

The Freethinker

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Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

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THE Christian Churches to-day, with the Vatican at their head, are busily engaged, nowadays, in staging a "come-back" on the much-publicised plea that they represent the stoutest bulwarks against what they usually describe as "Communism." The policy, whilst temporarily successful, is, actually, a dangerous one; a boomerang which, in a perhaps not remote future, is liable to recoil upon its protagonists. However, at the present time it is indisputable that the Vatican represents the ideological centre of the present "crusade" against "Communism," and that for every curse hurled by the hierarchy of the Christian Churches against Atheism, *per se*, ten are hurled against "the Spectre of Communism." Under such circumstances it may not be inappropriate to consider briefly the historic relationships between Christianity and Collectivist, or Communist, societies. To avoid misunderstanding, we may relevantly add that we are quite well aware of the wide differences that existed between the "primitive Communism" of pre-industrial societies and the Communism of our own day.

Did Christianity Start as a Communist Organisation?

According to the official history of Christian origins contained in our canonical Book of the *Acts of the Apostles* the early Church started as a strictly Communist organisation, having "all things in common." So much so, in fact, that death at the hands of the Holy Ghost was the fate of Ananias and Sapphira, the first Christian "capitalists"! At this period, it is clear that the present alliance of St. Peter's successors with the Wall Street bankers still lay a long way in the future! How much truth there is in this account of the Communistic origins of Christianity we cannot, of course, say. However, in the present writer's opinion, it may be founded on the actual facts of the then current situation. Several of the Jewish sects of the period practiced "community of goods," including the Essenes, who some scholars hold to have been the prototypes of early Christianity. In any case, since the first Christians believed in the approaching end of the world, there would seem to be little point in accumulating earthly riches on the eve of Doomsday.

Lucian on Peregrinus

Our Book of *Acts* was probably produced in its present form about the year 150. A few years later we have an independent pagan testimony which, if authentic, indicates that Christianity retained its Communistic character until, at least, the end of the second century. For, writing about A.D. 170, Lucian of Samosata, "the 'Voltaire' of antiquity," gives us his amusing account of the sensational suicide of the shady adventurer, Peregrinus the Cynic, at the Olympic Games about that year. Peregrinus had previously been a Christian and had swindled the simple believers wholesale. Lucian specially mentions the Communistic organisation of the Church and the complete

indifference of the Christians to accumulating personal property, as the common purse was always there to fall back on. (Even if the work is apochryphal it cannot have been much later, since, after Constantine, this description would have been absurd.)

With the conversion of the Roman Empire under Constantine (fourth century), Christianity became official, "respectable," and a pillar of the holy trinity, "Law, Order and Property"; at least, official Christianity did. But Christian "Communism" was driven underground rather than suppressed altogether. From the Donatists (fourth century) to the "Fifth Monarchy men" (seven-

teenth century) a whole series of Christian Communist sects flourished—or failed to flourish—in the heretical underworld of the Middle Ages. Periodically this underworld was lit up by the fires of the Inquisition and, now and then, "Communist" sects staged spectacular revolts, several of which shook contemporary society to its foundations.

"When Adam Delved"

Amongst such revolts may probably be included the English "Peasants' Revolt" of 1381, the real originators of which appear to have been the Communistic Lollards, with their equalitarian jingle,

"When Adam delved and Eve bespan,
Who was then the gentleman?"

(or, in modern English, in the Garden of Eden, where were your class distinctions?). Later came the famous communistic "Kingdom of the Saints" in Münster, Germany (1534-5), which it took the whole strength of the combined Catholic and Protestant powers to suppress. Whilst in the Cromwellian era the English Communistic sects, the "Fifth Monarchy" men, in particular, played an important rôle.

[The current reference in our *Thirty-nine Articles* to "The Anabaptists" who "vainly boast" that property is "to be held in common" appears to be a direct reference to the Anabaptist "Kingdom" of Münster in 1534-5, which made a tremendous sensation in the sixteenth-century Europe.]

The Apocalypse and Christian Communism

The "Communism" of the Christian heretics was ostensibly based on the Bible; in particular, on the Apocalypse, which we have elsewhere described as "The Communist Manifesto" of Christian Communism, with its brilliant concluding vision of an equalitarian heaven, and its fierce denunciations of "The Scarlet Woman," the secular protector of Law, Order and Property (including slavery). From the Donatist, Tichonius (fourth century), who wrote the first commentary on *Revelations*, to the "Fifth Monarchy Men," who sought to assassinate Cromwell in order to usher in the reign of "King Jesus," all the medieval sects of Christian Communists looked to *Revelations* as the inspired Communistic scripture.

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

Communism and Christianity

—By F. A. RIDLEY—

The Jesuits in Paraguay

However, Communism was not confined to the heretical Christian sects. Even the arch-pillar of orthodoxy, the Church of Rome, occasionally made Communistic experiments. The most famous of these was in the Jesuit "Republic" of Paraguay, where the famous "Company" established a Christian and Communistic "Republic" under clerical rule which lasted for a century and a half and would probably have still been in existence, but for its violent suppression (1768) by the jealous governments of Spain and Portugal. For a century and a half the holy Fathers ruled absolutely over their Christian Republic where "all things were held in common," as in the primitive Church. It is true that Voltaire, an ex-pupil of the Jesuits, declared that "In Paraguay perfect Communism existed: the Jesuits shared all the wealth, and the Indians shared all the work."

Voltaire, however, was not quite fair to the Jesuits. For modern non-Catholic writers, such as Cunninghame Graham and Julian Duguid, have testified from their personal observations of the impressive ruins of the Jesuit settlements which still confront the primeval wilderness to the remarkable organisation created and sustained under such appalling difficulties by its clerical directors in the Jesuit Republic.

[cf. R. B. Cunninghame Graham, *A Vanished Arcadia*, and Julian Duguid, *Green Hell*.]

The Bruderhof

The Protestant Churches have also experimented with Communism on a smaller scale. The *Bruderhof*, an off-spring of the Anabaptists, still practice Communism, also in Paraguay, as well as in the secluded valleys of Wiltshire and Shropshire. "Christian Socialism" has a long, though by no means a "respectable" ancestry!

Christianity and Communism To-day

The chiefly Marxist Communism of our own day differs widely from the "Utopian" Communism of the past. For the most part it is atheistic and materialistic. In China, in particular, it has taken on an aggressively anti-Christian form. Whilst, generally, behind the "Iron Curtain" its attitude towards religion may be defined as "hostility tempered by political opportunism," the reactions of the Churches vary. The Protestant Churches are mostly divided, with pro-Communist minorities. The Dean of Canterbury is the best-known, though far from the ablest of our Christian Communists. Contrarily, the current attitude of the Vatican is one of fierce hostility. But is this likely to be permanent?

A New "Holy Alliance"

It is commonly assumed that the Vatican and the Kremlin are now irreconcilable enemies. But is this really so? The sociological history of the Church of Rome is an interesting but little known record. Successively, Rome has defended servile society against Feudalism, Feudalism against Capitalism and, nowadays, Capitalism against "godless Communism"! In, say, a couple of centuries' time, if Rome is still there, what will she be defending then? The Vatican is a chameleon with an unrivalled ability for "changing colour" as and when circumstances demand. What will be her next "colour"? Red? For in the recorded history of the Vatican "the wisdom of the serpent" has been much more conspicuous than "the harmlessness of the dove"! In a few decades the Church may be defending Communism against Capitalism! For Rome always likes to be on the *winning* side!

Book Review

By JACK BENJAMIN

ROBERT TAYLOR. By H. Cutner; 68 pages. Published by The Pioneer Press; 1s. 6d.

The men who laid the foundation stones for modern and scholarly Freethought, unfortunately, tend to be quickly forgotten. There is always, however, a handful, a painfully small handful of Freethinkers who go digging into the past. They are aware of what the pioneers have accomplished, and are cognizant of the bravery of standing up for ideals, truths and principles amidst a world of brutish and bigoted religionists, a public whose fury is heightened only by its ignorance and unspeakable intolerance.

In Mr. Cutner's latest contribution to Freethought literature, *Robert Taylor* (The Devil's Chaplain), we find within the confines of 68 pages a wealth of information presented in a succinct and highly scholarly manner.

Robert Taylor was one of the first in England to catch a glimpse of the Jesus myth and its basis. He aroused the full fury of the religious pack and suffered keenly at the hands of the brutish mob. However, he fought back valiantly and with the utmost courage, and his brilliant mind and lashing tongue made many an opponent back-water.

Mr. Cutner, an able and scholarly Freethinker and one of our outstanding "mythicists" has already done full justice to this problem in his book, *Jesus—God, Man or Myth*. His innumerable contributions to *The Freethinker* as well as to other Rationalistic publications have earned him the admiration of those who appreciate careful research as well as a clear and lucid style.

Unfortunately, little is known, comparatively speaking, of the life of this remarkable man, Robert Taylor. His three books, *The Syntagma*, *Diagnosis* and *The Devil's Pulpit* are truly major works in the development of the myth theory, despite whatever insignificant corrections future scholarship made after their day. Mr. Cutner has gone to extensive preparation to amass whatever material is available.

The present writer is in hearty accord with Mr. Ridley's opinion (*The Freethinker*, January 8, 1954):—

"In his newly published booklet on Robert Taylor (1784-1844), already published serially in the pages of *The Freethinker*, Mr. H. Cutner performs, in my opinion, a valuable service both to historical scholarship and to the Freethought movement, by recalling the fundamental facts about one of the most brilliant and, also, persecuted of the pioneers of Freethought."

In his preface, Mr. Cutner explains his aim in writing this work:—

"In the following pages an attempt is made, not only to show Robert Taylor the man, but to give, perhaps for the first time, a fair and unbiased estimation of his worth."

That Mr. Cutner has accomplished this is to his credit. As a close student of the myth theory for many years, I can unreservedly recommend this work to every Freethinker and seeker of truth.

It is a permanent addition to Freethought literature and a valuable asset on the shelf of anyone's library.

Just Published:

MARRIAGE

SACERDOTAL OR SECULAR ?

An Enquiry into whether the Marriage Ceremony is the business of Church or State

By C. G. L. DU CANN

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The Mythical Jesus

M. PROSPER ALFARIC, Emeritus Professor of the History of Religions of the University of Strasburg, despite his seventy-seven years, is indefatigable in mind and with pen. Every month or two a new crystal-clear and deeply erudite little work comes from his retreat in the rue Récamier. In the latest, which is also the first of *Les Cahiers de Cercle Renan*, he sets out succinctly the conclusions to which a lifetime of study has led him, *Le Problème de Jésus* (32 octavo pages).

For Renan the New Testament, shorn of its accretions, presents the story of a man Jesus, son of Joseph and Mary, in five acts which proceed in perfect harmony from an idyllic opening in Galilee with gathering speed to the tragic end at Jerusalem. Much that Renan accepted was rejected by Loisy who, diffidently as it were, extracted from the Synoptic Gospels a picture of a Prophet of the Imminent Destruction of the World, after which will be established the Kingdom of God under the rule of Jesus, become Christ the Messiah. Guignebert held somewhat similar views to those of his contemporary (they both died in 1940), but expressed them more brutally and radically, cutting away still more dead wood and displaying particular doubt as to the originality of the moral teaching of Jesus.

Like these three and Turmel, Alfaric was brought up as a Catholic; all five are professionals in the study of Christianity, whereas Dr. Couchoud, the learned medical adviser of Anatole France, is an amateur, though no less erudite. For Couchoud, Jesus was never human, but an expression of men's longings and fears. Alfaric accompanies his friend as far as the latter dare go and then continues boldly, roundly and trenchantly further along the same path.

The more deeply he studies, the longer he meditates on his studies, so much the more incredible becomes for him the theory of a human Jesus. Long years ago he considered the Myth theory one of those extravagances to which the over-exuberant application of criticism might lead. Now for some time past our learned friend can perceive in the New Testament story no more and no less than a mythical illusion. The steps of his conversion can be set out briefly thus. Such an illusion is possible for the stories of Osiris, Attis, Adonis and Mithras are related with an abundance of lifelike detail. Such a cult was not unknown in Palestine; there was also a local cult of the kind, according to which a Son of God descended to earth to reveal to mankind by means of parables and miracles the Mystery of Man, the cult of Simon (or perhaps Eshmun) nicknamed by enemies Magus. To-day, when these Saviours have no longer any following there is no difficulty in recognising that they are mythical; but they differ from Jesus only in that the latter is still worshipped.

Such an illusion was then possible; it was also probable. If it had been factual history, how did it happen that not a single Roman of the latter half of the first century mentions it, e.g., Seneca; that Philo who in A.D. 40 wrote of events in Palestine found no place for the coming of God, nor Josephus nor Justus of Tiberias. When the four gospels are examined under the microscope of criticism and compared with the Apocalypse and the Pauline Epistles, the probability of a myth becomes stronger and stronger. When the Pauline works and the Revelation are thoroughly sifted the man, the Son of Mary, is absent from them without a trace of existence. The Lamb of Revelations never was human; nor the celestial Virgin ever a terrestrial Mary. The three "pillars" of Jerusalem to whom Paul refers, Kephas, James and John, do not ever seem to have known Jesus, whereas in the Gospels they were among his first followers. Paul certainly did not treat them with the

respect due to Apostles; he himself had seen Christ when he was lifted up to the third heaven, but never on earth.

Prof. Alfaric finds in the Epistle to the Hebrews a peculiar interest; it is, he considers, no true epistle, but a theological treatise such as might have been expected from the Alexandrian Apollos, which by means of extensive interpolations has been made to look like an Epistle. The original core probably antedated Paul, for its theology is the more archaic of the two, its central theme is the Saviour Son of God who comes down to earth to fulfil the will of God (cp. Psalm XL) as a priest of the order of Melchisedec, who had neither father nor mother nor descent, neither beginning of days nor end of life, i.e., he was mythical.

Once Prof. Alfaric had arrived at the conclusion that Jesus Christ might very well be a mythical personage built up on an Old Testament foundation, a new and even more patient study of Josephus brought him to focus his attention on that section in the second book of the War of the Jews describing the Essenes. As he himself admits, he was not the first to do this; others have wondered whether Jesus was an Essene or not, whether John the Baptist, probably as mythical as Jesus, was not one as well. But for Alfaric this is not the right way of regarding the matter. It should be whether the believers in Jesus Christ derived their beliefs from the Essenes, or better from the Essene doctrines. The Gospels are evidently the outcome of an evolution which had been at work for an appreciable time. A scrutiny of the Pauline Epistles, of the so-called Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Book of Revelation—the three works which contain the most archaic teaching of the New Testament—leads the student straight to the Essenes. Whereas the Jews who were in revolt after the deposition by the Romans of Archelaus were inspired by the belief that the Anointed of God would return and restore the Kingdom of David, the Essenes, gentle mystics, awaited the advent, not of a triumphant warrior, but of a humble saint whose exemplary life would obtain from Jehovah a forgiveness of sins for the faithful. The Dead Sea Scrolls, the Ethiopian Book of Enoch and the so-called Little Genesis all shed light here. The Jesus Christ, priest like Melchisedec, the Master of Justice and the Son of Man of Enoch all belong to the same school of thought. (Note that the Master of Justice was seemingly the Head of the Covenant and regarded ex-officio as the incarnation of the Son of God.) The Epistles to the Galatians, to the Corinthians, to the Romans, to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, each yields its witness to an Essene origin. As for Revelation, that *skandalizon* for the orthodox and happy hunting-ground of the Little Bethel preacher, Prof. Alfaric claims that as a characteristic Essene document in which the celibate initiates are vowed to poverty, detest luxury and renounce everything which may hinder them from complete submission to the will of their god.

Once the Essene origin of the divine myth of Jesus is admitted, so claims Prof. Alfaric, much in the Synoptic Gospels which appeared incomprehensible falls into place, e.g., "whomsoever shall do the will of God is my brother and my sister and my mother," or again, "there be eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake," etc. Here we have that Essene community described by Pliny the Elder as living on the western shores of the Dead Sea, whose numbers, although there were no births, were constantly renewed by fugitives from the life of the world without.

I have just one fault to find with this little work, that it is so brief. I should like to see the arguments and documentation set out at length—but who would publish the work these days?

C. B. B.

This Believing World

It will be most gratifying for the Rev. B. Graham to learn that at least one distinguished journalist, Mr. W. J. Brown, has, in the *Sunday Dispatch*, publicly announced his, well, if not exactly his conversion, his strong hope that everybody else who hears the reverend gentleman will be converted. Sadly Mr. Brown admits that the Great Revivalist is "not an intellectual." But does that matter? Mr. Brown himself has nothing but contempt for science which "is still under the dismal influence of Darwin, Freud, Hoyle and the rest." Thank God, Billy Graham is putting an end to all that.

The great discovery that Mr. Brown has made is that Billy is catering for something neglected by modern life, namely, the soul, and he goes into raptures on the way that at last the soul is coming into its own, and that the materialistic conception of the Universe is "on the way out." When it comes to writing this kind of slosh, Mr. Brown appears to us to be following the late lamented Horatio Bottomley—who, in 1914, also discovered the soul and the God of Battles, and some of us half expected him to find the Angels of Mons as well sent to him as a special favour for the readers of the *Sunday Pictorial*. But Revivalism does bring about some fantastic conversions.

In any case it is astonishing to find that so many of our journalists become maudlin directly they think about the Rev. B. Graham. Do any of them really believe in the incredible nonsense of true Christianity? We doubt it. We have rarely met a journalist outside the religious press who believes in the reality of Hell, Devils and Miracles, not to mention Virgin Births and "Ascensions." But here we have one of them, a Mr. T. Feely, who writes for the *Sunday Graphic*, almost beside himself with joy that the Reverend Evangelist is making hundreds of thousands of people at last believe in true Christianity—not Church Christianity be it noted—but the real thing, a real Hell, real Devils, real Angels and diamond-studded pavements in a real Heaven, with a benevolent old gentleman (in God's Precious Word) Jehovah, helped by his only son, Jesus Christ, doling out Divine Presents to all who believe.

With the utmost contempt for the effete Churches utterly unable to bring the people back to the (above) true Christianity, Mr. Feely points with pride to the organising ability of Graham and his helpers, and how well they know how to bring people to believe in Devils, Miracles, etc., and insists that Graham "is no mystery man. He is simply a Minister who knows his job superbly." He knows the types who believe in his infantile nonsense—like Mr. Feely—quite as well. And he knows that so long as he fills his time with urgent calls to Jesus Christ, to Christ Jesus, and to the Saviour, he will have our pious press, with their tearful reports, solidly behind him. Only through J. C. and Billy Graham can you be saved.

And note how beautifully the religious fervour of our own Billy Grahams works out in practice. Two thoroughly pious and all-believing Christians in the R.A.F. with their evangelistic zeal at its highest and greatest have been putting their true Christian faith to practical use. They were in charge of their own prisoners who were made to line up naked in the cold outside their cells, kneel and say their prayers, while one of them was compelled to read God's Holy Word, the Bible, to them. This was the usual procedure several times—and should have been hailed with more than joy by our maudlin journalists. But—alas—a stony-hearted court, unable to appreciate religion at

its truest, gave one corporal responsible 56 days hard, and another 84 days hard. We think the officers who gave these sentences should now be compelled to listen to the Rev. Billy.

The sixth talk on "World Religions" for the radio was given by Canon Raven who had to deal with "Non-Religious" Faiths, and among these he included Communism as a typical example of very religious fervour. He claimed that Science, in any case, was deserting the now "old-fashioned" view of a mechanical Universe and was more and more inclined to see the Hand of a God or something like it in World Processes. It was a pity that the worthy Canon did not give us the names of the scientists who talked like this in the name of Science together with copious extracts from their books. Perhaps he found it more encouraging discreetly to omit any such references—especially as they would never be asked for by his Christian hearers. There is, of course, no truth whatever in any assertion that Science, as Science, is admitting a God or even the Ghost of a God anywhere. This God of Science is as much a myth as the God or Gods of Christianity.

Correspondence

THE FREETHINKER AND THE THEATRE

SIR,—Provided that the writer has a secular type of outlook, I cannot see why the dramatic criticisms which appeared over the name "Raymond Douglas" have been dropped. Surely a paper as wide in its sympathies as *The Freethinker* should bring in all subjects, whether dealing with religion or not? Art, law, science, may not be as interesting to many Freethinkers as what Charles Bradlaugh said a great many years ago, but the art which makes some comment, the law which is a repressive law, and the science which has a bearing upon the future of the world, should all be ventilated in the pages of the liberal and progressive periodical.

How Mr. Douglas wrote, and whether I agreed or disagreed with his conclusions in dramatic criticism, is beside the point. A lot that he wrote may have been quite irrelevant. The point was that he wrote, and those of us who wish for a less narrow and rigid approach to secular matters from contributors to *The Freethinker* were glad to read a dramatic critic who was neither a "Bible-banger" nor a "Bible-spitter."—Yours, etc.,

PETER COTES.

A CATHOLIC CRITIC

SIR,—In answer to your editorial note concerning my correspondence on "Who was stupid?" (*The Freethinker*, March 19, 1954), I beg to be allowed to state:

(1) Papal Conclaves are not shrouded (italics mine) in secret. The procedure of the Conclave is accessible to all after the election. The Conclave is not held in the open or publicly for the obvious reason of avoiding outside interference, and of securing as much as possible the liberty of vote. You may easily imagine what would remain of democracy were Papal elections to be made in public!

(2) The election of Cardinal Rampolla to the Papacy was only probable, but it was never a fact, as you erroneously said in your editorial of January 29.

(3) Pius X condemned all (rather vague, Mr. Ridley) modern knowledge of Modernism, in so far as Modernism was condemned from the Catholic point of view.

In regard to your article "Christian Origins" (*The Freethinker*, March 19) you say: "The Christian religion . . . began in almost complete obscurity." A glance at the Gospels would be enough to give us an adequate answer to this difficulty. We know therefrom how Jesus began his public life by being baptised in the Jordan, how he called the apostles to his fellowship, his teaching, the foundation of the Church on Peter, the authority bestowed on Peter to govern the Church, the order to administer the Sacraments, etc. Of course, one need not, at this stage, consider the Gospels as "inspired," it is sufficient to consider them as historical books. Here, evidently, we come in front of another question, that of authenticity of the Gospels, which is beyond the scope of my correspondence. I would suggest, however, as a book of reference on this subject Hugh Pope's *Introduction to the Gospels*, or better still, *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scriptures*.

G. M. PARIS, Editor, *The Faith* (Malta).

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To Correspondents

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Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

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Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place). — Sunday, April 25, 3 and 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.

Bradford N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday at 7 p.m.: HAROLD DAY and others.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Bomb Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: Messrs. WOODCOCK and BARNES. Every Sunday, 3 p.m., at Platt Fields: a Lecture.

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

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

West London Branch.—H. ARTHUR, W. J. O'NEIL, L. EBURY, C. E. WOOD. Hyde Park, 5 p.m.

INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Café, 40, Cannon Street, off New Street). — Sunday, April 25, 7 p.m.: F. A. HORNIBROOK, "My Fifty Years of Freethought."

Junior Discussion Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1). —Friday, April 23, 7-15 p.m.: M. L. BURNET, "The Colour Bar."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1). — Sunday, April 25: A. ROBERTSON, M.A., "World Citizenship."

N.S.S. Conference Arrangements

Our 1954 Annual Conference takes place on Whit Sunday, June 6, at New Millgate Hotel, Long Millgate, Manchester, 3. Our hosts, the Manchester Branch, are on their toes to make it a memorable occasion.

A reception and social at the hotel on the Saturday evening will precede the conference, and a coach outing on the Monday, pending in time for us to catch trains to take us home that night, will round off the week-end. Every paid-up member may attend and vote at the conference.

Will all members attending let the undersigned know as soon as possible, so that reservations for hotel accommodation, Sunday lunch, and the coach trip, can be made in good time?

P. VICTOR MORRIS, Secretary.

NOTES AND NEWS

The "Hyde Park Forum" of the West London Branch, N.S.S., made an auspicious beginning on Sunday, April 11, with the coming of Summer Time. The president of the N.S.S., Mr. F. A. Ridley, opened both the meeting and the Summer Session, and was followed by Mr. Arthur, Mr. Ebury and Mr. O'Neill. By the end of the opening meeting Mr. O'Neill was addressing the largest meeting in the Park. Everything indicates that the remarkable success of last year's park propaganda will be repeated this year. Those

indefatigable workers for secularism, Mr. Harry Cleaver and Mr. Frank Murril, sold *The Freethinker* outside the park gates and good sales were reported. "Bon voyage" to the West London Branch, N.S.S.!

Freethinkers, everywhere, will, we imagine, welcome the timely recent protest of ex-President Truman against the McCarthy Inquisition. As the former President very truly remarks, the methods of the Wisconsin Senator and his supporters produce all the evils of dictatorship, suppression, and spying, which they charge against Soviet communism. In short, "McCarthyism" represents a classic illustration of the biblical axiom about "casting out Beelzebub by means of Beelzebub"! It will be recalled that Mr. Truman himself refused to appear before the (infamous) committee. So, also, did Mr. Corliss Lamont, the well-known American Rationalist and author of *The Illusion of Immortality*.

Atheists, beware! The Calvinist-near-fascist government of Dr. Malan in South Africa has just banned the public propaganda of atheism on, apparently, the view that atheism is the ideological counterpart of communism. In the present state of the world the decision is a dangerous one, and the example of Dr. Malan's régime is likely to be followed elsewhere. In the U.S.A., for example, Roman Catholic influence is powerful and growing, and nothing would please Cardinal Spellman and his political associates better than to see all anti-Christian propaganda condemned as "crypto-communism" and, as an example of "un-American activities." It is true that George Washington once went on record with the historic remark that the American government was, in no sense, "founded on the Christian Religion." But a little matter of logic would not bother the hysterical "witch-hunters" in present-day America!

We seem to recall that, according to the American novelist, Upton Sinclair, an anti-war speaker in America was once arrested for quoting *The Declaration of Independence*, which is, certainly, a "subversive" document by any standards? We think that our fellow-Freethinkers in the U.S.A. would be well-advised to recall the time-honoured adage: "The price of Liberty is eternal vigilance." Nor are we immune; since, what the U.S.A. does has a tendency to be imitated nearer home. For which reason, we welcome a recent suggestion of the "Humanist Council," to which the N.S.S. is affiliated, that an agitation should be promptly commenced to repeal the iniquitous "Blasphemy Laws" which still disgrace our Statute Book. They may be a dead-letter now; but will they always be so? The sooner they are out of the way, the better!

As expected, Mr. H. Cutner's address on "Materialism and Dialectical Materialism," on April 11 at the Leicester Secular Society, provoked an interesting discussion in which many present took part. It ended a successful season. And Mr. Cutner was highly gratified at being made an honorary life member for his "devoted and distinguished service to Freethought," an honour for which he cordially thanks the president, Mr. G. A. Kirk, and the members of the Leicester Secular Society.

"Bradlaugh's attitude towards the Christian religion was a perfectly fair one, and ought not to have brought down upon him any abuse whatever. There are more ways than one of dealing with religion. It may be approached as a mystery, or as a series of events supported by testimony. If the evidence is trustworthy, if the witnesses are irreproachable, if they submit successfully to examination and cross-examination, then, however, remarkable or out of the way the facts to which they depose, they are entitled to be believed."—AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

Religion in India

By C. McCALL

HAVING no personal knowledge of India, I mainly depend for my information upon letters and newspapers received from friends who live there. These have fostered a genuine interest in the progress of the Republic since its inception. And, so often has the voice of India risen above the clamour and cleavages of U.N.O., so often have her statesmen and women expressed the views of clear-thinking people throughout the world, that I have come to regard her as the main agent of rationalism in international politics: the residuary of sanity in a world madhouse. On the national level, the attempt to establish a secular State in a country with a long and deep religious tradition was likewise encouraging, particularly at a time when Christian reaction was threatening secular strongholds in Europe and the United States. Largely responsible for the secular constitution was Jawaharlal Nehru—"a Rationalist with a halo," as J. B. S. Haldane dubbed him because of the saintly pictures of him that are on sale throughout the sub-continent.

In the last *Rationalist Annual* Professor Haldane gave his impressions of India and his reasons for believing that "the prospects of humanism in India are perhaps brighter than in some parts of Europe and America." Since then, the Kumbh tragedy has emphasised the immensity of the task that, nevertheless, faces a secular administration. A leading article on this subject appeared under the *nom de plume* "Vedette" in the *Sunday Statesman* published in Calcutta and New Delhi on February 7, 1954.

"Religion's high place in Indian life, which has always been taken for granted," it says, "has been brought home to millions of people in this country and outside with a renewed emphasis" by the tragedy. And it asks: "Is the call of religion losing or gaining force in India? Has the impact of economic progress left a favourable or adverse effect on faith?" Rather disturbingly, the answer is that organised religion has shown "an increasingly upward trend" in the seven years since Independence. It must be remembered, of course, that religion in India is very different in some ways from religion in Europe. As Professor Haldane has indicated, Hinduism is a non-proselytising religion which has always allowed great freedom of discussion. Furthermore, the art of India has been very largely integrated with Hinduism. Such factors are not easily appreciated by Europeans. I cannot help thinking, however, that the "great freedom of discussion" applies only to an enlightened minority. For the great mass of Indians, uneducated and illiterate, freedom of discussion is meaningless. Preserving existence would seem to be a full-time job.

India's present religious revival is, in fact, closely bound up with the re-discovery of her cultural heritage and the growth of nationalism following Independence. Significantly, too, this religio-cultural revival springs from the upper classes.

"It was no poor pujari or unknown mahant who sponsored the restoration of the Somnath Temple a few years ago," writes "Vedette." "The movement was inspired and guided by Indian political leaders of the status of Sardar Patel and Mr. K. M. Munshi. Among its more distinguished patrons was no less a person than the President of the Republic." And a "very vocal section" of the population holds that India culture is "embedded" in Hinduism. This section understandably wants to retain the close association between cultural life and organised religion: to preserve the "upward trend."

Unfortunately, India's non-religious politicians are sometimes acquiescent. To quote "Vedette" again: "People

who have been puzzled by the presence at the Kumbh Mela of a large number of front-rank Indian political leaders, not all of whom are by any means devoutly religious in private life, should look for an answer in the new emphasis on religio-cultural ceremonies." Mr. Nehru is instanced as one who has never been known for "exaggerated concern about religion" and yet spent two days at the Allahabad festival before proceeding on an election tour. "He was probably internally distressed by the display of so much popular enthusiasm for an ancient superstition," continues the article, "but even he found it difficult to keep away."

"Vedette" states that he writes in no spirit of irreverence—he has, indeed, a personal weakness for colour and ritual—but he cannot help wondering whether "excessive official patronage of religion in this country is an unmixed blessing." "In the India of to-day and to-morrow," he urges, "the emphasis has to be different. Religion has an undoubted place in life, but in this country we seem to suffer from too much religion rather than too little. Must leaders of public opinion be led by mass feeling most of the time? There is need for an honest searching of minds."

This is a timely warning. I would not be so bold, or so foolish, as to suggest that Mr. Nehru should pursue a policy of open warfare against the powerful religious elements in India. That might be disastrous for himself and his country. As Prime Minister he must, at this stage, obviously strive to keep the peace and consolidate the secular constitution: consolidate it for the clash that is bound to come. But it is one thing to tolerate religious festivals and another to participate in them. Mr. Nehru is convinced of the necessity of a secular India and openly says so. His prestige is enormous surely it would not have been lessened by absence from the tragic riverside festival.

It might be argued that his attendance on such occasions is essential if he is to placate the religious leaders and to carry the ignorant masses with him. The deep imprint of religion upon Indian life lends some weight to this view, but I cannot accept it. The Hindu leaders are unlikely to be satisfied so easily: they demand more integration of religion and the State. Among the rest of the population, the Indian government will be judged by results. Nobody is too simple or too poor to know that it is better to be fed and clothed than to be hungry and naked. Starving peasants may show little interest in more abstract matters, but some concern with their own living conditions is inescapable.

I believe, then, that "Vedette" is justified in calling for less emphasis upon religion and less official patronage of it. The mass religious feeling to which he refers has been very largely inculcated by former Indian rulers, and there are many who are desirous of perpetuating it. Let us hope that the leaders of the secular Republic will move progressively away from it. Religion is still the opium of the people.

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The Crime of Colour

By W. H. WOOD

(Concluded from page 122)

Let us not forget, either, that crying shame of the First World War when we tricked the Arabs into fighting for us with the promise of full independence, and at the same time bribed the Jews with the promise of Palestine. We knew that for centuries the Jews and the Arabs have been bitter enemies and that we could not possibly keep faith with both sides when the day of redemption came. It is a disquieting fact that in the course of history we have never hesitated to use Colour, Race or Creed to further our national interests with little regard for the interests or rights of others. We preach Democracy and talk loudly on the Rights of Man but it seems all too clear that only the White Man is entitled to any rights including, presumably, the right to protect those rights even at the cost of national dishonour!

Surely, to any right-thinking person, the Coloured man who is expected to die for the great White race in times of war is entitled to share in the rights he has helped to win and to enjoy equality with the White man in times of peace. Why is it, then, that he is held securely down and can find no one who is ready and willing to champion his just cause? It is useless for pompous politicians to point to the educational benefits we have bestowed upon the coloured people, the opportunity to gain University degrees and honours in science, medicine and law, if we are still to treat them as intellectual and social inferiors. There can be only one reason for this selfish and dictatorial attitude—Fear. We must continue to dominate and keep them in subjection because we fear for our own survival. In the British Empire six out of every seven people are coloured and so, if we are to uphold the principle of minority rule, we must use the jackboot and well and truly kick them in the pants whenever they show signs of resentment and discontent. Because our great-grandfathers exploited the coloured races and stole their lands and great mineral wealth for financial gain we actually believe that these people should be grateful to us and bend the knee in servile humility! We are too blind and foolish to realise that the surest way of committing national suicide is to proceed with this policy of White Superiority while we ram down their throats the Christian doctrine of charity, equality and brotherly love.

Is there any logical reason why we should show even less consideration towards the coloured races than we show towards our own domestic animals? Domestic animals are petted and pampered and admitted into our homes as members of the household, but how many people are willing to admit into their homes a brother human being whose skin happens to be black? The proud dowager, lovingly fondling her snuffling peke, would rise in horror and hurriedly leave the hotel lounge if a black man dared to enter in her presence. And do not imagine that the dignified dowagers and the Colonel Blimps are the only members of society who display this attitude towards men of colour—the man-in-the-street is every bit as snobbish and race-conscious when it comes to meeting a coloured man socially or even in the course of business. He not only dislikes and distrusts him but does not hesitate to be deliberately offensive. He believes the morals of a coloured man to be non-existent and he would take extreme measures to prevent any sort of friendship developing between such a man and his own daughter. It is still one of the deadly sins for a white woman to marry, or even to be seen in the company of, a gentleman of colour. Such a woman is

beyond the pale and must be socially ostracised. Are we still living in the Victorian age that we are so convinced that "East is East and West is West," as Kipling put it? To-day, the aeroplane has annihilated distance and geographical boundaries so it is high time we annihilated historical and hysterical prejudice.

In the world to-day, the coloured people outnumber the whites by more than two to one so we have no right to assume that the earth was made exclusively for *us*. We may have invaded and conquered the coloured countries by superiority of arms but that is domination by might, not right. There is no moral justification for what we have done so the coloured man has every right to despise and distrust *us*. Do we ever think of that? And do Christians ever imagine for one instance that the God they worship might be a black God? Why, of course God is white—even if there *are* two blacks to every white in heaven! It is plain common sense. But is it also common sense why, in the twentieth century, we call ourselves civilised when we refuse to act with ordinary decent humanity towards our fellow human beings because they happen to be coloured?

Believe it or not, the white man, with all his superior airs and graces, is sitting on the top of a dangerously active volcano. If he cannot hear the angry rumblings and sniff the sulphur fumes rising from beneath the surface it is because he *is* a white man: self-styled Lord of Creation and maker of atom bombs, but too stupid to save his own pale skin while there is yet time, by recognising the equality of all men, of all races, colour and creeds.

Under the Terror of Franco

A Pastoral from the Bishop of Astorga against Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset:—

The Bishop of Astorga recently published a pastoral entitled "The Christian Restoration of Culture" in which there is an assault against the tendencies—increasing daily in the breasts of the young generation—which tend to expose the false intellectual values of Falangism, all so much representing—or appearing to represent—the Spanish liberal tradition.

In this pastoral, a model of cretinism and savagery, the following is said about Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset:—

"One of them has already rendered his tribute unto death, and it is our wish that God has gathered him to the breast of his infinite mercy. To the other one we wish a long life so that the Lord benefits him with the light of his faith. In both of their writing we can truly find indisputably lofty thoughts and expressive forms of great beauty; but they are mixed with errors and at times slanders against religion, and immorality, and it is not given to everybody to separate the wheat from the rye, and least of all to those who are not sufficiently informed. Therefore, it is not in accordance with Christian discretion to recommend to university students the reading and free study of Ortega and Unamuno in order that the student might know of the mistakes, as it can happen that he might be swayed if he is not duly warned. Neither must these authors be praised unreservedly without mentioning their mistakes.

"As for the mistakes, where Unamuno is concerned they have already been exposed by the pastoral of the Bishop of the Canaries on the 19th September, 1953. And as for Ortega, there are in his writings numerous manifestations of dogmatic heterodoxy and of unjust apprecia-

tion of the values of Christianity and its institutions, as well as public declaration of acatholicism (*atheism), the negation of God and irreverent 'boasting of taking to free-thought overnight.'"

Ecclesia, the weekly organ of Accion Catolica, has recently published a document which is feeble in its context. It deals with the conclusions of an inquest held by the "National Ecclesiastic Assessors Office of Syndicates" on "apostolical penetration in the working-class masses."

This document contains such statements as:

"In general, the great majority of the workers have not evolved, as was wished, towards a more Christian feeling in life. Our workers are greatly ignorant of religion and few show interest to belong to it. There are not many who can reason dogmatically. Both the Church and the clergy consider the workers are more inclined towards

* Translator's addition.

making fortunes than to remaining humble and consider that our apostleship protects more the rich than the poor. . . ."

Among the causes of this situation, the document in reference says:—

"The Marxist virus which still stains their souls (the workers'). . . . The economical narrowness in which they live greatly disturbs their spirit, and this bitter life of theirs frequently causes them to take an interest in the materialistic with contempt for all institutions, whether they be the Church or the State, which do not resolve their most acute problems. . . ."

Here we stop, but what we have pointed out suffices to confirm that the Spanish workers continue to withstand the "apostolic penetration" and the Falangist demagogue.

According to Accion Catolica, the "Marxist virus stains the souls of the workers."

[Translated by F.A.R.]

The Book of a Life-Lover

By EVELYN BELCHAMBERS

APPARENTLY a book dealing with abstractions, *Pleasure* is all the more readable for its feminine authorship: in male hands, such a theme might become hopelessly tangled and remote from all actuality. But Mrs. Moore's lively temperament and her love for the concrete have enabled her to write a witty, wise and very human study of pleasure in all its aspects.

It would be over-simple to describe the book as a manual of hedonism, even though (and this would damn it in the estimation of the unco-guid) Mrs. Moore's fervent contention throughout is that there is no sin in innocent happiness and that the world would be a far pleasanter place to live in if everyone had a happier time, with more pleasure and more good things.

Mrs. Moore holds no brief for politicians of any kind, and she is insistent that over-population and the wars thus caused are the all-powerful forces against the joy in life which should be every person's birthright. She is deeply conscious of some of the lost liberties of the time of her own childhood and youth, and she deplores the modern tendency to regimentation which is forever impinging more on the individual's private life. Yet she does not deny the considerable progress that has been made in many spheres. "I do not know," she writes, "what answer, as a pleasure-loving person, I could make if I were compelled to choose between going back to live in some era of the past or going forward into the future. Nowhere in the past, when I face the details of history realistically, do I find conditions wholly acceptable even to so moderately sensitive a conscience as my own. But the future, if we are to continue along the paths that our reformers, both of the Left and the Right, are hewing out for us, presents a singularly dingy vista."

Like most discerning people, Mrs. Moore is all for the individual. If a further quotation may be permitted, she writes, on her final page, after inveighing against the irresponsible modern scientist who threatens the annihilation of our poor world, "but whenever he is allowed to be an individual, man is kinder, more merciful, more honourable, and less vindictive than he has ever been before; and if he were to learn that moral courage is higher than physical—high as that may be—he might even yet reclaim his precarious future."

Mrs. Moore is an unashamed lover of feather beds, hot

fires, enjoyable meals, music, books, pictures, theatre . . . all the things that are so odious to the kill-joy moralist. She is not callous to the sufferings and hardships of the working classes or the oppressed races, but she has the temerity to affirm her conviction that just because at the present stage in history not *everyone* can have the civilised amenities, this is no reason for *no one* being allowed to have them. Against such a crudely vindictive attitude she urges the supreme importance of even a few people being left alone to enjoy and foster these amenities, pending the happy time when a less grossly over-populated world will be able to share in them—if they wish to. In support of this contention she quotes H. G. Wells: "A certain proportion of men at ease is good for the world; work as a moral obligation is the morality of slaves, and so long as no one is overworked there is no need to worry because a few are underworked."

The book is divided into twelve chapters, which include a well-deserved one tilting at utopias with their static, unreal conceptions; two thoroughly sound ones on "personal relations," in which she is not afraid to mock gently at the psychological wisecracks as well as at the churches and other well-meaning bodies of advisers; and a truly excellent summing-up on "the ethics of pleasure."

In these days when, with all the dreary round of dances, whist-drives and organised sport, an anti-life attitude still tends to be prevalent, and when many earnest but mistaken people are inclined still to ascribe our present decadence and apathy to our so-called hedonism and lack of loftier ideals, a book such as Mrs. Moore's is timely and stimulating. Like a great predecessor, Michel de Montaigne, this lady has boldly chosen for her subject the *self* whose consciousness and esteem, as she says, it is folly and futile to try to lose, and the result as with Montaigne, is a sane and humane study of age-old fundamentals.

[*Pleasure*, by Doris Langley Moore. Cassell & Co. 1953. 16s.]

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