

RELIGION AND SCIENCE

Sir,—A hundred years ago Spurgeon said that the shores of the centuries were littered with the wrecks of systems of unbelief. His prophesied continuance of such wrecks has been verified. Ephemeral scientific theory serves to hide, as the trees in Eden, men who wish to keep God afar. Scientists are sinners, like other men, and have the personal right of all men to trust in God, through Christ. No scientific fact blots out the cross of Christ. Nothing discovered since the Christian Newton first promulgated theories of a mechanistic universe that dominated thought for a quarter millennium, to Alexis Carrel and others of more recent years, has any adverse bearing on Christianity. Archaeology has greatly strengthened Christian evidence. Less than before this century does science provide any foundation; its theories of "relativity," "probability," "uncertainty," prop a universe that is not a four-dimensional, time-space continuum, but one that is suspected to pass the bounds of human sense, to be unknowable. According to Jeans, matter shows properties inconsistent with either "waves" or "particles," and radiation, "like matter, is all a matter of probabilities." The hottest stars eventually die, the universe is about the same age as the earth, the whole universe is expanding — all parts rushing away from each other in a confessedly quite unintelligible manner. In short, perpetual motion is as improbable in the universe, to the scientist, as it is on this speck of its matter. Seeing through a telescope, or mathematically, a universe with apparent beginning and ending—that he confessedly cannot understand—is no barrier to a scientist's belief in a Creator-God and the manifestation of His nature in Christ Jesus: rather should it induce a humility that hastens to welcome reasons for existence, that science cannot approach.

A. E. ROBINSON (Auckland).

Sir,—My original purpose, to criticise the panel "Speaking for Ourselves" for their failure to discuss issues basic to the questions, has been emphasised by your correspondents who do advert to that issue in this particular case. Whether or not a scientist can be a Christian depends upon a definition of the word "Christian."

Lack of definition is responsible for the idea that a person can be a Christian and not a member of a church. If "Christian" has a set definition which means believing in a set of known truths, and one of those truths is a Christian church, a Christian must belong to a church. If set beliefs are not necessary but can be contradictory one with another, as many Christian churches are, then membership of a church is not necessary because a man can logically be a church unto himself. If set beliefs are not necessary, then what is necessary? For the word could come to mean three or three thousand different things, which is absurd.

The result is that by general belief each church is partly right and perhaps partly wrong. The question can only be solved by a strictly reasonable examination of Christianity with the firm conviction that two and two cannot make four and five at the same time, and consequently that Christianity either is something or it is nothing. It cannot logically be two things at once.

A person who believes in Christ is not therefore a Christian, because such a belief does not imply a way of life any more than a belief in Napoleon does. The ethics of Christianity, including the Ten Commandments, are there

LETTERS FROM LISTENERS

because the Church teaches them and says they are Christianity. Only if it can be proved that all churches are in error do the ethics of Christianity become doubtful.

The fact remains that a scientist can be a Christian if scientists admit the validity of thought. Upon the validity of thought as opposed to experiment depends the proofs for the existence of God, and unless those proofs can be disproved the scientist must consider the result and the results of the deductions from those proofs. The proofs that there is a God and that Christ was God who founded a church make it clear that science can never conflict with Christianity. The philosophy of Christianity has its source in God, and since God is truth and cannot, being perfect, admit contradictions, nothing can contradict His philosophy—Christianity.

The panel and your correspondents clearly accept the idea that a definition of the word "Christian" is impossible without a great deal of room for variation. This is to say that it is impossible to attain truth. Once it is impossible to attain truth, except experimentally, confusion is the natural and inevitable result.

IPSO FACTO (Wellington).

(This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.)

PRODUCTION OF RADIO PLAYS

Sir,—It seems a pity that when the NZBS do put on a good play over the air it should be spoilt by faults in production. On Sunday evening, September 18, my wife and I were listening in to a play by Clifford Bax — *The Shrouded Candle*. Like hundreds of other listeners, we look forward to hearing plays on Stations 2YA and 2YC. When it happens to be a BBC production we know we are in for something worthwhile. But in *The Shrouded Candle* we were disappointed, not in the play (which was good), but in obvious production faults. The lady who took the part of Arabella Stuart in the play had a deep contralto voice, in my humble opinion unsuitable to the part. Her voice boomed, and her diction became indistinct. Her enunciation was so faulty that it was sometimes impossible to catch what she was saying. It seemed also as if she was standing too close to the microphone. In addition to these faults she often spoke too rapidly and failed to pronounce her consonants distinctly, dropping her voice at the end of her sentences to the detriment of clearness of the last important syllable. Hard, distinct consonants often modify faults of poor pronunciation, especially in low-pitched voices of the "booming" breed of contraltos.

The BBC production of *The Show Must Go On*, which finished last Wednesday week, was a delight to listen to, not only on account of the perfection of the production. Enunciation, pronunciation, choice of voices representing the different characters, the truth and reality

of the presentation, the finished handling of every part of the play, all helped to make it a notable performance in all its eight parts. But how much delight can be got from an NZBS production? And what can be said of a poor, thin New Zealand play, inadequately produced with poor voices and faulty enunciation? H.E.G. (Palmerston North).

CHURCHES IN RUSSIA

Sir,—"F.K.T." exposes his own gullibility in the credence he gives to Kravchenko's utterances. As one who followed the Kravchenko case closely (having a friend in Paris who kept me posted with newspapers relating to it) I know in what a poor light this individual was shown when called on to defend his abuse of his native country. It is obvious that all "F.K.T.'s" ideas about Russia come from authorities like Kravchenko.

If he knew anything about the history of the Church under the Czars, "F.K.T." would not be so shocked at the crude anti-Godism of early Soviet days. "There is in the U.S.S.R. today," according to the Webbs, "nothing that can properly be called persecution of any religious group." At the same time they admit that "the social atmosphere in the U.S.S.R. is unfriendly to any form of supernaturalism." That is because, like Bishop Barnes, they hold that "There have been many conflicts between religion and science. The latter in every case has won the battle." Their theory is that anything beyond the certain knowledge of science is the realm for scientific, not religious speculations. Religion, as with Galileo and Darwin, opposes to scientific advance its home-made myths. Belief in a supernatural hinders scientific progress.

Their method of combating it is not by persecution, but by setting against it propaganda for materialism and science. This does not mean, as many assert, an overthrow of "spiritual values": and on this point the Rev. Dr. Hewlett Johnson makes some very shrewd observations. And the moral integrity and scholarship of neither the Webbs nor Dr. Johnson has ever been seriously questioned: the same cannot be said of Kravchenko.

As to the Churches' attitude to the Soviet Government, the speech of Metropolitan Nikolai at the Paris Congress of Partisans for Peace last April, calling for support of the Soviet Union's peace policy, tells a story.

In these days it is easy to abuse Communism. But let "F.K.T." find out something about it before he rushes into print. C.V.B. (Wellington).

TEMPO FOR SINGERS

Sir,—"D.M.'s" *Radio Review* note in your September 16 issue is excellent on the point he is making—that of keeping period-harmony in a song-group. His

citation of Harry Plunkett Greene's delightful *Interpretation in Song* (written nearly 40 years ago, and therefore little known now, singers being notoriously uneducated in music, its theory, or its history) might lead him some time to trot out another of P.G.'s strong points—I mean his insistence on the necessity for strict tempo being kept in about 98 song-bars out of every hundred.

Singers seem to think they may vary the tempo at will, their accompanists being merely their very humble followers. P.G. well points out that the accompaniment of an art-song is an essential part of it—often the more important of the two. In "On Wings of Song" and "Who is Sylvia?" for instance, he would not allow the slightest variation of the composer's time; all three verses of each, together with all interludes, were to have the one unvarying rhythmic flow. I must have heard these two sung hundreds of times, recorded or studio performed, yet never once have I heard P.G.'s advice followed.

Correct tempo seems actually to be frowned on now, yet rhythm is impossible if time is not respected. As P.G. shows in his book, time in a song must not be varied, except occasionally and for good reason, or where the composer has expressly ordered it. A *rallentando* or *accelerando*, he insists, must still keep the relative time values which the composer has written.

As it seems impossible to convince singers how horrible their wobbling sounds to a sensitive ear, can they perhaps be induced to start a movement for getting Schubert and Brahms sung in proper time—the composer's time? "How sour sweet music is, when time is broke, and no proportion kept."

F. K. TUCKER (Gisborne).

CONCERT PROGRAMMES

Sir,—It was with great interest that I read in *The Listener* a letter from "Music Lover." I fully agreed with his opinion. In fact, I am pioneering to play more of the lesser-known works. The repertoire available to a pianist is enormous, and with a little effort, courage and conviction, music just as fine as that which is played so regularly now may be included in programmes and be appreciated.

Personally, I had a pleasant reward and surprise when I played for the troops in England during the war. Their response to the unfamiliar as well as the familiar was most gratifying. The greatest example of a pianist who is interested solely in the music is Schnabel. He never compromises for the sake of popularity.

VERA BENENSON (Auckland).

DOWNIE STEWART

Sir,—Just a line to express my appreciation of your leader "A Man Who Knew Happiness." It is a very fine tribute to a man who fully merits it. You have portrayed him as he was, and not the least factor in his happiness was his strong religious conviction and experience. A.H.R. (Dunedin).

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS

R.J.R. (New Brighton): Your letter has been forwarded.

B.H.W. (Christchurch): The discrepancy was caused by an error which we regret as much as you do.

CHART FOR ELECTION NIGHT

Following the practice of previous election years, the November 25 issue of "The Listener" will contain an election chart—similar to the one which proved so popular with listeners in 1946—on which listeners can record progress and final results as they come over the air on November 30. For this year's election eve issue of "The Listener" a record demand is anticipated and to avoid disappointment listeners are urged to reserve their copies early.