific philosophy we shall expect exactitude there too. We shall expect finally only one scientific materialism. Our search is therefore for an exposition of materialism which is the most promising in that direction to-day.

The Reality of Life

Where are they now, whom we loved and are dead?
The red rose of morning blooms once, and is fled:
They are gone; they are gone!
Like the snow on the hill,
We shall see them no more
For their voices are still.
The Cosmos is empty, and God is not there.
Only the stars hear the innocents' prayer:
Take away then the folly of life still to be,
Only this earth is desirous to me!

VILLENEUVE.

This Believing World

The B.B.C.'s recent broadcast by the German theologian, Bultmann, on "demythologising" the Bible appears to have aroused Bible defenders, if not quite to a state of fury, at least to rally round the Precious Word as if a hundred years of drastic criticism had not singed off a single Holy comma. It was obvious to our Christian Higher Critics that the Old Testament no longer stood where it used to, and they had the courage to say so. But the years of stress and strain through which we have been passing have brought with them a generation who know nothing of Higher Criticism; and, with the connivance of the B.B.C.'s religious section, broadcasts are regularly given defending the Bible not only from people like Bultmann, but also from the Higher Critics whose conclusions are nearly always ignored.

We have, for example, the broadcasts to children on Monday mornings in which the poor kiddies are told that the Old Testament is an actual historical record. They are told to believe that the Creation story, the Serpent talking pure Hebrew, the Flood and Noah's Ark, the Exodus, and other myths and legends, are historical facts! And in the Third Programme—specially given for "intellectuals"—we have a Rev. G. W. Anderson trying to explain, or explain away, some of the conclusions of recent Scandinavian Biblical critics, and asserting that, while there may be a little "myth" in the Bible, it is in actual fact real history. The "Exodus" real history! Why, if there is one fact known about the Israelites it is that they never were in Egypt. The story is pure myth.

Then we have the Archbishop of York declaring that one of the most significant facts of the modern "revival" of religion was the way young people were showing interest in it; while Dr. W. E. Sangster despairingly asks, "What has gone wrong with the youth of this country?" He also wants to know "Who are the guilty?" We can leave the Archbishop and Dr. Sangster to settle between them the truth about the young people for they both can't be right. But one thing does emerge from all this—that religion, or "true" Christianity, or whatever it is called, has never been at a lower ebb in the country as a whole than at present. And this in spite of the tremendous advertising it gets from the B.B.C.

The priests, parsons, archbishops and cardinals who want us to go back to the Ages of Faith (they were, in fact, as Cotter Morrison pointed out, Ages of Filth) forget one thing. It is that the teaching of history and science in our schools has shattered pure, devout religion to smithereens. The story of the "evolution" of planets and stars as taught by modern astronomers—and in front of the microphone, too—is enough to knock out Christianity. And never again can intelligent people believe the childish myths and legends of that once powerful religion.

The other Sunday, Prof. Treharne broadcast on the "myth or legend" of Glastonbury and he gave Joseph of Arimathea, the Holy Grail, the story of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, and the story in general of "Avalon," a devastating knock-out. That there may have been an Arthur who fought off the invading Saxons may be true; but that the romantic stories surrounding him and his Knights are just fiction there is no doubt whatever. But Prof. Treharne, while firmly demolishing these Christian "myths and legends," holds fast to those of the New Testament. He actually believes in the Resurrection! Words fail us.

This "demythologising" business has certainly upset all-believing Christians—they were always led to believe there were no myths in the Bible. Now, the "intellectual" Christians are trying to explain why the Bible is full of myths, the latest exponent being the Rev. U. E. Simon who, on the Third Programme, treated his hearers to some genuine muddled muddle. As far as one could understand him, the Biblical writers took Pagan myths, knowing they were myths, and grafted them on to God Almighty and Jesus; this made the history of these two Gods real history, for obviously Pagan myths are myths, while Biblical myths must have actually occurred. We envy Mr. Simon his muddle and the way he got it across.

Theatre

"Rain." By John Colton and Clemence Randolph. Embassy Theatre.

This play, based on Somerset Maugham's story, *Miss Thompson*, is of special interest to Freethinkers because it deals with conflict between a minister of the Christian faith and the conversion of a whore. But the story is in no way one-sided for it exposes a certain hypocritical attitude to Christianity, and in its interpretation by the Rev. Alfred Davidson. This being so, our sympathies go to Sadie Thompson because we feel that there is undue interference in her life and her mode of living by those who think they know what is better for her. Sadie Thompson is morally unsound, and the Rev. Davidson is also morally at fault in the manner he deals with her.

We find ourselves hoping that Sadie will find a way to avoid taking the ship back to San Francisco and three years' prison that awaits her, for this is the sentence that her "conversion" would impose on her.

The play is 1916 period, and we realise that in the relatively short time to the present day, great advances have been made. In many respects the world is so much the better for being freer.

The play suffered from imperfect casting, but Miriam Karlin as Sadie Thompson was extremely good. Nigel Arkwright as a doctor undecieved by religion, Alastair Hunter as the hotel owner, Robert Ayres as Sergeant O'Hara, and Margery Hawtrey as Mrs. Davidson, all gave good performances. In fact it cannot be said that there was any indifferent acting. Anthony Hawtrey played the Rev. Davidson with less skill than he produced. His direction of the play was realistic and Mary Purvis's set brought the correct atmosphere.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

Play the Game

We are but one small part
Of one eternal mind,
And though we seek its source,
That source we'll never find.
We linger here a while,
And make our little guess,
But learn that we are nothing,
We never shall be less.
But still we'll play the game
And stand for what is right,
With our fellows struggling
Like heroes to the light.

PAUL VARNEY.

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THE FREETHINKER

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To Correspondents

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.—Our apologies. We will try to follow your MS. more closely.
J. BOWMAN.—Your article will appear in due course. If you want quick publication, please make your articles shorter.
WILLIAM J. FREEMAN.—Thanks for your letter and cutting. We heartily reciprocate your good wishes.
RUPERT G. HUMPHRIES.—Thank you for your letter. Will you please make letters intended for publication shorter?

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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.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES.

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.: E. W. McDOWELL, "Whither Education?"

Bristol Rationalist Group (The Crown and Dove Hotel, Bridewell Street).—Wednesday, March 18, 7-30 p.m.: Discussion, "Rationalism a Positive Force." Readers of *The Freethinker* in Bristol are cordially invited—and to make a note of the date. On April 15, the subject will be "The Philosophy of Materialism."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 3, 7 p.m.: Major A. H. REYNOLDS (Howard League for Penal Reform), "Corporal Punishment."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: VICTOR E. NEUBERG, R.P.A., "Freethought and Politics."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: IAN WINTERBOTTOM, M.P., "Whither Germany."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A., "The Left Tradition."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Street, Edgware Road, W.2).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY, "War and the Secular Movement."

NOTES AND NEWS

A resolution accepted to be placed before the Annual General Meeting of the Peace Pledge Union in April is worded as follows: "We feel that the identification of crime and militarism with irreligion in general, and materialism in particular, by pacifist writers and speakers, serves no useful purpose, and causes unnecessary distress to those pacifists who cannot honestly accept any religious belief. We should like to feel that the P.P.U. links all pacifists irrespective of individual approach, the emphasis continually being on personal responsibility for right conduct."

We congratulate the P.P.U. in seeking to end the discrimination so often shown against Freethinkers in movements with advanced and humanitarian aims; also an

N.S.S. member, Mr. J. R. Howes, of Stockport, who put the resolution forward.

A public meeting was held in St. Pancras Town Hall, London, on Wednesday, February 18, to discuss the moral and legal problems arising out of the Bentley case, and to demand, specifically, the abolition of capital punishment.

The hall was packed. Amongst the speakers were Mr. Sidney Silverman, M.P., Dr. Donald Soper, President-Elect of the Methodist Church, Miss Sybil Morrison, of the Peace Pledge Union, and Mr. F. A. Ridley, who spoke in a personal capacity. This must, we think have been the first time that the presidents of the Methodist Church and of the National Secular Society have spoken on the same platform! Legal reform and, in particular, the abolition of capital punishment, form part of the written constitution of the N.S.S.

The announcement of the forthcoming retirement of that stormy petrel of the Church of England, Bishop Barnes, of Birmingham, must, we imagine, cause considerable relief to the authorities of the Church of England. Dr. Barnes, at the age of 78, now goes into retirement to join his fellow-modernist, Dr. W. K. Inge, who, at the vast age of nearly 93, shows no urgent disposition to "shuffle off this mortal coil" and to be "for ever with the Lord."

Dr. Barnes's services to rational thinking have been such that we may sincerely wish him a long and happy retirement. Except for a few "trade union" references to Jesus—after all, Dr. Barnes was a Christian Bishop when he wrote it!—his *Rise of Christianity* is a valuable contribution to the critical study of Christian origins. We fear that our modernist Father in God will have much to answer for at the Day of Judgment! When the "Red Dean" of Canterbury follows Dr. Inge and Dr. Barnes into eventual retirement, then only, we imagine, will His Grace of Canterbury be able to enjoy a quiet life.

Mr. F. A. Ridley will be speaking for the Glasgow Secular Society at the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, on Sunday, March 8. His subject on this occasion will be *The Social Origins of Christianity*, an important element in the background of Christianity, which both historians and critics of Christianity have been inclined to neglect. The subject is one which the Editor of *The Freethinker* has studied long and carefully, and upon which he is consequently, well qualified to speak with authority.

The Reverend Fr. Leonard J. Feeney, of Boston, U.S.A., has just been excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church. His "heresy" consists in saying that all non-Catholics are certainly damned. It seems a case of "the punishment fitting in the crime," when a man is condemned to be damned for wishing other people to be! However, the Church of Rome is a worldly-wise body which knows how and when to move with the times. The climate of Hell, we predict, will get steadily cooler until it becomes just pleasantly warm.

A Literary Frontiersman: The Novels of Sinclair Lewis

By A. P. PERRIN

AT the beginning of 1951 Sinclair Lewis died, an exile from American territory, in Rome. With Henry James, master of the specialised and the fastidious, Lewis, whose cycle of novels covered most aspects of American society, thus at least shared, if nothing else, a common need to escape to an older culture. The American obituary notices were tepid in their appraisal. The *Christian Century* still felt the sting of his caricature of the false priest Gantry, unrivalled in literature since Moliere's exposure of the pseudo-devout in the reign of Louis XIV. This it stigmatised as the "greatest failure of his productive years" and, under a headline, "Our greatest was not very great," treated its reader to a prosy homily. "Not a great writer . . . not even a very good one" wrote *Time*. Even the left-wing *Nation* found *Babbitt* too long. Lewis indeed had little in common with everything associated with *The American Century*, the rapid extension of which over the entire non-Communist globe was co-eval with his last years. To the standardisation of life consequent upon the triumph of machinery after the Civil War he was by nature opposed. He looked back, as a late novel, *The God Seeker*, betrayed, to the individualism of frontier days, and earlier still, to the radicalism of Thomas Jefferson's primitive American republic.

Nearly all Lewis's novels relate the struggles and adventures of a single person to whom other characters are tributary. The earliest to attain a modicum of success was *The Job* (1917), which, following the nomenclature of the later works, might have been called "Una Golden," for it is the story of an office-girl who pits herself against the harsh conditions of New York. In this book Lewis shows a sharp sense of the reality of the cleavage between classes in his analysis of the "two cities" of New York, which, in the 1890s consisted of the fortunate few who controlled its pleasures and comforts at the apex of a great pyramid of office slaves who supported them; for Lewis had no delusions about the nobility of labour; he realised that for the majority of mankind in an industrial society work is a killer, destructive of the intellect and deadening to the lyrical impulse. He had not yet properly conquered "the city" himself, and the success of his heroine is correspondingly moderate. The description of extant economic conditions is detailed and photographic. *The Job* is a cautious book. It is free from the extravagant Waughish fantasy, verging sometimes on hysteria, of the later works; subsequent "heroes," like Gantry and Planish, almost become omnipotent, and envisage themselves at the head of world-wide leagues for moral and political reform. The Marxist might regard this development as a reflection of the passage of U.S. capitalism from a domestic into an imperialist phase. The Freudian will find it an example of the way in which the artist achieves substitute gratification of the fantasies of omnipotence, common to everyone in childhood, in his work; and of how, vice versa, by the acceptance of his creative fantasies, he may even achieve their partial satisfaction in reality. Three years after *The Job*, *Main Street* appeared, and the miracle happened. *Main Street* sold nearly a million copies in a decade and Lewis was acclaimed in Europe as well as America. Such success must have given him sufficient confidence to give free reign to his imagination.

The "heroes" of Lewis's novels may be divided into two categories, those who are heroes indeed, challenge the false values of a commercialised society, and, if they do not meet with entire disaster, are involved in a futile and unavailing struggle; and those who accept "the racket," and impelled by false and even wicked motives, rise rapidly to the top. Some of the heroes combine features of both these categories.

The most important may be summarised as follows. Carol Kennicott in *Main Street* attempts to reform Gopher Prairie, dreams even of rebuilding it, but finds she is tilting at windmills, and achieves nothing. Babbitt, although not intrinsically bad, like Gantry and Planish, nevertheless accepts philistine values at their surface value. A successful realtor, an able manipulator of the machine of money and success, he does, however, contain an element of the rebel, breaks away from the herd, flirts with the local radicals, and promptly comes to grief. If Carol Kennicott's reforming activities lead simply to a certain social frustration, Babbitt's life is threatened with ruin, and we are made aware of a whole world of violence and intolerance at work within, and against, the framework of American democracy, a world which Lewis was later to elaborate upon in *It Can't Happen Here*. Martin Arrowsmith, in *Arrowsmith*, like Carol Kennicott, a reformer, is unlike her in that he gives way more completely to the other side in failing to fulfil Gottlieb's injunctions in the West Indian plague epidemic. In this he is thus similar to Babbitt, although in a reverse direction; Babbitt is captured for a time by the visions of the planners and reformers. Arrowsmith yields to the pressure of the orthodox and to commercial interests. True to Lewis's general pattern it is only in so far as he cedes to the latter that he is a success; as a rebel, a devotee of pure science, he fails. Elmer Gantry, intoxicated at first with alcohol and then with power, and Gideon Planish, intoxicated most of the time with both alcohol and power, are examples of the completely bad "heroes" who meet with complete success. The late *Kingsblood Royal* (1948), repeats the pattern of the reformer doomed to futility, but with a difference. Initially like Babbitt, a well-greased axle turning smoothly in the American business machine, Kingsblood becomes an uncompromising champion of the coloured races and is rewarded by the loss of his material wealth, an armed assault on his mansion, and final incarceration. *Kingsblood Royal* is indeed an astonishing performance for a man of 63. The American obituarists conveniently forgot it when they attempted to depict Lewis as a tamed lion, corrupted by success. It displays a reforming zeal and a perception as undiminished as that evinced in *Main Street* and *Babbitt* nearly thirty years earlier. Moreover, it represents a development upon these two earlier books; all three repeat a similar pattern, but with *Kingsblood Royal* there is a significant variant. Carol Kennicott, in *Main Street*, after her unsuccessful attempts to impose her ideas on Gopher Prairie, breaks completely with her kindly but boorish husband, and decides to build her own life amongst the intellectuals of New York. In similar fashion Babbitt breaks with the conventions of Zenith and determines to follow his own path. Both, however, return to the herd; Carol Kennicott, if inwardly unsubdued, is prepared to jettison her ambitious projects, whilst with Babbitt the fires of revolt are quenched for

all time. By contrast, Kingsblood Royal refuses to deny his negro blood and is prepared to accept every consequence which his voluntary publication of the knowledge of it involves; unlike Babbitt, even when confronted with these consequences, he refuses to recant. It is as if Lewis has at length ceased to waver and has achieved the full

courage of his convictions; for there is sometimes the disquieting feeling that he does not quite know which side he is on. The satire of Seneca Doake and the radical elements in *Babbitt* is fierce, and the book in parts reads like a cautionary tale in favour of Babbitt.

(To be concluded)

Goodness Without Tears

By BISSETT LOVELOCK

THERE is no cynic like a young cynic, and contrary to general belief, a man gets less rather than more cynical as life advances. This is because, in the words of Wilde, a cynic is concerned with prices rather than value, and it takes thirty years or more to assemble a price index.

It takes, therefore, thirty "good long years or more" to realise that man re-acts sometimes to urges other than for self-aggrandisement. If, that is to say, you interpret self-aggrandisement realistically.

In fact man does things because he wants to. He is made that way. Life presents him on every possible occasion with the choice between various lines of action. Will you choose the white, she says, or the red, "par" or "impar"? Or will you pin all to the lucky number seven? Choose wisely and weigh your chances; or if you prefer act quite irresponsibly. No action of yours can affect the spin of the wheel. But you must not stake on "zero" and you cannot withhold your throw.

And here adds the Croupier with a crafty smile, as it cannot benefit you in the slightest, is an invaluable guide called "self-interest." Where every choice is equal it will tell you which to choose. And in a game where good cometh forth out of evil and "good intentions do incur the worst," it will tell you infallibly what are good intentions. And as a slight drawback, its use is obligatory not optional.

The delusion that man is choosing not between "par et impar" but between Good and Evil—between White and Black instead of Red and Black, is, of course, the Great Delusion. It deludes all classes of people from thinkers down to religionites. The latter are particularly prone to the delusion; partly because they have a vested interest in the struggle, partly because this existence depends on the separation of Good and Evil.

But Good and Evil are inconceivable without Moral Laws: without that is to say a set of regulations, by means of which one can be distinguished from the other. Just as legality cannot be defined without a Legal Code! And just as the Legal Code is valueless without a Judicial System, including policemen to administer it so to the Moral Code needs its Judicial System of Gods, Demons and Vicars. Neither is of any use without authority, and the Moral Law with its "Do this or you won't go to Heaven" is on a par with "Spitting Prohibited" without the attendant "Penalty 40s."

The essential feature of the Moral Law is that it is changeless and not adaptable to circumstance. And religious people prove that inferiority of their own laws by adapting them constantly. Thus murder and theft are approved if committed against foreigners in the interest of National Expansion in War; adultery is tolerated in Monarchs and approved in Patriarchs, and the prohibition against graven images and competitive Gods does not apply to the Church of Rome.

Without Moral Laws there is no good and evil. And without Good and Evil there is only self-interest. But self-interest fortunately is not solely concerned with the interests of self. Self-interest demands from time that we sacrifice our interests to those of other people: in some cases in order that we may "sit upon the right hand of

God the Father Almighty" in addition to "inheriting the Earth"; in others because a man's self-esteem demands occasional concrete food in the shape of good works. Also there are gregarious instincts which demand some self-sacrifice as imperiously as other instincts demand food.

Thus man does such "good" as he does do, either for quite discreditable motives (i.e. the chance of doing himself a bit of good in a higher sphere) or because he cannot help it.

Any System of Philosophy, or Code of Ethics, based on any other assumption is founded on error.

Review

The Plain View. Spring Number, 1953, 1s.

The very excellent articles and reviews in this number should specially appeal to readers of *The Freethinker*, and the Editor, Mr. H. J. Blackham, is again to be congratulated on the high standard he maintains.

His own article on "Christianity, Marx, and Humanism," will please neither Christians nor Marxists, and he rejects both creeds. "If humanism rejects Christianity," he writes, "It must reject the essential claims as presented and defended by modern minds. It does." And Mr. Blackham argues very ably indeed in support of his thesis.

He argues very ably also against Marx and "Marxist utopianism and intransigence." Of course, "Marxism rejected socialist utopianism . . . but embodied in itself the three main types of utopian fallacy." These are the utopia of anarchy, the platonic utopia, and the historical utopia. "If these utopian justifications are taken away," he says, "there is no reason and no excuse for Marxist policies, at least none for their intransigence. Nothing in the history of Communist parties in action encourages one to think that there is more in these utopian hopes than experience up till now had inclined one to believe." Mr. Blackham's arguments in support of his case are very closely reasoned, and he concludes, "Marxism cannot be justified."

Mr. Hector Hawton writes brilliantly (as always) on "Modern Satirical Writing," with special reference to Aldous Huxley and George Orwell. In *Apes and Essence* and *1984*, both writers attacked totalitarianism, and Mr. Hawton thinks that, in a way, Huxley did it better than Orwell. But it is quite impossible to summarise the argument, which is extremely well done, and I can only send the reader to it—for his own benefit.

The article on "Post Feminism," by Virginia Fleming, is one which all feminists of both sexes should read, as it deals with problems not altogether envisaged by the older generation, many of whom, as Suffragettes, appeared to think that giving women the vote would settle all their problems. Miss Fleming seems to think, however (I hope I am doing her no injustice), that women—that is, in the mass—are all wonderful, and would do marvellous work, but unfortunately they are "frustrated." They are frustrated when single, frustrated when married, and frustrated when the family grows up. And society must take the problem in hand and see that they are never

frustrated. My own small experience is that, whatever they do and however much they are helped, they consider that they are for ever frustrated. But it would not be too bad a thing if the women who are to be the future mothers learnt just a little more than they generally do in cooking and looking after children. After all, a man will always beat a woman in engineering and making atom bombs.

Mr. M. Roshwald discusses "The United Nations and International Solidarity" very ably, and the reviews of many "worth while" books are so well done that they could be called original articles. The subscription for one year is 4s. 6d., and the journal can be obtained from 4a, Inverness Place, Queensway, London, W. 2.

H. C.

The Late Ambrose G. Barker

A few friends, among them Miss Ella Twynam and Mr. P. Turner, gathered together at the funeral of Mr. Barker at the Golders Green Crematorium last Friday in memory of a sturdy fighter for the causes he loved best. These were Socialism and Communism, and in his long life of 93 years he met many of the old stalwarts including William Morris and Eleanor Marx.

As a schoolmaster in Leyton, Mr. Barker taught for 45 years, but his hobby was the collecting of rare books connected with advanced causes. He helped to found the Labour Emancipation League, the Socialist League, the Walthamstow Antiquarian Society, and was a member of the Working Men's Club. He lectured extensively and, among other writings, is his pamphlet on Henry Havelock published by the Pioneer Press.

Mr. Barker was, as far as religion is concerned, a Freethinker, and it is worth remarking that the notice of his death in the *Walthamstow Guardian* omits all reference to his anti-religious activities. Modest to a degree, he never sought honours or advancement, content to work as a "private" only for Socialism which he felt must come sooner or later. He leaves behind him a record of sturdy independence and integrity never to be forgotten by those who loved him most.

H. C.

Correspondence

TITO AND RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

SIR.—In reply to F. E. Papps, I would like him to ask his informant if she knew of 200 Croat intellectuals, among them 15 priests, being sentenced to death at Dubrovnik, the trial for each person lasting one minute. The pastor of Glamoc in Bosnia was horse-shoed and died in great agony. Rev. I. Nonoc, pastor in Unescic Dalmatia, was skinned alive. Fourteen others were saturated with benzene and burned alive. Has F. E. Papps heard of the Ozna?

If Yugoslavia is such an Eldorado, why is there at the present time 160,000 living in Argentina, 12,000 in England, many more thousands in Austria, Germany, Canada, America, away from their own homes and families? I have lived through three wars, and never thought I should hear of such bestialities as have been perpetrated by vermin like Tito and his kind.

I suppose it is a political move on our Government's part to entertain the beast, but why on earth try to pin wings on his shoulders? I have no use for priests. I have a profound pity for anyone who is shackled with religion, Roman Catholic or otherwise, as I was tied up with it the first 30 years of my life, and only by the merest chance was I freed and have revelled in 37 years of freedom.

I am grateful to *The Freethinker* for a fuller and more contented life, and hope it will continue in its fight for right and reason. I can, if necessary, supply F. E. Papps with more details, and also the source of my information. Again, best wishes now and always.—Yours, etc., (MIS.) MARY PERRY.

P.S.—I am an ignorant old woman or I would have stated first that F. E. Papps' letter was in your paper dated January 4.

BELIEF

SIR.—Mr. R. D. Marriott in a recent letter, replying to a previous letter of mine, made the following astounding statement:—

"Mr. Turner's latest contribution asks us to 'drop all beliefs.' Does he include Freethought, Secularism, and Atheism in this

appeal? I suspect that he really means drop all beliefs incompatible with his own."

Yes, I did ask for the dropping of *all* beliefs, and am fully aware of the meaning implied by my statement. It is not necessary to misunderstand or misconstrue such a statement.

What is belief? Belief is positive, it is both a proposition and a postulation, it is based upon supposition that some statement made by some person who may have just thought of it, or inspired by an unknown fear, or by a combination of fears, suggestions and repetitions. Now, although a thought cannot arise for no reason whatever, it can arise through lack of knowledge by the false interpretation of appearances.

Freethought, Secularism, and Atheism are not beliefs. Freethought means what it says, and freely thinking implies the lack of belief. It seems stupid to call it belief. Secularism implies the direction and action in mundane affairs, as distinct from theological directives.

Atheism means a negation, a complete denial of unprovable propositions in the shape of all religious beliefs. It is either stupid or dishonest to include the negation of beliefs as beliefs.

Unfortunately, many unscrupulous people can see, and have seen that unknown fears lack reality, and realising the weakness of the masses' lack of understanding, mercilessly exploit the believers for their own greedy advantage.

Belief, as I have already stated, in religion is due to constant repetition of false and stupid statements by the money-making priestcraft, who are well aware of the foolishness of their followers, although a number of the followers such as builders, printers, and many other trades are able to make money out of it.

The organised Church needs a powerful and well-armed Secular State to support it, a power that whilst pretending to organise the people in the Church, is divided into a large number of divisions and classes, with a wealthy aristocracy who understand the position advocating the Church. The Church teaches the common people to obey authority, especially Kings, Presidents, Governments, etc., advising them to assist in maintaining the authority, sacrificing themselves when desired for the glory of their gods and masters.

The people who obtain the authority are mostly the unscrupulous, gangsters, criminals and murderers; but with the large economic power they possess, they put over an outward show of sanctity, honesty, and virtue.

But that has not prevented them from utilising the various divisions of the world, using the dupes to destroy their neighbours and themselves without mercy, out of which each set of gangsters hopes to be top dog. People having been taught to believe in religion, are easily persuaded to believe in politicians and politics.

The surface of the earth being restricted, and no one deciding on what part of the globe that he or she should be born, satisfying arrangements cannot be made whilst one has some belief upon the matter, belief in most cases encouraged by religion, coupled with lack of knowledge.

Sex is, of course, a very potent force, and dangerous subject, which religion has very successfully used to further its ends. Probably 80 per cent. of grown people are unhappy over this matter, due chiefly to beliefs stimulated to the utmost by religion.

It is not possible in a letter to go fully into these matters, but it is only by completely eschewing beliefs in all things that humanity in the mass can hope for a life of real happiness, and this, may I add, is the only axe that I wish to grind.—Yours, etc.,

P. TURNER.

ESPERANTO

SIR.—It was interesting to read the letters about Esperanto and Freethought, though it was also a little surprising to learn that it is still necessary to "sell" the idea of an international language to Freethinkers. I have been a Freethinker (to put it in a mild form) since the age of 15, and having cast off much prejudice—religious, national and racial—found that the demand for a universal language fell naturally into the pattern of my outlook of life.

Space should not be wasted to promulgate the advantages of Esperanto over other international language projects or national languages, as the question before us now is no longer which language to adopt as an international medium of expression, but how to awaken the consciousness of progressives to its necessity in modern life.

Freethinkers with Left leanings should learn Esperanto and join Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda. Those who abhor the idea of the Class Struggle should join Universala Esperanto Asocio.—Yours, etc.,

"MATERIERO."