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—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Christian Origins— A Marxist View

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

EVER since the era of Voltaire, the problem of the actual origins of Christianity has increasingly attracted the attention of scholars and has been the object of critical controversy. Broadly speaking, there have been, and there still are, two fundamentally opposed schools of thought who view the whole problem of the actual historical origins of Christianity from points of view which are directly opposed. On the one hand, the scholars who remain attached to the Christian Churches defend the supernatural origin of this religion, as distinct from all rival creeds, and, consequently, view the whole problem of Christian origins against this supernatural background. Where-

as the school of non-Christian or anti-Christian scholars who reject this alleged supernatural basis pursue their critical inquiries on the assumption that Christian origins were purely human in character and must, accordingly, be studied in the same way as any other historical phenomenon. There are, of course, variations in both camps: Christian "modernists," who accept *some* of the critical conclusions of Rationalist scholars, and what are sometimes called "reverent" Rationalists, who appear to accept *some* of the Christian conclusions! But, broadly, these are the two fundamental schools of thought on the question of the origins of Christianity.

A Third View

In recent years, with the rise of Socialism and, in particular, since the Russian Revolution (1917), a third, primarily sociological, view has emerged which, whilst generally rationalistic in its critical conclusions, differs from the traditional view of Rationalism in laying emphasis on the social, rather than upon the theological causes for the appearance of the Christian religion. From this point of view, whilst religious and theological views played an important part in formulating the new approach to religion which eventually took shape in the Christian Church, its primary cause is to be found in the social sphere and in the social conflicts of the Roman world amid which the new religion first arose. From its close association with the ideas derived from Karl Marx, we may term this point of view, generically, as the "Marxist" view of Christian origins.

An English Marxist

The above point of view with regard to Christian origins is expressed in an important book just published by Mr. Archibald Robertson, an English—or, at least, English-speaking!—Marxist scholar. Mr. Robertson, who, like so many excellent radicals in both Church and State, is himself of clerical stock, has been a regular contributor to the Rationalist Press (both with a large "P" and a small one!), including *The Freethinker*, for many years past, and is still a regular speaker at Conway Hall, "The Laurie Arms" and other centres of Freethought propaganda. He is, also, a recognised authority on the subject of Christian

origins. For some years past he has been veering towards the political Left and towards the Marxist view outlined above. In his new book he writes avowedly as a Marxist rather than as an "orthodox" Rationalist—if we may be allowed this "Irishism." Here he gives us, for the first time in English, as far as we know, the complete Marxist "Outline of History," as far as Christian origins are concerned. It is this basic fact, rather than even its own intrinsic merits, which constitutes the real originality of this important book (cf. *The Origins of Christianity*; Lawrence and Wishart, 81, Chancery Lane, W.C.1; 21s.).

Since the learned author's work presupposes throughout a coherent historical and social philosophy, it is necessary to know what this philosophy is.

The Marxist View of Religion

Basically, Marxism holds that what is primary is the "struggle for existence," both natural and social: "Primum vivere, deinde philosophare" ("First keep alive, and then philosophise"), as a medieval "Marxist before Marx" summarised it. In a world divided into competing states and rival classes, ideas can only survive and exercise influence in accordance with their utility in and for the prosecution of these fundamental struggles. This applies also to religious ideas which, in a pre-scientific age, often become the appropriate vehicles for contemporary social and political struggles. Religions, accordingly, rise or fall with the classes, the ideas which they embody. Mr. Robertson considers Christian origins strictly in accordance with this fundamental Marxist thesis.

"The First Revolutionary Literature"

Historically, Christianity originally emerged as a Jewish "heresy": "What is true in the New Testament isn't new, and what is new isn't true," as the Jewish rabbis still put it. But Judaism itself had a long history prior to the Christian era. According to our author, the name, "Israel," first appears in an Egyptian inscription of 1223 B.C.—a respectable antiquity of which few modern states can boast! Without going back as far as that, Mr. Robertson accepts the historicity of, at least, the later Kings of Israel and Judah, a view, perhaps, unduly conservative and which some critical scholars might query. In pursuance of his social thesis, our author finds the secret of the religious evolution of the Jews in their political and social struggles: whilst the Jewish priesthood, like most priesthoods, was conservative and allied with the ruling classes, the exploited masses found their champions and mouthpieces in the plebian prophets, who preached a return to the primitive equality of the desert and denounced the luxury and extortions of the priests and kings. Mr. Robertson describes the prophetic literature as "the first revolutionary literature in history." Judaism, which emerged only after the Babylonian exile (586-38 B.C.), represents a

final compromise between priests and prophets, and our Old Testament is "edited" from this point of view.

The Messiah versus the Roman Empire

The troubles of the Jews did not end in Babylon. Upon their return to Palestine they were subjected, successively, to the Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. The tyranny of the Pagan Greek king, Antiochus Epiphanes (second century B.C.), produced the Maccabean revolt, and Israel became independent for about a century, only to be finally conquered by the Roman Empire, which, despite repeated efforts to shake off its yoke for two centuries (63 B.C.—135 A.D.), proved eventually too strong for the Jews. Out of these national and social struggles was born the idea of the Messiah, the Liberator-King; out of them, also, the originally Jewish heresy was born, which circumstances and the interplay of social and religious forces afterwards transformed into the world-religion of Christianity.

"The Jesus of History"

Our English Marxist is not a "mythicist." Like his German predecessor, Karl Kautsky, he believes that there was an historic Jesus, who was crucified by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, probably as the leader of "the insurrection" to which our Gospel of *Mark* still refers. But in the tremendous drama of Christian origins, the "Jesus of History," as presented by the Marxist historians, Kautsky and Robertson, is not much more than a dummy figure; a titular figurehead rather than the actual founder of the religion named after him. It seems a little difficult to imagine why, and how, so obscure a figure should have, subsequently, such a central rôle ascribed to him. However, that is a matter for Mr. Robertson, who learnedly "refutes" those who do not accept the hypothesis of a personal Jesus. No doubt, some of the sayings and doings in our Gospels were actually said and done by *someone*; but, even where historical, the figure portrayed in the Gospels is, surely a composite character, made up partly of myths and partly of the historical reminiscences of, perhaps, a number of contemporary Palestinian would-be Messiahs, a type of which there was no lack at this time. However, we will leave Mr. Robertson his Jesus, at least for the rest of this article.

Paul and Christ

Christianity, as world history knows it, represents a fusion carried out over a period of time, and completed by about the end of the second century, between Gnostic theologians, who believed in a divine Christ but not in an historical Jesus, and "Messianist" Jewish heretics who believed in an historical Jesus, but not in a divine Christ: the Catholic Christ of the Creeds, "perfect God and perfect Man," represents the final formulation of this fusion. From the social point of view, even more important to our author's thesis, the Gnostics opposed revolution, did not advocate the millennial kingdom on earth, and were prepared to "render unto Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's," or, briefly, to ally themselves with the Roman Empire, and to renounce the Messianic Kingdom, that ancient version of "the Dictatorship of the Proletariat" with which, according to our author, Christianity had actually started.

Paul versus the Apocalypse

Both the Gnostic and the Messianist points of view can still be discerned in our New Testament, albeit "edited" in the interests of what later became orthodoxy. The supreme representative of Christian Gnosticism is Paul, whom our author regards as an historical figure who wrote at least the nucleus of most of the Epistles ascribed to him. From the latter proposition many Rationalist

critics, including the present writer, would dissent: it would appear more probable that the Epistles are the work of a group of Gnostic theologians who adopted the name of a famous early Christian missionary, of whom some authentic reminiscences—besides some which are not authentic!—are preserved in our Book of *Acts*. Also we think that our Marxist author rather over-estimates the *conscious* social rôle of the Pauline writers, who were, after all, mystical theologians and not socialist politicians. Though, no doubt, the net effect of their writings was much as he describes it. Contrarily, the "Messianist" point of view was expressed without ambiguity in the *Apocalypse*, which has been termed "John's nightmare," but may be more accurately described as a "hymn of hate" against the Roman Empire. From the "fusion" of these rival points of view the Christian Church arose eventually. But it seems a little difficult to imagine why they ever wanted to join forces.

The Catholic Church and the Roman Empire

Anyway, they did fuse and, by the end of the second century, when Christianity emerges fully into the light of history, we find a Church recognisably similar to what it has been ever since, social conditions in the Roman Empire, our author insists, had prepared the way for the new religion, particularly the final failure of a series of slave rebellions, the last of which was led by the famous Spartacus (73-71 B.C.), which forced the beaten slaves to seek salvation in the *next* world, and it was to them that Christianity first appealed: the cross, the instrument of this-world torture, became the symbol of next-world emancipation—a psychological masterpiece! From the end of the second century, where *The Origins of Christianity* ends, the ultimate victory of the Church was assured.

An Important Thesis

An important thesis, from which, with whatever criticisms, there is much to be learned. The Marxist school is fortunate in having as its champion a member of the leisured class able to formulate it! Needless to add Mr. Robertson writes with all the lucidity which we have come to expect from this distinguished author.

Our Greatest Need

The World's great need is Fellowship,
When all, as Comrades true,
Will live, not only for themselves,
But for their fellows, too.
While Nature sheds her gifts around,
The aim of all should be,
That these, and Labour's due reward,
Are shared with Equity.
"Do as you would be done unto"
For long has firmly stood,
With meaning clear—to will, and do,
To others, only good.
To "Love our neighbours as ourselves,"
To try to helpful be,
Will banish discord, pave the way
To human harmony.
Though hard to "Love our enemies,"
A lesson we may learn,
By kindly act, an enemy,
Into a friend may turn.
To men and nations this applies,
And may, in time, give birth
To what we mostly need to-day—
Goodwill and peace on earth.

C. E. RATCLIFFE

"Worker Priests" and Catholic Power

We are obliged to the Editorial Board of "Freedom" for permission to reprint this article.—EDITOR.

IT has been the policy of the Catholic Church in the last century to encourage workers to take active part in the trade union movement, either by forming separate catholic unions as in France, or by working within existing unions, but in addition having an association of catholic workers, as in this country.

This policy has been intensified in post-war France to the extent of forming a special seminary at Limoges for the purpose of training "worker priests" whose aim was to set up "catholic communities of industrial workmen within the social forms they had already created for themselves." To this end these "worker priests" took jobs in factories in an attempt to identify themselves with the industrial worker.

From the beginning, however, the priests were faced with such difficulties as having to participate with other workers in activities which were frowned upon by the hierarchy, and which eventually culminated in two priests being beaten up by the police when demonstrating with communists in an "anti-Ridgeway riot" last May.

This incident and the possible consequences have obviously been the subject of much thought in the Vatican. Last week, the Pope, through Cardinal Pizzardo, Prefect of the Sacred College of Seminaries, formally forbade the priests continuing with their policy of taking jobs in factories with the order that the preachers of the Limoges seminary should be sent back to their dioceses.

This action has caused more than a flutter among the French hierarchy and even among those bishops who were critical of the scheme in its origin. The leading catholic papers have also been expressing doubts as to the correctness of the move. It is difficult, however, to really assess the extent of the opposition because of the fact that no catholic will openly express strong criticism of the Pope's policy. The catholic review, *Actualité Religieuse dans le Monde* goes as far as any when it says:—

"To-day it seems that the whole future of the experiment is at stake. The Church will be judged. We must, however, realise that as far as human eyes can see, it is perhaps our last chance that is in danger of disappearing.

"We must measure the consequences of this collapse. It would be above all a profound discouragement, not only for the working class but for all classes. How many Catholic intellectuals and indeed unbelievers are not following this god attempt with the deepest sympathy? Henceforth there would be a dangerous temptation to say: 'There is nothing to be done; the abyss is too deep: Christianity cannot reach the working class.'"

Archbishop Feltin of Paris gives a more orthodox point of view in a lecture published in the *Semaine Religieuse*, and indicates the arguments that will be adopted by the Pope in the final decision taken after this month's meeting arranged between the Pope and two French Cardinals. Archbishop Feltin says that the priests concerned need more prayers and criticism and that the dangers of their task were fourfold:—

1. Mistaking the character of the missionary apostolate, which must not be confused with temporal action;
2. Falling into error as to the idea of the Church itself;
3. Falling into error as to the law of charity, which is the essential law of Christianity (where justice was at stake, and in particular circumstances, and alliance with members of other denominations might well be right, but it must not become a rule, the Archbishop said);
4. Error about the vocation of the priest, who must

preserve the spirit of obedience and humility and resist the temptation of blindly following his personal conscience, which would produce precisely "that neo-protestantism which the Holy Father fears so much." (M.G. 2/10/53.)

These arguments couched in such careful language are familiar to us all, and as we have so often pointed out, bear strong resemblance to the arguments advanced by the pundits of the communist church.

Apart from the fear of the catholic hierarchy that "worker priests" through their example of collaborating with non-catholic workers will give the green light to other catholics and so spread the idea that workers should unite against the common enemy whatever their creed, it must be remembered that the support for the church in France largely comes from the middle and the property-owning classes. There is little doubt therefore, that if the Pope does not decide to completely squash the experiment it will be radically altered in form. That it is not worth losing the support of the money classes to risk the slightest sympathy being established between communist and catholic workers will undoubtedly be the decision of the Pope.

From the anarchist point of view such a decision would be all to the good. The longer workers go on believing that the Church is concerned with their welfare the harder is our task to convince them that when the Church speaks of "getting among the workers" it is not for moral or humanitarian reasons but to further the power of the Catholic Church.

R.M.

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This Believing World

Town Councils all over the country will have had the shock of their lives. They will have read that Chelsea voted against beginning their meetings with prayers! Even the explosion of an atom bomb near by could hardly cause a bigger shock. As one pious Councillor, Mr. R. C. Duncan, said, "I think it fitting that we should ask for guidance"—he ought to have said "Divine" guidance—and no doubt he feels the necessity. But we are glad that at last one Town Council has the pluck to reject the farce of prayer to a God who never does anything, and whose "guidance" is a myth. Let us hope that other Town Councils—and Parliament—will follow suit.

Methodists still appear to be living in the 18th century. For example, we have Dr. Soper who does not like horse racing—we wonder whether he plays cards or goes to a theatre?—"wishing" that the Royal Family would not go to horse races. It's a pity that he cannot launch a furious attack (like John Knox) on some of the other things they do—like playing polo on a Sunday. But he sadly has to admit that there are other Methodists who do not share his views on gambling to give one instance. But for heaven's sake don't call Dr. Soper a kill-joy, he implores. Why not? Are not most Methodists kill-joys if they are true Christians?

The B.B.C. rarely misses a chance to bring to the radio a religious speaker who has been attending some religious Conference. A Mr. J. M. Todd, for instance, attended a "peace" one the other week at Altenburg in Germany, convened by Roman Catholics, and he told us how enthusiastic everybody there was for Peace. One would have imagined from the way he spoke that only Roman Catholics attending a Conference were really in favour of Peace. The sober truth is that at least half the wars which devastated Europe in the past were *religious* wars, and Jesus Christ, as the Prince of Peace, was a complete failure. Neither he nor his Father (who is generally depicted as a God of War) ever did a thing to stop a war. There may be ways of preventing future wars, but religion has nothing to do with such ways. As most Christians now know.

Nobody could know better than a man of God where murderers go to when they die, and when the Rev. E. W. Rolt, Vicar of All Saints, Battersea, tells us that they all go to Heaven, we are bound to believe him—that is, if we believe that Heaven is a place and not just a "state within you" as some naughty Christian Modernists insist. "All life is precious to God," says Mr. Rolt. Which means, of course, also the lives of the thousands of Nazi and Fascist torturers and murderers. What heavenly meetings they will have in Paradise with their former victims!

How heartily some of the pious reviewers on our national journals hate a Freethought work! Here we have, for instance, Mr. Edwin Muir in the *Observer*, reviewing a book entitled *Man and His Gods* by H. W. Smith, admitting that the author is "magnanimous" when dealing with Egyptian and Sumerian beliefs, but when dealing with "modern" religion—that of the Old and New Testaments—"his mood changes, he detests that religion heartily." He is "fair" to the Egyptians, complains Mr. Muir, but "unfair" to Christianity."

Now all this "criticism" really means is that it is quite fair to reject the Egyptian religion but quite "unfair" to reject the Christian religion as if there really was any fundamental difference between the two. And Mr. Muir

goes on complaining that Mr. Smith "does not seem ever to have a religious feeling" as if this was really a sort of crime. All we need add is that it is refreshing to come across such a book reviewed in such a journal as the *Observer* for, if at all possible, Freethought works are absolutely shunned by pious proprietors, pious editors and pious reviewers alike. We can only hope that Mr. Muir was suitably shocked as he appears to be. And his diatribe against an author who sees all religions as superstitions, including Christianity, can be read with a huge smile.

Let's Tell the World

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

FOR the past fortnight I have been wearing the newly-delivered badge of the National Secular Society in the lapels of my jacket and overcoat, and I have no doubt that it can play a useful rôle in making the militant Freethought movement better known, if it is widely adopted by members and sympathisers.

I do not know who first chose the pansy as the symbol of Freethought, but it came into use amongst French Freethinkers because the French word *pensée* (from which our pansy is derived) not only means *thought* but is also the name of the flower. It was a very happy choice of a symbol that has since gained worldwide acceptance. I sometimes wonder if the debased use of *pansy* that is now so common in Christian England has been spread by the intentional malice of Jesuitical enemies of Freethought. But we ought and can afford to treat it with contempt.

From the accompanying illustration it will be seen that in the new badge a departure has been made from previous practice. The one hitherto worn, which has been out of stock for quite a time, consisted solely of a pansy, to enable Freethinkers to recognise each other; but they form so small a part of the population that one of them rarely meets another by chance. The N.S.S. Executive Committee, therefore, when considering requests received for badges, decided in favour of something of a more positive nature. Incidentally, in these days a badge like the old one is held to be an article of jewellery and subject to purchase tax, while the inclusion of wording relieves the price of this burden.

It was not without reason that I gave the opinion, in my opening remarks, that the new badge can play a useful rôle in making militant Freethought better known. I have already experienced interested comment as a result of wearing it, and, travelling about London, I have particularly noticed the younger generation peering to see the details of my badge. It seems to me that we have the chance to take a leaf out of the book of the commercial, sporting, political and religious interests that use badges so consistently. Seeing that masses of people lose no opportunity of advertising their spare-time enthusiasms, their military service, their political affiliations and their religious beliefs and prejudices by the wearing of symbols, let us tell the world that we have ideas and ideals that bind us together, and that the symbol of these is the pansy.

The badge is the same size as the illustration. The words "Freethought" and "Secularism" appear in gold on an enamelled dark blue background, the centre being in gilt metal with the pansy in relief. It may be had either with a lapel-stud or a brooch-pin, and the price is 1s. 9d. each, which is the actual factory cost plus postage. It is not exclusive to N.S.S. members, and I shall be pleased to supply orders received from all readers and from freethinking and rationalist societies abroad.



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

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Thursday, 1-15 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, December 6, 6-45 p.m.: F. A. RIDLEY (President N.S.S.), "Rome and World Politics."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, December 8, 7 p.m.: ASHTON BURALL, "On Being a Democrat."

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq., W.C.1).—Friday, December 4, 7-15 p.m.: H. E. ATKINS, "Revision of the United Nations Charter."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, December 6, 6-30 p.m.: C. H. SMITH (Birmingham N.S.S.), "An Atheist's Reconnoitre on Science."

Manchester Humanist Fellowship (Cross St. Chapel).—Saturday, December 5, 3 p.m.: Miss A. PROSSER, "Humanity, Humanism, and Humanitarianism."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, December 6, 2-30 p.m.: Rev. D. PIPE, "The Churches and War."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, December 6, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, "One Hundred Believers."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.).—Sunday, December 6: P. VICTOR MORRIS (Gen. Sec. N.S.S.), "Secularism, Rationalism, Humanism—What is the Difference?"

A Chronology of British Secularism

By G. H. TAYLOR

(Continued from page 381)

1868. Security laws are aimed at making newspapers provide security against blasphemy, and Bradlaugh is prosecuted for not complying with the regulation. He fights the case at law, his supporters raising the money for the action, while the N.S.S. vigorously fights the security laws. Bradlaugh drops the name "Iconoclast" and stands for Parliament at Northampton. J. S. Mill loses his own seat in support of Bradlaugh. The latter is working on the question and Holyoake is pressing for improved working class representation in Parliament. Austin Holyoake prepares a form to supplant Christian baptism, and C. Watts a secular funeral service. The latter also joins the yearly attack on Christian doctrine. A youth of

18 has come from the west country to settle in London; his name is George William Foote.

1869. Bradlaugh has beaten the security laws, which are now repealed. With the support of Mill and others the Atheist can now give evidence at court, but by a technicality Bradlaugh is refused the right to affirm in a court; 200 secularist petitions follow. The Leicester Secular Institute and Club opens. Bradlaugh debates with Wm. Gillespie. Foote is now working for the N.S.S.

1870. The technicality is rectified and secularists now agitate for affirmation to apply to the United Kingdom and to jurymen; there are many petitions. In between his debates, editing, writing and speaking for the N.S.S., Bradlaugh is working on land reform. C. Watts, whose son Charles Albert begins work in the Johnson's Court office, is embarking on a series of verbal and written debates with the Christian Evidence Society.

1871. A Trafalgar Square meeting to protest against grants to the royal family is forbidden. Bradlaugh reconvenes it and tells the Home Secretary that the threat of force will be resisted; the Government rescind the prohibition half an hour before the start. Bradlaugh delivers his inaugural address to the Republican Club as its President, and as he is now "living the lives of ten men" the N.S.S. presidency passes to a benefactor of the society, A. Trevelyan. N.S.S. membership is now well past the thousand mark but this is misleadingly small, as some of the most ardent workers in the cause dare not risk membership on account of their livelihood. Secularists are now writing their own manuals for their schools and classes. Holyoake, who is an official of the N.S.S., revives his *Reasoner* monthly, printed by a Manchester Co-operative Society and with half the space given over to Co-operation. A. Holyoake and C. Watts edit a secular hymn book.

1872. Holyoake's *Reasoner* again fails. *Secular Chronicle*, a monthly, is launched at Birmingham. After a Hyde Park meeting has led to convictions for holding it Bradlaugh calls a great protest meeting, which is not interfered with, and the obnoxious regulations are then annulled. He publishes his *Impeachment of the House of Brunswick*. He resumes the N.S.S. presidency.

1873. Republican Clubs, largely secularist in personnel, hold a Manchester conference of their delegates with Bradlaugh and Foote present, and form a National Republican League, which is short-lived. There is increased secularist agitation for extending the right to affirm. Leicester secularists form a company under Josiah Gimson and buy land for £4,500. Mrs. Annie Besant gets a legal separation from her husband, a minister of religion, starts pamphleteering and goes to London. C. Watts continues his attacks on the Bible and his battles with Christian Evidence.

1874. On the death of Austin Holyoake the business in Johnson's Court is purchased by secularists for Charles Watts. The N.S.S. restates its objects: they are mainly secular education, disestablishment, the abolition of poverty and the raising of the level of the agricultural worker, land law reform and the abolition of the House of Lords. Mrs. Besant, through contacting the shop of Edward Truelove, Freethought bookseller, joins the N.S.S. On the other hand Joseph Barker, caught in a perilous crossing of the Atlantic, again finds Jesus and returns to the fold. In the literature of the year, Bible teachings are attacked by Watts and Mrs. Besant, the former bringing the verdicts of advancing science to bear on them.

(To be continued)

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK. By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 4s.; postage 3d. (Tenth edition.)

Mind or Matter?

By A. YATES

IN his reply (October 23) to a former article of mine on the above subject Mr. W. H. Wood propounds a number of arguments in disproof of Materialism. Let us glance at a few of them.

He quotes me as saying, "I do not know what the mental stuff of the cosmos may be," and he asks, "Who does?" And adds, "I doubt if he can tell me of what the *material* stuff of the cosmos is composed; so that does not get us very far." Now I do not claim to know of what the material stuff of the cosmos is composed, but I do claim, on the evidence of my senses, that there is such a thing as *matter*, whereas, on the contrary, I know of no evidence of equal strength in proof of the "mental stuff of the cosmos." So that in this instance the materialist does get a *little* farther than the anti-materialist.

He tells us, "Although no one knows anything for certain, it is our conjecture that the cosmos is not entirely physical" and that "in using the term 'mental,' we mean an intelligent or purposeful operative force—non-personal, non-physical, but able to permeate, combine and interact with physical matter." But what is this elusive force which he calls "Universal Energy or Life Force"? Mr. Wood does not tell us for the simple reason he does not know. All he can say is "Because it has not been identified it does not follow that it is non-existent." He forgets that for the same reason it does not follow that it *is* existent.

"Materialists," he says, "refuse to accept as possible anything they cannot understand," and, as an illustration of their obstinate incredulity, he gives us the following argument: "A materialist living back in the Middle Ages would have dismissed as completely irrational any suggestion that a man might one day travel through the upper air in a heavier-than-air-machine at a speed faster than sound. Because x-ray, radar, radio and television were then unknown, he would have refused to believe that such things could be. Surely, then, he should be very wary of condemning as nonsense a suggestion that the Universe may not be quite so material as he imagines."

This is an unfortunate argument for Mr. Wood. It recoils on himself by proving the opposite to what he intends. Does he not see that his hypothetical "materialist of the Middle Ages," though he might, from lack of the necessary experience have denied the possibility of such things, would not, *as a materialist*, have attributed them to a non-physical agency? And the event justifies his materialistic scepticism.

The person to whom Mr. Wood's argument would properly apply is not the materialist, but the *anti*-materialist of the Middle Ages. He would not only have denied that such marvels were humanly possible, but, in his superstitious ignorance, would have regarded them as the work of the Devil.

Again, he asks, "If, as Mr. Yates contends, there is no intelligent purpose in Nature, there can be no purpose in evolution. If evolution is merely a blind unorganised process, why do species always evolve towards a higher intelligence, and not devolve back to the slime from which we crawled?"

According to the theory of Evolution the development of species is due to two forces, Heredity and Environment, whose action is not necessarily progressive, but depends on the varying conditions of life which may either favour a particular development, retard it or destroy it altogether. Witness the extinction of many forms of life which have failed to adapt themselves to changing conditions. If evolution is not a blind unorganised process, but guided by

intelligent purpose, why this continuous frustration with its consequent enormous waste of vital energy? What kind of "purposive Intelligence" must that be which has failed so often, and so disastrously?

He tells us that "mental rather than physical perfection is the aim and objective of evolution," and adds, "If this were not so we should still be a species of super-mammoths, with giant strength and no intelligence whatever."

Mental development is always co-ordinate and proportionate to bodily structure. The mental and physical powers of the mammoth were necessarily adapted to its mode of life. Strength and bulk are no criteria of physical superiority. Could our modern mammoth, the elephant, even if possessed of equal mental powers, perform the manifold mechanical operations of the human body?

And now for his final question which embraces the whole field of psychic phenomena. How do I explain, he asks, "hypnosis, mind-projection, clairvoyance, prevision, premonition, mental-telepathy, dual and multiple personality, mental healing and the many examples of extra sensory perception"? I do not attempt to explain them for the simple reason I don't believe in them. The explanation should obviously come from him, who does. If these things are, as he asserts, to be ascribed to "non-physical, extra sensory perception," why are they wholly dependent for their manifestation on a material organism, to wit, the human brain? To put the question in other words. How did Mr. Wood and his fellow-psychics come to have such intimate knowledge of them? My answer to him is: If these marvels are owing to some, as yet unknown, agency, and not, as I suspect, the result of a happy combination of humbug and credulity, they will, as our scientific knowledge increases, be found to be due (as in the case of his materialist of the Middle Ages) to purely material forces.

Theatre

The Clandestine Marriage, by David Garrick and George Colman is the last of Donald Wolfitt's season of plays at the King's Theatre, Hammersmith.

The situation where Lovewell secretly marries the younger daughter of a rich merchant is developed to its utmost in comedy, for the elder daughter has been jilted by Sir John Melvil who has fallen for her sister, who in turn is also wooed by Lord Ogleby. There are the busy bodies who will talk and scandal is created round the younger girl, who has to cope with keeping her marriage a secret and avoiding the persistent attentions of the other men.

This production is remarkable for the well-balanced performances. David Oxley and Sarah Carter as the young married couple give much vivacity to their parts. Rosalind Iden makes a charming, though ill-tempered, elder sister who is frustrated. John Wynyard expresses the insincerity of Sir John Melvil. Ernest Hare is buoyant as the merchant. Finally Donald Wolfitt gives us in *Lovewell* a performance which is a masterpiece of comedy, in which the infirm and vain old man is still capable of philandering with young girls. To move a limb causes him to wince and a laugh is often arrested by a pain, yet he cannot consider himself too old.

This is a noble choice for the close of the season which has had as purpose the revival of many old plays which are seldom seen. Mr. Wolfitt is to be thanked for his great contribution to the drama, both in his acting and in his choice of plays.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS

"The Case for Rationalism in Brief"

By D. ALEXANDER

(Concluded from page 379)

CAN one imagine the enormous volume of creative energy which would be released for the public weal if people were emancipated from religious dogmas and cumbersome rites. The lack of initiative, lack of *joie de vivre*, and even low productivity, which seem to be some of the main economic troubles of our country might to some extent be alleviated. Times of greatest economic growth and self-confidence seem often to have corresponded to periods of growing irreligion. Once, however, advances have been consolidated, man has realised what economic potentialities he has, and has become scared of himself; he has then returned to religion. Witness the advances of Rationalism in England towards the end of the last century.

It is an important characteristic of the religious person—that he is frightened of himself. Believing in original sin, he fears his mouth's swearing, he is frightened of the predations of his genitalia, he is ashamed of the greed of his appetite, he does not like the world to know that he opens his bowels. The guilt occasioned by necessary performance of these functions is assuaged by his erecting enormous barriers and complicated conventions around them. The Rationalist desires to acknowledge human impulses and functions, and to encourage their natural expression without guilt.

Freud, Jung, and recently Flugel, have done psycho-analytical studies on religion. The resemblance between the all-powerful and omniscient father of early life and God is too obvious to be missed. Even the most orthodox stress "Our Father, which art in Heaven . . .", "Fatherlike, He tends and spares us . . .", "Heavenly Father, grant us . . ." It is this relationship of dependence and childhood which religion tries to impress and perpetuate. It tries to keep us in the infantile state of accepting another's ruling, and being dependent upon it. Each generation fails to reach the full maturity of responsible decision, and invokes the advice of God's minions to make the decisions which life require. Once this infantile dependence has been accepted, the childlike adult is offered the security of comfort for which religion is so well known. It is a security based on complete capitulation.

By contrast, Rationalism offers adulthood with its frank acceptance of responsibilities; it is an attempt to measure problems with a straight yardstick, using only relevant criteria—criteria which had they not been applied to science would not have produced the cars, televisions, telephones, etc., which we have to-day. One does not make scientific advances to-day by referring back to Galen, or Pythagoras, or other great scientists of previous ages. Religion is always looking over its shoulders to see if its forbears approve its course. Rationalism—the theoretical predisposition of science—looks forward, exploring with a free intellect any possibility of advance. People often attack science by pointing to weapons of destruction, but these are easily outweighed by the enormous advances it has brought. Certainly it will be freely admitted that were the world run on a completely rational basis there would be no wars; it is obviously more sensible to divide equably what we have than destroy part of it by fighting over it. Religions in the past have been responsible for the most bloody wars in history, e.g., the Thirty Years War in the Middle Ages.

There is little doubt in my mind that religion in our contemporary society does fulfil a useful rôle. To the multitudes tortured by the dilemma of choice, it offers an easy way out. From their earliest childhood people have been overpowered by authoritarian modes of thought. They have been offered the alternatives of being good, law-abid-

ing, Conservative (or Labour) Christians, or sinful, self-willed agitating heathens. In either case they accept a group of criteria, some useful, some bad, but with no discrimination. They are like a bookseller offered a bookcase of books to sell; unlike him, however, they are not allowed to reject the torn and outmoded ones.

The pressure of parental beliefs plus the severe tensions of the outside world are so great that the average person must succumb; he seeks moral "guidance." This may be necessary when young—and this brings me to a most important point—in a rationalist opinion, the direction of education is wrong. Instead of encouraging and strengthening children's critical faculties, so that they can make their own value judgments, they undermine the child's confidence and ability to think. The cumulative effect of this is to make him more and more dependent upon his parents and society's moral system. Personally speaking, I feel this attitude is nothing short of criminal. One cannot conceive of the creative potentialities of a free society. Even Christians agree that what distinguishes man from animals is his knowledge of Good and Evil; yet it is the spontaneous unmodified exercise of this faculty which they so severely deprecate.

Thus, in short, what Rationalism offers is encouragement to think freely, self-confidence based on mature judgment, release of creative energies, pride in initiative, ready acceptance of responsibility, realising a duty of every man for deciding his own morals—and above all, the supreme assertion of man in his responsibility for his own lot.

The Question of Marriage in Spain The Franco's Original Solution

By HISPANICUS

CATHOLICISM, as a religious matter, at Spain and in foreign countries, is a body without soul, a hobgoblin, a corpse. Give me the good schools and this hobgoblin will flee as body which the demon carries away. That is so, because Catholicism, a religious matter, is a question of culture. The history of mankind is an eloquent demonstration of our thesis. The history of Spain is also categoric proof of this assertion.

But Catholicism, as a political question, is, in Spain and in foreign countries, anything very different and very difficult. The Franco's Spain, my loved country submitted to the Vatican's dictates, is to-day the most rabid enemy of democratic mankind, the most rabid opponent to the progressive forces all over the world. With the Catholicism as political power the progressive men cannot live.

Frequently, we can read in the books, in the papers, and we can hear in the radio, that in Spain the religious belief is private matter. Thus is certainly in the written law. But in the real life things are thus by no manner of means. And we can offer to our readers some examples.

At the times of Franco's revolt our good friend P.P.M. was imprisoned because he married in 1934 according to civil law. The liberty was offered to him if he would marry according to the Catholic law. Our friend, infirm, married canonically and then was liberated.

Another friend was expelled from his post because he married in 1933 according to the civil law. To-day, there is not one public official, that is to say, a worker of the Franco's regime who is not married according to Church's

laws. If a Spaniard marries only according to civil laws, then he must go away because his life will be impossible in Spain. Thus, at our days all Spanish people is catholic, because our Mother the Roman Catholic Church has murdered all non-catholics. That is the true question of Spain.

If a Spaniard goes not to the mass of Sunday, then he will not attain work, and he with his family will die away by hunger.

If a Spaniard goes to a non-catholic Church then also he and his family will die away by hunger because none will offer to him work. But . . . the Franco's humbug is well prepared. The Loyola's sons are the best swindlers all over the world. And the Jesuits are the corner-stone of Franco's Spain. Thus, the Loyola's sons know how made the comedy *ad usum externum*. And in the big cities members of the Catholic Action, the SS of Vatican in Spain, are present at the divine offices, at the prayers of non-catholic churches. But if a true non-catholic is at the prayers . . . he will be black-listed. Peoples all over the world know very well what it represents to be black-listed by Roman Catholic Church in Spain.

How Franco has solutioned the question of marriages? Simply. In Spain there is to-day one only marriage—the Catholic marriage. In my city there is a man married in 1934 by civil law. He has four sons. He has married for second time according to the Catholic law. His first wife lives with her four sons. But the parish authorised the second marriage because he does not accept the non-catholic vinculum. Perhaps people in the foreign countries will consider all that as mediæval events, as facts of the times of Torquemada. Thus it is. My loved Spain—paralytic, crippled—moans, under the most heavy chains of the most monstrous of the tyrannies, the Vatican's tyranny, as denominates it the great thinker, A. Manhattan, who has penetrated the hidden designs of this greatest enemy of mankind.

The world must consider this real danger for our civilisation.

The freethinkers all over the world must work and struggle elbow-with-elbow with the Spanish freethinkers against the Franco's dictatorship. The Franco's regime and the Catholic Church are indissolubly united by the same responsibility, by the same murders. Both Franco and Catholic Church will fall down at the same time. They will be judged by the same crime, by the crime of high treason.

Correspondence

AN AMERICAN TESTIMONIAL

SIR.—In a letter I have recently received from a correspondent in the U.S.A. there occurs this comment in which you and your readers will no doubt be interested:

"I consider the *Literary Guide* and *The Freethinker* superior to any similar periodicals on the American scene. The British Freethought and Rationalist publications have a scholarly touch and style of expression so sadly lacking in the American. . . . I have a number of Pioneer Press and R.P.A. books on my book-shelf, which eloquently testify to the quantity and the quality of British Freethought literature."—Yours, etc., G. I. BENNETT.

MR. WOOD REPLIES

SIR.—It is a pity that Mr. Warhurst's stout champion and fellow-traveller prefers to hide behind the initials "J.W.B." He accuses me of being *dogmatic, over-bearing, bombastic*, and on the *lowest level of political illiteracy* (I have intentionally employed the use of italics here because they seem to annoy him), but whatever I may be, at least I have the courage to write under my own name.

I am not surprised that "J.W.B." disliked my suggestion that anyone who calls the British Empire "a huge slave camp" is under no obligation to live under its protection and would certainly not be missed if he betook himself behind the Iron Curtain.

That is one thing our British Communists just cannot stomach. To cry "stinking fish" in a comparatively clean and open atmosphere is so much healthier than being gagged and muzzled where the air really smells!

I would like "J.W.B." to localise the three-fifths of the world's inhabitants "experiencing constant starvation and mass suffering." as he states without any supporting facts. If he means all the totalitarian Communist countries then I entirely agree with him, but they have only themselves to blame for their foolishness in electing to be governed by a cruel and ruthless minority. If this is what he calls true democracy, then I have been sadly misled by the term. Also I have no wish to identify myself with Rationalism if—to be a true Rationalist—one must embrace the Communistic ideology, as many of your correspondents seem to think.

Lastly, I fail to see the "obviously unconscious irony" in my article "Rationalism and Tolerance," unless, of course, the irony lies in the assumption that Rationalism and Tolerance can never exist together. I still maintain that if Freethinkers claim the right to think freely, they cannot logically refuse non-Rationalists the same privilege. To insist that all people must, without free choice, embrace Rationalism, is to make the latter a totalitarian system as arbitrary and dogmatic as Christianity, or any of the other religious beliefs. If this is "J.W.B.'s" contention, then he has no right to call *me* dogmatic.—Yours, etc., W. H. WOOD.

THE TOWER OF BABEL

SIR.—I was very interested in your leading article with the above title, in which you arrive at the conclusion that the choice of a secondary language for the world lies between English and Esperanto.

It is, of course, quite true that English is widely spoken, although perhaps not quite so much as one fondly imagines—but so is French, Spanish and even Russian, which gives all these languages an equal claim from a numerical point of view.

The only real solution available, by peaceful means, is the adoption of a *neutral* medium of which Esperanto is the outstanding example. One need in no way be deterred by the thought that Esperanto is an "artificial" language, something inevitably inferior to a "natural" tongue. A more correct term would be "constructed," as it is built on root-words common to all our European languages. Esperanto can be spoken with such ease and fluency that it is impossible to realise that the language is anything other than natural.

All Freethinkers are invited to investigate the claims of Esperanto, and information on the subject will be gladly given on application to The British Esperanto Association, 140, Holland Park Avenue, London, W.11.—Yours, etc., BASIL J. EDGECOMBE.

ACTION AND THOUGHT

SIR.—Your correspondent, Mr. C. E. Berry, hits the head of a good metaphorical nail (issue November 11).

In my view the "secularist" use of the word "freethinker" has served its purpose and is now an anachronism. One should certainly think freely (hence freethought), but to be of any use such freethinking should be logical. Unfortunately, and so far as I can appreciate, the average "freethinking" secularist's appreciation of that which is logical is almost non-existent. . . . The most of his fellows. This reminds me of the story of a man who was considered to be highly intelligent by reason of the "obvious fact" that he had made a lot of money in business. A logically inclined friend deflated him in an argument about Life, so much so that, in despair, he said: "After that, I don't believe in anything." Most people in such circumstances would make such a "natural," "fair-minded" remark as that. . . . To that remark his logical friend said: "I see, so you don't believe in unbelief then."—Yours, etc., FRANK A. WATSON.

THE LATE JOHN KILPATRICK

We regret to report the death of the above-named member of the N.S.S. at his home in Belfast on Monday, November 23, the age of 81. At 16, he began to study the Bible critically, and turned away from a career in the Protestant Ministry for which he was intended. From that time his Secularism never wavered. He founded a Pets' Feeding Store and studied Airedale terriers (his breeds winning championships in Ireland, Scotland and England), canaries and pigeons. His articles in the specialist press were practical and authoritative, and his book, *The Thoroughbred Racing Pigeon*, is a classic work. Owing to the absence of cremation facilities in Northern Ireland, the body had to be brought to England to meet the wishes of the deceased for a secular cremation service. This took place at Golders Green Crematorium on Wednesday, November 25, an address being delivered to members of Mr. Kilpatrick's family and household by the Secretary of the N.S.S.