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—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Monarchy in the Modern World

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

THE recent Coronation and the tremendous spate of propaganda which surrounded it, has, in a manner at once striking and conspicuous, brought the institution of monarchy into the full glare of publicity. Can hereditary monarchy be acclimatised, in, and to, an age of Democracy? What, if any such exists, is the political significance of monarchy in the modern world? And what, perhaps the most intriguing question of all, is the modern "mystique" which, in an era when hereditary privilege is, pretty obviously, on the decline, and when the former religious sanctions for "the Divinity that doth hedge a King" have now largely ceased to operate, still succeeds in "putting over" so successfully such an elaborate ritual of royalty as accompanied the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth the Second?

An attempt to answer the above, and kindred questions in the light, primarily, of modern psychology, is made by a Canadian publicist, Prof. Percy Black, in his *The Mystique of Modern Monarchy* (Watts—8s. 6d.), a publication which made a most timely appearance immediately after the Coronation. Writing from the point of view of a professional psychologist rather than of an historian or a political philosopher, Prof. Black endeavours to give the reasons both for the retention of monarchy in the modern world, and for the popular enthusiasm demonstrated for the person of the monarch, as indicated in the tumultuous applause with which his or her public appearances are greeted.

Our author appears concerned, throughout, primarily with the British monarchy. Indeed, as ex-King Farouk is reported to have predicted, it is doubtful if any other monarchy will exist in, say, a century's time. Prof. Black himself, though we did not find his conclusions altogether explicit, appears to visualise the ultimate disappearance of the British monarchy also, which, he rather seems to suggest in his concluding paragraphs, will not suffer, eventually, any violent overthrow but, rather, will simply "fade away" in the manner ascribed to "old soldiers" in a once popular song!

In dealing with the whole problem of monarchy in the modern world, it appears reasonable to suggest that we have two quite separate problems to consider: What are the political motives which ensure the retention of monarchy in the modern world, and what are the psychological devices which "put over" the cult of monarchy—perhaps, we should rather say, the entire cult of Royalty—to the man-in-the-street who, in our modern democratic communities, is the ultimate arbiter of its destiny. We may add that Dr. Black deals with both these problems in an interesting and, on the whole, explicit manner, though, understandably from the fact that he is a psychologist, we found him more convincing on the second, the purely psychological problem, than on the first, political one.

Historically speaking, it seems to be a mistaken view to

take the evolution of monarchy in isolation from the contemporary general course of social evolution. A king does not reign in, or over a vacuum: concretely, he owes his position to the goodwill and to the active support or benevolent neutrality of the dominant social forces in his contemporary world. Once these classes withdraw their indispensable support, the collapse of the monarchy—and, usually of the monarch himself—is ultimately inevitable. In dealing with the rise and fall of monarchies, it is, in our submission a major error to exaggerate the personal importance or characteristics of the individual monarch. Probably, the, by now, fairly numerous regiment of

"kings in exile" who haunt the fashionable watering places of Europe, are, on average, no better and no worse than their more fortunate royal predecessors. What has happened is merely that times have changed, and the social forces which formerly bolstered up their thrones, are now no longer able or willing to do so. Any long-established hereditary monarchy is far more a symbol of the prevailing social order than a theatre for the personal attainments of the individual monarch. Indeed, it would probably be a correct definition to state that the average monarch is usually rather below the average in culture and intelligence: he (or she) is an average person mentally depressed by exceptionally parasitic surroundings.

The whole problem of the relationship between monarchy and democracy, as envisaged by our Canadian author, is, of course, of quite modern origin. The monarchies of pre-modern eras were not unduly solicitous of popular support. They presided over societies in which it was not so much argued as taken for granted, that the laws were made, and society run solely in the interests of privileged minorities. Ancient monarchy, of which the immemorially ancient Pharaohs of Egypt represented the classical type, was based chiefly on Divine Right; concretely, on the priestly class and on popular superstitious awe; and much the same state of things existed in the Christian Middle Ages, where the Emperor, the titular Head of the Christian body-politic, was "Holy" even before he was "Roman." Whereas the (pagan) Roman Empire, and the same applies to the military monarchies of modern Europe, relied chiefly on the officer-class who controlled the army. This state of things was fully recognised in ancient Rome, where Tacitus tells us that, after the death of the last hereditary Caesar, Nero, the army made the momentous discovery, "that emperors could be made outside Rome."

The modern democratic or constitutional monarchy, which began in England after the execution of Charles the First and the resulting collapse of monarchy by Divine Right, really represents an illogical compromise between the forms of monarchy, and the reality of republican institutions. This hybrid character of modern constitutional monarchy was clearly seen by the French publicist, Benjamin Constant, when he went on record with the historic

observation that, "a constitutional monarchy resembles a monarchy (that is, absolute monarchy—F.A.R.) in appearance, but a republic in substance." The old type of monarch could boast with Louis the Fourteenth, "*L'etat, c'est moi*" ("I am the State"). In current political practice, the substitution of an elected President for Queen Elizabeth, would, to-day, not make a great deal of practical difference.

However, and here Prof. Black is at his best, what preserves the monarchy to-day is not its actual political role, but the semi-religious mystique which he analyses so ably. Royalty, to-day, is not so much an active political institution as a quasi-religious social cult: "The Divine Right of Kings" did not, it would seem, perish altogether with the Stuarts? On Coronation Day, June 2, we noted quite a passable imitation of it in the Abbey and—much more important in the streets! It seems clear that, even in this Year of Grace, 1953, the Queen of England—and, perhaps even the Queen of Tonga!—is not just a crowned President. There is a "mystique" about her—a "Tabu," as the Polynesian subjects of Queen Salote would describe it.

From a practical political standpoint, our author has no

difficulty in showing that there are, really, only two serious arguments to be adduced in favour of monarchy. It is better than some forms of dictatorship—"God save the Queen" merely invokes a myth, whilst "Heil Hitler" exalts an actual menace—and, in the present circumstances of the British Commonwealth, the election of a President from our heterogeneous congeries of "Dominions" would present insuperable difficulties: would India accept Dr. Malan, or Protestants, a Catholic French Canadian?

Against the royal "mystique" there are, from the Rationalist point of view, many formidable arguments, the most obvious of which is, precisely, that it is a "mystique," with a basis which is, ultimately, religious rather than rational in content. There are many other objections too obvious to need stressing here. But the Coronation, probably the last of its kind, has brought the issue again to the fore, and if Prof. Black has not finally resolved the problem, our readers will, we are sure, find much that is both interesting and instructive in the course of his comprehensive survey.

The Death Sentence

By C. H. NORMAN

THE death sentence is passed in all murder cases (except those of infanticide where women are concerned), in the following terms: "That you be taken from hence to the place from whence you came, and from thence to a place of execution, and that you be there hanged by the neck until you be dead, and that your body be afterwards buried within the precincts of the prison in which you shall have been last confined after your execution; and may God Almighty have mercy upon your soul."

The Chaplain: "Amen."

The Chaplain receives a fee of two guineas for the utterance of this one word "Amen", which must be the highest payment for any one word in the world. No man of letters ever valued his words at such an extravagant rate!

It is worth while examining the structure and text of this remarkable pronouncement which is made in the criminal courts of this country by supposedly highly-educated men. It is perhaps one piece of evidence of the peculiar type of people who are appointed to sit in judgment in capital cases that not one of them has made any protest against this formula in the last forty-five years, a period covering roughly three generations of the Judges.

What the words mean: "That sentence is that you be taken from hence to the place from whence you came" is beyond any logical conception. How anyone can be taken from "hence" to "whence" must be beyond even the Jesuits to explain. The language is grammatical nonsense. The next part of the sentence is descriptive, but is also inaccurate. A prisoner is not "hanged by the neck until you be dead" (see Pierrepont, the hangman's evidence, before the Royal Commission on Capital Punishment; the man who hanged Evans, who, incidentally, told the Commission that he was confident no innocent man had been executed). The prisoner is placed on a platform and hurled through a trapdoor, which has the effect of breaking his neck. This device broke down in the case of Lee, in the Babbacombe case, and he was reprieved after three unsuccessful attempts to hang him.

The next passage is still more astonishing as a piece of grammar: "and that your body be afterwards buried within the precincts of the prison in which you shall have

been last confined after your execution." Properly, the passage should read: "and that your body after execution be buried within the precincts of the prison." As it stands, it is tautologous, ungrammatical, and inaccurate.

The last passage is the choicest one of all from the point of view of the freethinker: "and may God Almighty have mercy upon your soul." The reflective mind may wonder why, if God Almighty is to have mercy upon a non-existent element called "the soul," the learned judge pronouncing sentence does not invoke mercy upon the existing and substantial body. There seems a radical contradiction in the political and religious sense.

One is entitled to inquire what God Almighty has to do with the matter at all. To the freethinker the answer is simple. As there is no God Almighty, he can have nothing to do with these criminal trials, as the non-existent cannot affect the existent. As the freethinker does not believe there is any soul, equally God Almighty cannot affect the non-existent.

It is really a shocking and nauseous piece of humbug from beginning to end. In the particular case from which this sentence is quoted, the reply of the prisoner, J. A. Dickman, was, "I declare to all men that I am innocent, one of the rare instances in which a prisoner is on record as having made an avowal of innocence after the death sentence had been passed."

As for the representative of the Anglican Church who plays his part in this degrading ceremonial, perhaps all we need say is that it is of a piece with the Archbishop of Canterbury pouring what is called "Holy Oil" on the monarch's head, which the Duke of Windsor quite rightly considered a disgusting ceremony.

The Gods

Millions have asked—there's no reply,
Who made the gods? where, when and why?
On grovelling knees, in blank despair,
No message greets their abject prayer.
All the gods were made by man,
Disprove this axiom, no one can;
They all are myths and dreams in kind,
Illusions and delusions of the mind.

W. PRICE

Robert Taylor

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

(Continued from page 212)

THE "Prolegomena" introduced the great importance of the subject, and it is written, it should be added, in a style as devoid of "pyrotechnics" as can be imagined. The question of the truth or the falsity of the Christian religion was very important, Taylor claimed, and indifference was "criminal." The business of the book was to deal with "stubborn fact and absolute evidence," and so it proceeded with a certain amount of method, commencing with the state of the heathen world into which Christianity was introduced. And Taylor showed that the stories of gods and goddesses were much the same in all countries:—

"To have been goddess-born, heaven descended; to have lived and died as none could live and die"; to have been believed, to have done and suffered great things for the service of mankind; but, above all, to have propitiated the wrath of the Superior Deity, and to have conquered the invisible authors of mischief, in their behalf, was such an overwhelming draft on the tender feelings, the excitement of which is one of the strongest sources of pleasure in our nature that the best hearts and weakest heads never gave place to the coolness and apathy of scepticism. Not a doubt was entertained that a similar series of adventures was proof of one and the same hero, and that the Grecian Apollo, the Phœnician Adonis, the Aesculapius of Athens, the Osiris of Egypt, the Chrishna of India, were but various names of the self-same deity; so that nothing was so easy, at any time, as the business of conversion. Not incredulity but credulity, is the characteristic propensity of mankind."

Moreover, the state of the Jews 2,000-odd years ago was much on all fours with that of the "heathen." In his chapter dealing with their beliefs, Taylor has many shrewd remarks on Moses, Aleim or Elohim, and Judaism in general; and he saw quite clearly that "Christianity, however, is not so essentially connected with the Jewish religion as to stand or fall with it"—a contention in line with the opinion of many Christians, of course, but much more advocated these days than in his.

Taylor also saw quite clearly and noted that "after the epoch of time ascribed to the dawning of divine light, the human mind seems generally to have suffered an eclipse . . . we look in vain among the successors of Cicero, Livy, Tacitus, Horace and Virgil, the statesmen, orators, and poets of the golden age of literature, for the continuation of the series of such ornaments of human nature. A slight had smitten the growth of men's understanding. . . . The "dawning of divine light" indeed had ushered in an era which triumphed against "the wisdom and honesty that feebly opposed its progress."

Deceiving the "vulgar," and cultivating and perpetuating ignorance, was henceforth the duty of the Christian Church, and Taylor showed by extensive quotations that this was done. Herein, the prisoner of Oakham gaol was in his element, and as he gives often the actual words of those authorities in Latin or Greek, and his own translation, whether he was or was not "unreliable" in this respect. It was one of the Christian charges against him, and made because it was hoped that some of the mud would stick.

Unfortunately, even Freethinkers—or at least Rationalists or Agnostics like Professor Huxley—repeated the charges, and that was exactly what Christians wanted.

The point Taylor made, and he hammered it in, was that the Christian Church made it its duty to deceive its followers, and to put a premium on ignorance. He could not unfortunately quote Scripture for his purpose, particularly from Peter and Paul. In a note he says, "Compare also

2 Corinth. xi. 23, where Paul says, 'I speak as a fool', which he need not have said"—a sly and just hit.

One point ought to be made at the outset of this account of the *Diegesis* and that is, the book is packed with excellent notes. For example, here is one and a most valuable one it is:—

In the year 1444, Caxton published the first book ever printed in England. In 1474, the then Bishop of London, in a convocation of his clergy, said: "If we do not destroy this dangerous invention, it will one day destroy us." The reader should compare Pope Leo the Tenth's avowal, "that it was well known how profitable this fable of Christ has been to us," with Mr. Beard's Apology for it, in his third letter to the Rev. Robert Taylor, page 74, and Archdeacon Paley's declaration, that "he could not afford to have a conscience."—See Life of the Author attached to his work on the *Evidences of Christianity*, p. 11. London. 12mo. edit. 1826.

And in talking of Stephen, he points out that it is "a name of the same order as Nicodemus, Philip, Andrew, Alexander, etc., entirely of Grecian origin, ascribed to Jews, who never had such names, nor any like them."

But Taylor made very great play again with the admissions of Christian authorities—he gives 66 in one chapter, some of them long extracts—which play havoc with "revelation" and "inspiration." The famous passage from St. Augustine that "the thing itself, which is now called the Christian religion, really was known to the ancients, etc.," is quoted in full in the original Latin, and there are many others equally cogent and apt.

Dr. J. Pye Smith evidently did not like these numerous quotations—nor for that matter did he attempt to reply in detail to the *Diegesis*; he referred to it very briefly in the Preface to the last edition of his *Answer to the Syntagma*. But it is worth putting on record once again how he "answered" Taylor's quotations:—

A man possessed of the volubility, the rashness, and disregard of truth which Mr. Taylor displays, might write, not one or two books only, vamped up with pedantic titles and conceited braggings and bold blasphemies, but twenty or fifty. He who makes no conscience of veracity in statement or equity in argument may rake together an endless mass of quotations from authors ancient and modern, good or bad; and, by pickling, garbling and perverting, he may make the compound wear almost any appearance, or to speak almost any language, that he may please to impose upon them. Such is this boastful and deceitful *Diegesis*.

The truth is, of course, that Taylor was particularly careful in his selection, and a more damning number of fatal admissions to Christianity had rarely before been got together. The last—from Grotius—sums up the situation beautifully: "He that reads ecclesiastical history reads nothing but the roguery and folly of bishops and churchmen." It is a pity that this absolutely truthful statement is not better known to the present generation.

Whether Taylor was right in identifying the early Christians with the Therapeuts or Essenes is a matter of opinion; it does not affect his other arguments in the least. He brings an array of proofs from competent authorities to maintain his position, one of the strongest being, as is admitted by Mosheim, that the Essenes had dwelt in Egypt long before the coming of Christ. In addition one of the greatest libraries then in the world was at Alexandria, in Egypt, where "lazy monks and wild fanatics" clubbed together in the University "concocting holy mysteries and inspired legends." Taylor also insisted that "everything of Christianity is of Egyptian origin," and that the pro-

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This Believing World

The feature which distinguished that great Christian evangelist and revivalist, Dr. Torrey, was his capacity for lying with unblushing sturdiness; and it proved too much for the late W. T. Stead, who was an earnest Christian, as well as a great journalist. Stead did his best to expose Torrey, who fled from the country back to America where, no doubt, he was able to exploit his talents this way to the utmost. We are to have next year, we understand, another great revivalist, Billy Graham, and it will be amusing to see whether he shapes as well as Torrey in the difficult art of maintaining the truth.

We are told that he is a "fiery gospel preacher," and he indulges in the "persuasive" argument that "salvation is necessary to escape the punishment and pangs of Hell." As a "fiery" evangelist, Mr. Graham was bound to believe in Hell—but will he make his audiences in this country believe it? The "fires" have long since been put out by infidel scientists, and it will take more than his "persuasive" arguments to rekindle them.

Graham thinks that England "is more wicked to-day than at any time since the days before John Wesley," and he adds, "Less than 1 per cent. of the folks in London attend church." He is already praying for us—we are going to get a revival "that will sweep across the land." It is particularly interesting to note that while he could not be here for the Coronation, he told his American audience recently that he "hoped to be in Heaven for Jesus Christ's Crowning Day." And perhaps some of us may silently hope—the sooner the better.

We have often wondered why so many distinguished soldiers and sailors are such out-and-out Fundamentalists whose credulity and superstition easily outmatch any simple Salvation Army girl. One of these gentlemen, Sir William Dobbie, recently told a Croydon audience how prayer had helped him in many battles during World War I, when all seemed lost. It's a pity that we could not have the testimony of the hundreds of thousands of British young men who were killed trying to capture Passchendaele during the three years it was occupied by the Germans. How did prayer help them? Are we to take it that only survivors have been helped by prayer? Did God Almighty save the precious life of Sir W. Dobbie, while he permitted nearly a million not so precious English lives to be lost in World War I?

Every now and then we come across an impartial description of "spirit" or "divine" healing by a matter of fact provincial reporter, and only rarely do we get a description which insists that dozens of quite incurable cases were immediately cured. In the revivalist and divine healing campaign held a month or so ago in Jersey by the Rev. A. Tee, although hundreds packed the Town Hall, it does not appear that any of the "pathetic procession" of sick people were cured. The reporter counted 60 people "crippled, blind, deaf, afflicted" as he describes them, with lots of poor babies who were all "anointed" with olive oil and touched by Mr. Tee—and eventually the reporter retired "to wonder." The wonder would have been if any of the really sick had been cured.

Still, failures do not bother the true believer. A "spirit" doctor in Brazil—such things almost always happen far, far away—removed a man's swollen appendix "at a seance held under test conditions and witnessed by an audience of 40 people" Of course, the doctor was not an "Invisible

Man" doctor. For the operation, he "materialised" himself and "apported" his instruments. This is vouched for by "Dr. Enid Smith," who adds that "the patient was left with a small scar" only. This appears to us to overshadow completely the marvels of spirit-healing performed by Mr. Harry Edwards and the 2,967 other spirit healers in this country. What do they say about it?

Theatre

The Private Life of Helen at the Globe Theatre, described as a comedy by André Roussin and Madeleine Gray, is not a good play.

Do not be taken in by the good acting, Arthur Maerac's careful production, and the well-lighted attractive setting of a columnated terrace in the palace of Menelaus, nor by the wit that occasionally comes over the footlights. The authors have regressed to the ancient Greek technique of allowing the action of the play to take place off stage, but not having the ability of Sophocles or Euripides, they have also kept off stage some of the most interesting characters. In fact, the effort to keep characters out is obviously contrived. The result is that we witness nothing of excitement, nothing dramatic, and have to listen to a great deal of talk. For the last few minutes the characters suddenly turn to mime, and as erratic as this might seem it is a welcome relief and gives us the most amusing part of the entertainment.

Diana Wynyard will attract you as a most beautiful Helen. Cecil Parker is able to give strength to the part of Menelaus. Young Janette Scott, with five long pigtailed again shows that she can act in advance of her years in the part of Hermione, their daughter.

Everything in the palace of Menelaus would be beautiful if only this were a good play.

Arms and the Man (Bernard Shaw) at the Arts Theatre is Alec Clune's latest production.

The production suffers from awkward settings in the first two acts which force the actors into unnatural positions relatively to each other, but Mr. Clune has succeeded in bringing out the spirit of Shavian wit and humour that surround this philosophical survey of man through the medium of soldiery.

Mr. Clune also gives a remarkably good performance of Bluntschli, the practical Swiss soldier who teaches the Bulgarians his art. Performances generally were good and notably well led by Gwen Cherrell as Raina and Robin Bailey as Sergius.

As a revival the play succeeds. It is followed by a short play written by Wolf Mankowitz and entitled **The Bespoke Overcoat**. This is about an old Jew (Alfie Bass) who orders an overcoat from his tailor (David Kossoff), but he dies before it is finished. His ghost returns to find an overcoat to replace his ragged one, and with the tailor he steals one lined with sheep skin from his former employer who had ill-used him. Without sets a vivid atmosphere is created by the good acting.

Cilli Wang, who has been performing at the Arts Theatre, is remarkably versatile in a variety of mime and dance sketches. These are cleverly conceived and her approach to them proves without doubt that she is a great artist.

You should not miss an opportunity of seeing her.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

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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.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, June 28, 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and J. MILLS.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every week-day, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields, COLIN MCCALL.

North London Branch (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, July 12, noon: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, July 11, 7 p.m.: Messrs. T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch).—Every Sunday from 4 p.m. onwards: Messrs. O'NEILL, CLEAVER, WOOD, EBURY, TAYLOR, and RIDLEY.

INDOOR

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Friday, July 10, 7-15 p.m.: J. ADDISON, "An Objective Approach to History."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, July 12, 11 a.m., S. K. RATCLIFFE, "Eisenhower and McCarthy."

Bristol Rationalist Group (Crown and Dove Hotel, Bridewell Street).—Wednesday, July 15, 7-3 p.m.: A Lecture, "From Malthus to Lysenko."

NOTES AND NEWS

The recent Royal visit to Scotland again brings into sharp relief the anomalous relationship between Church and State that exists in this land of illogical compromises. For, by a clause in The Act of Union between the two countries in 1707, the Sovereign an Anglican in England is a Presbyterian in Scotland, and, accordingly, automatically changes her belief every time that she crosses the border! For, under the Act of Union, Scotland retained both her national church and her legal system; the former, Calvinistic in doctrine and Presbyterian in government. The current situation becomes still more anomalous when it is realised that there is an Anglican Church in Scotland, to which, however, the Monarch does not belong in Scotland. It is all very confusing, and must require an elastic conscience on the part of Her Majesty. One cannot even describe such a state of things as "mediaeval," since the Middle Ages only had *one* Church. Perhaps in the near future the Head of the Commonwealth will be expected to belong to simultaneously *all* its religions? Does not common sense demand the secularisation of the State?

Our contributor, Mr. R. J. Jackson, sends us a copy of his learned pamphlet, *India's Quest for Reality*. [The Buddhist Society, 16, Gordon Square, W.17.] Mr. Jackson originally published this pamphlet in 1947, and it has now been re-issued. The author, R. J. Jackson is, perhaps, the most learned exponent of Buddhism at present in this country, and as the Foreword informs us, was lecturing on Buddhism in Hyde Park as far back as 1908. Throughout the past half-century our author has been busily engaged in advocating Buddhism both on the public platform and in articles in the Buddhist press. Occasionally, he has contributed to *The Freethinker*, which is always open to the expression of scholarly criticism. Mr. Jackson is not, we may add, a Theosophist, but is a genuine Buddhist of the Theraveda, or Southern School of Buddhism, which claims to possess a rationalistic and anti-theistic approach. One may also comment that, unlike some more pretentious English exponents of Buddhism, R. J. Jackson really does know what he is talking about!

In *India's Quest for Reality* the author gives us a learned resumé of the evolution of Indian Philosophy from pre-historic times, and endeavours to explain for the benefit of his Western readers both its fundamental concepts and its technical terms. Historically, Buddhism itself appears to have emerged originally as a reforming movement in Hinduism, opposed to the caste-system and, in particular, to the growing power of the priestly Brahmin class. The earliest records depict Buddha as a religious heretic and reformer. We do not think that it is correct to describe the earliest form of Buddhism, as is sometimes done, as atheistic. Contrarily, the earliest Buddhism seems to have been essentially agnostic, and we have elsewhere described Buddha as "The First Positivist," long before Comte and Spencer. The philosophical evolution which led up to Buddhism is ably sketched in *India's Quest for Reality*.

Religious people do queer things at times! One of the queerest is represented by an exhibition now being held at Olympia, London, W., under the auspices of His Eminence the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Westminster. This exhibition is officially described as a "Vocations Exhibition," and its purpose, as described recently in *The Times* (July 6, 1953), is "to illustrate the training and future work of parochial clergy and of 160 religious orders of men and women in this country." In a sermon preached at the opening of this exhibition the Cardinal declared that there was a serious shortage of priests and the purpose of the present exhibition was to make the attractions of the priestly life better known. One might suggest that a life calling for celibacy, poverty, and the wearing of the ridiculous clerical dress, could not possibly attract the youth of to-day. Anyhow, since only God can give a man a "vocation," what use is the exhibition anyway? Does the Almightiness need to be reminded of His duty?

Robert Taylor (Continued from page 219)

fessions of Medicine and Divinity being inseparable, and the Essenes being *healers*, it was probable, at least, that they were the original "fabricators" of the writings afterwards collected in the New Testament; the probability becoming a certainty through the unguarded admission of Eusebius himself in his *Ecclesiastical History* (17th chap., 2nd book) that those ancient Therapeuts were Christians and that their ancient writings were our Gospels and Epistles."

(To be continued)

The Very Unorthodox

By (the late) J. G. LUPTON

WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR refers in his impeccable prose to a Mr. George Nelly, who "was for several seasons a great poet." One remembered when he was so famous a one that he ran after Mr. Milton, as the old gentleman was leaning on his daughter's arm from the Poultry, and treading down the heel of his shoe, called him a rogue and a liar. Later he confounded some of his father's friends with all the hirelings and nuisances of the age, with all the scavengers of lust and the link-boys of literature, with Newgate solicitors, the patrons of adulterers and forgers, who, in a long vacation, were promised a silver shilling on crying down a religious tract. Afterwards, when he wrote a bad poem, he supported his sinking fame by some signal act of profligacy, an elegy by a seduction, an heroic by an adultery, a tragedy by a divorce. On the remark of a learned man, that irregularity is no indication of genius, he began to lose ground rapidly, when on a sudden impulse he cried out at the Haymarket, "There is no God!" It was then surmised more generally and gravely that there was something in him, and he stood upon his legs to the last. "Say what you will," once whispered a friend, "there are things in him as strong as poison, and as original as sin." Landor affected to hope that the mercies begun with man's forgetfulness would be crowned with God's forgiveness.

These remarks form part of an imaginary conversation, but Landor intends the judgment, and his George Nelly represented Byron, whose *Childe Harold* was completed in 1818. Part of *Don Juan* was written by 1822, when Landor wrote his censorious passage. Byron describes the *Childe* as one who "ne in virtue's ways did take delight," but loved "concupines and carnal company, and flaunting wassailers of high and low degree." Such verse may suggest some aspersion on his father's friends, but Byron asserts more than once that *Childe Harold* is a fictitious character. In the preface to the first and second cantos he says there are some very trivial, merely local, particulars which might be grounds for another notion, but the main points indicate otherwise.

There is, however, poetic justice in subjecting Byron to scathing treatment, for he accorded that to other poets. In *Don Juan* Canto I (written in 1819), he says, "thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey; because the first is crazed beyond all hope, the second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy." Landor, a friend of Southey was probably hurt, but *Don Juan* is in a contemptuous style, and Byron had misgivings. He has other stanzas scornful of Wordsworth, but his manuscript of one has his own remark, "unfair." Byron remarks of Keats that he was no gentleman, which indicates Byron's idea of a gentleman as a titled person, or, at least, one who had been to one of the great public schools or elder universities. I have read that Byron's knowledge of literature was not extensive, and his remarks on his fellow poets seem to confirm this.

Landor felt impelled, on Byron's death in the cause of Greek independence, to apologise for his earlier opinion, but he did not withdraw it. The fact is that Landor, although in favour of the liberation of national groups from foreign domination, seems afraid of the boldness of Byron and Shelley, when directed against religion. His own remarks on the idea of death are atheistical, or nearly so, but he has no trumpet that sings to battle.

He rendered a graceful tribute to Shelley, whom he said distributed half his income of £1,000 a year, among

the poor and afflicted, but then he must admit that he had once refused to shake Shelley's hand, owing to having believed a false report of his treatment of his former wife.

Shelley's hatred of priestcraft comes out in a torrent at times. He refers in *Adonais*, his lament on the death of Keats, to Milton, dying "blind, old and lonely, when his country's pride, the priest, the slave and the libertine, trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite of lust and blood." This seems a fair portrayal of the conditions which must have flourished after the Restoration.

Byron is a colder, more objective spirit, but *Childe Harold* is made to speak of Voltaire, whose talent breathed most in ridicule, "now to o'erthrow a fool, and now to shake a throne," and of Gibbon, sapping "a solemn creed with solemn sneer" (Canto III, cvi and cvii). In Canto I, xxix, he describes the building at Mafra, Portugal, "where the Babylonian whore had built a dome, where flaunts she in such glorious sheen, that men forget the blood that she has spilt, and bow the knee to pomp that loves to garnish guilt." I cannot imagine Landor liking Shelley's stanza on Milton, or Byron's on Mafra.

Both Shelley and Byron spoke very disparagingly of Castlereagh. The former says, "I saw murder on my way; he had a face like Castlereagh." Byron had several attempts at savage epitaphs. One reads, "So he has cut his throat at last! He! Who? The man who cut his country's long ago." R. W. Chambers in "Man's Unconquerable Mind," page 322 *et seq.*, has some remarks in defence of the unfortunate statesman. He points out that Napoleon's campaigns were, and may still be, seen as an attack on human liberty. That attack was defeated largely owing to Castlereagh. It had required courage to win that war. Napoleon could lose armies. Five thousand British troops captured would have brought any British Minister's head near the block. Byron wrote, "Castlereagh is preparing his head for the pike." On the news of Waterloo, he said, "I'm damned sorry for it, "and then "I didn't know but I might live to see Lord Castlereagh's head on a pole. But I suppose I shan't now." After the peace Castlereagh worked incessantly for seven years. "Don't bring back," he said, "the world to peaceful habits." Due largely to his efforts, France was not dismembered, and there was peace for a generation, and permanently with America and France.

As the exhausted Castlereagh was about to undertake the fresh responsibility of the Conference of Verona Wellington said he was bound to warn him that he could not be in his right mind. Castlereagh covered his face with his hands, and said, "Since you say so, I fear it must be so." After some days of illness, he took his life in a fit of delirium. Chambers says, "friends of progress raised a cheer as his body was borne to burial." Landor could have found an attribute for those "indecorous" cheers.

Byron was a patrician satirist. He detested all governments; a statesman cannot do that. Byron had a tendency to injustice. Shelley had a better social sense. J. M. Robertson cited him, however, and, I think rightly, as an example of a rationalist poet who had too much emotion. His emotional character helps us to understand his curse on Castlereagh, ending, "Marry ruin, thou tyrant, and God be thy guide to the bed of thy bride." The appalling and hideous curse was fulfilled. It is a blemish on his fame.

The Kabbala Unveiled

By AKIBA

HITHERTO all judgments of the Kabbala—Jewish mystical thought—have been marred by an entirely false picture of its origins, an entirely erroneous idea of its significance. On the one hand we have the Christian and Jewish obscurantists who transform the meanings of simple sentences in the Bible into highly complex meanings which simply have no basis in the texts. On the other, we have the crude and simplistic interpretations which do violence to the facts, and fail to get to the essence of the matter.

It is perhaps important to take into account the fact that many distinct concepts which we have to-day are of comparatively recent origin. The distinction between religion and politics, for instance, which we take for granted, did not exist in the minds of ordinary people until after the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. And even the difference between philosophy and religion was by no means clear to people a few centuries ago. Philosophy—whether of the school of Aristotle or Plato—was the handmaid of the Church, the Mosque or the Synagogue—until the Renaissance. And again, as far as science is concerned, it has only been able to establish itself as a study in its own right since the break-up of the medieval order, and become an international and interracial pursuit until the Industrial Revolution had achieved a considerable momentum of its own. Alchemy versus chemistry, astrology versus astronomy, religion versus politics, religion versus science, religion versus philosophy—all these are modern conflicts of recent origin.

What has this to do with the Kabbala? A very great deal. For the tendency to-day is to project back all these conflicts of an essentially secular age on to the medieval world. The Jewish mystics, no more than the alchemists or astrologers of those days, were quite oblivious of the hidden contradictions in their life-long work. The creator of Faust fashioned him out of a mixture of what we now understand to be scientist and charlatan, astrologer and astronomer, alchemist and chemist. The Kabbalists, too, devoted their time to mystical exegesis of the Bible, numerology, astrology, philosophy, in fact everything that went by the name of science in medieval times.

Although there are mystical passages in the Talmud, and highly obscure chapters in the Book of David, and in the Book of Revelation, the works which are described as belonging to the Kabbalistic school first made their appearance about 800 or 900 A.D. with the *Sefer Yetzirah* ("the Book of Creation"). This book taught that creation was but a series of graded emanations (*Sefirot*) proceeding from God and taking form in the tangible world. Thus each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, to which a number is attached, has a special mystical import in that it took part in the creation of the world. The Kabbalists like Azriel (1160-1238), whose name is associated with book "Bahir" (Brightness), developed the numerology, the alphabetical and numerical combinations and permutations to a fantastic degree. Every word in the Bible was subjected to the Notarikon and gematria, letters were moved to and fro, or added up, multiplied and subtracted to produce new words and new sentences. On the surface, all this numerical and alphabetical juggling seems to be futile and idiotic. This has been the view of nearly all the critics of the Kabbala, even the most sympathetic. The letter-juggling has been generally looked upon as superstitious practice. But was it?

There are two rational explanations for this numerology, which have never been considered by the Kabbala's many

critics. First of all, there can be no doubt that an esoteric tradition did exist in the framework of Judaism, certainly stretching back to centuries before the common era. That these esoteric sects had any desire to commit any of their teaching and doctrine to plain language, is highly unlikely. What more obvious way than "transmitting" words, could these esoteric sects have worked out for handing on their teachings to the initiated?

The second explanation is more or less accepted in relation to certain words and verses in the Book of Revelation. That is, words and names were used to convey certain political-religious ideas. Babylon is almost certainly Rome in the Book of Revelation. In the Talmud, Edom is used as a cipher word for Rome. It is more than likely that the Kabbalists were carrying on an ancient tradition of deciphering passages in the holy books by means of numerical manipulations. This, of course, does not imply that the Kabbalists, certainly the majority of them, were even aware or conscious of the reason for the deciphering tradition.

Then again, the Kabbala was able to provide a field not only for the obscurants and word-jugglers but also for the heretics and philosophical freethinkers who could garb or conceal their thought in abstruse terminology and strange analogy.

It is perhaps of interest to note that the Bible of the Kabbalists, the Zohar, which came to the public eye for the first time when published by Moses, son of Shem Tob de Leon (1250-1305), contains a passage which is in flat opposition to the astronomical (more accurately, theological and cosmological view) of the earth current at the time. The Zohar asserts in its section on the Book of Leviticus that the earth rotates on its axis like a ball; thus, when it is day in one half of the globe, the other half is plunged in darkness, and those living below have their heads in the opposite direction to those above. Quite naturally, the views of Copernicus and Galileo did not disturb the Kabbalists, as they were common currency centuries before.

The Kabbalists evolved a concept of God as the *En Sof* (The Limitless), which bordered on pantheism. A history of philosophy will show how easily the concept of God as the Universe (Spinoza) passes over into the concept of the Universe as the Universe. The tremendous impact of the Kabbala on Christian thought during the Renaissance is attested by Reuchlin (the great Hebraic scholar), Pico della Mirandola, and other Christian Hebraists who prepared the way for the Reformation.

This brief review of Kabbalistic thought will, it is to be hoped, make way for a rational interpretation of the complex historical phenomenon known as Jewish mysticism.

Big Broadcast

"The Biggest Broadcast will commence in a jiff. It may cheer you—or bring on the blues: We're presenting great TRUTH—the actual griff—But, meanwhile, stand by for the news!"

A. E. C.

"Relics"

At Toledo in 1768 one of the canons, as he was showing me the urns containing the relics, told me that one of them contained the thirty pieces of silver for which Judas Iscariot betrayed Our Lord. I begged him to let me see them, to which he replied severely that the King himself would not have dared to express such indecent curiosity. —*Memoirs of Casanova.*

Correspondence

THE "HOLY" OIL

SIR,—Your reference to the Mau Mau character of some parts of the Coronation ceremonial makes one wonder a little about the nature of the Holy Oil. What are its chemical components? This section of the performance originated from ceremonial in the Bulgarian Branch of the Orthodox Church. The formula for the making of the oil is believed to date from the early days of the Bulgarian Church. It would be interesting to know where the Holy Oil, sprinkled by the Archbishop on the head of the Queen, originated from. Perhaps it came from Russia! Incidentally, the Communion wines come from the oddest places.—Yours, etc.,

C. H. NORMAN.

SHOULD THE CHURCHES BE TAXED?

SIR,—Mr. Paul Varney would have us demand that churches should pay rates and taxes. It is a toss-up who is the bigger nuisance, the believer in the social value of religion or the believer in the social value of taxation. Salvation by taxation is as ridiculous a conception as is salvation by faith. The one good thing about the churches is their freedom from rates and taxes. This freedom should be extended to all of us. Mr. Varney has hold of the wrong end of the stick.—Yours, etc.,

W. E. NICHOLSON.

THE MONARCHY

SIR,—Your correspondent's letter on "Why Abolish the Monarchy?" suggests that the alternative to Royalty is a Dictatorship, overlooking the fact that Royalty in itself is a Dictatorship, compelling us to accept as Head of the State a person whose only claim to represent us is due entirely to an accident of birth.

Royalty may have been necessary in earlier times among primitive people, so were ox carts and asses, but these have outlived their usefulness. Without constant propaganda in school and Press our Monarchy (and religion) would probably have passed away long ago.

I feel sure that a Republic moulded on the true conception of liberty, equality, and fraternity, would be more suitable for a 20th century democracy.—Yours, etc.,

H. R. T.

WHO RUNS THE COUNTRY, AND WHICH IS THE WAY OUT?

SIR,—The letter of Alfred D. Corrick suggests that Mr. Abbott's views on the power behind the Government in the country are novel and exaggerated. They certainly are not new, and of the competency of George W. E. Russell, himself a Government Minister, to form a sound judgment on the matter, I leave your readers to judge. He wrote in 1897, in "Collections and Recollections," "the permanent Civil Service whose chiefs have been, at least since the days of Bagehot, recognised as the real rulers of the country. . . ." On the other hand, we know that in the Cabinet, as in all national and international activities, the real owners or their tried and trusted agents are in command, whether legislative, religious or military, in peace or war, whatever the camouflage that is used to disguise the reality. "The truth is that parliament makes the laws," says your correspondent. Well, let me recall a fairly recent happening. The Members of the House of Commons had passed, by a large majority, a Bill suspending for five years capital punishment for murder. The Bill went before the Lords and was sent back to the Commons and Members were ordered to drop the measure, which they did. Parliament, says Mr. Corrick, makes the laws. Let me recall what Lady Dorothy Nevill replied to Hyndman, as told in his "Record of an Adventurous Life": "You will educate some of the working class . . . and when you have succeeded we shall buy them." As I have before pointed out, the great delusion that has led to the wasting of our energies has been, and still is, compromise, especially in war time, the idea that something can be achieved by working with and hoping to reform from within. No system has been altered in this way. The countries are still R.C. that hoped to reform from within.

The Protestant countries took the other road. It is true we have adult suffrage, but with a Parliament lasting five years and with the system shown above, where a private Member can promise anything and excuse its non-fulfilment under "party orders," nothing can be done. The thing they fear is annual parliaments. History shows that whenever short parliaments were in operation they were reversed by reaction. Again, the £150 deposit required from candidates is against independent action, this with the whole party machine being used against any active rebel. The moral is, we cannot hope to reform from within. All parties immediately disaffiliate both individuals or groups who do not toe the line. As individuals we cannot escape the responsibility for the deeds of the organisation to which we belong, by

saying: "I do not agree." If we are members of a body we are responsible for its acts. It is worse than hypocrisy to support any party that upholds conscription and pretend to deplore its results.—Yours, etc.,

JAMES H. MATSON.

"THE MOST VALUABLE THING THAT THIS WORLD AFFORDS"

SIR,—Your most interesting article under the above title reminded me of the delicious incident recorded by Samuel Pepys on the arrival at Dover of Charles II in 1660:—

"The Mayor presented him from the town a very rich Bible, which he took and said it was the thing that he loved above all things in the world."

That His Majesty tired of its exposition is evident from a story told by one of his contemporaries—I think the delightful gossip John Aubrey—that once a preacher stopped in his sermon to implore the Duke of Lauderdale not to snore so loud lest he awaken the King.

The King's progeny, too, reminds one of the Old Testament patriarchs. In the course of a lecture by a Dr. Beu, entitled "Death in High Places: Some Royal Case Histories," the audience was informed that Charles II's illegitimate children numbered fifty-two. I endeavoured to audit this account and concluded it was incorrect. I make the number about thirty-four. Still is enough, though a long way from the record which—according to Lea's *History of Sacerdotal Celibacy*—was held by a medieval German bishop credited with 69 children.

The usually circumspect Scott—who rarely wrote anything to bring a blush to the young person's cheek—was quite naughty regarding Charles II. In *Peveril of the Peak* a young woman said the King "the father of his people." "Of a good many of them," said the Duke of Buckingham in an aside.—Yours, etc.,

WM. KEST.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

SIR,—Recently there have been three notable murder trials in which strenuous efforts were made to obtain a verdict of "Guilty but insane," thereby saving the life of a killer. Twice the "expert" psychiatrist was successful, but I am glad to see that in the recent Christie case the jury were not impressed.

To a rational mind the facts of the conduct of the case appear farcical. The judge tells the jury that, although other deaths may be mentioned, prisoner is only charged with one crime, that must be kept in mind. Then, to support his case, defending counsel cites five other deaths, and gets permission to dig up another body!

The argument seems as follows: prisoner is charged with murdering his wife by strangulation, nothing else must be decided. Clearly he would have hanged for this. Evidence is then led that he strangled other six, and for that reason the jury are asked to save this miscreant from legal strangulation.

I might just say that counsel's plea for the demented prisoner to be "locked up for the rest of his life" is very wide of the mark. There is no locking up these days, and a poor unfortunate murderer is treated with great consideration. Other lunatics, to treat him with deference, he gets special treats, one of which is a weekly visit to the cinema, where to take his mind off his own troubles, he may see in a Westerner quite a good deal of murdering.—Yours, etc.,

J. ETTLE.

GOOD SHAVIAN PROPAGANDA

Bernard Shaw, always unpredictable, always paradoxical, never assailed religious superstitions and absurdities as the staunch Rationalist would have liked. He baffled them as he did the Fundamentalist. He was essentially an Atheist, of course, but he never used that term in his essays and speeches. This is what an English clergyman sneaked into his house just before cremation and prayed loudly for Shaw's soul, saying that he was sure Shaw believed in God, whether he was a Christian or not. Shaw, in death, revenged himself on the pious interloper by meddling. His Will, among other heretical utterances, stipulated that no Sermon or Prayer, least of all one invoking God, implying any sympathy with the Cross and the Dogma of redemption by innocent blood and sacrifice, should be uttered at residence or funeral.

The Cross was his particular aversion—it stood for "divine savagery, spites and childishness."

Of the several major religions afflicting the world, Christianity is incontestably the most preposterous, purile and offensive in reason and moral decency. Shaw knew this, and said it at last.

Coleridge said: "Not one man in ten thousand has the goodness of heart or strength of mind to be Atheist."

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