

The Freethinker

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THE late Mr. Hilaire Belloc, that vigorous Champion of the Roman Church and of the intolerant Theocracy of medieval Europe, once described Communism and Capitalism as "The Hellish Twins." Both these superficially antagonistic social orders, he argued, were the common offspring of the Reformation, of that revolution in both the religious, the political and the economic spheres, which put an end to the European Middle Ages, and which overthrew the Catholic Theocracy, where, "all roads led to Rome."

Our Modern "Twins"

Be that as it may, it would surely be more accurate to refer to Belloc's own Church, the Roman Catholic Church, as one of "The Hellish Twins" who menace the present existence and progress of contemporary secular society. Nor need we look far for the other "twin." For, in Asia and Africa, the Church and creed of Islam represent a similar menace to secular progress and to the critical reason, as does the Christian Church of Rome in Europe and in America. Are not these two formerly rival, and still superficially antagonistic creeds, still the major foes of contemporary, social and rational progress?

"Birds of a Feather"

In his aforementioned article, Belloc declared that however much they may hate and mutually denounce each other, yet both Communism and Capitalism are "chips from the same bloc," "birds of a feather." Both, stridently proclaimed our Catholic apologist, originated from the same source the great rebellion against Rome in the Sixteenth Century; both are enemies of "the common man" whom they enslave in "servile States" disguised more or less effectively under slogans about progress and what Belloc termed "The Great Rosy Dawn"! Both Communism and Capitalism have a common interest in the degradation of mankind, in the destruction of freedom, and in the propagation of an aggressively materialistic philosophy destructive, alike, of Reason and of Revelation. But, writing in 1954, do not most of the above charges apply, to-day, to our contemporary "hellish twins," Rome and Islam?

The Revival of Theocracy

The nineteenth century, the century *par excellence*, of Liberalism and progress—with a capital P!—imagined that it was leaving behind it for ever the medieval world of intolerant Theocracy. When the Pope proclaimed himself "Infallible" in 1870, the news was received with derision in most European Capitals. Similarly, the Liberal thinkers of the East held for "Old Wives' Tales" the sacred scriptures, whether Vedas or Koran. Unfortunately, the powers of reaction still represent a formidable danger, that "each new attraction is still followed by reaction," that elemental truth proclaimed by Ibsen's *Brand*, is, once again illustrated in the present century. To-day, the world strong-

holds of Theocracy are to be found in Catholicism and in Islam, old rivals in the past, "Hellish Twins" in the present.

The New Counter-Reformation

Elsewhere, in a paper written by the present writer and read before the World-Congress of Freethinkers in Luxemburg in September, 1954, I have sought to demonstrate that the Roman Catholic Church is, just now, launching a world-wide counter-offensive, ostensibly against "the spectre of Communism"; actually, against modern civilisation and secular progress: a new "counter-

Reformation," similar to that launched by the Vatican under Jesuitical inspiration in the 16th and 17th centuries, and which culminated in the last and the most terrible of the "Crusades" launched by Rome, the terrible "Thirty Years' War" (1618-48). To-day, only on a world-wide scale, militant Catholicism is, again, launching its "counter Reformation"; again as in the earlier era of the Reformation, it takes full advantage of the *Social* crisis of our times.

The Western "Twin"—Rome

The Western "Twin" is the Church of Rome, which *alone amongst the Christian Churches*, retains the exclusive medieval principle of the medieval Theocracy; whereas, the other Churches have, to some extent, at least, compromised with modern knowledge, Rome alone claims her ancient infallibility and, along with it, the right to condemn, and to punish error. The spirit of Theocracy, the spirit which lit the fires of the Inquisition in medieval Spain, and which still outlaws "heresy" in modern Spain, still finds its *Western* stronghold in Rome, in the Vatican, with the "Infallible" Papacy.

The Eastern "Twin"—Islam

If Rome represents the still surviving Western version of Theocracy in the 20th century, her old enemy and fellow—Theocracy, Islam, represents the complimentary Eastern "Twin." For Islam, the also Theocratic creed founded by Mohammed in the 7th Century, also claims "Infallibility" not, indeed, for its Pope, but for its book, the Koran, the verbally inspired "Word" of Allah. Like Catholicism, Islam also claims a universal jurisdiction. Like Catholicism, again, Islam, "The one True Faith," claims the right to convert the heathen, if necessary, by force, and to suppress "Heresy," also, by force. In Muslim jurisprudence, the stoning of the "apostate" replaces the *auto da fé* of the Inquisition, but the principle of persecution remains identical: in modern political parlance, Catholicism and Islam, both represent "Totalitarian" creeds, aiming at an exclusive world-domination, in both this world and in the next, on *both* sides of the grave!

The Muslim "Counter Reformation"

It is a matter of common knowledge that the period in world-history which witnessed the political, military and

—VIEWS and OPINIONS—

The Hellish Twins—a Study of Catholic and Muslim Theocracy

By F. A. RIDLEY

cultural ascendancy of Europe, also witnessed a simultaneous decline in the political power and in the cultural activity of the nations of the Mohammedan East, then virtually identical with a decadent feudal society and scholastic culture. The present century, which has witnessed the decline of European Imperialism, witnesses, simultaneously, a remarkable renaissance of Muslim activity: Islam, too, is at present, staging its "counter-reformation": the formation of the "Arab League," the revival of Islam in North Africa and, above all, the triumphant creation of powerful new Muslim States in Pakistan and in Indonesia represent the more obvious landmarks in this Muslim "counter-Reformation," to which the recent Egyptian Revolution and its successful reoccupation of the gateway between Asia and Africa, the Suez Canal, and the creation of a Sudanese State may, perhaps, be attributed. From Indonesia to Nigeria, Islam is, once more, an international force in world affairs.

The Theocratic Principle

In a popular text-book about religion written some years ago by a well-known English novelist, the author, Miss Ethel Mannin, singled out two religions, Catholicism and Islam, as *the two* outstandingly successful examples of religion on the international level. This special distinction is, also, shared by these two creeds with regard to their exclusive, intolerant, and, in modern phraseology, "Totalitarian" character. For, what we have termed above, "The Hellish Twins," Catholicism and Islam, are distinguished from all other contemporary religious creeds, by their essentially Theocratic character. Unlike the Protestant Christian Churches, most of whom have abandoned the principle of religious persecution and have compromised with modern culture, the Vatican unyieldingly retains its alleged monopoly of absolute Truth, whilst, unlike the more accommodating Eastern creeds, such as Hinduism and Buddhism, Islam, similarly accepts the final and unalterable nature of the Revelation written by the Prophet under the verbal dictation of Allah. It is this principle of Theocracy, of absolute monopoly and of aggressive intolerance, that constitutes Catholicism and Islam as the major foes of contemporary social progress and of the exercise of the free critical reason of mankind.

Our Lady of Fatima

It is indisputable that for the past thirteen centuries, ever since Islam first made its sensational entry into the medieval world, the two Theocracies, Catholicism and Islam, have been mortal foes, and that crusade and counter-crusade have been hurled against each other. However, in the face of the threatening inroads of modern secular culture, which threatens with destruction *all* variations of supernaturalism and *every* type of Theocracy, an undeniable tendency has made its appearance in recent years to form, so to speak, a "United Front" of the gods against the common menace of a scepticism which, left unchecked, would eventually devour them all. In the case of Islam and Catholicism, this alliance seems to have celestial approval! For the Virgin-Goddess of Catholicism "The Fourth Person" of the Catholic Trinity, the Virgin Mary herself, has appeared in recent years, at Fatima, a place named after—and, perhaps, originally consecrated to—the prophet Mohammed's only surviving child Fatima, who, in the Theology of some Muslim sects of the, in particular, Ismaïli persuasion, occupied a position which has some analogies with that held by the Virgin Mary in Catholic dogma and religious practice. Is Mary's choice of Fatima to be regarded as an olive-branch, perhaps as the preface to a *de facto* alliance between the two great Theocracies of our era, Rome and Mecca? So, at least, it

would seem. Bishop Fulton Sheen of New York, one of the most acute of contemporary Catholic ecclesiastics, speaking at the Shrine of Mary at Fatima, has recently declared that the appearance of the Virgin at Fatima signified a token of her regard for the Muslim millions "who believe in God, but not yet in Christ."

A New "Holy Alliance"

Is a new "Holy Alliance" at present in process of formation between the two strongest and most intolerant religious forces of our era? Will the "counter-Reformation" of Catholicism and of Islam eventually meet at Fatima? Will these "Hellish Twins" of Theocracy *finally* merge into Siamese Twins bound together in a common defence of the Supernatural? Not only professed Freethinkers but, equally, all lovers of civil and religious liberty, both equally menaced by the Theocratic principle, must remain alive and vigilant to meet such a menacing eventuality. For the entire record of both theocracies shows that, to avoid extinction, they will fight to the bitter end, and with every instrument of force—or fraud—that may come to hand. We witness the last stand of Catholicism and of Islam—the "old Guards" of the Supernatural!

Cohenisms

Christian ethics have all the characteristics of the prison cell, being more concerned with restraints rather than with expression.

The savage does not discover Gods; he creates them. Civilised man neither creates nor discovers them. He buries them.

Persecution is the compliment paid by a threatened lie to a conquering truth.

The one indispensable condition for understanding God is to have ceased believing in his existence.

If you take away from some men their knowledge of God you leave them in a state of complete ignorance.

In the world of opinion there are neither majorities nor minorities; there are only differences.

Why?

Unwishing, Fate has called me into sense
And bade my Ego from the void condense
In sentient atoms on some false pretence,
And gave unanswered "Why" for recompense.

One moment here the "Wine of Life" to taste
Before the cup beyond our reach is placed,
Alas! For even as we drink in haste
Fate jogs our elbow and derides the waste.

And if the bouquet of the Wine grow less,
And lips grow cold that now so warmly press,
What of it, friend? 'Tis only thus, caress
And draught alike must end in nothingness.

For hopes to-day that fill to-morrow's womb
To-morrow's yesterday provides the tomb;
And where you seem to-day, the garnished room
Already waits another tenant—Whom?

W. H. HORNIBROOK.

—NEXT WEEK—

MARSHALL J. GAUVIN
(U.S.A.)

SPEECH AT THE LUXEMBURG CONFERENCE

Italy After 16 Centuries of Catholicism

By "SPECTATOR"

FOR more than 1,600 years one religion has reigned in Italy; all the rulers have been Catholic and firm supporters of the Church. Even Mussolini after attaining power became reconciled to the Church. Everywhere during the fascist regime were to be seen three images together—the King, the Pope and Mussolini. The Pope declared Mussolini a great man especially sent by Divine Providence. Since the war Italy has been ruled by the Catholic Christian Democratic Party, endorsed by the Pope.

No land has been so blessed with clerics. During the sixteen centuries bishoprics and archbishoprics have been established as need arose and *none* have ever been dis-established. So that now it is possible to find an Archbishop and a Bishop each drawing hundreds of thousands of lire from the state, in tiny communities not deemed worthy of a police-station. In Rome alone there are 70,000 clerics.

One short interval excepted, the head of the Catholic Church has dwelt in Rome; and to Rome has flowed countless millions in money from foreign lands without cease. For all practical purposes, education has ever been in the hands of the Church.

Surely religion has never enjoyed such an opportunity to show its worth. Organisation, power, wealth, control of the young, nothing has been missing. Nor has ability been lacking. The Church has always had enough resources to attract able men and the supply of Saints has been plentiful.

We should then expect to find a land of morality and true happiness if the claims of Churchmen are true, if our human problems can be solved by religion.

Surely, too, it is time to take a look at Italy and see what answer she gives. If we take say Greed and its converse as our first measuring rod there is no country in the world, except perhaps the U.S.A. and Spain, where the contrast between rich and poor is so marked as in Italy. There exists a small class of big land-owners, financial magnates and high Church dignitaries who live in luxury, and millions of simple people who are homeless, unemployed and short of food.

Greed has certainly won. Even the charitable orders in Italy are weak and small in resources compared with the millionaires. Priests and bishops in the countryside complain that the faithful humble peasants are rack-rented, overworked and under-paid, but the "faithful" landlords heed not these exhortations.

The misery in the countryside, in Sicily, in Sardinia, in the South, centre and North of Italy is beyond description. Here is a typical village as described by a recent Parliamentary Commission; Paspardo, in Brescia. Its population numbers 1,258 and 75 per cent. are tubercular. It has no water supply, no sewers, no public conveniences. It has only one bakehouse. The people live on potatoes, chestnuts and rye. Milk is scanty, meat unknown. Many of the children have never seen a lollipop. The houses are chimneyless, the smoke goes out the door and most of them are in a dangerous state of disrepair. Families of up to eleven persons live in one room, often without beds, mattresses or bedclothes.

The cities are filled with unemployed—2½ million officially—and homeless people. Within eyeshot of the Vatican hundreds of families live in caves. And even the wages of employed workers are below subsistence level.

Perhaps chastity fares better! But no, prostitution, debauchery, orgies abound in Rome; at least as much as, and more obviously than in London, New York or Paris.

Homosexuality is admittedly rife and every journal carries the advertisements of specialists in venereal disease.

Now let us look at temperance. Again we are disappointed. Italy is recognisedly the European depot for opium, cocaine, heroin, morphine and marihuana. Recent revelations have shown this dope traffic to be headed by close relatives of Ministers, Church dignitaries, nobles, in short of the highest in the land. And as must happen, murders, suicides, flow from this filthy trade.

And here perhaps we can place murder. Italy, particularly Sicily, is the home of the Mafia, an organised murder gang which, according to the Americans, is the sire of the New York Murder Incorporated. As with the dope traffic it is linked with the highest in the land, laughs at the law and even murders people in gaols. Brigandage, open banditry, still reign in Sardinia and mysterious deaths are a commonplace in Rome.

Lastly we come to Honesty. Truth compels us to admit that nowhere in the world are there more flagrant violations of that humble virtue. Of late one scandal after another has broken out in Italy, involving again the mostly highly placed persons. Illegal dealings in exchange bringing millions to people who corrupt Departmental officials, open breaking of the municipal and state laws to the benefit of financial jackals have lately been crowned by one in Rome itself.

To understand this example, it is necessary to explain Roman municipal law. In Rome if a firm or person buys a block of land, erects houses on it and that land increases in value, half the increment must be paid into the municipal funds. Before the last war, a big real estate company connected with the Vatican, bought a big block at Monte Mario for a few pence a square metre. Upon this block it erected houses, made streets, installed sewers, even altered the tramway track, all of its own volition without any official authorisation. To-day the land is worth 15 to 20 or 30 thousand lire a square metre. The increment is between 20 and 30 million pounds. Not only is it not paying a cent of the (at least 10) millions it owes but it has sent in a bill for its unauthorised alterations and the Council is paying it. Rebecchini, the Mayor of Rome, is an excellent Catholic and pays due respect to the spiritual board of directors that company has the honour to have.

On the other hand 200 homeless families had the impudence to squat on a valueless unoccupied piece of land and erect 200 shacks of whatever wretched material they could find. For this breach of the law Rebecchini had no tolerance. He sent the cleaning squad with a truck and a steel rope. The rope was drawn around the houses, attached to the truck and the truck driven off. Comment is needless.

Further, as the City funds were getting short, quite understandably, Rebecchini and his Catholic friends who have a majority on the Council increased the sales-taxes on the necessities of life in Rome by 2½ million pounds for the year 1953-1954. This of course makes the lot of the unemployed, the old, the sick and even the worker still more wretched.

For the dreadful state of affairs described above (and it is not overdrawn, the whole truth is much worse) the Church may not be responsible. We will leave it to the student of political economy, etc., to allot the responsibility. At least it is clear that the Church is impotent against those evils—and possibly a brake on remedial measures.

(Continued on page 397)

This Believing World

Spiritualist and Protestant Divine Healers are not allowed to get away with it altogether—at least not if *Picture Post* can get in edgeways. For this widely circulated journal has now recorded for us, photographically, “a miracle” at Lourdes, mindful no doubt of the famous aphorism that the camera never lies. Here is the sick young lady with a tumour on the brain, given up as a hopeless case, taken to the pool in the Grotto of Lourdes and, just as she was taken out, she “suddenly got up and walked.”

Here was a miracle indeed—one which appears to have staggered even the all-believing Catholic doctors in charge. But it will not yet be certified as a “miracle.” It will take a year to do that, unlike cures by Spiritualist Healers whose “miracles” are done almost in a flash. But the mystery which puzzles us is—why, out of the 60,000 cases taken to Lourdes, among whom she was one, is it that the other 59,999 were not cured? Surely the Virgin should not discriminate in this way?

We note with pleasure that the *Birmingham Mail*, the other day, was not afraid of mentioning *The Freethinker*, though lest this frightens its readers too much, it is called “a leaflet,” bless its heart! Anyway, we shall not retaliate in kind by calling it “a rag.” Some Christian reader got hold of what we said about Mithras and Jesus, and became intensely “worried.” So with scorn we are told that we seem “utterly unaware” of “the dates of Mithraic remains.” With pride do we state, therefore, that we are not “unaware” of these dates, and also a lot more dates that the gallant Christian rushing to defend Jesus against our awful infidelity himself appears to be utterly unaware of. Mithras became a very prominent God in the fourth century B.C., and was worshipped by the Romans at least as early as 70 B.C. So there was plenty of time for the Gospel writers to “pinch” plenty of ideas from him for their own God—and incidentally from other Gods also.

But the “Mail” writer himself is upset at what we said about the hordes of hermits and monks running wild over Europe as the result of the success of early Christianity, and giving us what all historians call the Dark Ages by doing their best to destroy what the Greek and Roman civilisations left as a heritage in Europe. And how is that answered? Why, by telling his devoted readers that “we” know more about the “origins” of Christianity than did our grandfathers, and “the climate of opinion in our universities and colleges has turned again towards Christ as the hope and Saviour of Mankind.” This is history taught in our newspapers—and we trust that the worried Christian is sufficiently answered. For our part, we can only repeat that a good deal of the Gospel story of Jesus was taken from the story of Mithras who also was the Saviour and Hope of *his* world.

By the way talking about “spirit guides”—some of us wickedly consider them as jokes—why are they always painted for us in our Spiritualist journals as males dressed in female garments? In *Psychic Realm* is a portrait of a “spirit healing guide” wearing a blouse and skirt and a sash though we admit that his shoes are not the dainty high-heeled ones usually associated with a pretty nurse. They look like wooden clogs. This particular “guide” recently opened and locked some doors for a nurse—doors which had been previously “check-locked.” This enabled her to give an injection to a patient—and the “guide” disappeared. And what has Lourdes to say about this wonderful “miracle”?

SCIENCE FRONT

Hormones, Enzymes and Tropisms

MUCH vital activity which has hitherto encouraged the pious hope that it was the result of a principle of “Life,” as distinct from matter and utterly separable from it, can now be explained as the action of hormones and enzymes. The former are produced by the ductless glands and go round the body in a kind of postal system, being extracted by tissues (the letter-boxes, as it were). Hormones affect the growth and co-operation of parts of the body, and the four types of hormones are among those organic substances which can be made artificially in the laboratory. Enzymes, too, play an important part in many vital operations, such as digestion. Organic chemistry explores their nature, physiology their function: they are indispensable constituents of living cells.

Hormones and enzymes are substances, but a tropism is the name given to an action cycle. A tropism is one form of physico-chemical sensitiveness to the influence of light. They have been extensively studied in plant and animal life, beginning with the simple fact that the roots from a seed strike downwards and the leaf-stems upwards towards the light. In the human head there are balancing, or gravity, organs called statocysts which facilitate the automatic maintenance, or recovery, of an upright posture. In the shrimp the stones of these organs have been removed for the purposes of experiment, and replaced by iron filings, and it is then found that if the experimenter holds a strong magnet above it the animal swims upside down. Insect life is largely explained by tropisms. For instance, the behaviour of a moth near a light was in Lubbock’s day thought to indicate some fascination for the light. Models can now be made which imitate the moth’s behaviour. Two photo-electric cells are substituted for the eyes, and each works an electric engine on its side. When the light falls on one “eye” the model circles round like a paddle boat with one engine going. If one eye of a real moth is blacked out it will fly in a circle. When the light hits both “eyes” of the model, the electric current passes to both motor machines, and the model goes straight ahead into the light, just as the live moth does.

These researches represent advances in the analysis of what have been termed “instincts” (a label which has lent itself to teleological or even religious interpretation). A tropism is a blind (non-purposive) drive which may lead the creature to destruction or to salvation impartially according to the circumstances, but in either case it is a simple result of the interaction between the inborn nervous structure and the external stimuli.

G. H. T.

From God’s Word

“If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that *one of thy members perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Hell.* And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee; for it is profitable that *one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into Hell*” (Matt. v. 29, 30).

Fighting the Catholic state of mind is not an easy task, and those who resort to cold reason as a means of overturning blind faith are apt to register but small success unless the faith-shackled victim ultimately comes to grief through his excessive credulity. Then emotional resentment may arise, and the bat-blind believer, stung into sensibility by personal injury through his faith, may get his first glimmer of awareness that his Church is wrong.

Ex-Catholics have told me that they got their first eye-openers through emotional “shock.” Something in which they believed implicitly blew up in their faces; from then on faith declined rapidly. The Church no longer held them in awe.—*Woolsey Teller.*

THE FREETHINKER

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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.

To Correspondents

Correspondents may like to note that when their letters are not printed, or when they are abbreviated, the material in them may still be of use to "This Believing World," or to our spoken propaganda.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Deansgate Blitzed Site).—Every weekday, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, December 12, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

INDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanics' Institute, Second Floor).—Sunday, December 12, 6-45 p.m.: A. H. WHARRAD, "This Universal Church."
Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, December 14, 7 p.m.: ROYSTON PIKE, "The Faith of an Agnostic."
Junior Discussion Group (South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall).—Friday, December 10, 7-15 p.m.: Miss YVONNE WATTS, "Food and People."
Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, December 12, 6-30 p.m.: R. W. RAWLINGS, "Civil Liberty To-day."
Manchester Branch N.S.S. (New Millgate Hotel, Long Millgate, Manchester, 3).—Sunday, December 12, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY, "Freethought, Freewill and Determinism."
Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Large Lecture Theatre, Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, December 12, 2-30 p.m.: W. N. WARBEY, M.P., "Can the Human Race Survive?"
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Trades Hall, Thurland Street, Room 7).—Thursday, December 16, 7-30 p.m.: A. HEWITT, "Why I Deny God."
South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, December 12, 11 a.m.: Dr. W. E. SWINTON, "Digging up the Truth."
West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W.1, five minutes from Edgware Road Station).—Sunday, December 12, 7-15 p.m.: CEDRIC DOVER, "Perspectives on Racism."

ITALY AFTER 16 CENTURIES OF CATHOLICISM (Concluded from page 395)

We may be pardoned for mildly doubting whether the Italian people get value for the money they spend on their Church—at least in this world.

We may perhaps save some of our money and our energy by taking heed of the lesson Italy conveys, viz., that the remedies for earthly troubles are to be sought here, on earth, and not from supernatural regions.—(From the Melbourne Rationalist.)

Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £644 17s. 3d.; E.M., £1; C. Bridger, 2s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Brighton, £1; A. Hancock, 1s.; W.H.D., 2s. 6d. Total to date, £647 3s. 3d. Donations should be sent to "The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund" and cheques made out accordingly.

All Have a Part to Play

She, who cannot be bought,
The Muse of Poesy,
By whom the poet's songs are wrought,
Vouchsafed this thought to me:
If Freedom die, there can be no more song;
Let Freedom's Press but perish, all goes wrong.
The Free Press is the lyre,
The poet's vocal-chords,
With it he can aspire
To put in lovely words
The deepest thoughts of Freedom's vision true,
The aspirations of himself, and you.
Poetry and fine Prose
At bottom are the same;
If one more brightly glows,
Both feed on the same flame,
A yearning for the liberty to write
Man's highest thoughts, to set a wry world right.
Then let the wise man speak,
The poet fashion song;
And Freedom's Press, not meek,
Proclaim their thoughts for long;
But if our dear *Freethinker* is to live,
All have a part to play
Each in our own way;
To think, and speak, and write, for truth to strive,
And—NOW TO GIVE.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

Review

By H. CUTNER

Man in the Universe. By C. E. Last. Foreword by W. J. Brown. Published by Werner Laurie. 166 pages. 1954. Price 10s. 6d. net. THE author of this book clearly loathes Materialism—especially Mechanistic Materialism. And though Mr. Brown admits that he himself is "no scientist," and obviously knows extremely little about Materialism, he thinks that Mr. Last has put forward some theories which at least appear "to account for the accepted facts as adequately as the present materialist explanations"—a remark which looks like damning the book with faint praise. He does, however, add that his rejection of "the materialist conception of life and the universe" does not rest upon Mr. Last or—as far as I understand him—on anything else. We are in fact not told on what it rests, for Mr. Brown, as befits a man who is not a scientist, carefully chooses in his "foreword" terms and words which are as vague as he could make them.

It is true that he and Mr. Last quote the late Sir James Jeans who looked upon God Almighty as a good Mathematician creating the Universe in terms which a modern astro-physicist can (more or less) interpret; and they both seem pleased because many of our nineteenth century concepts and conclusions about the world and the origin of things have naturally changed with advancing knowledge. Unfortunately, the change has not been in the direction

which Mr. Last fondly imagines ought to be the case. His book is one long protest against the Mechanistic Materialism which modern conceptions of science and speculation are forced to admit—and which he cannot, in spite of Mr. Brown, confute.

This quotation from Jeans is typical of the kind of thing both Mr. Last and Mr. Brown depend upon:—

Consciousness is fundamental. The material universe is derivative from consciousness, not consciousness from the material universe.

This is, of course, the typical Idealist position made famous by Berkeley; but at least Berkeley had the excuse that he knew nothing about Evolution. Jeans was brought up on Evolution, and no one knew better than he that at one time this world of ours was a "gaseous ball," something upon which no life could possibly exist. As it cooled down, it produced the earliest form of life, protoplasm, which in the course of millions of years gave us the teeming life existing now on earth. But will the reader note—before protoplasm or any sign of life whatever appeared, there was the *undeveloped* earth; that is, there was *matter* without life, without mind, without consciousness, or to use theological terms, there was no "soul" or "mind" or "spirit." There is only one way in which religious physicists like Jeans, or Idealists can answer our Materialist conclusion, and that is to deny Evolution and go back to Special Creation. And I hope that I am doing Mr. Last no injustice if I say that his book is really in favour of Special Creation and against Evolution.

The whole *concept* of Mind or Consciousness could only come when man had evolved far enough to be able to discuss himself and his position in the Universe. Until then, Mind meant for him nothing more than growth—the growth of a carrot, for example.

What it was that made things grow became a subject for speculation only when man had evolved high in the scale of "being"—that is, when he began to think and talk and write. We know very little of the processes through which man became an intelligent being and all the explanations which have been offered, whether in the name of religion, or of science, have to be examined in the light of cold reason, and modern discoveries in all the sciences.

The one thing which, however, stands out, and is quite unassailable is that "matter" came *before* "mind" or "consciousness"; and all we know of mind is what we learn from the living only in this world of ours. Thus to talk about "the Attributes of the Universal Mind" (in capitals) is to use words which quite possibly have some meaning for people like Mr. Brown or Mr. Last, but for no one who believes in Evolution.

Mr. Last tells us very little about Evolution—the word does not occur in his Index—though he does tell us what the evolutionist means by "mutation," and also that Darwin had "a unit presented to him already made"—the "protoplasmic unit." And naturally he sneers at the evolutionists like this:—

In the cult of the evolutionist there was a "property" inherent in matter which enabled it to overcome the difficulties of being alive by making experiments of the trial and error principle. It masqueraded under the name of "natural selection" and material evolutionists still speak of it.

I fancy that this brilliant "argument" could have been just as easily written by a Jehovah's Witness or a demure Salvation Army lassie.

The bulk of *Man in the Universe* is concerned with some of the statements in the many science lectures broadcast by Mr. Fred Hoyle and other physicists who quite clearly show that all we know or can know are phenomena or experience. As to "explaining" things, that is not necessarily the function of the Materialist even if he can, and in most cases, he cannot.

Both Mr. Brown and Mr. Last appear to be very angry that "Science could find no trace of a Maker or Director." In this the Materialist heartily concurs—but on the other hand he insists that neither Mr. Brown nor Mr. Last has found any traces either. They both use the same kind of argument. It is that because I cannot "explain" electricity or light or the growth of a potato or why birds have feathers, therefore, *saying* there must be "a Universal Mind" or "Director" or "Mathematician" or "Maker" fully explains and proves everything. The good old Christian way was to say, "God did it." If you then said you were no wiser than before, you were told to read the Bible and have "Faith." Then you would know everything. Mr. Last's book is just a little more pretentious but it means the same thing.

We are given this from Professor Mottram's *The Physical Basis of Personality* to show how "many men of learning and repute are in revolt" against Materialism:—

I admit that the materialist position always has roused the deepest antagonism in me since first I became aware of materialism as a possible philosophy. It would be horrible to many of us—the majority of us I think—if materialism were true, but that is no reason for rejecting it out of hand. . . .

Of course, one could answer this kind of nonsense by saying that it would be horrible for a great many of us to find that the God of the Bible, the Universal Mind, or Creator, or whatever you called it, was really living in Heaven with Jesus Christ on one side and the Pope on the other. We can only fervently claim that the "Great I Am" is as mythical as Mr. Last's Universal Mind or Jeans's Great Mathematician.

But any reader who wants to see how Mr. Last "demolishes" Materialism may find in *Man in the Universe* plenty of "argument" and criticism which may even send him to Billy Graham. As far as I am concerned, I feel if this is the best our opponents can do—God help them!

The "Meditations" of Marcus Aurelius

By G. I. BENNETT

(Concluded from page 386)

THUS in the book of *Meditations* we have presented a purely secular and truly unself-seeking *raison d'être* of the good life; and whether its author believed in Providence and, if he did, in what kind of Providence, is quite secondary to this fact.

Yet any study of the life of the philosophical emperor confronts us with a tantalising question—the extent of his complicity in the persecution of the Christians. In a ruler so enlightened and humane as he, the idea of his being a persecutor at all is at first exceedingly hard to understand—made harder by the circumstance that Christians living during his reign and later spoke of him not in terms of hostility but of esteem. After extensive historical research obscurity still exists, and at this time of day it is unlikely that the facts of the case will ever be established beyond doubt.

What is certain is that Christianity made no impression upon the emperor's thought. Indeed, he appears largely to have shared the view of his age that its adherents were misguided and even dangerous religious zealots. How far, then, may he be considered responsible for the general persecution of the Christian Churches at Lyons and Vienne, which occurred about the year A.D. 177, towards the end of his life?

We know how calamitous were the times through which the Roman Empire was passing, engaged in long and difficult frontier wars, harassed by internal military strife,

stricken by outbreaks of famine and pestilence, and afflicted by earthquakes. We know that the Christians were suspected—not altogether without cause—of conspiring the empire's ruin. We know that many Christians secretly hoped for, and some were rash enough, gleefully and publicly, to prophesy its coming collapse. We know that they refused to hold any official office, or to take part in Roman civic and public affairs; and that they did not simply avoid participation in the Roman State religion: they lost no opportunity to express their unbelief in it and even jeered at it. We know also that by the time of Marcus Aurelius their numbers had so far grown as to constitute a serious menace to the stability of the Roman world, when the need was critical for a "closing of the ranks" as the barbarians pressed ever harder into the empire territory.

It is therefore more than likely that the Stoic emperor, while no persecuting spirit, saw no alternative but to allow the harsh law against the Christians to take its course. To say this is not to clear his name of the one thing that stains it, but it does at least make understandable the attitude of so admirable a ruler, who was a Roman first with a Roman's sense of duty to the empire.

At this distance of time we see more clearly than any contemporary possibly could the greatness of Marcus Aurelius. That greatness lay not in any special talents, for he was not one of outstanding ability or surpassing intellect. It lay in the excellence of his character, in the courage of his philosophical convictions, in the elevation of his mind above life's pettiness and narrowing influences.

Living in an age of unbridled despotism, and occupying a station bestowing on him virtually unlimited power, he did not yield to the opportunities that abounded to abuse power, but remained a singularly simple and upright man of great personal forbearance and kindness. For nineteen turbulent years, during which he suffered much from weariness, he bore the burden of supreme rulership of the Roman world, a classic exception to Acton's famous dictum that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." For once in the affairs of men, if never again, Plato's dream of a philosopher-king had been realised in fullest measure.

He saw better than most minds, before and since his time, the moral limitations of men, did not attempt to bend them to the caprices of his will, but simply noted: "What can the most unconscionable of men do to thee if thou persist in being kindly to him, and when a chance is given exhort him mildly, 'Nay, my child, we have been made for other things. . . .'" Perhaps that is why he has been called (so unjustly, I think) "ineffectual." He "saved his own soul by his righteousness," wrote Matthew Arnold (thinking of the emperor's evil son Commodus), "and he could do no more."

Actually, an unwillingness to commend his own pattern of life to others is a mark of the sensitive spirit. He who, of all men, has a right to give others the benefit of his counsel often hesitates to do so out of an awareness that what he holds to be true may, after all, have only a personal validity. So it is that superior men have frequently less discernible influence upon their contemporaries than the coarse and vulgar tirader, the rabid reformer, the fiery preacher, the self-righteous moralist, and the fanatical proselytiser.

To this elect company of the high-minded Marcus Aurelius belongs. He has much to offer those who read him, whether they seek ethical and spiritual wisdom or a philosophy that will uphold them in adversity.

Unitarianism "on the Air"

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

ON a recent Sunday morning the announcer of "Programme Parade" gave out that the Morning Service would be a Unitarian one. This was more informative than the *Radio Times*, from which readers might learn that the service was being broadcast from the Chapel of Manchester College, Oxford, by the Principal, the Rev. Sidney Spencer. No reference to Unitarianism was made in the printed announcement or Order of Service. Indeed, the service might have been an orthodox Nonconformist one, in line with "the main stream of Christianity" as hitherto required by the B.B.C. as a condition of religious broadcasting.

Since Unitarian representatives have appeared on the platform at joint protest meetings held in opposition to the B.B.C. religious broadcasting policy, it is interesting to find their creed admitted to the favoured circle of those that British listeners may now hear. Let us see how this particular opportunity of propagating Unitarianism was used. There was an Introduction, Prayer, The Lord's Prayer, three Hymns, Lesson from St. Matthew's Gospel, Anthem, Sermon and Benediction; but there was no indication that the worshippers present subscribed to doctrines repugnant to the vast majority of Christians.

To quote Thomas Belsham's "Calm Inquiry into the Scripture Doctrine concerning the Person of Christ," Unitarians deny the supreme deity of the Son and the Holy Ghost viewed as separate persons in the Trinity. They deny Original Sin. They affirm that Jesus of Nazareth was a man constituted in all respects like other men, subject to the same infirmities, the same ignorance, prejudices and frailties, but one authorised to reveal to all mankind, without distinction, the doctrine of a future life in which men shall be rewarded according to their works. They deny the propitiatory or vicarious nature of the death of Christ, also the doctrine of eternal punishment. The existence of a personal devil and of fallen angels forms no part of their doctrine. Such distinguishing features of Unitarianism could never have been guessed, however, by anyone listening to the Rev. Sidney Spencer's service. Can it be that their omission was the price Unitarianism had to pay before one of its ministers was allowed to broadcast?

In the Lesson and Sermon the Minister would no doubt say he did his best to be true to his denomination, but it is doubtful if one in a thousand listeners was aware of his efforts. How many noticed that he did not read the Lesson from Matthew 5 (Revised Version) as it appears in that book? He read: "Whosoever shall say to his brother, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the council." The R.V., however, says that "Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire." By omitting this reference to hell, in which Unitarians do not believe, the Rev. Mr. Spencer was playing an underhand trick with Holy Writ. According to the Bible the man who "shall be in danger of the council" is he who shall say to his brother, "Raca" (an Aramaic expression of contempt).

In his sermon, Mr. Spencer was at pains to explain why in one respect he preferred the Revised Version to the Authorised. The latter says: "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." The Revised Version leaves out "without a cause," and this in Mr. Spencer's view was "more like Jesus." The preacher did not find fault with the R.V. for making Christ threaten certain folk with "the hell of fire," however. He just pretended the passage did not exist! Maybe the B.B.C. allowed him to do this in return for a mention of "the Divine Sonship" of Jesus in another part of the sermon. Of course, Mr. Spencer would say, in common with other Unitarians, that such "Divine Sonship"

A school should be the most beautiful place in every town and village—so beautiful that the punishment for undutiful children should be that they should be debarred from going to school the following day.—OSCAR WILDE.

was something shared by all mankind, but the B.B.C. Religious Broadcasting Department know that this meaning would not have been the one understood by the great majority of listeners.

If Unitarians are satisfied with this kind of representation in B.B.C. programmes, that is their affair. The B.B.C. should realise, however, that when they come to deal with organised freethought they must not expect the N.S.S. to trim its views as a condition of being allowed to state them on the radio. Our speakers will never agree to wrap up their message in a cloud of verbiage or to pretend that they think other than they do. They will say what they mean, in a manner that should give offence to no one who does not fear the truth.

What is Religion?

PROF. A. N. WHITEHEAD: It is "force of belief cleansing inward parts." (*Religion in the Making.*)

PROF. JOHN DEWEY: It is "inclusive moral ends which imagination presents to us." (*A Common Faith.*)

GERALD BULLETT: It is "an intuitive loyalty to something beyond one's self . . . a pursuit of ends beyond one's immediate self-interest." (*Problems of Religion.*)

PROF. DURANT DRAKE: It is "a continual re-dedication of the heart to ideals." (*Contemporary American Philosophy.*)

PROF. C. G. JUNG: ". . . any truth about ultimate things . . . that helps you to live." (*Psychology and Religion.*)

J. LANGDON-DAVIES: Religion, the fountain of emotional warmth, "concerns itself with the description most

acceptable to each individual." (*Science and Common Sense.*)

PROF. R. H. DOTTERER: Religion is "enthusiasm for the good." (*Philosophy by way of the Sciences.*)

TWO COMMENTS

PROF. W. E. HOCKING (a believer): "No religion is a true religion which is not able to make men tingle; yes, even to their physical nerve tips, with . . . a wrath to come" and a "fear of hell." (*The Meaning of God.*)

PROF. J. B. NEEDHAM (a freethinker): "Well-intentioned pacifists like to compound remarkable mixtures of scientific and religious thought, bottling them under such labels as the 'religion of science,' . . . No hope whatever lies in this direction. It is much better to realise that the scientific view of the world is incurably analytical, mathematical and materialistic." (*Sceptical Chemist.*)

THE VERDICT

H. L. MENCKEN: "(1) The cosmos is a gigantic fly-wheel making 10,000 revolutions a minute."

(2) Man is a sick fly taking a dizzy ride on it.

(3) Religion is the theory that the wheel was designed and set spinning to give him the ride." (*Heresies.*)

G.H.T.

You will soon be going about like the converted, and the revivalist, warning people against all the sins of which you have grown tired.—OSCAR WILDE.

Thinking is the most unhealthy thing in the world, and people die of it just as they die of any other disease. Fortunately, in England at any rate, thought is not catching. Our splendid physique as a people is entirely due to our national stupidity.—OSCAR WILDE.

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