

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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FROM the Swiss Lake of Geneva to the South African veldt is a long way in space; and from 1536 to 1953 is, also, a long way in time. None the less, these places and dates are bound together by an intimate chain of cause and effect. For in 1535, the French theologian, Calvin, the most important and influential of the Protestant Reformers, published his famous manual on the new Reformed theology, his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*; and in South Africa in the present Year of Grace, Dr. Daniel Malan, that devout Calvinist and former minister of the Dutch Calvinist Church, is effectively putting into operation the teachings of his eminent master on the African continent and in relation to the racial question.

"Some," declared John Calvin, "hath God predestined to eternal salvation and some hath His inscrutable wisdom consigned to eternal damnation." Such was, what the Geneva Reformer himself described as "the horrible decree" of predestination, by which the Calvinist Deity legislates for a fallen and sinful world.

Amongst the European races which accepted the then revolutionary Gospel of Geneva, were the Dutch who, inspired by the Calvinist dogmas shook off the yoke of Spain after a protracted and heroic struggle against the gigantic empire of the "Most Catholic" King of Spain. Since the predestination dogma clearly sanctifies success, the newly-liberated Dutch went on to dispossess the Catholic powers from the colonial monopoly bestowed upon them by the Borgia Pope, Alexander the Sixth (1492-1503), after the Discovery of America by ships flying the Spanish, and of the sea route to India by ships flying the Portuguese, flags. For the past three and a-half centuries, Holland remained the greatest, next to England, of oriental colonial powers; a highly profitable role which, in fact, she has only just vacated in Indonesia.

On the way to the East, the Dutch occupied the southernmost point of Africa, the prophetically-named "Cape of Good Hope," as a half-way house to the more profitable "Spice Islands" of the East. From which modest commercial beginning ultimately arose, as a result of the ebb and flow of circumstances, the present Dominion of South Africa. Three centuries of colonisation, a century of desperate wars against the warlike "native" Kaffirs and, finally, two savage "Boer Wars" against their English political and economic rivals; these represented the painful successive steps by which the mysterious ways of the Calvinist Deity led His worshippers to their "Chosen Land," and called into being a new, Calvinist world just at the time that the Calvinist dispensation was crumbling away in its continent of origin, Europe.

To-day, as we write these lines, the pious Dr. Malan has just received a new lease of life and power from the predominantly Dutch (Boer) electorate of South Africa; an Election which has already been fittingly dubbed as, "the last battle of the Boer War." We may now expect, it

would seem, an attempt by the pious doctor—or, rather, by his successor, since, at 78, the aged Premier is hardly likely to occupy the political stage much longer—to undo the result of the Boer War (1899-1902), and to restore the Dutch Republic of his equally pious and Calvinistic fore-runner, President Kruger.

However, this aim of the ultra-nationalist republicans of Dr. Malan's Party, if actually entertained, represents a long-term policy kept discreetly in the background until after the result of the General Election. The more publicised and sensational issue upon which the Malan régime sought the verdict of an exclusively white electorate was the

question of "Apartheid"—that is, the official recognition of the "Colour Bar" as the permanent basis of South Africa's public policy and of her social life. It seems that the "Apartheid" theory of racist supremacy, of the "herrenvolk" ("master race") theory, which passed out with Hitler in Europe, and is—despite McCarthy and Co.—on the way out in the U.S.A., has now come to stay in the Union of South Africa, whatever the exact form. Dominion in the British Commonwealth, or Dutch Republic, may eventually be realised. White rulers and black helots, such is "the shape of things to come" in the South African sub-continent.

The Nazi "herrenvolk" theory, which became German state-policy during the Hitler régime (1933-45), was the obvious outcome of defeat in war, of the frustration experienced by expanding German Imperialism as the result of the failure of its first bid for world-dominion in 1914-18. No such *political* origin can, however, be sought for the current racist dogma of Malan and Company; since the Boer War was a war between *white* men exclusively; in which both sides scrupulously refrained from arming their *black* subjects against their *white* rivals. Unlike the Nazi racist theories, the roots of the Malan dispensation spring from theology, not from political defeats.

It is, we suggest, in the predestination theology of Calvin that we must look for the roots of "Apartheid." Indeed, it appears to be indisputable that such is the case. For at a very early stage in its contact with Africa we find the Dutch Reformed Church rigorously applying its Calvinistic dogmas of Divine Election and of predestination to the Colour Bar and, in general, to the racist question. As far back as the 18th century, we find the South African Divines go on record with the historic affirmation that the Mosaic institution of slavery was of Divine Origin and applied, in particular, to the Negro races of Africa. One can add that their practice kept pace with their theory! An ingenious theological deduction added the further startling information that the Negro is the off-spring of Ham the accursed. For Ham, the legendary ancestor of the black races, had been solemnly cursed by his father, the Patriarch Noah, on account of an unfilial youthful prank which he

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Calvin's Last Hide-out

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

had played on his drunken father (cf. Genesis, ch. 9, vv. 25 *et seq.*). And does not the Divine Law also affirm that "the sins of the father shall be visited on the children"?

Theologians are traditionally apt at arguing from the particular to the general. The black off-spring of Ham, cursed by the Divine Book, were, and are clearly amongst

those races indicated by Calvin as predestined to perdition. Nor could any fault be found in enslaving and in extracting the utmost profit in *this* world from those already doomed by the Deity Himself to everlasting damnation. Thus Calvinistic theology leads automatically to "Apartheid" politics. Malan's South Africa is Calvin's last hide-out!

How Russia is Ruled

By P. C. KING

By WALTER KOLARZ. (Bletchworth Press, 1953; price 7s. 6d.) THE contents of this book were originally given to the public in the form of lectures on the B.B.C. The author claims that all his factual material is drawn from official Soviet sources. There is no reason to doubt this statement. At the same time the author's bias against the whole Russian regime is very evident; while his material is doubtless authentic, he has selected it in such a manner as amounts to just another bit of propaganda, a method of presentation which the author so deplores in Soviet publications! Furthermore, while Mr. Kolarz admits that any reasonable comparison of things Russian must be between her former (Czarist) epoch and the present, his yardstick throughout his book is that of the advanced West.

As the title implies this is essentially a political treatise. I propose here to dwell on those aspects of Mr. Kolarz's work of particular interest to readers of *The Freethinker*.

Freedom of thought and expression as we regard them is non-existent in the U.S.S.R., according to Mr. Kolarz. "To say there is a Press censorship," he writes, "would be a gross under-statement." Control extends much further back than publication. No periodical may be owned by others than Party members or organisations, and the personnel of the journalistic profession is selected and trained with the utmost attention to Marxist-Leninist principles. Only two papers in the whole Union, namely, *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, have foreign correspondents; other papers must study carefully the line taken by these two papers and follow it strictly. Furthermore, foreign news is not treated factually but in order to convey that "only the U.S.S.R. and its satellites are forging ahead while the rest of the world is declining and quickly becoming a prey to communism." As a consequence the Soviet public is gravely misled and, from time to time, suffer severe shocks when brought face to face with reality, such as when the Nazis rose to power. Further, this monolithic treatment of news gives the Soviet Press a dull and monotonous appearance, as the result of which circulation of newspapers is falling off: between 1938 and 1950 the overall circulation fell by 10 per cent., although population in the same period rose by 10 per cent.

Similarly, the administration of the law in the U.S.S.R. does not pretend to be impartial. A law court is "the conductor of the policy of the Soviet rulers and judges must serve the fundamental aims of the Party." The position of Public Prosecutor is peculiar and all-powerful, in that he can exercise supervision over the whole Court, not excepting over the judge himself. Should a judge acquit or give a sentence considered by the Public Prosecutor too light, the latter may register a protest—and the judge may find himself out of his job or even in a forced labour camp! The profession of counsel for the defence is held in contempt, the ranks of the "Colleges of Advocates" being generally recruited from degraded judges, prosecutors or other discredited officials. In no case is any technical legal training required for these offices. This judicial system has been imposed on all satellite countries.

One of the great achievements claimed for the Bolsheviks is the elimination of illiteracy in the former Czarist empire.

While admitting that this is so quantitatively, qualitatively the author calls the results in question. Its main, almost sole purpose, he argues, is to facilitate the propagation of Marxism; as Lenin has said it would enable the people consciously to participate in political life. The movement known as the "Alphabet of Lenin," was a scheme to adopt the Latin symbols for all languages in the Union. One of the advantages of this literary revolution was that only such writings as suited the Marxists-Leninists need be translated into the new script, and thus the rising generation would be unable to read the old literature of their mother tongue. With the growth of the cult of Russian nationalism this latinisation came to be regarded as a "cosmopolitan" deviation and fifteen years later a change was made to the Cyrillic or Russian characters, giving incidentally a fresh opportunity to discard writing which, in the interim, had become heretical.

This growing Russian nationalism or imperialism had other effects on the production of films, plays and books. Past (Czarist) Russian heroes, such as Peter the Great, Ivan the Terrible, General Suvarov, etc., were restored to their former eminence, and claims that such things as locomotives, tramcars, tanks, submarines, penicillin, cine-camera, telegraph, telephone, etc., etc., were the inventions of Russians were loudly proclaimed. The adulation of the past, however, was not extended to the non-Russian nationalities. To laud a national hero of non-Russian origin, especially if he had fought against the Russians, would be to be guilty of "bourgeois nationalist" tendencies! The Turkmenians were not permitted to adopt the Latin scrip introduced by Kemal in Turkey; it was found to be "counter-revolutionary."

In view of his bias it is not surprising to find that Mr. Kolarz regards atheism and godlessness as part and parcel of the Communist tyranny. He claims that all the efforts of the Bolsheviks to suppress religion failed and they had therefore to compromise by granting a "limited tolerance." The Russian Constitution of 1936, Article 124, permits "freedom of religious worship"; this has been interpreted as granting the right to hold services, but not to have their own schools, youth association or to make propaganda. All religious organisations, Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Mohammedan, Buddhist, etc., were treated with equal severity in the earlier phase. In the latter phase the Orthodox Church has been especially favoured as being more Russian and nationalistic. Income tax in the U.S.S.R. has several scales; priests, like defence counsel, suffer the most onerous scale.

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THE FREETHINKER

VOL. 72

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Robert Taylor

The Devil's Chaplain (1784-1844) By H. CUTNER

(Continued from page 134)

BACK at Edmonton, Taylor was introduced to the Rev. Dr. Gaskin for whom he seems to have had a very strong affection as he was, says Taylor, "the wisest, and best, and best-hearted man he had up to that time ever known." A sketch of his character was later written by Robert Taylor in the *Lion* (published by Richard Carlile), No. 15, page 478, October 9, 1829. Gaskin made him put an advertisement in *The Times*, written in Latin, "declaring his repentance" so that he could be completely reconciled to the Mother Church—as well as to his own mother, who was on a bed of sickness caused by the shock of his "infidelity." And in it he declared that, "in a delirium of grief, he was ready to recant, to avow, or to publish anything that should be called for." Later, he assisted Dr. Gaskin at Newington Church so well, that the congregation actually invited him to preach there. But, though all this adulation, and the burning of his sceptical books, should have silenced his "infidel" doubts, it did nothing of the kind. For even while on his knees in prayer one evening in February, 1819, he began to realise "what a downright fool and idiot he must be, at thirty-five years of age, to be at the baby's game still, and not to have seen through the trick, by which fools and knaves of not half his natural gifts, had pushed him from his chance in the scramble of life." This, however, did not prevent him from still preaching in Newington Church, where he was a great favourite—as well as at Tottenham, Edmonton, Southgate, and Enfield.

Rather to his surprise, he discovered that "a different sort of doctrine was required at each of these churches; and no two schemes of divinity in the world were ever more diametrically contradictory to each other than that of Edmonton and Enfield"; so that he was obliged, as he frankly admits, and as even his pious mother felt no qualms about, to please both, on the principle of "my doctrine is not mine, but his that pays me." He was always a great success; so much so that the Rev. Mr. Lloyd decided to publish a little pamphlet on the *Awful Apostasy and Miraculous Repentance of the Rev. Robert Taylor*—designed actually as "a Judas-Kiss, professing kindness, but aiming at and intending to prevent that dying away of the matter" in order that it could do all the harm possible to any future prospects of his late curate. This was admitted even by Dr. Gaskin. The pamphlet went to the length of ascribing the "apostasy" to hereditary madness running in the family; actually, it was Robert's fanatically Christian brother William who became insane—"Infidelity being," declares Robert Taylor, "the greatest preventative and remedy of insanity, and the surest counteractive of all tendency to it, in the world."

In the ultimate, Lloyd's pamphlet did its mischievous work: for as soon as the various churches where he preached found out that he once had been an "infidel," he was never given another chance. The then Bishop of London (he became later the Archbishop of Canterbury) wrote to Dr. Gaskin, and very clearly hinted that Taylor would have no help from him as he was quite "unworthy as much as to gather up the crumbs that fell from his Saviour's table, and should hardly think of aspiring again to a ministry which he had so dishonoured." As for Lloyd, he bluntly told Taylor that there could be no advancement for him, the "background" being his proper place. Although he had some money, it was necessary to earn a living; so he advertised in *The Times* offering £300 if he

could be put into a situation compatible with his belief of Deism, and was answered by a couple of swindlers who found no difficulty in cheating him out of far more money than his mere £300. The swindling was very well done,* and far cleverer men than Robert Taylor would have fallen this way. His mother refused to see him any more, his brothers treated him with indescribable cruelty, he was soon without money, friends, and even relatives. At last, through an unexpected piece of good fortune, he managed to obtain a situation in Birmingham. It was a post in a school kept by a Mr. Forster, who treated him with great kindness. His old master, Mr. Partridge, sought him out and renewed his friendship—though Taylor was always a little afraid that Lloyd's pamphlet would follow and "betray" him.

Curiously enough, Taylor did not break off his connection with the Church altogether even then. He was given the curacy of Yardley under the rectorship of the Rev. Dr. Fell—one of those clergymen "who always took care to be in the right by going to sleep whenever there was any danger of anything like sensible conversation being brought forward." He rather suspected his curate of infidel opinions but said nothing and left him fully in charge in Yardley. Taylor indeed became very popular and was very happy in his retreat. One of his old hospital-days friends, the Rev. Mr. Kennedy, also managed to get him to preach in his own church in Birmingham where Taylor decided to do the best he had ever done, drawing from the great divines, Tillotson, Bossuet, Young, Sherlock, Watts, and others, for his arguments and matter. He was invited afterwards to a great company which included many other clergymen, and in the argumentation which followed he found it impossible to restrain himself, openly confessing his doubts upon many "sacred" points. It was actually the beginning of the end.

As he had not been licensed to Yardley, his bishop wrote to him asking whether he was the "hero" of Lloyd's pamphlet. He had to admit that he was, but threw himself upon the bishop's Christian charity with a wealth of argument drawn from all sorts of examples. Taylor was soon to learn that "there is no more insane or unreasonable act, of which a reasonable man could be guilty, than an attempt to reason with a bishop. You'd have better success with a bulldog. . . . There never was a bishop in all the world who was capable of appreciating the virtue of his inferior in station." The result was inevitable; it was a notice to quit—not only from Yardley, but from his school.

So once again Robert Taylor was, as he puts it in his *Autobiography*, "unhoused, unhomed, unfed." But before he left Yardley he decided upon one course of action worth recording:—

He threw the reins upon the neck of that eloquence which truth alone can inspire, and let the irresistible waggery of his soul take its full glut in clover. Every sermon was the finest and richest satire which his genius could dictate, *comme Voltaire*, which imperceptibly unhinged the faith, and heaved the anchor of the religious convictions of the whole parish, and set 'em all afloat. He infidelized his entire congregation—he inculcated the great duty of resolutely refusing to believe all doctrines whatever that did not square with reason, or that stood in the remotest connection with anything *mysterious* or *unintelligible*.

* One of the men was afterwards hanged.
(To be continued)

"The Freethinker" Fund

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This Believing World

A London magistrate refused, the other day, to allow a young Roman Catholic girl to marry her Protestant fiancé—and he was quite right. There is nothing like two kinds of the same religion to make a marriage thoroughly unhappy, especially when that religion is Christianity. For nearly 2,000 years the religion of gentle Jesus has stirred up more strife than possibly anything else in the world, and certainly in marriage. Why does not the B.B.C. stage a discussion to find out why Christians hate each other so much?

In an excellent article on Voltaire, our American contemporary, *Progressive World*, for April, makes several quotations from him without "chapter and verse"—also the inevitable "Though I do not agree with a word you say, I will defend with my life your right to say it," and it is the only one put into italics to be singled out as the one quotation most characteristic of the great Freethinker. Unfortunately, Voltaire never said it, though this fact will not prevent it being quoted as his for centuries to come. Still, even this feeble effort to put the matter right might help to keep the celebrated quotation from being assigned to the wrong person.

In a recent number of the *Readers' Digest* was an article by a full-blooded Roman Catholic proving that the most distinguished quality of Popery was its universal tolerance. Catholics, maintained Mr. J. Cogley the author, never interfered with the religions of other people—everybody had a right to a different Church, though, of course, there was only one true religion—his own. Whether any Catholic who knows the history of his religion really believes this deliberate prevarication of the truth is another matter. Mr. Cogley must know that the history of the Papacy and its Church is one long story showing how Roman Catholicism tortured, imprisoned, and burnt alive, its opponents without pity or mercy; and wherever modern civilisation has not altogether penetrated, as in the Balkans, that story is still the same.

Moreover, the Heads of the Church have never denied their hatred of all opposition. The Church has never renounced its right to kill all heretics—witness the *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Vol. 14, p. 768)—"Heretics may not only be excommunicated but also justly put to death." That is clear and unequivocal. In *Evidence For Our Faith*, J. H. Cavanaugh actually admits that "not all Christians are willing to go" as far as letting people have a religion of their own. He claims that there is a big difference between "voodoo incantations," or snake worship, and his own religion; and therefore the word "tolerance" can easily be misunderstood. But what actually is the difference between a voodoo incantation and the Catholic incantation which changes a wafer into the living Christ?

Though it is a fact that there is a small revival of interest in religion in America, Dr. W. H. Smith, who is a Professor of Theology at Pasadena, California, sadly admits that "there is no spirit of confession of sin in our country." There is also "no urgent seeking after Christ as saviour." But, thank God, he insisted on one consolation—religion was far better off in America than in England where "95 per cent. of the people never darken the door of a church." Well, it all depends on what is meant by being "better off." We think we are better off here if it is true that 95 per cent. of our population never go to church. We may even make it one day 100 per cent.

Forthright Gilbert Harding had no hesitation in calling a spook believer called Philip Paul on the TV, "barmy."

much to the disgust of all spook believers. Mr. Paul is highly indignant, and in the *Sunday Graphic* asks Mr. Harding whether spook believers like Lodge, Crookes, Conan Doyle and others, were also barmy? Certainly—so far as believing in spooks and fairies is concerned. Mr. Paul drags in the famous Borley Rectory—though until Harry Price found out that it was haunted nobody else seemed to know about it. But, of course, Mr. Harding does believe in spooks—in Roman Catholic ones, so long as the Church guarantees them. And in both cases the test for spooks is hopeless credulity.

The Australian Sunday Christian Observance Society is a new one on us but it, like its English counterpart, the Lord's Day Observance Society, is horrified that the Duke of Edinburgh watched the Australian cricket team play East Molesey last Sunday. Both Societies would have much preferred the Duke and the Aussies miserably to grovel on their knees all day before Christ Jesus. Fortunately, the two Societies were, more or less, politely told to go to—that is, the game was played with the Duke as a most interested spectator.

Theatre

The Teddy Bear, by James Warren, at the St. Martin's Theatre, has an excellent idea which might have made an excellent play. Three factors have marred it.

The author has allowed inaccuracies to creep in, and he has not used a masterly pen. The play is wrongly cast, notably with Roger Livesey as the criminal. The direction has been badly handled. In its favour are a splendid performance by Olga Lindo and the promising work of two juveniles—Thomas Moore and Margaret McCourt. Also the idea, which is that the girl (Margaret McCourt) in a long part unwittingly causes the man who killed her mother to give himself up to the police.

With so much against it the play's chances are slender, and yet—with obvious remedies—it could be made to succeed.

The Wandering Jew, at the King's Theatre, is Donald Wolfit's latest interpretation. As a part he makes a great deal of it and does it well. As a play those who follow free thought will find the religious element odious if taken seriously. Better that it should be regarded purely for what to-day it so obviously appears to be, viz., a legendary tale.

The crowning scene, "Spain in the Middle Ages", which came last was by far the most effective, and in this Patricia Burke gave us some acting which deserves to be long remembered in the part of Olalla Quintana.

Donald Wolfit's production comes over reasonably well. **A Touch of Spring** has been brought to Bolton's Theatre by C.O. Productions. This musical play, which is very near to being revue, has been round the provinces and most of the young players are making their debut in London.

The authors, John Dellacey and Adrian Dale, have a script which is far above its execution, but they should avoid rhyming romance with dance, and love with dove. Ronnie Baker's music is outstanding for rhythm, and he is a first-rate pianist.

The weakness in the show is that it demands too much of the players, who are not all sufficiently versatile to see it through. Of the youngsters Lorna Dean has good stage personality; of the elders John Dellacey and Judy Child amused us greatly with late Victorian bathing costumes and period songs. A show which is brisk, light and cheering

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

THE FREETHINKER

41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.
Telephone: Holborn 2601.

To Correspondents

H. W. BROWN.—You certainly did not make your meaning clear. However, you will find full details in *The Faith, the Falsity, and the Failure of Christian Science* by Riley, Peabody, and Humiston (Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1926)—“Upon her death, Mrs. Eddy's estate was appraised at three million dollars” (page 227).

W. RITTENOUR.—Thank you for your letter. We will pass on your suggestion re publication to the appropriate quarter.

E. SMEDLEY.—Congratulations on the auspicious event.

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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

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: H. DAY and A. H. WHARRAD.

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

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch). — Every Sunday at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. Sunday, May 3: Messrs. EBURY, CLEAVER, O'NEILL and WOOD.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: Prof. J. C. FLUGEL, D.Sc., “What is the Will?”

Notes and News

We have referred on several occasions to our Oriental contemporary, *The Indian Rationalist*, and have congratulated it on the stout fight which it is putting up for the principles of Rationalism in the Indian sub-continent against immemorial superstitions. Amongst the superstitions which in, apparently, both East and West, seems to have revived in recent years, is the superstition, or pseudo-science of astrology. Most of our Sunday papers and, nowadays, a good many of our week-day ones as well, carry as a regular feature, “What the Stars Foretell,” or some similarly intriguing title. In India, apparently, the contemporary situation is even worse. For in this allegedly “Secular State” it seems that State subsidies may soon be granted for the official teaching of the cult of the stars. (Here we have still not got quite as far as that yet!) Accordingly, we regard it as opportune to reissue in the columns of *The Freethinker* the fine article, *The Basis of Astrology*, by E. Laurent, recently published in *The Indian Rationalist*. Incidentally, we are still waiting for an explanation from our astrological experts as to what new planetary influence is now exercising its benign influence since the death of J. V. Stalin, upon the “Cold War”!

Our Theatrical Critic, Raymond Douglas, is, like so many contributors to this journal, a man of parts and varied interests. Mr. Douglas is, inter alia, a keen student of Witchcraft and has, in particular, made a first-hand study of the evidence for the career and tragic death of the famous Joan of Arc. We shall shortly publish in several issues a study by Mr. Douglas which seeks to establish that the national heroine of France, now a canonised saint of the Catholic Church, was, in actuality, a priestess of the witchcraft cult which lurked in the backwaters of mediaeval Europe and that her “voices” which inspired her to expel the English from France had actually nothing to do with Christianity. That, in brief, “Saint Joan” was actually what she was burnt for—a witch, from the point of view of the Church, a “devil-worshipper.”

Some little time back we published an outspoken and controversial article by our contributor, Mrs. Allpress, on the vexed question of Euthanasia. We have just received a letter from Dr. C. F. Potter, Founder and First President of the “Euthanasia Society of America,” who expresses his interest in our contributor's approach to the whole question. Dr. Potter would welcome contacts with any English Freethinkers who might be interested in the subject. Dr. Julian Huxley and other British Rationalists already sit on Dr. Potter's Advisory Board. The address of the “Euthanasia Society of America” is: “Hotel Ansonia,” Broadway at 73rd Street, New York, 23, N.Y., U.S.A.

Apartheid

I favour Apartheid
For the White;
The Black man's right.

I favour Apartheid
For the Japs—
Unpleasant chaps.

I favour Apartheid
For Nazi and Fascist;
They will not be missed.

I favour Apartheid
For the Catholic priest;
Of Christian clerics quite the trickiest.

I favour Apartheid
For those that lend money
At interest—it's not funny.

I favour Apartheid
For Bikini—Monte Bello,
A most dangerous fellow.

I favour Apartheid
For McCarthy and McCarran;
May they die of the mange and the murrain.

I favour Apartheid
For me, the writer;
Und so weiter.

A prison cell
That shuts the world away
Would suit me well.

The Basis of Astrology

By E. LAURENT

MOST people are still under the delusion that astrology is a science. The universities in India corrupt the youth by teaching this pseudo-science. A resolution urging State aid to astrology has been tabled in the Indian Parliament by a member from Travancore-Cochin. It is the duty of Rationalists to wean the public from this craze by exposing the basic fallacy of astrology. I propose in this article to discuss one aspect of astrology, viz., the groundwork on which the astrologer bases his ingenious calculations.

Primitive man believed that the earth was fixed and the sun, the moon and the stars travelled round and round the earth. Copernicus exploded this myth and to-day every schoolboy knows that the earth is revolving round the sun. But astrology is based upon the pre-Copernican mythology of the fixed earth and heavenly bodies moving around it. Let those who believe in astrology sink this elementary fact into their thick brains that astrology is based upon pre-Copernican astronomy which was disproved 500 years ago.

Astrology owes its origin to the belief of primitive man that heavenly bodies were conscious living beings devoting their powers and concentrating their attention upon human beings inhabiting this earth and taking the trouble to regulate the events in the life span of every single individual human being. This belief was in consonance with the knowledge and environment of savages whose lives were at the mercy of elemental forces and who sought to propitiate those forces by deifying them and worshipping them. But now we know that the stars and the planets are not living beings but huge balls of fire and that this earth of ours is a small planet revolving around the sun which is a minor star of the universe and that this universe itself is but a small fraction of a bigger universe most of which we cannot get at even by our telescopes. It is fantastic to imagine, with all the knowledge that we now have of the nature of heavenly bodies, that they have minds and are concentrating their attention upon us, poor humans inhabiting an infinitesimal portion of the universe.

According to astrology the position of the stars at the birth of an individual and their consequent movements determine the occurrences in that individual's life. Among the celestial bodies that influence human lives there are three types singled out: firstly, the twelve constellations represented by the twelve signs of the zodiac, known as twelve *rasis* in Indian astrology, secondly, the nine planets or *grahas*, and thirdly, the 27 groups of stars which indicate the consecutive position of the moon during its 27 days' cycle.

The zodiac is an imaginary belt in the sky consisting of twelve constellations having as its mesial line the ecliptic or the great circle round which the sun appears to travel in the course of the year. The twelve constellations have been called by the ancients according to the imaginary figure formed by their rough outline in the sky: thus Aries (the ram), Taurus (the bull), Gemini (the twins), Cancer (the crab), Leo (the lion), Virgo (the virgin), Libra (the scales), Scorpio (the scorpion), Sagittarius (the archer), Capricornus (the goat), Aquarius (the water carrier), and Pisces (the fishes). The sun enters the constellation "Aries" on the 22d of March and passes the twelve signs one after the other during the twelve months of the year.

Since we now know that the sun does not move and that the earth is revolving round the sun, it is clear that the sun appears to us to be moving from one constellation to another because we see it at different dates during the year from different points of the moving earth. These

signs of the zodiac represented by the twelve constellations or *rasis* were fixed by the astrologers of 2000 years ago and as the stars in heaven are constantly moving, some receding from us and some approaching us, the zodiac has changed its shape in the course of these 20 centuries. It is known to students of astronomy that our pole star is different from that of the Egyptians. Astronomers have discovered that the inclination of the earth's axis is gradually changing with the result that the stars appear to have changed their positions. This is known as *precession of the Equinoxes*. This means that the basic framework of astrology, namely the signs of the zodiac, is all wrong. During the twenty centuries since the zodiac was invented the stars have changed their positions by 30 deg. The constellations have turned a full sign and they have in fact moved into neighbouring "houses" or *rasis*. This makes nonsense of the original theories and the calculations based on them. A few modern astrologers who have picked up a knowledge of astronomy pretend to bring their science up to date by modifying their calculations allowing for this movement of the stars. But such calculations are too complicated to be tackled by any but competent astronomers. When a mere astrologer pretends to such specialised mathematical knowledge we may take it that he is an imposter.

Another material with which our astrologers work are the planets. The word planet literally means wanderer. Those heavenly bodies that change their position comparatively quickly have been called the planets. To the astrologer they are nine in number, viz., the Sun, Moon, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, Venus, Saturn, Rahu and Kethu. It is evident that the astrologer still thinks that the sun is a planet (wanderer) and that the earth is the fixed centre. Rahu and Kethu have long ago dissolved into mythology. In olden days two huge snakes which swallowed and vomited the sun and the moon were invented to explain the solar and lunar eclipses, and legends have grown around these monsters. To-day every schoolboy knows how the eclipses are caused. While bringing into existence the mythical Rahu and Kethu, astrologers take no notice whatever of the newly-discovered planets Neptune, Uranus and Pluto, besides the Earth itself which the astrologers do not yet realise is just a planet.

Along with the twelve *rasis* and *grahas* mentioned above, the movements of the 27 groups of stars are also taken into consideration to cast the horoscope. For all practical purposes the stars are in the same position in relation to the earth throughout the year. Their apparent change of position is due to the earth's movement round the sun. If at all the distances of the stars vary they do so only to the extent of 184 million miles (diameter of the earth's orbit) which is very negligible compared with the immense distance of the stars from the earth. The nearest star is $3\frac{1}{2}$ light years from the earth, i.e., 21×10^{11} miles approximately. Taking it for granted that the movement of the stars affect the events in our life, are our astrologers so competent as to calculate the quantum of the change and to assess the effect due to so minute a change?

I am aware of the argument advanced by *The Mysindia* Weekly that whatever may be the defects in its foundations, its structure and its calculations, astrology produces results. Don't the predictions sometimes at least prove correct? Does it not follow, therefore, that there is something in astrology? This funny argument can be advanced by every quack to bolster up his pretence. Out of numerous predictions in regard to the future some one or two may succeed at some time or other. Applying the law of

probability, one in a hundred may succeed. Often, as in the case of predicting the sex of a child to be born, the probability of success is 50 per cent. The child has to be male or female and whatever you say has a 50 per cent. chance of proving correct. Moreover there is a peculiar phenomena in popular psychology by which while the failures are all forgotten only the successes are remembered, and these lucky guesses are added on from time to time, one over the other, until they appear a huge pile of achievements. It is forgotten that if the failures are also added on in a like manner they will make up a pile infinitely greater in size.

Belief in astrology persists among the masses and is rampant among the educated classes. Newspapers and periodicals make tons of money and charlatans carry on a roaring trade exploiting this ancient superstition. Astrology is developing into a menace to public peace and tranquillity. Gullible and weak-minded people are cheated of their all by designing rogues who pretend to possess the power to foretell the future by means of astrology. While there are a few misguided astrologers who may believe in this pseudo-science, the vast majority of professionals are hardened criminals who deliberately defraud the public.

—Reprinted from *The Indian Rationalist*.

Floods Galore

By F. S. HOUGHTON

THERE is plenty of evidence to settle the vexed question as to whether or not the deluge actually took place. Evidence is to be found plentifully in History, Mythology, Geology and Astronomy. Of the 400 religions on Earth almost without exception each one contains a flood tradition or myth. Apart from Old Testament history Plato mentions the deluge tradition in his dialogues "Timæus" and "Critias." He writes about a universal deluge in which the great island continent of Atlantis (from which, by the way, the Atlantic gets its name) was submerged in "one direful day and terrible night."

There is evidence that this great island continent did exist, and that its empire included parts of the continents of Europe and Africa, and that the tops of its great mountain ranges now exist as the Azores in mid-Atlantic. This story of Plato's deluge is corroborated by the Hoerbiger Cosmic theory. Hans Hoerbiger was an eminent Austrian astronomer, but unfortunately his work is not available to English readers, not having been translated into English. The theory was boycotted by other astronomers at the time partly because of jealousy, and partly because it may have seemed to them to be too far fetched, but it now comes more and more into line with modern astronomical discovery.

According to Hoerbiger universal space is filled with hydrogen particles in a state of utmost rarefaction and this medium, however tenuous, offers resistance to all moving bodies, it slows down bodies moving in their orbits, so that bodies revolving round a centre cannot move on re-entering circles or ellipses but on inward-tending elliptic spirals. The idea of this rarefied spatial medium was put forward by Hoerbiger over 30 years ago, but rejected. In recent astronomical talks by the B.B.C. the theory is now accepted, thus proving that Hoerbiger's tenet was announced before its time. It is now known, and accepted, that the sun and all the great stars exhale prodigious quantities of hydrogen into space.

There must have been quite a number of similar independent planets which got into the gravitational pull of the Earth and became "captured" and eventually approaching so close that disintegration took place, the debris descending upon the Earth.

Briefly, Hoerbiger's theory is that the deluge (Noah's) took place about 15,000 years ago and that this deluge was brought about by the Earth's "capture" of the planet Luna, our present moon. I say our present moon, because according to this theory it isn't by any means our first moon. Hoerbiger reckons that there have been three previous moons. So that there must have been similar deluges at each "capture."

Hoerbiger postulates that the planets do not describe perfect ellipses, but that they travel in their orbits in con-centric paths, and to make the case quite clear I will quote

him: "What happened was this: A small planet, Luna, whose orbit lay between the Earth's and that of Mars had spiralled steadily closer. It being much smaller than our Earth it was only a matter of time before the small outer planet came so close to the Earth that serious gravitational interference was to be expected. It was especially at these periodic conjunctions where the Earth was at its aphelion and the small planet at its perihelion that the two bodies wielded their greatest influence upon one another. The Earth moving at its slowest, and Luna at its fastest, they followed for a while a path which was practically parallel. Eventually the smaller planet came so close that it could no longer escape the gravitational pull of the Earth and was 'Captured.' Henceforth Luna was forced to move round the Earth as its satellite and became our present moon."

This "capture" caused a terrestrial cataclysm, the waters of the polar seas left their beds, being drawn from north and south by the "capture" flood, wide areas of the Earth becoming permanently submerged. Much of the air being lost into outer space and the waters piling up into a watery girdle in an equatorial belt. Thus the deluge. Everyone knows that the moon exerts a tidal effect upon the earth. It was during this cataclysm that the island continent in mid-Atlantic disappeared, becoming suddenly submerged. There were many other similar occurrences. England became separated from the mainland of Europe. The Mediterranean sea was formed. Further proof of inundation is to be found in the Congo river bed which runs for about 100 miles under the Atlantic Ocean, proving that without doubt the river mouth was at one time so much farther off. Then there is the numerous evidences of marine remains in various places which cannot otherwise be accounted for.

Geological examination of our coal measures prove that these parts of the country have been beneath the sea on several occasions. So that the Old Testament writers, knowing nothing about these things, had to rely upon their imagination to account for the persistent flood tradition which was universally held, and which could not be gainsaid. The way they did account for it was by the Noah's flood story.

Correspondence

MENTAL HOSPITALS

SIR.—Mr. Sharpe's defence of "mental hospitals," published in your April 3 issue, will not bear analysis. A "medical superintendent" may walk through each ward twice a day, but that is not the same thing as giving redress to anyone complaining. A "social welfare officer" may be paid to perform certain duties, but who is going to see that she does? Certainly not the Board of Control, which would not bother about complaints neglected by the "superintendent" either.

It is not natural that a "mental hospital" should always be locked. According to report, some of them have only one or two

closed wards on the male side and also on the female side, i.e., two to four closed wards altogether. I do not know what danger attaches to leaving w.c.s unlocked: it is surely better to accompany potential suicides than to make them an excuse for refusing people proper access, which was obviously the abuse to which I was referring.

Four single blankets over the top sheet (usually an inmate is forced to have one under the bottom sheet, which would leave him only three) are not enough in an unheated dormitory in mid-winter. Folded double, they afford more adequate, but really insufficient cover, but their weight tends to make one very round shouldered. An eiderdown, or perhaps a rug, is necessary: without it comfort, so desirable, is impossible.

"Occupational therapy" I have seen used to get "patients" to turn out the maximum possible quantity of saleable goods. Compulsory games, cinema, etc., can be sources of annoyance, and compulsory unnecessary exercise.—Yours, etc.,

F. HILTON, Ph.D.

HOMO SAPIENS!

SIR,—There has been a lot of talk about the growing shortage of food in the world with the cry that, with more organisation and more effort on the part of the present population, the world may be able to feed twice the present number. Why the cry of more and more production, in particular, children? Is there not a thought, in the world, for the poor things, who never asked to come to this Vale of Tears?

The men who started organised religion for their own gain, in many cases, are to blame for the descent of man to the Ant Hill. With greater organisation, man is slowly changing. To-day the results of the descent can be seen in all walks of life. The mass breakdown of the human nervous system, in time a new form will take its place, better able to deal with the organised ant hill type of life. Our work is such that the brain of Homo Sapiens is seldom if ever asked to function. From school to the grave, the answers are pushed in; all that is required of man to-day is to select the right answers. A job an electronic machine can do better. One of the higher works of man was Law. To-day the lawyer is nothing but a clever little Fox Terrier doing clever tricks for the amusement of his bosses. The Law, for the good of man, is dying rapidly. The first law of the Ant Heap is no one shall think, and our lawyers see that it is carried out, to the best of their ability.

If a man wants to live a full and happy life, it is not necessary for him to do masses of the Ant slave work, which is so popular to-day. He can still live a full, happy and well-fed life without work, or with very little, and one day he may reach the next higher stage of evolution, where the answers to all may be clear. If man does not want to live as Homo Sapiens, he can go to any Ant Hill and see what future life will be like. Mass production and then mass destruction, for no reason at all, but, just because it is part of the organisation which must go on, for the brain that once controlled its actions has gone.—Yours, etc.,

R. G. KITCHEN.

THE CHURCHES AND POLITICAL POWER

THE NEED FOR UNDERSTANDING AND VIGILANCE

SIR,—Mr. Warhurst is afraid I am seeing things. I trust he is correct and that I am not merely seeing things but, what really matters, seeing through things. I certainly did not say "the Church is becoming a sinister menace." What I did say was that the "sinister menace" faces us. It is no new phenomenon, but it is certainly true that to-day, religion is using and being used by political power in a fashion that must claim our most serious attention.

The Church does not own the country. A more correct statement would be that it is only one of the reactionary forces that keep the workers in subjection and obtains its not inconsiderable share in the gamble for the whole of the wealth produced by the human labour. The owners are not merely one small group, but are organised in many, of which one is the political, using the word in its broadest sense, the Executive, notwithstanding its being regarded by the public by its own designation as the "Legislative," with the Sovereign as its figure-head.

H. W. in his letter appears to claim to have a clear understanding of the "facts of life." That being so, it amazes me to find his pathetic faith that championship of social well-being was to be hoped for in a seion of the German family that has given rulers to a large section of Europe, and has always had an important part in the reactionary forces. My point re the abdication was that the Church claimed to, and in fact did refuse to recognise the secular law of the country re divorce. For the rest, my desire was to point out how small, well-organised groups are obtaining power over the nation, by using their organised power in many ways, i.e., the threat of the vote, boycott both trade and social, and in many other ways, and we ignore this at our peril.

There is a growing tendency on the part of advanced movements to make concessions in various directions in the hope that their popularity will increase by, as it is claimed, attracting and not

repelling the adherents of the other side. Many of us know what we are giving, all history tells what the progressive has got in return.—Yours, etc.,

JAMES H. MATSON.

THE BENTLEY CASE

SIR,—I have read Mr. Round's letter in your issue of April 1. I thought everyone knew that Ministers have very little to do with such matters as reprieves. In practice they are invariably guided by the Permanent Civil Servant at the Home Office who is head of the department dealing with reprieves. No Minister ever makes the actual decision. I used to know (the official in question (now retired) and he was known to his friends as "the man who has the power of life or death."—Yours, etc.,

R. G. ABBOTT.

TERROR OVER YUGOSLAVIA

SIR,—Re "Terror Over Yugoslavia," by Avro Manhattan, which was so admirably reviewed in *The Freethinker* of April 17, 1953. On pp. 100, 101, of this book one may read a letter, the author of which, it is stated, is Dr. P. Grisogono.

In an article in *The Commonwealth (U.S.A.)* of March 27, 1953, written by Bogdan Raditza (a former Chief of the Foreign Press Department for Tito's Government), one reads: "... a letter... the authenticity of which has been often denied by Dr. Grisogono... This writer [Bogdan Raditza] has received a letter from... dated February 19, 1953, stating: '... I refuse to have my name used in connection with an apocrif [fake] letter...'"

Has Mr. Manhattan been taken in by a fake, or, in keeping with Roman Catholic tradition, does the fault lie with Mr. Raditza?—Yours, etc.,

A. S. BEARDSMORE.

MISERY-MONGERS

SIR,—The last paragraph in "This Believing World" (April 1953) poses the question: "Why do so many misery-mongers manage to get elected so often to Town Councils?"

I would hazard the guess that more people would rather take more trouble to make others more miserable than to make themselves happy.—Yours, etc.,

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

QUERY?

SIR,—I once had a note of a phrase I often heard in the "old country," viz., "the great lying Church," attributed to Thomas Carlyle. I quoted the saying recently, and was asked where Carlyle said that. And having lost my reference, I was rather taken aback. Do you know, and care to tell me, who, and where, makes the statement, I shall be greatly obliged.

For many years—in the times of G. W. Foote, and Chapman Cohen (whom I frequently heard speak in Glasgow, Scotland)—I was a constant reader of *The Freethinker*, and found it a splendid paper on its subject, and completely reliable. And (I think) it was in *The Freethinker* I first saw the above-mentioned phrase. I have not seen *The Freethinker* very often since those far-away days, but I still "stay fast" with its teachings—albeit, I have passed beyond its original, basic, purely "Rationalistic" explanations. History is a much more complex thing than just simple "common sense" issues and derivative origins.

If you would care to send it to me for six months, I think I should like to see it again, for old times' sake. Let me know—if you feel like it—at your leisure. The world has changed very greatly since those days, and I fancy it would be highly interesting to note its philosophy of the day. That it was right in its conceptions of the origin of "religions" and the "superstitions" of the "Church" is undoubted. And yet, while all that is clear, I meet very few—very few indeed—who have shaken off the "toils of priestcraft."

There is another phrase I ran across lately which is meaning less to me, as to boot, "The red roses of Heliogabalus." I know what "Heliogabalus" is, but the sense of it I do not know.

Thanking you, meantime, and apologising for this intrusion.—Yours, etc.,

GEO. R. ROSS.

RICHARD CARRINGTON

Nottingham Branch lost a stalwart supporter on Friday, April 17, in Mr. R. (Dick) Carrington, of Hucknall, who died in his eightieth year. He had been a reader of *The Freethinker* and supporter of the N.S.S. for many years and joined the Nottingham Branch at its formation. He was a great admirer of G. W. Foote, Chapman Cohen and J. T. Lloyd.

Mr. Carrington had not been well for a long time and could not leave the house but his letters to the Nottingham Branch were always bright and cheery and full of good wishes for its success.

Mr. Carrington was cremated at Wilford Hill (Nottingham Crematorium) on Wednesday, April 17. His widow and members of the family attended, also friends and members of the branch. A Secular Service was carried out by the undersigned in accordance with his wishes.

T. M. MOSTLEY.