

How Atheism Kills Freedom

A discussion of the foundations of Freedom, and how they are to be defended.

By D. G. M. Jackson, M.A.

Australian Catholic Truth Society No.1222 (1955)

1. ATHEIST PROPAGANDA AND FREEDOM

A SHORT time ago, the Melbourne press gave headlines to a sensation which had been caused in England by a certain Mrs. Knight. This lady, the wife of a university man from Australia, had been giving some talks under the auspices of the B.B.C., in which she advocated that children should be taught that the existence of God was very much open to doubt: "Some people no more believe in Him than in Santa Claus." She suggested, too, that the Bible, both Old Testament and New, should be handled, for cultural purposes, simply as a body of myth, like the classical legends of Greece and Rome: and that Jesus of Nazareth should be treated simply as a human preacher, His claims to super-human power being dismissed as mere fantasy, along with His miracles and Resurrection. It seems that this lady recognizes that some acquaintance with Christian Theism is part of the essential equipment of an educated person, in view of the historical importance of this system of thought in the development of Western civilization. It is to be regarded, however, one gathers, simply as a "museum piece," which is no more "alive" than the elaborate religious system of the ancient Egyptians for the civilized modern person of today.

It is not my design on this occasion to examine Mrs. Knight's views about God and Christianity in any detail. I will only say that her gibe about Santa Claus suggests that she has never seriously considered the problem of Theism at all. Has she, for instance, reckoned with the difficulty, which Professor Haldane himself has admitted, of accounting for human thought itself in terms of materialistic naturalism? For the rest, it is far easier to wave the Gospels away airily as largely "myth" than to account, in a scientific manner, for the marvels related in them, soberly, by writers who undoubtedly derived their material from eyewitnesses, and produced their work at a time when large numbers who had seen and known the Nazarene were still alive. That the Resurrection was the heart of the Christian message of the first disciples is certain - and their whole character and conduct is inconsistent with the view that they were consciously fraudulent, or the victims of hallucination: while the authorities who opposed them found it impossible to produce the kind of evidence which would certainly have been available to refute their claim, if it had been the falsity that infidels assume. It simply isn't good enough to declare "it can't have happened because science says the dead don't rise." Science has nothing to say about a world beyond the natural order which is its proper field. If the evidence makes it clear that a marvel has occurred, all that the honest scientist can say is simply: "From the standpoint of our human knowledge, this cannot be accounted for." And nothing is added to our understanding of what occurred early one Sunday morning in the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberias, during the administration of the Procurator, Pontius Pilate, in

Palestine, by comparisons with pagan myths or legends, which make no pretence whatever to factual historicity.

The B.B.C. and Atheist Rights

That is all, then, that I propose to say at present about this lady's superior nonsense concerning Christian "myth" and mystery. I'll pass on to deal with a matter which seems to me of far greater importance - namely, whether a free democratic government is right in allowing views of this kind to be given widespread publicity on a national radio network like the B.B.C. It appears that their expression caused an explosion of Christian indignation, in which all religious bodies were united: and that the press condemned the offensive broadcasts very heartily. One can well believe, indeed, that many who are themselves indifferent or irreligious would find the idea of systematically "indoctrinating" the young in crude disbelief a highly repugnant one, and would regard the dissemination of a propaganda like that of Mrs. Knight socially demoralising. The B.B.C., however, refused to yield to the protest by imposing a ban on the lady's broadcasts, though it was ready to provide ample "air-space" for those who sought to refute her - notably the Archbishop of Canterbury. Its resolution in this case, indeed, is in contrast with its eager spirit of "appeasement" not only before, when it hastened to apologize for the perfectly true casual reflection of a Catholic Bishop (whose script had been passed) which happened to offend certain leading personages in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland still under British rule.

The principle on which the B.B.C. apparently bases its conduct is one very generally assumed in the modern world - namely, that "religious freedom" requires that the public authority should not merely treat the adherents of existing religious bodies on the same footing, but should hold an equal balance between theism and atheism, regarding the propaganda for both sides in this fundamental dispute as "indifferent" from the standpoint of the common well-being which it is its business to defend. "You may not like Mrs. Knight's views," these people will say in effect: "but if you truly believe in freedom, you will be prepared - like Voltaire - to fight for her right to publicize them, no less than for that of the Christian leaders to refute them."

Expressed in this fashion, the claim sounds very plausible: and those who oppose it would appear to be either narrow-minded reactionaries, or the victims of an emotionalism which cannot be allowed to influence the policies of responsible statesmanship, if democratic liberties are to be preserved. I should like to suggest, however, that a closer scrutiny reveals it to be based on a principle which no Christian believer can accept if he thinks clearly, and which the whole experience of the modern world reveals to be false, and fatal to the liberties and civilized values we have inherited.

My case is that these values are inseparably linked with the idea of Divine Authority and Divine Law, to which all human communities are subject: that the basic notion of the dignity and freedom of the individual has come down to us from ancestors who believed man to be sacred, because made in the "Image of God," and destined to an immortal life: and that when these beliefs cease to be held by those who rule the State, or by the people in whose name they govern, there is a gradual "devaluation of man" leading to a drift towards inhumanity, collective servitude and barbarism. If this is true, I think you will agree, it is the duty of the State to regard the active campaigners against Christian theism, not as the maintainers of a view which has no relevance from its standpoint, but as people who are socially dangerous, because their propaganda tends to weaken the moral foundations of ordered freedom.

Liberalism and Christian Theism

At first glance, it might appear that the ideas of "liberty, equality and fraternity," as they are familiar to us in modern history, are far from being fruits of the Christian spirit. They were inscribed upon the standards of the French Revolution, which declared war upon the Altar as well as the Sacred Throne, whose occupant reigned "by the grace of God." The men who handed them down, first to the American fathers, and then to the radicals of France and the rest of Europe, were, many of them, unbelievers and enemies of religion: and almost all were bitter critics of the existing established Churches, both Catholic and Protestant. Men like Diderot dreamed of the emancipation of man from the "reign of God" no less than from the government of Priests and Kings. He was to have no "moral policeman" in Heaven, but was to accept only the clear dictates of his own reason. It is to be noticed, however, that, whether these men were atheists, or believed - like Rousseau and Jefferson - in some kind of "Supreme Being," they based their attack on the so-called "Christian persons and institutions of their time very largely on the ground that they outraged certain "moral standards" and ideals which they assumed to be absolute.

The "King by Right Divine" governed wrong: His "Justice" had nothing to do with real justice, which should deal with men according to their humanity and social value, not according to arbitrary and artificial distinction of blood. The authorities ground down the poor and treated them as serfs, pitilessly sweating labour and taxes out of them: whereas it was their duty to give them liberty, and to design a State which would promote their wellbeing. The doctrine of the Church - they asserted - was full of corrupt superstition, and its teaching, and the conduct of its clergy, denied the sublime doctrine of the Galilean, of Whom they professed to be followers. They were rich and proud - He had been poor and humble: they imposed their authority as allies of a Government organized to serve the rich and great: He had denounced the oppressors of His time, including the priests, and had been murdered for doing it. Jesus had been compassionate - they were without pity: He had been upright - they were hypocrites: He had been heroic - they were contemptible.

It must be obvious a very large proportion of this criticism was conducted by the use of weapons taken straight out of the Christian armoury, even when those using it were infidels. They taunted Christians with not being loyal to their faith: they constituted themselves as champions of the social values of the Founder of that Faith, even when they rejected Church creeds with contempt.

But above all, they asserted the dignity of Man. The people, said Rousseau, must be regarded as the only true sovereign. Every man was entitled to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," said the American Fathers. States must be designed according to the law of "Right Reason" in order to satisfy the requirements of the common man: the laws must be framed in conformity with his true nature, so that his virtue might be developed and the danger of corruption might be diminished. Slavery was outrageous because it meant treating him as a chattel or instrument, and not a person: the lives of women, "the weaker sex," and children, must be the object of special protection, their oppression was especially outrageous to humane sentiment. It was increasingly demanded that all men should have opportunities to acquire culture, as well as wealth: and then that these should be equalized, so that the distinctions between men should be based on their real qualities rather than their accidental advantages of birth.

Man's pursuit of Truth must be free, like his pursuit of happiness. He must be free to inquire as well as free to worship as he would: and liberty of self-expression must be assured as well as sound information, through a free press.

Man's Immortal Value

It was long before the children of the liberal secularists set themselves to inquire into the basis of the exaltation of man. Their Christian ancestors, to be sure, had believed that God had established a radical distinction between man and the lower animals, by making each human being a "Divine Image" with a Living Soul. He had shown His special love, again, by the Incarnation of the Divine Word, Who had "become Flesh," and thereby glorified the Flesh. In the words of the old American battle hymn, the glory of Christ's Person had "transfigured you and me." Man was by nature immortal - so that the least human being would outlive the mightiest of human earthly communities, which had no real value except in terms of their service to the life of the individual and his true happiness, here and hereafter. He was given a reason capable of grasping Truth, so that he might use it in the service of Truth, according to the measure of his might. He had power to distinguish right from wrong, so that he might do right. It was wicked to maltreat or murder human beings, because they were a sort of lesser divinities, not mere animals - they could be slain only by God's authority vested in lawful magistrates, for serious offences involving moral responsibility.

This had been the belief of Christian ages about human beings - even though the practice of Christian communities had seldom come anywhere near realizing its implications. They had, however, been exposed to a constant running fire of criticism from saints and reformers, and the Christian conscience had gradually made its mark on social institutions, here and there. Where it had failed to do so, there continued to be a tension: the ghost of the Christian ideal haunting the nominally Christian societies which were organized without regard to it.

That ideal had operated powerfully, in the end, for the destruction of the "old order": but it could not continue, indefinitely, to inspire the social action of men who had ceased to believe that the human person was in any real sense sacred: who no longer regarded human Reason as a spiritual faculty enabling men to grasp Reality and Truth: and who looked upon ethical values as rooted in subjective human feeling, and not in the Law of God.

2. HOW ATHEISM DEVALUES MAN

So far, we have passed from the discussion of the anti-God propaganda of Mrs. Knight in some B.B.C. broadcasts, to the question whether a democratic authority ought to regard the principle of "religious liberty" as including "liberty for anti-religious propaganda." It has been suggested that to attack Christian theism is to attack the concept of humanity and humane values upon which the free democratic system is founded. It has been shown, too, that the founding fathers of modern Western "democracy," even when they proclaimed themselves enemies of the Throne and Altar, based their revolutionary protest upon a conception of human dignity and equality, and a notion of Real Justice, Truth and Reason, which they had received from Christian ancestors, as part of a system of thought which holds that human persons were sacred, because they were immortal souls made in the Divine Image.

The liberal humanitarianism of the last century was, in fact, a hybrid: or, if you like, an intermediate stage on the road towards a fuller phase of social secularism. Its radical reformers, even when, as in Europe, they were largely anti-Christian, were living on the capital of a Christian ethic, to which they in reality appealed under colour of "social humanitarianism," and their very faith in Reason was based on the notion of man as a spiritual being capable of grasping truth. As time went on, however, secularist criticism, based on new scientific theories, weakened the spiritual foundations of this unstable compromise, at the very moment when the applied sciences were transforming the Western world, and creating new problems of power and of "mechanised life."

"What is man?" cried David long ago: and he proceeded to say that God had made him a little lower than the angels. In the age after Darwin, however, scientific popularisers who proclaimed the "hypothesis of God" to be unnecessary, declared him to be a being a little higher than the apes, and the result of a natural process of struggle whose meaning was obscure - if, indeed, it had any meaning. To be sure, it was flattering to human pride to be really "on top of the world" - captain of one's soul, master of things, maker of values: and the last shadows of the Christian idea to disappear was the idea of Progress.

Marxian and Racialist Theories of Progress

Man was ascending: he was the spearhead of a "purposive process" even if its origins were irrational and its end doubtful. He was destined to find fulfilment, said Marx, in a new world order, in which social-economic harmony would at last be achieved, and the wars, oppressions, miseries and drugging spiritual illusions of the previous ages would dissolve into the Communist peace which was the final goal of history. The task of the intelligent man of the present era was to place himself in the revolutionary van of this movement of destiny and to aid in the process of "moulding man" to the shape of the new order - the elements resisting the process must be forced to move on, else ploughed under. There was no moral meaning in life, except in terms of this social process: the individual person had no significance, except as a contributor towards it in one way or another.

Other thinkers and politicians conceived the "struggle for existence" in somewhat different terms, and formed different conclusions about the next phase of universal history. A number of German, French and Anglo-Saxon thinkers on evolutionary lines contributed to the notion, which gained especial popularity in Germany, of a Higher Race emerging from the ruck of humanity, in order to fulfil its destiny in creating a new world. The idea that the heroic pioneers of this process had a duty to humanity at large was dismissed as mere superstition: the rest of men were divided into those who could be received as partners in mastery, slave-races whose destiny was to serve their lords, and human vermin who must be "liquidated" because their blood and traditions made them natural enemies of the real progress of mankind. For the Racists, "religious myths" were of value if they could be revised so as to conform with the requirements of the "Blood and Soil" cult: but the notion that man was sacred or precious as man was a corrupting error; and the value of even higher human beings depended - as with the Marxists - upon their "usefulness" in contributing to the collective achievement, and their complete self-abandonment in the service of the hive. The old idea of "justice" towards individuals was meaningless, being based on the myth of a "Higher Law" - humanity was simply weakness, since it involved sparing anti-social types and treating inferiors as equals and was opposed to the "hardness" needed for conquest in the cosmic struggle.

Here, then, we have two alternative "designs for social living" which have been applied to large bodies of men in our own time, in which the consequences of the rejection of a Divine Order, and the acceptance of "man-made" values are only worked out. In both of them, the individual human personality is "devalued" to the utmost, and the liberties and rights of the citizens depends completely upon the arbitrary will of those who govern, who regard no law as superior to the fulfilment of their plan. The assertion of collective man's absolute mastery attains its utmost heights in the complete absorption of the insignificant individual man's life, into the disciplined and directed life of the hive.

Man as the Raw Material of Planning

The social code of the Communist States has been denounced frequently for its massive disregard for humane considerations. The accounts of "correction-camps" and "forced labour camps" given by refugees have startled the free world, and, with these, we have heard of "brain-washings," mass-liquidations and deportations; as well as the carefully worked out designs whereby the social services, the Trade Unions, and other structures originally designed for the benefit of the "under-dog" have been transformed into chains for his enslavement. It is well that we should realize, however, that the humane principles invoked by the free world in its condemnation of these detestable things are entirely invalid in terms of the thought of those who administer the planned Socialism of the Soviet Union and its satellites. For purposes of propaganda, they continue to talk in conventionally humane terms when denouncing their opponents, or appealing to the emotions of plain men who still think along the lines of traditional ethics: but when they are analysing social situations at home in Marx-Leninist terms, their speech betrays their real thought only too well. Listen to this, from the Czech Prime Minister, Zapotocky, in a statement on the Party's attitude to medical care for sick workers.

"Not even the doctors," he complains, "have a proper appreciation of our production. Widespread are the philanthropic, liberal and incorrect views that the main thing is to help and support the individual. What kind of a socialist point of view is that, comrades?" The sick worker, you see, is worth nothing in himself - the one thing to be considered is the effect that the cessation of his toil may have on the production process. His treatment must be regulated, therefore, according to his importance in that process. His restoration to full health does not matter, so long as he can be restored enough to carry on at a minimum of cost, and with the minimum of interruption. Again, the idea that a man's individual subscription to unemployment and sickness relief, justly entitle him to benefit according to a certain standard is swept aside as "out of date." The use of the sums subscribed is to be decided by those who administer them, simply with a view to providing an incentive to work, and in the light of the results of work done. These small examples will, I think, serve to illustrate how the idea of personal insignificance and rightlessness is carried into every detail of the Communist system, in which the implications of the secular-atheist view of man are fully realized.

The Logic of Social Secularism

You may say: I admit that secularist States have done these horrible deeds: but, after all, so-called Christians States have a horrid record of inhumanity behind them, too: they have practiced slavery and oppression, they have committed mass-inhumanities: and they have sometimes used religion itself as an excuse for these things. All this is, of course, perfectly true - but, as I have already pointed out, Christian Theism provided standards in whose light these evils could be criticized, and moral incentives for reform. A true Christian might accept a bad system like slavery as unavoidable, and even uphold it as such: but he could not believe that it was right to treat men as mere chattels or instruments, even if he was a slave-owner: and, in a community governed on Christian principle, there was a natural tendency for the servile class to collect customary "rights" based on their human personalities - to marriage, family life, a certain degree of independent ownership and immunity from arbitrary power. The more thoroughly Christian it was, the more the personalist pattern would prevail, as the underlying faith in the sacredness of man made itself felt in action.

With secularism, the opposite law prevails - the more fully its concept of man is realized, the more the individual becomes "raw material" to be used or fashioned in accordance with the requirements of some collective plan for production, or social experiment, or material conquest.

The reason is, that once we consider man to be no more than a planetary being, the highest of the mammals, talk of his "dignity" and "fundamental rights" is merely a fantastic misuse of words. Personally, he cannot possibly be made to amount to more than a brief moment in an immense process: if he has an importance, it depends on his place in the activity of the community which has a larger, longer planetary life. The "Higher Law" is nothing but a subjective human fantasy, which the enlightened Planners will not allow to interfere with their designs for collective wealth and power. As for the reign of Reason: of what worth are the speculations upon the meaning of existence of an animal-in-evolution? The idea that his mind bears a sort of divine ray in the sensory world, to penetrate its real meaning, is clearly a hangover from the age of Theism. Man's reality and value are reduced to his biological organism - which means that it is consistent to treat him as other organisms are treated, in relation to the aim of the particular collective group to which he is attached. What should that aim be? It isn't possible to say, in a world from which moral absolutes and final causes have been banished, so that nothing remains but what people in power happen to want at the moment.

A Social Problem and Two Solutions

"In this world," says one of John Dewey's clever disciples, "ends as well as means must be held subject to review as events continually develop." You have a social order in which the process of mechanization is going ahead rapidly, and large scale industry tends to concentrate the control of power and wealth in a few hands, while reducing the multitude to dependence and destroying the traditional pattern of their lives. How are you going to deal with this situation?

The Christian thinker believes that man is sacred, and that the first aim of society is to help him to live virtuously according to the laws of his nature, which require that he should enjoy a certain degree of personal independence as well as material well-being. He would say: The problem is one of redesigning your industrial system so that those who work it can exercise a pressure of human choice in their vocation and enjoy a stable and healthy family life with security. We must work against developments which make common men helpless subjects of the arbitrary power of the handful of controllers and machine managers. It would appear that this requires a modification in the system of large-scale industry so that it may conform to these basic human requirements.

The logical secularist will approach the question very differently. He will say "large-scale industry obviously represents the latest phase in the human process, and we must accept its actuality. The task is to adapt the workers to the new situation by furnishing them with a degree of material well-being and amenities and moulding them to a system of thoughts and values which will be serviceable to the collective processes of production. They must give up their old ways of living, and their former aspirations towards independence. They must learn to collaborate in a disciplined way with the skilled men at the top, and accept their directives: and they must lift their eyes towards a new age-vision of larger production, and more mechanization since this is the way the stream of life is running.

In a work, actualism, here and now, is the only thing that counts. Man is a self-compulsive bundle of 126 instincts, whose end is his becoming. The answer to the problem of growing servitude is to produce "conditioned" types to meet the demands for slaves: the answer to maladjustments is to tailor the square peg to fit a round hole, and scrap it if it will not. There are no real "values" to consider, only the will-to-power of the planners: the task of Science is to find how the "design for living" can be arranged so that their machines will go on smoothly.

The conclusion seems irresistible - that there can be no "democratic institutions" or liberties or rights for the common man unless the human person is accepted, as somehow really sacred: and, if God is denied, there is no way in which he can be sanctified, so as to be immune from servitude and "conditioning" at the will of tyrants equipped with the latest devices of science.

3. NO GOD, NO FREEDOM

We have seen, now, that the secularist idea of man as an animal-in-evolution, a bundle of complexes related to a planetary process which has no meaning but what man himself plans to give it, leads inevitably to the "devaluation" of the individual person, and the destruction of the notion of civil liberties and personal rights. The "master of things" and maker of new values ends up harnessed, in servile fashion, to the instruments of his own power and production, under the absolute power of planners whose task is to direct the experimental further processes of collective living and social organization, in order to achieve ends determined by themselves. It has been shown that the "totalitarian" systems of our time, which the free world condemns as degrading, inhuman and the like, are the logical result of the atheist principles professed by those who exercise power in the regions where they prevail: and that, as belief in God fades, with the vision of man as His Image and the subject of His Law, the idea of liberty, equality, justice and Reason, in whose name the former revolts against the old regime were raised, must perish also.

The Obliteration of Truth

The grim picture of a fully-equipped "world-order" designed by men who had succeeded in banishing the idea of God and the Soul, and had worked out a scheme for breeding humans artificially - thus eliminating family relations and loyalties - was painted before the war by Aldous Huxley in his *Brave New World*. Forecasts of an even more grotesque and terrifying type, based on the observation of present-day trends, have been made by Orwell and others in recent times. It is no use pretending that these prophetic warnings are mere fantasy, when we can see the developing seeds whose horrid flowering they picture. To take a single example, the Orwellian method of "obliterating truth" by systematically destroying the memory of inconvenient facts, and inventing and composing official fictions in place of them, is being practised today in the Soviet Union. Its science, art, history, information services and education are all under the reign of an officially imposed system of "truth" designed to serve the purposes of "the system" - a truth which can be arbitrarily revised with every change in the "party line" and with every new development in the struggle for power at the top. Lavrenti Beria, having fallen from office and been mysteriously obliterated, a new account of his life appears, in which he "features" as a tainted villain from the beginning: his name is removed from dictionaries and information-files, so that it may be forgotten officially; the former chief of police becomes a nonentity. The drama of Communist trials, with the mass-propaganda accompanying them, is intended for the same purpose - to provide a fully-fashioned and detailed official fiction to stand in place of the truth about their victims, and stamp it thoroughly into the mind of the common man.

Power Ungoverned by Reason

In our own society, the obliteration of inconvenient fact is not carried out so deliberately: but the memory of certain truths can be gradually destroyed, so far as the common man is concerned, by simply ceasing to pass them on. Modern secular education has gone far towards promoting a new illiteracy about religion: the transmission of the classical culture of the Western world is no longer of principal importance to the designers of cultural curricula even at the university level. The object

of the new education is to make man "at home" in the present world and to equip him for a career in it. The teacher has no subject-matter which even pretends to deal systematically with the elementary and universal issues of human destiny: and if the graduate of the modern school knows whatever wisdom mankind has come to about the nature and purpose of the world, it is only by accident and by hearsay. There is, therefore, a cultural vacuum: and this vacuum is producing a progressive disorder in the development and use of material knowledge. Reason no longer controls man's desires to make them conform with a higher law: it has become "the instrument by which his instinctive impulses seek their satisfaction," to use the phrase of a celebrated psychologist. The power which science places in his hands is, therefore, ungoverned. He devises instruments which can obliterate vast cities at a blow, and breeds germs which can wipe out whole populations: he has invented methods of psychological oppression which can destroy resistance by capturing and dominating the very citadel of the personality. And the impulse towards greater power which has led to the acquisition of these deadly kinds of power engenders a horrid itch to make use of them. What can restrain this terrible impulse? Little - it would seem - except fear and the remainder of a humane moral scruple derived from the habits of thought of the past - when men had not learned from John Dewey that "the business of mortals" was to discover man's "organic powers and propensities," and not to speculate upon an ultimate standard of right and wrong.

Is it surprising, really, that among the great "backroom boys" of the secular institutions of research, who have dedicated their lives to the applied sciences, there have developed perversions of sympathetic thought towards the enemies of freedom, which make this class a constant object of anxiety to the ruler of the democratic world? Why should they have a "social conscience" about defending democratic values? How can they avoid being drawn towards a world in which the scientific planners and experts are treated as superior beings, and in which their vast experiments are hampered by no outworn prejudices about human rights and social ethics? Why should they allow traditional notions about "loyalty" to America, or Britain, or France to prevent them from giving aid to the men who govern that world in order that they may be able to carry on and extend their bold designs, and be secured against the interference of those who stand for the outworn humanities of yesterday?

Who Are the Fighters for Freedom?

If we wish to know the truth about the foundations of liberty, it is instructive to look at the scene "behind the iron curtain," and to notice from what quarters resistance has come to the claim of the planners to "play god" with the lives of plain men and women. I do not think there has been a single case in which a modern man of science has suffered martyrdom for the cause of freedom - or even of scientific truth. The scientists have been content to bow to police-tyranny, and to fulfil the tasks given to them for the purposes of Communist power-policy. A rather better fight has been put up by some of the politicians, and the politically-minded classes who have followed their lead. The secular socialists, however, have been bludgeoned or seduced for the most part, into submission or collaboration, when they have not fled: the liberals of the earlier vintage of secular revolution have made a wretched showing as fighters for the freedom about which they used to talk so eloquently. The men who have been seen standing up to the tyrants, and who have provided the cause of freedom with new martyrs and confessors, have not been the inheritors of the liberal faith of Rousseau or the enlightened progressive humanitarianism of the nineteenth century. They raised a standard of resistance which was very much older - which had been displayed before Caiphas and Pilate, Nero and Diocletian, long before it was raised in face of the brutal servants of Stalin and

Mao-Tse-tung and the rest of the godless Communist juntas. The Galilean and His Apostles had not appealed to "the rights of man" in standing up to the ancient authorities of the pagan and Jewish world. They had simply declared to these men that there was a law of God above their laws, and that their power was valid only if it was exercised in accordance with that law, from which it was itself derived. Long before anyone had even dreamed of the exercise of popular sovereignty through elected assemblies, or begun to talk about civil liberties for all, these men had the foundations of true freedom by proclaiming authority to be a Divine stewardship, and subject to the moral restrictions imposed by its purpose. This was the protection and welfare of the common man, who must be enabled to live according to his nature, to worship the true God in the right way, and carry out the virtuous activities required for the salvation of his soul. Thus the moral limitation of the power of men over other men which is necessary to the existence of liberty was asserted, as a fundamental principle of the universal order of Divine Justice, by men who were little concerned with material well-being, but very much with what they called "the reign of God." In the same way, they brought to light, as a by-product of their Faith, the notion that the purpose of Government must be the service of God and the people, and that the earthly status of rulers gave them no spiritual privilege which distinguished them from the least of their subjects in the sight of their Divine Overlord.

Christian Radicalism

The attitude of God towards the hierarchies of earthly power, had been shown, Christians held, by the incarnation of His Divine Son in poverty and life as a village craftsman; by Christ's choice of poor peasants and fishermen as the friends and disciples who were to continue the work, and by His positive precepts - dramatically acted out - in regard to the relations between masters and servants in the new Christian order. These truths might be obscured, but they could never wholly be forgotten while the Christian virtues were accepted as the foundation of men's thinking: the servitude of a man's earthly station did not prevent him from being a "king of men" in the real order of the spirit: indeed, since every man was God's image, and Christ's own brother, every man must be, in some sort "a king" even here below.

And a radical shadow from the world of real values fell upon the world of earthly conventions whenever the priests and people sang the Magnificat. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and exalted the humble, He hath filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

Yes, the first Christians were an obedient and submissive lot so long as the demands of Caesar did not outrage their principles: but the masters of Rome were not wrong in their judgement that their system was incompatible with the existing order, and must undermine and transform it once it grew strong; and the new atheist Caesars of Communism are no less discerning in realizing that they cannot master and mould the minds and souls of their people, and build their new, closed, collectivist order, so long as a large multitude continues to believe that there is a Divine Law to which they owe a higher service - an unalterable law founded in the nature of things; and governing the whole of life and human relations - a law which cannot be refashioned according to the latest requirements of the social planners. It is over this that the irrepressible conflict has been joined, because it is here that the foundation of human freedom is really laid.

"The ideals which we regard as typically Western," says Christopher Dawson - "the supremacy of law, the recognition of the moral rights of the individual and the duty of society towards the poor

and the oppressed - are not the invention of modern democracy. They are ultimately products of the Christian tradition and find their only true justification in Christian principles."

From the time of the medieval charters, and the feudal contracts establishing authority on a basis of mutual responsibilities under God's Law, to the days of the American Declaration in which the essential equality and just liberties of man are derived from their Creator's endowment, the rights of man and those of God have been seen as two sides of the same coin. You cannot deny the Divine Name on one side without devaluing the human image on the other.

Democracy Must be "Pro-God"

And so, at the end, we come back to Mrs. Knight, and the question of what ought to be done about her and her sort - whose influence is rampant in educational institutions, in political life, and in every class of society at the present time. There is no question of a State "persecution" of militant infidels, of course - leaving aside the whole question of principle, repressive activity, even against false and anti-social opinions as such, is more likely to create sympathy for them than otherwise, especially when those who stand for them are adept at making use of popular slogans to serve their purposes. This does not mean, however, that the democratic State ought to stand neutral as between Christian theism - upon which the moral foundations of its liberties rest - and those who attack the Faith openly, or seek to undermine it in one fashion or another. Clearly, such people have no claim, any more than traitors or immoralists, to a share in the facilities of a national organ of publicity like the B.B.C., and wherever the responsible authorities can exercise control or influence, whether direct or indirect, it should be used resolutely, though with due discretion, so as to strengthen and aid the forces in favour of faith in God and in the spiritual worth and dignity of man. In the sphere of education, again, true "justice" does not mean neutrality as between Christianity and Secularism - far less, giving secularism a privileged status by wiping religion off the curriculum. It requires that the policy of aiding and strengthening religion should be observed over the whole field of cultural activity, as a matter of duty to the common good. As for the propaganda of atheism, it should be tolerated only as vice is tolerated, within limits defined by a balance between the public danger of the thing itself and the danger involved in the expansion of State power required to repress it, with the social consequences entailed in such action.

The Divine Reality cannot be ignored or treated as an irrelevant thing for the purposes of public policy, without bringing about social consequences of a dire and destructive kind affecting the whole of life and civilization. It is high time for the free nations to face up to this truth, before their freedoms crumble further under the regime of false "neutralism" which gives full scope to the enemy within.
