

The Freethinker

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— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

Communism and Religion

By F. A. RIDLEY

AT a recent meeting of the International Executive Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers the question was again raised as to the present status of Freethought in the Communist-controlled lands, and the present and future relationship of such organisations with the World Union. The existing statutes of the World Union insist categorically on *political neutrality*. However, in pre-war years, the Russian "League of Militant Atheists" satisfied presumably the then existing International Committee that, at any rate in their official relations with the World Union of Freethinkers, they were willing to comply with this stipulation. In consequence, they were duly enrolled as a constituent organisation of the World Union and, if our memory does not deceive us, the Russians were officially represented at the Prague International Congress in 1936 by Mr. E. Yaroslavsky. Since the last war, however, nothing more has been seen or heard of the Russian "militant atheists," and all attempts to contact them have proved futile. This, we may add, is the more surprising since there is, apparently, no ban on individual Communists joining the World Union, or even holding official positions inside it. Two very active members of the present Executive Committee of the World Union, Mr. de Ronde of Holland, and Monsieur Boulanger of Belgium, are members of the Communist Parties of their respective countries. M. Boulanger, in fact, is a very prominent Belgian Communist, a former Senator, and an ex-Cabinet Minister. However, no result has so far accrued from the inquiries of the Committee, and the Freethought organisations in Communist lands—if they still exist—are not now affiliated to the World Union of Freethinkers.

A World-Wide Creed

Since the defeat of Hitler and the end of the last war, Communism has become a world-wide creed, which now dominates Russia, China, and Eastern Europe; a large area of the earth's surface, and, perhaps, a quarter of its population. Moreover, in most non-Communist lands, the adherents of the creed of Lenin and Stalin are active and often influential. It is, accordingly, a matter of great importance to ascertain what precisely is the current attitude taken up toward religion as such, and, in particular, towards the churches, by this powerful political organisation. In this connection we are primarily interested in the *facts* of the situation rather than in current *political* controversies!

The Materialist Interpretation of History

In theory, all Communist Parties the world over accept the theory first propounded by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, in 1848, usually described as *The Materialist*, or sometimes as *The Economic Interpretation of History*. Taken literally, this theory, which is accepted by all Communists, including the "heretical" followers of Trotsky and Tito, as well as by

the official Communist Parties, would appear to exclude religion as an active force in human affairs. For, surely, if, as the theory in question holds, the basic dynamic force in human progress is the *economic* solution of mankind's struggle for existence, the supernatural is, *ipso facto*, excluded from active intervention in human affairs? What, for Marxists, counts primarily in human history, is economics *not* theology!

Furthermore, Marx himself was quite explicit on the actual part played by religion in human affairs! Its essential role, he defined, as "The opium of people." That is to say, religion as a *social* force is, essentially, a narcotic, a species of mental or emotional "opium," which dulls the misery of human existence amongst, especially, the oppressed masses in societies founded upon human exploitation. Hopes of a *future* life derive their popular appeal precisely because of the unsatisfactory nature of the *present* one. Such a definition of religion could, we imagine, hardly be accepted by even the most "Liberal Christian," or, indeed, by the adherents of *any* religious creed.

Communism and Christian Missions

In another, but parallel connection, the influence of contemporary Communism operates strongly against religion in the practical field. In this last connection, we refer, in particular, to Chinese rather than to Russian Communism. In his brilliant book, *Asia and Western Dominance*, the Indian publicist, K. M. Pannikar, declares that the advent of the Communist regime in China has completely destroyed the influence of Christian missions in that immense land. As Indian Ambassador in China during the Communist Revolution, Mr. Pannikar was able to observe the process at first hand. One has only to read the Christian and, in particular, the Catholic Press, to find agitated confirmation for this statement!

The Communist Regime and Religion

So far, so good! However, Communism is now a government as well as a theory. As such, the Communist régime has to deal with religion in practice. Here, again, basic *theory* appears unexceptional to secularists: both religious and anti-religious organisations enjoy equality before the Law. In *practice*, however, this unexceptionable theory appears to be a good deal diluted by *political* opportunism. In recent years the Russian "Orthodox" Church appears to have received a semi-official recognition by the Soviet State. Moreover, in at least one of the "Peoples' Democracies" in Eastern Europe, in Hungary, religion appears to be officially subsidised by the State. In general, it would seem that the present tendency in the Communist States is to rely on scientific education rather than on special Freethought propaganda and to discourage special societies such as the former "League of Militant Atheists," which exist professedly for the propagation of anti-religious criticism. How far this policy actually militates

against religious beliefs is somewhat uncertain, thanks to the intervening folds of the "Iron Curtain"! According to a friend of the present writer who was recently in Moscow: whilst the churches are still full their congregations consist mostly of old people. A fact from which one may perhaps draw conclusions not unfavourable to Secularism.

Communism and Political Opportunism

It is common knowledge, and we hardly suppose that it is really necessary to remind Freethinkers of the fact, that political theory and political *practice* are not always identical. This recurring fact appears in relation to the current *practice* of Communism, as in other non-Communist régimes. There seems little doubt that considerations of a political nature have played some part in past and present relations between the Communist States and religious organisations. To take a current example, the present favour shown to the Orthodox Church by the Russian Government is, in part, at least, motivated by the persistent hostility of the Vatican, and the necessity for finding a *religious* antidote to its anti-Communist propaganda. Freethinkers will probably find Communist Totalitarianism a more serious obstacle than the, perhaps,

inevitable political opportunism of a recently-established régime. Must not "Freethought," to be really "Free," be *always* free from governmental supervision?

Communism and Religion

To conclude we may draw up a summary balance-sheet of the relations between Communism and Religion. As "non-political" Freethinkers, we exclude all political or economic points of controversy. Philosophically-speaking, it appears to be indisputable that the Marxist-Leninist theory may be classed as definitely antagonistic to religion; though not all Rationalistic critics of religion will agree with its primary emphasis on the *economic* factor. In practice, when in power, Communism has, perhaps, compromised between its own theories and political expediency. Perhaps, however, this is merely a *temporary* expedient. From a Freethinking point of view the most serious criticism that can be levelled against the Communist régimes lies in their tendency to extend the power of the State into questions of philosophy where, so far, its intervention has usually been disastrous. To be effective, Freethought requires autonomy. We hope that our Communist friends will eventually recognise the soundness of this point of view; and that we may eventually hope to see them again within the ranks of the World Union of Freethinkers.

Julian Huxley Speaks on Humanism and Science

AT a recent meeting of the Indianapolis Chapter of the American Humanist Association Prof. J. S. Huxley addressed some 300 laymen, scholars and scientists on "Evolutionary Humanism."

He said (according to the report in the *Liberal*, December, 1954) that what we know of the mechanism of evolution does not allow us to suppose any "Divine Plan"; nor does it provide any evidence for a personal God. He regarded gods and spirits as mere projections of our own subjective fears, wishes, fantasies, anxieties and insecurities into the outer world.

He said we were in an age of "religious crisis," in which the traditional religions were using every device to regain their former position, a situation which may prove either man's undoing or his golden opportunity. Dr. Huxley thought we were on the verge of the foundation of a new world religion (in a sense broad enough to be acceptable to most humanists, atheists, agnostics and freethinkers) which would be accepted scientifically, emotionally and philosophically.

Similarly unacceptable to the scientific humanist were Fascism and Communism, which replaced the mythical gods with the almighty State, views which could not be reconciled with the humanist position that the developed individual human personality is the *raison d'être* of political and economic institutions.

Ours, he said, was the first age in which man had developed a reasonably accurate picture of the universe and his part in it. A major task of science, he emphasised, lay in the future control of man's own evolution. We should be able to exercise insight into the direction of the evolutionary process in the future. Man was unique in being the only species, on this planet at least, which has thus far withstood the test of survival and has not been sidetracked into an evolutionary dead end. Man alone had developed the intelligence for comprehending his own nature, controlling his environment, creating beauty and determining his own destiny. This was a far more ennobling view of man than that provided by the religions of a helpless, depraved half-beast, half-angel incapable of achieving any

worthwhile goal without some imaginary "supernatural" assistance.

Anticipating the outraged protests of the fundamentalists who see in evolutionary theory a threat to the absurd doctrine of "special creation," Dr. Huxley explained at length the actual mechanisms of the evolutionary process. Evolution is made possible by the complementary processes of self-copying or replication (which tends to stabilise heredity through countless reproductive cycles) and self-variation by means of mutation, interbreeding and other means, whereby variations are introduced which breed true. Following the operation of these mechanisms, the process of Darwinian natural selection, or differential survival of variations, directs the evolution of life forms either into stabilised deadends, such as horses, ants, birds, etc., or into channels where further development is still possible, as in man.

Human biological evolution has nearly reached its limits. Cultural and psychological evolution has only barely got under way.

Dr. Huxley explained that he regarded himself neither as an optimist nor a pessimist, but as a meliorist, holding that man *may* build a better world under certain conditions. The old gods and spirits were merely the figments of primitive imagination, of some use during the childhood of our race, but only of historical interest in an age where science is the vanguard of knowledge. The old rituals were childhood games, and prayers merely childish jibberish.

SUNDAY

Sunday to the godly is a day of low tones, its minutes go muffled by; to the children of the godly it is an eternity. To the ungodly it is a day jeopardised by an interest in barometers that is almost too poignant. To one man it is an interruption of the week, to another it is the week itself, and all the rest of the days are but preparations for it.—E. V. LUCAS.

NEXT WEEK

SIR ARTHUR KEITH (1866-1955)

AN ESTIMATE

By G. H. TAYLOR

The Colour Problem in Britain

By COLIN McCALL

I HAVE just seen a newspaper report of a well-attended meeting held in Kendal on November 17, 1954, when the President of the Methodist Conference, the Rev. W. Russell Shearer, spoke about the colour problem here and abroad. It was causing many difficulties in our large cities, said Mr. Shearer, and he referred to his home town of Birmingham which now has 40,000 coloured workers. "We have got to face the fact," he continued, "that this problem is now present in Britain in an acute form, and we Christian people have to take the lead in treating everyone, whatever his colour, as one of God's children."

There is little to disagree with in the first half of this quoted statement. An influx of immigrants obviously creates a problem in a country of our size and population. But the arrival of coloured workers brings no more difficulties, economically, than that of, say, Irish workers. The fact that one group is distinguishable by its different colour of skin does affect the matter—makes the problem more "acute," if you like—but it should not be allowed to retard rational thought and action. The problem of colour as such is, I insist, an artificial problem rather than a natural one. By that I mean that the obstacles to be surmounted are social and not biological. They are part of what Dr. M. F. Ashley Montagu has called "man's most dangerous myth—the fallacy of race."

The second part of the statement under review is sweet sounding and little more. At most it provides a silly reason for sane action. In practice it has by no means always proved effective. True, some Christians have stood out nobly against South African *apartheid* (the Rev. Michael Scott springs immediately to mind), but others have given it their support. Dr. Malan is a devout Christian of the Dutch Reformed Church, and his successor, Mr. Hans Strijdom even more so.

The facts upon which we should base our opinions on "racial"—as in other—matters must be derived from scientific study; other sources are useless. And Mr. Shearer's religiously sentimental plea for equal treatment of coloured people stops short at inter-marriage. The President of the Methodist Conference seems to advocate *apartheid* in marriage: God's black children shall not marry his white ones! Of course, Mr. Shearer is not alone in holding such a view: if he were it would scarcely be worth noticing. It is because it is widespread, and fallacious, that it deserves our attention.

It needs to be stated quite plainly that there is no valid biological objection to inter-marriage between a negro and a white, or between members of other different ethnic groups, providing that both parties are of healthy stock. The notion that half-bloods (or half-castes) are physiologically inferior to their parents is mistaken; indeed, the truth is quite the reverse, as many anthropological statistics show. Hybrid vigour or *heterosis*, long well known to biologists, is likewise common in the case of man.

Investigations of American Indian-white mixtures dispel the popular illusion of the "half-breed" that emerges from the novels of our childhood. Professor Franz Boas's pioneer study (1894) showed that the half-blood Indian was taller and more fertile than the parental Indian and white stocks, and subsequent research has confirmed this in many areas of North America ranging from Northern Ontario to Yucatan. The famous crossings of the English "Bounty" mutineers with Tahitians on Pitcairn and Norfolk Islands afford fascinating and valuable data. They were notable for an extremely high rate of increase averaging 11.4 children per female on the former, and 9.1 on the latter

island from the initial unions. A large proportion of these hybrids were long-lived and they had unusually long-lived descendants. Dr. H. L. Shapiro, who studied both groups, found "a physical vigour and exuberance which equals if not surpasses either parent stock . . . (and) continues even after five generations"; a vigour which "applies also to their social structure, which on Pitcairn was not only superior to the society instituted by the Englishmen themselves, but also contained elements of successful originality and adaptability." In the absence of colour-bar, Maori-white marriages have proved particularly successful in New Zealand, and even in Australia, under very unfavourable social conditions, aboriginal-white crossings have had beneficial results (Report of Dr. Cecil Cook, Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Northern Territory of Australia, 1933). The islands of Hawaii in mid-Pacific have a mixed ethnic population, many different types having satisfactorily crossed with the native Polynesians.

Negro-white unions have been taking place for millenia, without the degeneration that popular belief would presage. In Brazil and Cuba hundreds of years of inter-marriage have been valuable, biologically and socially. As for South Africa, J. P. Lötzy and W. A. Goddijn made *Voyages of Exploration to Judge of the Bearing of Hybridization upon Evolution* (1928) and investigated crosses between Bushmen, Basutoes, Fingoes, Kaffirs, Mongoloids, Indians, whites, etc. Their evidence reveals hybrid vigour and often strikingly beautiful types due to the crossings. Perhaps the most extreme of all negroid-white mixtures was that of Dutch and German peasants with Hottentots, the descendants of which are the Rehoboth Bastards of South Africa numbering about 3,000. As Dr. Montagu has remarked: "If disharmonies were likely to occur anywhere, we should expect to find them here; the fact is, however, that the Bastards are an admirably and harmoniously developed people who show all the evidences of hybrid vigour most strikingly. They are taller than their parental stocks and considerably more fertile."

If space permitted, many other instances might be given of beneficial interbreeding between variant ethnic types. Instead, let me quote from the statement issued by the Unesco Committee of Experts on Race Problems on July 18, 1950. After indicating that race-mixture has been going on from earliest times, it reads:—

"Furthermore, no convincing evidence has been adduced that race-mixture of itself produces biologically bad effects. Statements that human hybrids frequently show undesirable traits, both physically and mentally, physical disharmonies and mental degeneracies, are not supported by the facts. There is, therefore, no 'biological' justification for prohibiting intermarriage between persons of different ethnic groups." (*Unesco Courier*, July-August, 1950.)

What "justification" can there be then? The answer is: none that is valid. Dr. Oliviera Lima, the Brazilian statesman, said that "In South America our experience of centuries has taught us that there is no real understanding except the one that comes through the fusion of races." That, surely, is the basis on which to build our future world. It is the conclusion reached by the wise statesman and the scientific anthropologist. Here, as always, it behoves us to ignore the religionist.

This Believing World

Rarely has the most ignorant Fundamentalism been so rampant as during this last Christmas. The way in which public men and women let themselves go blithering about Angels, and Heavenly Hosts, and the Three Wise Men, following a Star, and all the credulous nonsense which the supposed Birth of the Babe of Bethlehem brought into being, was fantastic. The Babe was already the Saviour of the World before he had time to blink his first eyelid; and with it all the Churches could sit back and smile.

Just as one example. The "Daily Express," with its four million circulation, weighed in with a leader which would be hard to beat for sheer superstition and ignorance. The Bible was "the best-seller" of all time—though if there is one stark fact about it, it is that nobody reads the Bible except for a few pages. There is not the slightest doubt, according to the *Daily Express*, that "the angel appeared before Mary and told her she was chosen to be the Mother of God." If this does not represent gullibility at its most gullible, we should like to know what does?

And just as silly is the "Express" statement that the "angel brought Joseph warning" that Herod was going to kill all the children in Bethlehem thus enabling the father or the reputed father of the Babe to hop it in safety to Egypt. Do even our Archbishops believe in the reality of these "angels"? We doubt it. How many of them believe in Jesus as God Almighty, or in the Virgin Birth, or even in a "physical" Resurrection? How many of them really believe in "miracles"? Except at Christmas and Easter, they mostly represent Jesus as a kind of super Sunday-school teacher going about "doing good."

What distinguishes Christmas from some of the other Christian feasts—and most people know that it is just as much a Pagan feast—is that, while they sing Hosannahs like the Heavenly Choir, and Good Will towards Man, they indulge in the most terrible slaughtering of poor "birds" imaginable to give us a "happy" Christmas. How could the Birth of the Babe be better celebrated than by this wholesale slaughter? It is enough to make even Cain, the first murderer, who was a vegetarian, turn in his grave.

Our American contemporary "Progressive World" for December has, we note, a small critique of Professor Toynbee's monumental Study of History, and naturally has "no sympathy whatever with his 'philosophy' or his religious sentiments," and asks, "In whose actions does God, as Toynbee conceives him, reveal himself? In Hitlerism, Fascism, rank materialism, lip service to ideals?" The juxtaposition of "rank" Materialism with the other "ideals" is delightful. What exactly is "rank" Materialism? Is it the same as, or a cousin of, "blatant" Materialism? As *Progressive World* is rather inclined to favour Dialectical Materialism, this may be the explanation; but if not, may we ask to have "rank" Materialism clearly defined?

That doyen of musical critics, Mr. Ernest Newman—and 60 years ago or so he was a big name in our own movement—had a provocative article recently in the *Sunday Times* on "Lost Ritual Music." He points out that the triumph of Christianity over its rivals was never an easy one for the religion of Mithras and that of Isis and Horus "had a huge following." They lasted for centuries, and perhaps a good deal of the music of early Christianity was, like so much of their ritual and beliefs, taken over by the new religion. The music of these "Pagan" religions, says

Mr. Newman, "may have been silently absorbed into the music of the Church."

Thus, the more one goes into the history of Christianity, especially when untrammelled by Christian beliefs, the more one finds "Paganism" not merely in its beliefs, in its theology, and in its ritual, but also in its music. "It is quite absurd to assume," concludes Mr. Newman, "that organised music did not begin until the Christian Church shaped its own marvellous liturgy and adorned it with music no less marvellous." Is there anything new in Christianity?

What is God?

MAURICE MAETERLINCK.—The universe is "That which we might just as well call God." (*The Magic of the Stars.*)

DR. A. K. ROGERS.—God is "Universal Consciousness." (*Modern Philosophy.*)

PROF. R. H. DOTTERER.—"God is goodwill, and wherever goodwill is, there is God, too." (*Philosophy.*)

PROF. JOHN MACMURRAY.—God is "Infinite Personality," "the ultimate synthesis of matter and spirit, nature and man." (*Christianity and the Social Revolution.*)

PROF. J. E. BOODIN.—The universe is a super-organism and God is "the spirit of the whole."

PROF. DURANT DRAKE.—"God is the universal self in each of us." (*Contemporary American Philosophy.*)

PROF. ZIEHEN.—God is "the totality of laws." (*Groundwork of Religious Philosophy.*)

DR. S. H. MELLONE.—The word God "becomes a name for the infinite system of law." (*God and the World.*)

PROF. S. ALEXANDER.—God is "a speculative possibility to which we give shape in anticipation." (*Space, Time and Deity.*)

PROF. R. A. MILLIKAN.—". . . nature, or a God, whichever term you prefer." (*Science and the New Civilisation.*)

J. LANGDON-DAVIES.—God is "the sum total of the universe in all its aspects." (*Science and Common Sense.*)

TWO COMMENTS

PROF. W. R. SORLEY.—"The religious idea of God was taken over by philosophy without question." Philosophers should therefore "be aware of its real origin before using it." (*Moral Values.*)

CHAPMAN COHEN.—"God enters into philosophy only when it is beginning to lose caste in its proper home." (*Theism or Atheism.*)

VERDICT

BERTRAND RUSSELL.—"The whole conception of God is derived from the ancient oriental despotisms. It is a conception quite unworthy of free men." (*Why I am not a Christian.*)

G.H.T.

LEAVING IT TO GOD

Dr. William Osler, having been invited to inspect a famous London hospital, was proudly shown about by several physicians and surgeons. Finally the charts were reached, and he looked them over carefully, observing the system of abbreviations: SF for scarlet fever, TB for tuberculosis, D for diphtheria, and so on. All diseases seemed to be pretty well under control except one indicated by the symbol GOK.

"I observe," said the famous doctor, "that you have a sweeping epidemic of GOK on your hands. This is a symbol not in common use in American medical circles; just what is GOK?"

"Oh!" one of his hosts lightly replied, "when we can't diagnose, God Only Knows."—QUOTED BY WALTER NEALE IN "LIFE OF AMBROSE BIERCE."

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE. By Chapman Cohen. A Criticism of Professors Huxley, Eddington, Jeans and Einstein. Price, cloth 4s. 3d.; postage 3d.; paper 2s. 6d.; postage 2d.

THE FREETHINKER

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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.

A. BROCKLEHURST.—It was a sceptical cleric who told Footo he had "seven reasons for staying in the Church; my wife and six children."

F. NADEN.—There is no "nation of atheists" on earth. Atheism cannot be nationalised; it is reached by individual thought. To call any country "atheist" is an unwarranted statistical conjuring trick.

FRANK HOUGH.—The R.C. Church waited about two centuries before accepting the earth as round. Like the man of 85 who ran away from home because he could stick it no longer, they didn't want to do anything rash.

J.H.J.—The Freethought movement has distinct aims and cannot, as a body, spend money and time on every worthy cause.

CHAS. N. writes, "After reading *The Freethinker* for six months I am of opinion that it is better to be damned standing up than saved kneeling down."

C. W. BROOKS.—Thanks for suggestion. We hope to publish an article on Luther.

PETER LIVESY.—The process of dismissing an Archbishop would be so difficult that we cannot imagine it being attempted, at least under a monarchy.

F. BAILEY (SEN).—Glad to have your appreciation of Footo's *Shakespeare and other Essays*, and your opinion that "no better essay on Emerson has been written."

KEITH ROSE.—The Romans did not debar a slave from rising to a high office of state.

H.N.—Mohammedans claim there are animals in Heaven—including asses. And they know as much about Heaven as anyone.

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 week-

day, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead

Heath).—Sunday, January 16, 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).—Sunday, January

16, 6-45 p.m.: L. CORINA, "Obscenity; the Police and the Law."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,

W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 18, 7 p.m.: H. J. BLACKHAM, B.A.,

"Either—or; the False Dilemma and the Necessary Choice."

Junior Debating Group (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—

Friday, January 21, 7-15 p.m.: J. PLATTS-MILLS, "Has Russia

Contributed to Peace."

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—

Sunday, January 16, 6-30 p.m.: VICTOR E. NEUBERG (N.S.S.),

"Ballad Sheet to Comic Strip."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College,

Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, January 16, 2-30 p.m.: Rev. C. W.

HARRINGTON, "Racialism; the Voice of the Church."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,

W.C.1).—Sunday, January 16, 11 a.m.: D. G. MACRAE, M.A.,

"Religion as a Sociological Concept."

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place,

Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, January 16, 7-15 p.m.: E.

HILLMAN, "Jewish Heresies."

ROBERT TAYLOR. The Devil's Chaplain (1784-1844). By

H. Cutner. A detailed account of a remarkable Free-

thinker and his work. Price 1s. 6d.; postage 2d.

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £695 8s. 5d.: D. Chapman, £1; W.H.D., 5s.; W. H. W. Ballast, £1 1s.; Another C.C., 6s.; Mrs. D. Behr (South Africa), £1; W. A. Butson, 10s.; E. Cook, 5s.; Mackay and Trendell, 5s.; A. Hancock, 1s.; E. Henderson, £1; C. Jones, 6s.; F. Brooks, 2s.; R. C. Bossomaier, £2; Mrs. S. E. Hassell, 15s.; T. Benton, 5s.; F. Metcalfe, £1; N. R. Hawker, 2s. 6d.; R. Aksed, 18s. 6d.; H. Irving, 4s.; T. Paterson, 2s. 6d.; J. Arthur, 8s. 3d. Total to date: £707 5s. 2d.

Donations should be sent to "The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund" and cheques made out accordingly.

Mr. Frederick E. Papps writes:—

It would be a disaster if, for financial reasons, the good old *Freethinker* had to cease publication. Such would, of course, be the occasion of much jubilation in the religious camp. I do hope that all of us who value the mental freedom which knowledge brings will rise as generously to the occasion as the religious dupes rise to their churches' demands. *The Freethinker* ought to be displayed on newsagents' counters as openly as religious journals. I definitely think newsagents are afraid, and that pressure is exerted by the religionists. Religion is based on fear, and inculcates this fear in all its ramifications. Even some freethinkers are afraid of the consequences that might follow a display of courage. Their challenge to religious beliefs should be heard more, seen more and lived more. I am an old age pensioner, and shall spare a bit of the promised rise for the memorial fund, and hope those heretics who are blessed with a healthier income will take note and act accordingly.

Notes and News

This issue contains an advertisement of the N.S.S. Dinner to which all readers are welcome up to the limited capacity of the Oxford Corner House. The Guest of Honour is Mr. Adrian Hope Brunel, F.R.G.S., F.R.P.S., best known to our movement for his enthusiastic admiration of the great freethinker, Thomas Paine. A wider public recognises him as the outstanding film director responsible for *While Parents Sleep*, *The Constant Nymph*, *Blighty*, *Variety*, *The City of Beautiful Nonsense*, *The Crooked Billet*, *The Vortex*, *The Man Without Desire* and *Badgers Green*.

We extend the heartiest welcome to two new members of the Executive of the N.S.S., Major C. Draper and Mr. H. Arthur. Throughout his notable army career Major Draper made no secret of his strong and militant atheist views, with, of course, the inevitable trouble from time to time. His indoor lecturing for the N.S.S. has met with great appreciation both in London and the provinces. Mr. H. Arthur has now had his first full season of outdoor speaking and is already regarded as a great asset. We wish both gentlemen a long, useful and happy association with the National Executive.

Among *The Freethinker* articles which have recently been reprinted in overseas freethought journals, one by P. V. Morris on "The Pope and Sex" was used as the front-page article of the October issue of the New Zealand *Rationalist*.

A request has been received from the instructors of the Philosophy and Religion course at Denison University (Ohio) to use passages from Chapman Cohen's *Materialism Re-stated*. The work is obtainable from the Pioneer Press at 5s. 3d., plus postage.

REVIEW

"Science in History"—1

By H. CUTNER

Science in History by J. D. Bernal. Watts & Co. 1954. 967 pages. 42s. net.

TO deal with any book containing nearly 1,000 pages is not easy, but in the case of one covering the impact of science on our known history it is bound to be supremely difficult when limited to one or two articles only.

Moreover, while Prof. Bernal is a well known scientist in a particular field, he has cast his net into other fields and those of us who there profoundly disagree with him are bound as a result to have our criticism influenced perhaps against him. For example, in *Aspects of Dialectic Materialism* he shows that he is a bitter opponent of "mechanical" Materialism—and, of course, he has every right to be so if he feels that way. But what he says about it is—so it seems to me—to be as far from the truth as anything said by a devout Christian.

He writes: "The world view of the mechanical materialist is distorted as a result of . . . a dangerous ignorance; the simple materialist invokes God, but in a way so indirect that he is unconscious of the fact. . . . Mechanical materialism suffers from another defect; while it is ostensibly based on science, it is really based on a mythological abstraction from science, a reduction of all the universe to a number of separate abstract categories: space, time, matter, motion." And so on. Prof. Bernal as an out-and-out Dialectical Materialist is bound to oppose "mechanical" Materialism—otherwise there would be no necessity for his own creed. But it is difficult to imagine even a simple and pious Christian to write so stupidly as to say "the simple materialist invokes God. . . ." It is just the kind of thing which prompted the *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer of *Science in History* to quote a long passage and then comment: "It would be hard to find eight other sentences in which so much rubbish is condensed."

The truth is that when Prof. Bernal goes to his scientific and historical authorities without comment, he can no doubt be relied upon to give us the facts. As soon as he tries to explain these or other things from the point of view of a convinced Dialectical Materialist, his opinion is worth no more than that of any professor dealing with something outside his own science. Sir William Crookes was a great analytical chemist, but when he tried to use his reputation as such to bolster up his childish credulity in Spiritualism, relying as he did on fraudulent mediums, he is simply laughed out of any intellectual court.

What I felt as I read the first few hundred of the packed pages of *Science in History* was that the author was really not very interested in telling us about the Stone Age, or classical culture, for instance, though it had to be done. What he wanted to get "across" his readers was the much later impact of Marx and Marxism, not in Science as such, but in Social Science entirely from the Marx-Lenin and Russian point of view. There he could let himself go and justify "science" as absolutely Marxist.

Yet, what a chance he has missed to give students the Encyclopedia of Science we could all do with. For example, I want to know exactly what made Lavoisier one of the great men of science of the eighteenth century, as well as why he was "executed" by the French Revolutionaries. Reading for myself about it, I came to the conclusion that it was a foul murder of the worst kind, quite as foul as that of poor André Chenier. What does Prof. Bernal say? He is bound to deal with Lavoisier, with whom, he tells us, the name of Priestley "is indissolubly linked." Lavoisier

was "extremely competent and confident." He was rich and was thus able to buy "a place in the *Ferme Générale*, the small and immensely rich corporation that collected taxes for the king. He could not foresee that it was to cost him his head." Prof. Bernal adds: "His prosecution together with other Farmers-General was not directed against him personally, still less against science." This is clear enough, yet what are the facts? Let me quote Carlyle:—

Lavoisier, famed chemist, shall die and not live: Chemist Lavoisier was Farmer-General Lavoisier too, and now "all the Farmers-General are arrested"; all, and shall give an account of their moneys and incomes; and die for "putting water in the tobacco" they sold. Lavoisier begged a fortnight more to finish some experiments: but "the Republic does not need such"; the axe must do its work.

If Carlyle is to be believed then, the "Republic" was not merely against the Farmers-General "personally," it was against Lavoisier as a scientist—his experiments were "not needed"; and what Prof. Bernal says is categorically denied by Carlyle. From what I have read elsewhere, I agree entirely with Carlyle and not with Prof. Bernal.

What he has to say about Bruno is, of course, quite right—Bruno "was a martyr not so much to science as to freedom of thought, for he made neither experiments nor observations, but insisted to the end on his right to draw what conclusions he chose from the facts of science."

Prof. Bernal makes a special point of the fact that Bruno was not an *experimental* scientist; he could have said the same of Marx but does not. Marx, in fact, "brought Hegelian logic to bear on the struggle of the classes of his own time" and was "thus enabled to explain the inner dynamic of all social movements." The "all" is the operative word.

And, of course, as a Marxist, Prof. Bernal can hardly mention the Population Question without the usual sneer at "parson" Malthus—just like the Christian sneer at "Tom" Paine. He points out that "the hungry forties" was "a very suitable time" to help Darwin to understand how the Malthusian theory could be applied to Evolution. In any case, declares Prof. Bernal, in the light of the "enormous extension of civilisation—agriculture and industry together," all "the talk of the danger of overpopulation appears all the more clearly as reactionary nonsense." This is the kind of *obiter dictum* which made the *T.L.S.* reviewer declare that often "some evil genius jogs his (Prof. Bernal's) elbow" to "treat the reader to a dissertation on the economic significance" of some facts, and to give us a "long and dreary section on the so-called social science in which the cloven hoof of Marxism is openly displayed." Facts are facts, and opinions are opinions, but somehow—as is shown in the nonsense quoted above on Malthusianism—Prof. Bernal thinks his opinions are facts when they are nothing of the kind.

FREETHINKING

No one can be a great thinker, who does not recognise that as a thinker it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead. Truth gains even more by the errors of one, who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think. Not that it is solely, or chiefly, to form great thinkers, that freedom of thinking is required. On the contrary, it is as much and even more indispensable, to enable average human beings to attain the mental stature which they are capable of.—JOHN STUART MILL.

An "Intellectual" Parson

By P. VICTOR MORRIS

THE Very Reverend Walter Robert Matthews, K.C.V.O., D.D., D.Lit., Dean of St. Paul's, preaches a different kind of religion from the crude revivalism of the Reverend Billy Graham. Apart from the fact that both kinds are labelled Christianity, they have nothing in common. On second thoughts I must amend this statement, since they both appear to be profitable pursuits. We have heard a great deal about the £5,000 a year the American Bible-thumper receives for his antics, but there is little doubt that Dr. Matthews enjoys rewards of a considerably higher value and more permanent nature in return for his services to the church of the Jesus who is said to have taught the blessedness of poverty and humility.

Deans of St. Paul's usually have somewhere, and somewhere of above-average comfort, to lay their heads. Their stipends rank among the plums to be gained in the Anglican Church. Their position is one of complete security, financial and social. They are admitted to exclusive circles and accorded honours almost everywhere they go. Dr. Matthews, for example, is a Member of the Senate of London University, an Honorary Bencher of Gray's Inn, a holder of decorations conferred by British and foreign monarchs and of honorary professorships and doctorates of Theology and Divinity bestowed by Universities abroad. As Dean of St. Paul's for over twenty years he is a fixed star in the religious firmament, across which, like a meteorite burning itself out, Dr. Graham may career for a short time. The latter will never achieve membership of "The Athenæum" as Dr. Matthews can claim to have done.

The Dean is also staff-theologian of the *Daily Telegraph*, to which paper he regularly contributes a Saturday-morning sermonette. That appearing on January 1 was typical of his manner, the title being "A Notion of Eternity." None of the Sin, Salvation and Biblical Prophecy stuff of Billy Graham here. Dr. Matthews' religion is of the philosophical kind, meaning that the average *Daily Telegraph* reader will not understand it, but will accept it on trust as "deep" and intellectually worthy of respect. The reader may then seek to gain credit by repeating the Dean's supposed profundities about "n + 1," "time and succession," "the Eternal Mind" and similar terms. It often works. Listeners put on an intelligent expression and nod their approval.

Dr. Matthews' article was actually a disgraceful performance, ignorant, illogical and incoherent. He began by citing a small boy who, knowing the first number, set out by counting to find the last one. Pursuing this research will, according to the Dean, bring the lad up against "the problem of time and succession and the fact that we cannot conceive the end of time or a minute which is the last of all." This is nothing more than the old priestly trick of creating a problem by asserting that there is one—like their "problem of evil." Time and succession are fundamental to existence and do not constitute any sort of problem. "The end of time" and "the last minute of all" are useless and meaningless terms unless applied (as is both useful and proper) to the end or the last minute of a specified period. Making useless and meaningless statements does not create real problems, but it can confuse uncritical minds. Is this what Dr. Matthews wishes to do in his articles?

Take this statement: "Since we are finite and limited beings, we perceive and feel and know one thing after another and our lives are made up of a succession of events." Here we get the entirely unjustifiable assumption that if we were infinite and unlimited beings our lives would not be made up of events succeeding each other. There is no logical or experimental reason why this should be so.

On the contrary, the only conception we have of an infinite and unlimited existence belongs to the all-inclusive Universe, and events demonstrably do succeed each other therein. Existence and time, therefore, are inseparable and interdependent whether the existence be regarded as finite or infinite.

Dr. Matthews concluded, nevertheless, that "we can conceive a mind and an experience for which time, succession, minutes and hours are irrelevant. In other words, we can conceive Eternity and can have some dim notion of the Eternal Mind." The Dean had done what he wanted! He had got round to his God from the small boy counting, but with what tricks of dubious argument and false logic! Even then, all he can claim is a "dim notion" of what he submits for our worship. Compare this pale apology he offers with Billy Graham's red-blooded God, that being whose acts, words and will we know by biblical revelation that disposes of all argument forever.

I really cannot rate the illustrious Dean's intellectual approach above that of the emotional one of the much-advertised Evangelist. Together they typify the low level on which modern religious propaganda is carried on in a world where the value of truth for its own sake has been undermined. Incidentally, the greatest influences in destroying respect for truth have been the organised religions.

Cornish Column

AN outcry was raised at a recent meeting of the Cornwall County Council. All its members were circularised with a duplicated extract from the Students' weekly magazine of a college at Exeter. One article dealt with the question as to whether men students should have women students in their rooms, and there was also the account of the opening of a bar at the college. Our Victorian councillors were upset. They were further shocked by a feature article in the magazine entitled "Logic and Christianity." The writer had enlightened his readers on God by stating that God was a middle-class Bank Clerk who had been unhappily married for fifteen years. Our Council should have called in Senator McCarthy for what followed. The article went on to say that "Christianity made for Government by violence, while the Bourgeois God had ordered unnaturalness by forbidding free love."

The Council makes an annual grant of £1,550 to the college, so Alderman Lane raised the Bolshevik Bogy and a motion that this grant should be stopped. It is a credit to other Council members that, after a debate, the motion was defeated.

* * *

A further example of Christian tolerance was shown when Councillor Ford urged that the writer of the article that referred to God should be expelled. When a witch-hunting councillor referred to an undercurrent in the Council he was rebuked by Alderman Ould, who advised him to remember that he was a servant of the Council and not its dictator.

* * *

The Rev. D. Holt states that from a class of 35 boys aged 13 to 16 only nine attended a place of worship, and—horror of horrors!—on being asked how many did not believe in the existence of God, 25 had put up their hands.

* * *

Visiting the agricultural parish of St. Keverne, the Bishop of Truro urged the assembled choirs to understand the

meaning of the words of their hymns. In view of the harvest still rotting in many fields around St. Keverne, the hymn "All is safely gathered in" would be a good one to start with.

* * *

The annual Civic Remembrance Service at Penzance recently was held at a Methodist Church. Then came an example of the Brotherly Love of Christians. The C. of E. Chaplain to the Penzance British Legion, who normally addresses the Service, failed to attend. The congregation was enlightened by the Methodist minister, who stated: We deeply regret to announce that Canon Buckley, who has served us so many years, cannot address us. He has been refused consent to do so by Canon Williams."

In a later service another clergyman attempted to cover this by saying that "Canon Williams did not forbid Canon Buckley to preach, but withheld his approval." After a Press and Council controversy as to the best venue for the service, it has been suggested that the next one should be held in a Secular hall.

* * *

In closing, if anyone is interested in assisting the work of Freethought or of forming a branch of the National Secular Society in S.W. Cornwall, I should be glad to hear from them through *The Freethinker* office.

D. J. CROWLE.

Correspondence

AGE OF THE EARTH

I showed "Science Front" to a Fundamentalist acquaintance of mine. He said the scientific age of the earth was quite wrong, because God had deliberately mixed up the geological layers in order to confound man's curiosity. Can you beat it!—Yours, etc., J. HUNTER.

[It is an aspersion on God's character, because geology is in many ways useful to man, supposedly His creation. Your Fundamentalist is therefore an unconscious blasphemer.—ED.]

THE STAGGERED BIRTH

The city of Nazareth did not exist when Jesus was living but was built long afterwards in order to prove the Bible story correct.

To fulfil the prophesy of Micah (V, 2), Matthew's Gospel has him born in Bethlehem, and says he was born in the days of King Herod. History tells us Herod died in 4 B.C. But Luke's Gospel says Jesus was born when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. According to history, Cyrenius became governor of Syria in A.D. 7. So Jesus was born either in or before 4 B.C., or in A.D. 7, or after.

Matthew and Luke contradict each other by at least eleven years. The Christian priesthood ignores such contradictions because business is business!—Yours, etc.,

K. LIDAKS.

HUMANISM

Mr. Taylor's review of Mr. Blackham's *Essentials of Humanism* would suggest that it might be possible for the various trends in Freethought to unite and co-operate more, while maintaining their own special approach. Though not a member of either the Ethical or Secularist bodies, I think both have much to commend them and it would interest me to hear your views of their difference in outlook.—Yours, etc.,

P. HINDE.

[Humanism, through the Blackham process, becomes a little more definable than hitherto, and begins to look more like a practical policy. Its end-product is distinguishable from Secularism in (a) omitting the latter's attack on religious institutions and practices, and (b) hoping to short-circuit that attack by substituting a new religion. Humanism, or Ethicism, appears less concerned with the piecemeal method of reformative down-to-earth practical objects, than with anticipating one great world-sweep that will absorb religious believers without hurting them, a prospect which seems to many of us to be excessively optimistic.—ED.]

UNITARIANISM

With reference to Mr. Morris' interesting article on "Unitarianism," quoting Belsham's book, he says: "They (Unitarians) 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." He goes on to say: "but one authorised to reveal to all mankind, without distinction, the doctrine of a future life. . . ."

This seems to contradict the previous statement about the purely human Jesus.—Yours, etc.,

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

[P.V.M. writes: I agree with Mr. Ratcliffe that the two halves of the quotation are hard for a Freethinker to swallow together, but he should not expect people who pride themselves on having a "rational religion" to strain at them.]

* * *

Points from Letters

Take the Bible as a history of man's search for truth, and you will find a lot of it is fiction in which there is much good symbolised.—T. R. CAREN.

If God is Thought, what language does he think in?—A. WADE.

If it is true that Dalai Lama has mysterious powers, and the Lamas of Tibet can do miracles, why didn't they use this supernatural knowledge to keep out godless Communism from their Holy Mountains?—K. LIDAKS.

Does the Archbishop really think "adultery" should not break up a marriage? The Church is not concerned with human love, but only with the "sacredness" of marriage. Bind them together till death doth them part, even though they murder their minds, and sometimes their bodies too.—RUPERT L. HUMPHRIS.

We of the white race must beware of the stored-up anger of the Eastern peoples in memory of the atrocities committed on them by such as General Gordon and his class.—PAUL VARNEY.

The God-belief springs from the integrated childhood trust in an invisible heavenly Father and Protector. With the coming of manhood and the experience of life this belief should be slipped out of, much as the butterfly emerges from the cocoon.—FRANK FARRELL.

W. LONDON BRANCH ANNUAL MEETING

The A.G.M. of the West London Branch of the N.S.S. was held on January 2, a good attendance being recorded. The Secretary reported a successful year in which the branch had gone from strength to strength. People who were not themselves N.S.S. members had frequently expressed the opinion that the N.S.S. had a finer team of outdoor speakers than any other organisation using the time-honoured Hyde Park speaking ground. Membership had increased, too, but Mr. O'Neill wanted to see non-speaking members, who supported the meetings, making greater efforts to persuade members of the vast audiences to join the Society. He also thought no effort should be lost in reclaiming members whose subscriptions had lapsed.

The officials were reappointed as follows: President, Mr. F. A. Hornbrook; Secretary, Mr. H. Cleaver; Treasurer, Mr. F. McKay.

A scheme is projected for the training of new speakers during the winter. Four have already intimated their interest in this, and others to whom the idea appeals are invited to get in touch, either with the Branch or through *The Freethinker*.

The N. London Branch, members of which were guests at the meeting, had worked in close co-operation in the supply of speakers for, and general support of, both the indoor and outdoor propaganda. G.H.T.

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