

The Freethinker

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AT the present time when all eyes are focussed on the Geneva Conference and the meeting of so many of the world's leading political figures at the Swiss metropolis, one of the current political problems which is nowadays attracting most attention is the problem of German reunion. The Russians have a pattern for a "free, united and democratic" Germany, so equally have the Western powers! These plans are common knowledge and it would be superfluous to add any further comment on them here, but there is also a third power, one also world-wide in character, which is at least equally interested in "The German problem," and which also has its own plan for a not so reunited Germany even though its own plan for German reunification and for a future German "Fourth Reich" (empire), does not, just at present, receive much public attention. The third power in question is the Roman Catholic Church, an at least semi-political organisation, the connection of which with German history and politics dates back for some twelve centuries.

The Vatican's Plan

Both the Western and the Soviet blocs visualize a Germany united East-West or *vice versa*, their unified Germany consists of the re-unification of the present artificial states of "Western Germany" and of the present *Deutsch Demokratischer Republik*—DDR for short! of Eastern, Communist-controlled Germany, the only real difference between these rival plans for a united Germany consists in the *method* of effecting "reunion." Conversely, the Catholic plan now in favour at the Vatican, has quite a different orientation, and one which dates to an historic era long anterior to both Democracy and Communism. The present pope, it must not be forgotten, was papal nuncio in Germany prior to his election (in 1939) as Pope, and he is surrounded by a clique of German Jesuits. Both the Pope and his advisers are well aware that, as the present writer has elsewhere expressed it, Germany is the "key to the future of Europe," in the grandiose world strategy, currently pursued by the Vatican with untiring energy, of which world power is the ultimate goal, the German policy of Pope Pacelli and his German Jesuits plays an important and significant role.

The "Holy Roman Empire"

In brief, the fundamental aim currently professed by the Vatican aims at the primary revival of the German "First Reich," the self-styled "Holy Roman Empire" which was founded by Charlemagne, with the support of the papacy, A.D. 800, and which was forcibly closed down by Napoleon who had his own designs for a new "Roman" Empire! Today, this millennial "Holy Empire" is chiefly remembered by the famous gibe of Voltaire, that the "Holy Roman Empire was neither 'Holy,' 'Roman,' nor an 'empire,' but that, otherwise, it was an excellent description!" However, this caustic description of the great French satirist was only true of the decay of that empire. In its long prime, the "Holy Empire," "The First Reich,"

as the Germans themselves style it, lasted a thousand years—a good deal longer than that of Adolf Hitler!—and was a powerful and much admired institution.

Towards a Catholic Germany

Germany was, of course, the original seat of the Reformation, and has been divided on religious lines ever since the end of the "Wars of Religion," which culminated in the terrible "Thirty Years War," 1618–48. Broadly speaking, the North and East are predominantly Protestant, the South and West still mainly Catholic, politically the "Second Reich," the Prussian-led empire of Bismarck and the Hohenzollern kings of Prussia, represented a fusion of the Protestant East with the Catholic West. Today it is precisely the Protestant areas which have gone to form the

Communist controlled DDR, whilst Western Germany, what the B.B.C. usually describes as "Germany"!—is predominantly Catholic, with a Protestant minority. This is the Germany of that very pious Catholic and Jesuitical politician, Herr Dr. Konrad Adenauer, the present German chancellor, the present "strong man" of German politics, and the present "blue-eyed boy," not only of Washington, but, perhaps even more so, of the Vatican.

Dr. Adenauer and the Future of Germany

At present, the *political* regime in "Western Germany" is one closely allied with and inspired by *political* Catholicism. When the present writer was in Germany last year, an all-German Catholic conference held at Fulda, the traditional headquarters of German Catholicism, was attracting wide attention even in the Protestant press. Dr. Adenauer himself is a former burgomaster (lord mayor) of the famous Catholic cathedral city of Cologne (Köln), and a former member of the old Catholic "Centre" party under the Kaiser. It is in the light of his close association with political Catholicism that the present chancellor's policy for German reunification must be considered. Briefly, neither the Vatican nor Adenauer *want* reunion with Eastern, formerly Protestant and now Marxist, Germany, that would be to tilt the balance of power in favour of Protestantism as it was tilted under Bismarck when "The Iron Chancellor" waged his celebrated *Kulturkampf* war of rival ideologies against political Catholicism at the period of Adenauer's birth. The Germany which Pacelli, Adenauer and Co., wish to see "reunited" is a *Catholic* Germany, as near as possible the Germany of the "First Reich" of the "Holy Roman Empire."

The Catholic Reunion of Germany

The Germany that Adenauer and Co. wish to see reunited, does *not* include the DDR—"Eastern" Germany—except perhaps later on, by a forcible "Drang nach Osten" ("drive to the East") in which the new German army could be profitably employed. *Their* Germany, their "Fourth Reich" follows as far as is possible in the modern world, the old boundaries of the "Holy Roman Empire." It would include besides present-day "Western Germany," Austria,

— VIEWS and OPINIONS —

The Holy

Roman Empire

— By F. A. RIDLEY —

the Saar, perhaps, eventually, Luxembourg and Alsace Lorraine, all these are overwhelmingly Catholic lands, and the reunited Germany at which Rome aims would be an overwhelmingly Catholic empire, the "Holy Roman Empire" of the 20th century!

Germany the Key to Europe

As is generally recognised on both sides of the "Iron Curtain," the future of Germany represents the decisive problem in current European politics—it is the key to Europe. This fact, which is common knowledge in both

Moscow and Washington, is, it goes without saying! well-known also in the corridors of the Vatican, the oldest, most cosmopolitan and most experienced political institution in the world. As we have seen, Rome also has its plan for a reunified Europe, led by its then most powerful state, a Catholic German Empire. In the present world-strategy of the Vatican as in that of both Washington and the Kremlin, Germany looms large, as viewed from Rome it represents a problem of profound significance for the religious, not less than for the political future of Europe.

Debunking the Bronze Lilies

By MALCOLM STUBBS

THE old-fashioned Evangelical was proudly showing his new colleague the military chapel. Its dingy respectability so impressed the younger man that he could only respond to the Evangelical's enthusiasm by repeating one of the texts which decorated the walls, "How dreadful is this place. . . ." Father O'Connell's book* should help to make many Roman Catholic churches less dreadful aesthetically. He is an acknowledged liturgical authority and knows what things ought to be done to make a church edifying. The church, he contends, is built primarily to house an altar and not a sacred image, however stimulating to the devotion of the faithful. That is the theme of this book.

What will fascinate the collector of liturgical pieces (or exasperate the free-lance who hates rubrical regimentation) is the insistence on seemingly trivial details which are, nevertheless, important since they add up to a dignified ceremonial. For example, the bench used by ministers in the sanctuary must not be covered with silk. That is reserved for prelates; lesser ones are to use a cloth covered bench instead. However, for the faithful, chairs are favoured rather than benches, although the latter may be a necessity in large churches. Yet, even then, they need not be dull. A foot-note suggests helpfully that "a green stain (not paint) of a suitable tint can be very beautiful and restful."

Father O'Connell is exacting. He rightly abhors the gaudy and theatrical. Pious objects are to "excite devotion" and not cause "scandal." Also, stage effects such as spot-lights and coloured lamps are to be studiously avoided. So are images of doubtful liturgical propriety. The section on images is indeed revealing of the care the Church takes to safeguard orthodoxy. Fr. O'Connell tells us that it is forbidden to expose for "public veneration" the blessed Trinity depicted with three heads or the Virgin of Sorrows " (permanently) clothed in black with a crucifix in her left hand." Nor is Mary's Heart to be depicted apart from her body; a replica of St. Joseph's heart is also forbidden to be venerated publicly. The inference seems to be that some of these devotions may be performed **privately** though. I did not know that "direct devotion" to the Holy Face is forbidden. ("It must be regarded as an aspect of devotion to the Passion.") This ruling is rather complicated because veneration of an **image** of the Holy Face is permissible.

A large part of the book is concerned with the altar and its furnishings. It seems that an altar may not be built in a bedroom or, according to modern use, be placed over a tomb. Even an altar correctly constructed and correctly sited must be "clothed" to be liturgically proper. "Does not an altar without a frontal," Fr. O'Connell asks, "depict Christ as permanently stripped of the members of

* *Church Building & Furnishing: The Church's Way. A Study in Liturgical Law.* J. O'Connell. London. Burns and Oates. 1955.

the Mystical Body?" But an over-dressed altar is just as galling. Quite curtly he states that artificial flowers were first made by nuns in the 13th Century. (They are, however, permissible "if made of silk.") Those nuns were the first to introduce flowers on the altar but, we are told "greater churches (cathedrals, collegiate and monastic churches) do not, as a rule, use flowers on the high altar at all." In this respect the plate facing page 76, of the high altar of the London Oratory does not serve the purpose of the book well; **bronze lilies** ornament the altar!

Altar candles are to be made from beeswax or, failing this, beeswax in "greater part or to a notable extent." Coloured or ornamented candles are not forbidden, though properly they are reserved for the Pope's Chapel. As for the altar carpet, it is to be comely but in no wise must it have a profane design and it must have "no sacred symbols to be trod upon!" The altar bell is to have a "robust" tone but "Indian gongs are not allowed." The Sacristy besides having all things necessary for due liturgical observance—if it claims to be well equipped—should possess "an umbrella stand" and a "reliable clock."

Fr. O'Connell is nothing if not liturgical minded. When he debunks he produces support from the appropriate authorities. Indeed, so many are the foot-note references to the decrees of the Congregation of Sacred Rites, the Directives of the German bishops on Sacred Art, and so on, that it is a relief to find that "there are no liturgical laws about heating a church."

SAID THE LILY TO THE ROSE

"I think Gardeners are immortal,"
Said the Lily to the Rose,
"They've attended to our family,
Fore ever I arose.
My father told me when alive,
A Gardener saw him born;
And treated him with love and care,
That lovely summer morn."

"I'm sure they are immortal too,"
Rose whispered with a sigh,
"Red Tulip that died yesterday,
Said Gardeners never die.
Oh no, the Gardeners never die,
And flowers must agree,
That Gardeners are immortal,
And are not like you or me."

PAUL VARNEY.

The smallest atom of truth represents some man's bitter toil and agony; for every ponderable chunk of it there is a brave truth-seeker's grave upon some lonely ashheap, and a soul roasting in Hell.

H. L. MENCKEN.

John Toland

(1670-1722)

By ELLA TWYNAM

JOHN TOLAND was one of the most brilliant and learned, one of the most daring, unorthodox and original in outlook of eighteenth century deists. He is credited with having been the first to use the term *Freethinker* by applying it to himself in advocating his principles.

Born of Roman Catholic parents at Redcastle, Londonderry, he was baptised Janius Junius; but at school this name caused such merriment that the master ordered him to be called John. In his Preface to *Christianity not Mysterious* he says that he was educated from the cradle in the grossest superstition and idolatry, and that (according to a later work) he was not sixteen when he became zealous against Popery. As a Protestant, he entered Glasgow College in 1687 and became an ardent student of the classics and learned in ancient and modern languages. During his three years there, he gained so great distinction that he was presented with highly commendatory letters of credit from the city magistrates eulogising him as a man and a scholar. It was at Edinburgh University that he obtained his diploma as Master of Arts in 1790. Later he went to Leyden, studied under Spanheim for about two years and became a sceptic.

On leaving Leyden he returned to England and went to Oxford, reading deeply in the Bodleian Library while at the same time continuing a long correspondence with Pierre Bayle (famous for his great *Dictionary*) and Le Clerc.

Toland's earliest work, *Christianity not Mysterious, or a Treatise showing that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to reason nor above it and that no Christian doctrine can properly be called a Mystery*, was written while at Oxford in 1695 and published the following year. It caused a great commotion, was condemned by the Lower House of Convocation, brought before Parliament as heretical and ordered to be burnt by the common hangman (Ninon).

It was in that year that poor Thomas Aitkenhead, only 18, was hanged in Edinburgh for blasphemy.

Toland returned to Ireland, but his book had reached there first and was being attacked by priests, parsons and ministers of all the Christian sects; those who most violently abused the author and denounced his propositions being rewarded with honours and signalled out for preferment. One notable instance was Peter Brown, Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, who wrote a scurrilous and vindictive attack with a pen steeped in vitriol, and was made Bishop of Cork. Toland was wont to declare it was he who made Brown a Bishop. The Irish House of Commons ordered the burning of the book and the arrest of the author; but Toland managed to return to London.

Here he wrote his *Apology*, giving an account of his conduct and vindicating himself from the aspersions and persecution of his enemies. In his *History of Freedom of Thought*, Professor Bury says:—

It was under the direct influence of Locke that Toland, an Irishman who had been converted from Roman Catholicism, composed a sensational book, *Christianity not Mysterious*. He assumes that Christianity is true, and argues that there can be no mysteries in it because mysteries, that is, unintelligible dogmas, cannot be accepted by reason. And if a reasonable Deity gave a Revelation its purpose must be to enlighten, not to puzzle. The assumption of the truth of Christianity was a mere pretence, as an intelligent reader could not fail to see. The work was important because it drew the logical inference from Locke's philosophy, and it had a wide circulation. It is characteristic of this stage of the struggle between reason and authority that the rationalists who attacked theology generally feigned to acknowledge the truth of the ideas which they were

assailing. They pretended that their speculations did not affect religion; they could separate the domains of reason and of faith; they could show that Revelation was superfluous without questioning it; they could do homage to orthodoxy and lay down views with which orthodoxy was irreconcilable. The errors which they exposed in the sphere of reason were ironically allowed to be truths in the sphere of theology. The medieval principle of double truth and other shifts were resorted to, in self protection against the tyranny of orthodoxy—though they did not always avail; and in reading much of the rationalistic literature of the period we have to read between the lines.

A ready writer, Toland was now congenially employed in writing a *Life of Milton* to be prefixed to Milton's *Prose Works*, the first collected edition with a portrait by Faithorne. The *Memoir* was later revised, enlarged, and separately published in 1699.

On appearance, this *Life* was denounced by Dr. Blackhall (later Bishop of Exeter) and Toland replied with his *Amyntor, or a Defence of Milton's Life*. This contained "a General Apology for all writings of this kind, a Catalogue of Books, attributed in primitive times to Jesus Christ, his Apostles, and other eminent persons, with several important remarks relating to the Canon of Scripture, and a Complete History of the Book entitled *Icon Basilike* proving Dr. Gauden and not King Charles I to be the author of it."

This exposition added fuel to the flames and *Amyntor* was denounced as heretical by the House of Convocation in London. Toland thereupon wrote and published *Two Letters* insisting that he should be heard in his own defence, and also *Vindicius Liberius* giving a complete account of the facts. And though he was always being denounced by priests and Jacobites, he was appreciated at his true worth by men of genius and culture. John Locke, who knew him well, has left on record his correspondence with his Irish friend.

Toland continued writing many political tracts for his powerful Whig patrons, and secured the interest of William III through having dedicated to him *The Art of Governing by Parties*; and later, his *Anglia Libera* was presented to the Princess Sophia. Toland was warmly welcomed at Court and presented with several gold medals. He was also a welcome guest at the Courts of Hanover and Berlin; and his *Philosophical Letters*, published in 1704, contain three inscribed to the Queen of Prussia under the designation of *Serena*.

In 1712 appeared his *Letter against Popery*, and in 1714, his *Funeral Elegy* after the death of Princess Sophia.

Toland's unique achievements among the pioneers in the world of Freethought make his theological works of inestimable value. Unfortunately, they have become extremely rare and costly because so many copies were burnt and they have never been re-published. Freethought societies and publishers have constantly reissued Voltaire and Paine, but have ignored Toland. No biography of Toland but the slight sketch of his life prefixed by R. Huddleston to his edition of Toland's *History of the Druids* and taken mostly from the short *Memoir* by des Maizeaux, published in 1726, has appeared; yet he aroused the admiration of d'Holbach (the famous author of *System of Nature*), for he translated Toland's *Letters to Serena* into French. This is not surprising, for according to Lange's monumental *History of Materialism* the Second Letter "handles the kernel of the whole question of Materialism." Two of the Letters dealt

(Concluded on next page)

This Believing World

In spite of the hundreds of thousands—or millions—of fully-believing Christians who went to hear Billy Graham, religion "as purveyed from hundreds of pulpits is glaringly inadequate" complains the Rev. L. Weatherhead. Obviously people will go to hear the adequate Billy but won't go to hear "inadequate" religion. Mr. Weatherhead has been made president of the Methodist Conference, and he now says that the "set-up" in the Methodist Church is "dying for lack of vigorous reorganisation"—in fact, he would like to close four out of five of Methodist churches.

But is Mr. Weatherhead sure that it is because of poor reorganisation that Methodism is dying? May it not be due to better education in schools—to the fact that nobody can square modern history and science with the puerile Christian story and its silly miracles? Wesley's Hell is as dead as Weatherhead's Heaven—education has killed both, and none of the methods of Methodism will bring either to life again.

In the land of Billy Graham all does not seem so well where religion is concerned. There is actually going to be a "heresy" trial among the Lutherans—enough to rouse Luther with another inkpot for the Devil. The Rev. George Crist has discovered he no longer believes in the Virgin birth, in the Resurrection, nor in the miracles of Christ and has had the temerity to say so. Mr. Crist is going to be tried by seven of his brethren in Christ and though boiling oil is expressly forbidden in these cases—wouldn't the seven brethren love to use it!

When the Gospel says, "Ye must be born again," it *must* be so and we are delighted to give our most blatant readers the proof. It appears that when his daughter, aged 24, died, Mr. J. Bell of Stevenston was told she was sure to come back to him in the form of a little bird. Well, this really happened, for Mr. Bell heard a tapping on his window and there, sure enough, was a green-lintle. It was immediately received as one of the family and understands when it is talked to—as indeed it ought to, being his own daughter. This should silence for ever those impudent unbelievers in Reincarnation and in Christian miracles—it is so thoroughly convincing.

A brilliant woman genius—religiously speaking—won an American Quiz prize of £11,400 for correctly naming the Twelve Apostles. The *Daily Express* calls it "easy money" but can anybody name correctly the Twelve Apostles? Could Billy Graham or the Pope or even a convert like Mr. Evelyn Waugh? The fact is nobody can name them, for the list as given in Matthew is not the same as that in Luke and both differ from the list given in Mark. And John doesn't name them at all. We would dearly like to see the winning list and have explained why it won.

So "the most famous haunted house in the world" is once again in the news. Before the late Harry Price discovered it was haunted—just as he discovered a talking mongoose—Borley Rectory has no reputation whatever for spooks. This has been proved up to the hilt. But as soon as Price saw there was a market for spooks, especially in a rectory—and a market for well-paid articles—it immediately

developed the most eerie happenings, with spooks complete, and now a Spiritualist called Philip Paul is most anxious to carry on the Price tradition.

Though Borley Rectory was burnt down sixteen years the spooks, being fire-proof, still carry on; and it is the business of Mr. Paul and some friends to see that they do. Already they are looking for "new manifestations" as that religious weekly, the *Sunday Graphic*, breathlessly declares; and, as an overwhelming proof, a thirteen-year-old boy, Terry Bacon, excitedly cried that he had seen in the local church some bright lights and heard the organ. After this, out-of-date sceptics should verily hold their heads well down in shame.

EXIT DEVIL, EXIT GOD

Stanley Hall has pointed out how much we have lost by eliminating the Devil from our theology. He is the inseparable Companion of God, and when faith in the Devil grows dim God fades away. Not only has the Devil been the Guardian of innocent pleasure, of the theatre, of dancing, of sports, Hall observes, but he preserved the virility of God. "Ought not we to rehabilitate and reinstall the Devil?"

There is much psychological truth in this contention, even for those who are not concerned, with Stanley Hall, for the maintenance of orthodox Christian theology. By eliminating one of the Great Persons from our theology we not only emasculate, we dissolve it. We cannot with impunity pick and choose what we will dispense with and what we will preserve in our traditional myths. Let us take another sacred myth, as it may well have been, "Jack and the Bean Stalk." Suppose that our refined civilized impulses lead us to reject Jack, the reckless, mischievous, and irresponsible youth, who, after a brief but discreditable career on earth climbed up into the clouds and fraudulently deprived the Great Giant in the sky of his most precious possession. But if the revolted moral sense rejects Jack, is it likely that even the Great Giant himself will long retain our faith?

HAVELOCK ELLIS (*Impressions and Comments*).

John Toland

(Concluded from page 235)

with the philosophy of Spinoza which Toland considered "was without any solid foundation." For Toland, "Motion is essential to Matter no less than Extension, and Matter, neither ever was nor ever can be, a sluggish, dead, and inactive lump, or in a state of absolute repose."

In 1705, appeared his *Socinism Truly Stated*, and in 1709 his *Origines Judaicae*. But it was his *Nazarenus or Jewish Gentile and Mahometan Christianity* which roused so great and acrimonious a controversy that the first edition was soon exhausted. In answer to his vitriolic defamers, Toland issued *Mangoneutes* in 1720, and a very angry discussion ensued.

Toland's last important work was *Pantheisticon or the Form of Celebrating the Socratic Society*. His health had been precarious for some years, and he died in 1722 leaving a number of his pamphlets and other manuscripts to be posthumously published.

Needless to add, Toland made many friends of contemporary deists like Bolingbroke, Shaftesbury, and Molesworth; and Voltaire, through his visit to England, was both familiar and highly appreciative of his work. It is indeed sad to think so little is known of it.

—NEXT WEEK—

"BELIEF AND UNBELIEF SINCE 1850"

By H. CUTNER

THE FREETHINKER

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Telephone: Holborn 2601.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s. (in U.S.A., \$3.50); half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

To Correspondents

SOSPAN FACH.—See *Freethinker*, July 1st., Notes and News. More figures later.

E. A. SIDMONS.—There was no "minister at Ingersoll's death bed." He didn't even have a death bed. He died in his chair, his last words (to his wife) being "Better now." This was immediately before the end.

Lecture Notices, Etc.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Every Sunday, 7 p.m.: F. ROTHWELL.
Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Every Sunday at 8 p.m.: J. W. BARKER and E. MILLS.
Manchester Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday, 3 p.m., Platt Fields: 7.30 p.m., St. Mary's Blitzed Site: Speakers, Messrs. McCALL, MILLS, or WOODCOCK. Every weekday, Deansgate Blitzed Site, 1 p.m.: G. A. WOODCOCK.
Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Pierhead).—Every Wednesday and Sunday at 8 p.m. Messrs. PARRY, THOMPSON, and other speakers.
Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Every Friday at 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.
North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY and H. ARTHUR.
West London Branch N.S.S.—Every Sunday at the Marble Arch from 4 p.m.: Messrs. RIDLEY, EBURY, O'NEILL and WOOD.
The Freethinker on sale at Marble Arch.

The Memorial Fund

I AM pleased to be able to fulfil my promise to make an annual contribution of £2 0s. 0d. to the above fund as long as my circumstances permit, but I am disappointed that the £1,000 mark has not yet been reached.

When I wrote my appeal for the *Freethinker*, I suggested that a group of subscribers might make the promise of an annual or periodical subscription of a fixed amount as long as the need remained, in order to give some idea of the support that could be expected and I would like to know if there is much response to the idea.

I think, it would be only right at this stage to let subscribers know, how far their efforts are succeeding in meeting the need for which the fund was established, or if it remains necessary to spur on others to emulate their good example.

LEN EBURY, Vice-President, N.S.S.

Notes and News

Mrs Margaret Knight will be the guest of honour at the Annual Reunion of South Place Ethical Society at Conway Hall on September 25th. After a social meeting, Mrs. Knight will address the members and the public in the large hall in the evening.

The B.B.C. has recorded and will probably broadcast in the Home Service programme two discussions between Christians and Humanists on "God" and "Christ." Professor A. G. N. Flew and H. J. Blackham speak for the Humanists in the first and Hector Hawton in the second. The B.B.C. still fights shy of Freethinkers. Perhaps this is the best compliment they can pay us.

The Chapman Cohen Memorial Fund

Previously acknowledged, £892 7s. 2d.; Mr. Brandon, 10s.; Mr. Jescer, 5s.; F. Muston, 7s. 6d.; A. Hancock, 1s.; T. H. Derrett, 7s. 6d.; E. J. Hughes, 5s.; Wm. MacKee, 5s.; W.H.D., 5s.; T. Benton, 10s.; M. Byrn for "On to the Thousand" £1; H. Rowsby, £1; J. Toudic, 5s. Total to date, £897 8s. 2d.

Will Freethinkers in the Lockerbie, Dumfries and Carlisle area who are interested in the formation of a new branch of the N.S.S. please communicate with us?

Vitalism in Retreat

By G. H. TAYLOR

VITALISM is the rival of Materialism in the realm of science. It asserts that the advance from lower to higher (i.e. more complex) forms cannot be explained without the hypothesis of a Life Principle at work, operating on matter.

The history of controversy shows that one vitalist position after another has had to be abandoned. But apparently so long as one problem remains unsolved the Vitalist is ready to claim it as his territory. The last resort of the Vitalist is to the magnitude of our ignorance. As science daily finds more and more problems to tackle the vitalist comes along and demands from the materialist a complete circle of knowledge. Embedding himself in the sanctuary of the unknown, the vitalist sees the gaps in our knowledge gradually closing in on him, so that in time he may even be contending that he never intended mind to be taken as a sign of the Vital Principle. In the fact that materialistic science is in its infancy lies the false security of its opponent. Hogben well appreciates this point: "The controversy between writers of the mechanist and vitalist schools has too often focussed attention on whether a complete solution of the nature of life can be found in the mechanistic framework," but "we have not to disprove that a thunderstorm comes when a blue unicorn sneezes on Uranus, but to show that other ways of treatment give more useful conclusions." (1).

Why should we, confronted with a new problem, introduce an unknown force of the kind which has always had to be discarded in the past in the face of a known and measurable factor with calculable sequence of causation? Both the materialist and the vitalist produce an unknown, but whereas the latter introduces a principle beyond analysis the former supposes the operation of factors and conditions of the natural kind known, and looks for further modes of their behaviour, further calculable functioning of the type known and so successfully investigated, and of which our knowledge is daily increasing. The vitalist is guilty of bringing in a fanciful, unexplored and unexplorable agency about which nothing is known, and which has always been rendered superfluous in the light of increased knowledge.

The history of vitalism is therefore highly relevant, and the story of the abandonment of vitalist, in favour of mechanist, interpretations would be a theme in itself. In 1909 Prof. Reinke contended that "It would be a waste of time for a chemist to try to change carbonic acid into sugar in the laboratory in the same way as the reaction goes on by itself in the plants." (2) Shortly afterwards biochemistry had taken the first step towards it in Prof. B. Moore's production of formaldehyde by exposing a tube of water and carbonic acid to the action of the light from a mercury vapour lamp. Subsequently Baly transformed the formaldehyde in to sugar by exposure to light, and to-day

it is produced artificially. Numbers of such instances appear in Prof. B. Moore's *Biochemistry*. In his own lifetime Pasteur's assertion that alcoholic fermentation was peculiar to life was destroyed by Buchner, who obtained it with a non-cellular dead extract of yeast. Just as the relation of respiration to nutrition and animal heat passed from the realm of mystery, so Harvey analysed blood circulation by physical observation and reasoning, so Kepler applied the principles of optics to the action of the eye in vision, and Borelli those of mechanics to elucidate the action of muscles on limbs. These advances are admitted by the elder Haldane, a staunch anti-materialist, to have been mechanistic advances. In 1895 the physiologist, Sir M. Foster, thought it impossible to trace oxygen any further once it had entered the muscles from the blood. "The whole of life," he said, "lies hidden in this process." (3) The mystery vanishes with the work of A. V. Hill and Meyerhof on the chemical mechanics of muscle, an advance in the reduction of vital processes to problems in physics and chemistry, so that Sir F. G. Hopkins has declared that every step in muscle contraction has been chemically explained. Hopkins was president of the British Association for the 1933 meeting and he then exploded other vitalist theories. When the mechanistic conception of metabolism, or intake and output of matter by cells, had begun, vitalism was thrown back on the division and differentiation of cells, which was never to yield to physical or chemical treatment. Already, said Hopkins, research gives evidence of an at present obscure chemical. He referred also to the discovery of the chemicals which determine what stuff each particular type of cell shall select from the blood stream, and into what form it shall be built. Some time ago anti-materialists like J. A. Thomson were emphasizing these vital processes, which, so they claimed, chemistry could never explain. In 1827 the chemist Henry wrote, concerning organic compounds, "It is not probable that we shall ever attain the power of imitating nature in these operations. For in the functions of a living plant a directing principle appears to be concerned peculiar to animated bodies and superior to and differing from the cause which has been termed chemical affinity." (ib) With the reduction of organic chemistry to the chemistry of the carbon compounds Henry's position becomes obsolete. Instances could be multiplied. Six years before the determination by Helmholtz in 1851 of the velocity of the nervous impulse Johannes Muller declared that to measure the propagation of that "imponderable psychical principle" was "a theoretical absurdity." (ib)

At one time the evolution of the eye appeared to be something in the nature of a trump card for the anti-materialist. It has been safely removed to the realm of mechanism, so that even Dean Matthews has to admit that "It is no longer possible to point to the eye as direct evidence of an intelligent Creator." (4) The evolution of the eye may be said to start with the chemical effect of light on the amoeba, some types of which struggle towards the shade. A collection of light-sensitive cells into one area makes the primitive eye and begins to assume tremendous survival value. Sensitivity in the worm, to quote one case, causes it to retreat into the soil at dawn, thus to avoid the early bird. The evolution of sight thus appears on the same lines as that of sensibility to warmth, cold, touch and odour. "By insensible degrees we pass from a primary sort of receptivity that is like the purely mechanical irritability of an electric bell-push to a discriminating reaction that is undistinguishable from our own seeing. Vitalists like Bergson have made a tremendous difficulty about the evolution of the eye, declaring it too complicated

a process for unassisted natural selection. But is it after all so inexplicable?" (5)

So far as discoveries relating to sex are concerned we are told by an expert investigator, Prof. F. A. E. Crew, that "the sex-determining mechanism has been laid bare and the precision of its working revealed." (6)

Again, the materialistic procedure of Pavlov in his work on dogs and other animals is a striking example of its success in dealing with conscious behaviour. Hogben (op. cit.) is able to say that "The important advances of biological science during the last hundred years have not only involved continual abandonment of teleological concepts, but have consistently been made in the teeth of opposition of the vitalists, organicists and holists of their time."

"It seems to me," says Prof. J. R. Baker of Oxford, "that the vitalist is to fight a losing battle all the way.—The vitalist simply says that he thinks that we shall be unable to interpret life in terms of physics and chemistry. But the trouble is that every discovery in biology brings us nearer to such an interpretation.—All discoveries in biology are leading us nearer and nearer to a mechanistic explanation." (7)

The facts, then, tell us that there is no need, in the face of an unsolved problem, to fall back on terms like *elan vital*, entelechy, psychoid factor, etc., which explain nothing. "Shall we then join hands with the neo-Vitalists?" asks Prof. E. B. Wilson. "Yes, if we are ready to abandon the problem. No, a thousand times, if we hope to advance our understanding—I do not believe that a confession of ignorance leaves us with no resource save Vitalism." Such "would be to lapse into the Dark Ages." (8)

Another ground won from the vitalist is from the contention of Delage that new species could not arise from existing ones. In this connection Muntzing obtained from *galeopsis specioza* and *galeopsis pubescens*, of the same species, an entirely new species in *galeopsis tetrahit*. And while the scientist cannot change marsupials into monkeys, geology shows that evolution has had countless ages at its disposal. As Haldane remarks, "The gap between species is bridged not only by evolution in the past, but in some cases at any rate by hybridization in the present." (9)

Solving nothing himself, the Vitalist demands that the Materialist shall explain everything. But it is not a question of whether Materialism shall explain everything, but whether there is any alternative method at all, for no other method has ever rewarded the efforts of science. The Vitalist would like us to forget his losses in the past, but these losses represent a debt owed to clarity of thought—a debt which the Vitalist tries to cover by false currency, the "Life Force," which is no more than an obstructive myth.

- (1) *Nature of Living Matter.*
- (2) *Groundwork of Biology.*
- (3) Quoted by Hogben, *op. cit.*
- (4) *Contribution to An Outline of Modern Knowledge.*
- (5) *The Science of Life (Wells and Huxley).*
- (6) *Contribution to An Outline of Modern Knowledge.*
- (7) *Contribution to Science in the Changing World.*
- (8) *The Physical Basis of Life.*
- (9) *The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences.*

"Next to Eternal Joy, next to being forever with those we love and those who have loved us—next to that it to be wrapt in the dreamless drapery of eternal peace. Whatever flower of hope springs in my heart I will cherish, I will give it breath of sighs and rain of tears."

R. G. INGERSOLL.

Bible Numerology—2

By H. CUTNER

In W. E. Filmer's book, *God Counts*, there is a chapter, "The Number of Letters," from which we can take as a specimen the following :—

In 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2, we saw that the number thirteen was associated with anti-Christ. Verse 8 reads: "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." The number of letters in this verse is 117, whose factors 9 and 13 adequately express the doom of destruction to be meted out to the man of sin.

Apart from the fact that this rigmarole is completely devoid of sense—what is meant by "the spirit of his mouth?" Ectoplasm?—we have to take on trust that the number of letters in this verse is 117. In the English here given the number is 121 and, of course, there is a different translation in the Revised Version. And it is not 117 in my facsimile of the Greek Codex Sinaiticus. To put it another way, I have the strongest doubts about Mr. Filmer's competence in this number business. I suspect he has simply followed Ivan Panin, and never troubled to count the letters himself—as I have done.

Mr. Filmer excuses himself by saying that "the difficulty of doing so is evident to anyone acquainted with the various versions of the Hebrew and Greek texts." This really takes my breath away. Here is a man who tells us how "God Counts" and when he is caught out, blandly talks about the "difficulty" of finding out how God counts. If there are various texts which widely differ from each other, how is it possible to count the letters and words?

And why, anyway, should the two numbers 9 and 13 "adequately express the doom of destruction to be meted out to the man of sin?" Who says so? Ivan Panin?

The two numbers adequately express what they were designed to express in mathematics and nothing else. It is sheer superstition to imagine anything else—and it is worse if numbers are used to bolster up such hopeless credulity as Mr. Filmer shows everywhere in his book.

Let us take the number five. Mr. Filmer is more than enthusiastic over this wonderful number chosen by him as marvellous because God created "every living creature" on the fifth day. You can find this number five everywhere if you want to look for it, for it is the half of ten and as such it is just as important in the metric system. Renan points out that the Hebrew language can be reduced to 500 roots—and, as Mr. Filmer would say, does not this prove that it is the Divine Language spoken by the Serpent to Eve and by God himself to Adam? It is computed that Shakespeare used 15,000 words in his vocabulary—surely Divine Evidence that the Bard (who was certainly an unbeliever) was inspired by the Lord himself?

As I write this, Oxford and Cambridge have just drawn their cricket match with Oxford scoring 230 for six wickets. Here is something Divine surely; 230 is not only 10×23 but you get first the wonderful number 10 over which Mr. Filmer goes into ecstasy; and also 23, that is, $2 + 3$ which make 5, another number which is marked with the utmost Divine Grace. For example, as Mr. Filmer points out, there were five kinds of altar tools—pots, shovels, basins, flesh-hooks and firepans. But why the six wickets? Because six is the number "most often associated with fallen man"—in this case, with fallen wickets—and also with the "humanity" of Jesus—obviously referring to the drawn match as Jesus, the great Humanitarian, didn't want to humiliate either of the Universities by one losing the match.

Hence the draw. This is a typical exegesis from Filmer or Panin.

Religious fanatics have counted every word and letter in the Bible, and have come to many Divine conclusions—even from the A.V. For instance (this is not given by Mr. Filmer), the word Jehovah occurs exactly 6,855 times. How beautifully we can juggle with this extraordinary number! It adds up to 24 that is $10 + 7 + 7$. 10 is the greatest of all numbers but look how Divine is that 7. In 24, you get three sevens ($7 + 7 + 7 + 3$)—proof which should convince the most blatant Atheist in the Absolute Truth of the Trinity. And do not be put off with the fact that $2 + 4 = 6$. Did not God himself come down from high Heaven to be incarnated in the human Jesus? This fully accounts for the human number 6 getting mixed up with the Divine number 7 in this most marvellous number.

Or you can take the number of times the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet—Aleph—occurs in the Old Testament (also not given by Mr. Filmer). It is 42,377 times. Add the figures together and you get 23—just as in the cricket match above. And $2 + 3 = 5$! Here you get again the number always associated with living things; and does not this prove to the most unconvinced Atheist the Truth of the Living Christ? And if you leave out the 2—which obviously symbolises God and Jesus—you get three sevens again—the Holy Trinity once more. And all in the letter Aleph, the first letter, the primal one which signifies, says Mr. Filmer, "absolute unity"—and he ought to know. In any case, he gives us some wonderful proof of this from the Precious Word—"One thing thou lackest," "One thing is needful," and so on. Nothing has aroused my admirations so much as Mr. Filmer's "proofs."

Moreover, even in the Apocrypha (not mentioned by Mr. Filmer) which the Jews and the Protestants have not admitted into the Canon you can find God's numbers. There are 183 chapters altogether and 183 divided by 3 gives us 61. Here, indeed, is confirmation that the Church of Rome is justified in admitting the Apocrypha into its Canon for $6 + 1 = 7$, once again the Divine Number. How can an unbelieving Atheist and Materialist deny God's handiwork even in the Apocrypha?

In some excellent articles in the *New Zealand Rationalist* on Bible numerics, Mr. John Bowden has delved far more deeply into the subject, and has conclusively proved that if ever there was a complete mess in numbers it will be found in the Bible. Most of the figures given therein completely contradict each other, nobody seems able to count, and the different versions are in a state of awful chaos. Far from proving that God counts, the Bible conclusively proves that he couldn't—if the Bible really is his Precious Word. And there is no more in Bible Numerics than there is in Cricket Numerics—as I have shown above, not with any particular choice carefully chosen but with one looked at haphazardly. The Living Word is just so much living nonsense.

H. CUTNER.

FLASHES FROM NIETZSCHE

One should not go into churches if one wishes to breathe pure air.

The Christian faith from the beginning is sacrifice: the sacrifice of all freedom, all pride, all self-confidence of spirit; it is at the same time subjection, self-derision, and self-mutilation.

The tendency of a person to allow himself to be degraded, robbed, deceived, and exploited might be the diffidence of a God amongst men.

Leicester Log

ON Sunday, July 3rd, Leicester Secular Society spent a very pleasant afternoon at Alton Towers, I understand that the L.S.S. always pick fine weather for their annual outing, and Sunday was no exception.

If the Devil looks after his own, as he is supposed to, God doesn't seem to bother about his, in fact he seems to go out of his way to make it difficult for the very people who are trying to spread his word around. While Leicester Freethinkers were basking in the sunshine at Alton Towers, the bishop of Leicester had to cancel his open air service at Bradgate Park, a local beauty spot, on account of torrential rain. . . . Truly God moves in mysterious ways. His blunders to perform.

"The weather has not been kind to our crusade" says Canon Eaton in his parish magazine. He doesn't go putting the blame on God, however, if the weather had been good, the Lord would have received the credit for it. Numbers have dropped sharply, according to one observer only eighty turned up one week, although the Canon makes it 187. He also says, "I wish we could encourage heckling, but that is not easy in the gardens. I may think of going later to the market square". . . . He will get plenty of hecklers there; perhaps more than he bargains for.

Six trained evangelists, from the church army, replete with collecting boxes no doubt, will descend on Humberstone village during next October. Humberstone, you have been warned. If you want to get away, The Secular Hall lectures start in October.

FOSSE.

G. W. FOOTE ON MONOTHEISM

LONG before there were any kings there were chiefs. Even in the early feudal days the King was only the chief baron, and many centuries elapsed before the supremacy of the Monarch was unquestioned and he became really the *sovereign*. It was a process of natural selection. A mob of chiefs could not rule a mob of people. There was a fierce struggle, with plenty of fighting and intrigue, and fittest survived. Gradually, as the nation became unified, the government was centralised and out of the chaos of competing nobles emerged the cosmic authority of the Crown.

Similarly in the world of religion. All gods were originally ghosts. But as polytheism declined a supreme God emerged from the crowd of deities, as the King emerged from the crowd of nobles, and ruled from a definite centre. It was Zeus in Greece, Jupiter in Rome, Brahma in India, Thor in Scandinavia, and Yahweh in Israel. "I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God," was an exclamation that sprang from Yahweh's lips, through his priests, when his godship was still in the thick of the competitive struggle.

The ghosts became gods, and the gods became supreme deities who looked after the interests of their worshippers, gave them good harvests and prosperity in warfare if they were true to them, and plagued them if they nodded to their rivals. According to the O.T., when God was pleased everything went well with the Jews, and when he was angry things went wrong. This state of mind survives where people still talk of "judgments," still pray for what they want, and implore their God for victory when they have a fight with their neighbours.

(The Great Ghost.)

Correspondence

"NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY"

I am highly gratified that you have allowed Mr. Auld to discuss this subject because I feel that it is the reluctance of the British nationalist press to allow it to be discussed which is holding up a wider understanding of the subject and thus the formation of a public drive towards world unity and the consequent abolition of the preparation of international war.

I would define the word "nationality" as "membership of a political community which is distinguished by the fact that it has a constitutional organ of government which is recognised by the majority in that community as its highest political authority".

Let us now apply this definition to Mr. Auld's statement that "Internationalism" and "federalism" can never solve the urgent problems of our age, because both explicitly accept the illusion of nationality". First, we can easily see there is no "illusion" involved in nationality as I have defined it. It is a fundamental and vital part of our present way of life, something that bristles with tanks, aircraft, bombs and flame-throwers and prevents nations with the most similar ways of life among themselves (e.g., America and Britain) from being free from suspicions and rivalry and double-dealing with each other. According to the definition "nations" need not be selfish and crafty in their dealings with each other but we find that this is always so, because each is inspired by different aims, their national interests. Thus I agree that "internationalism" as the way to world peace is a cruel snare or mirage which has befuddled the minds of men long enough. On the question of "federalism" we have to recognise that federalism can be defined as "acceptance of a superior political authority for a grouping of groups which were formerly separate sovereign entities". Thus in a proper world federation we would have a world government before which all regional political authorities would bow and thus, in effect, we would have established the world sovereignty—and thus a world nationality, absolutely essential for the realisation of world peace and the abolition of the burden of armaments. It would make for easier transition to world nationalism if the ancient loyalties could be immediately rejected but this it not strictly essential since I have no doubt that U.S.A. solidarity is not threatened by the Texan's feeling for his own state.

E. G. MACFARLANE,

Organising Secretary,

The World Parliament Party

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