

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXVII.—No. 2

Sunday, January 12, 1947

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Man and His Future

SINCE the election of the present Government, Mr. Churchill has offered to the people two things that have created much attention. The first was the plain announcement of the determination of the Tory Party to restore some of the power of the Established Church, which has fallen considerably from its historic position. Nothing has been said by the general public of any moment, and Mr. Churchill has said no more about it. It is probable that the leaders of the Party have pointed out to the late Prime Minister that another crack like that would go far towards ruining the Party. At any rate, the startling declaration was accepted in silence; and it is likely that, as one of the chief aims of the Tory Party, the matter has been pushed into the background. Religion generally is not flourishing; it is, in fact, in a bad way, and it is not likely to move towards complete health. Certainly attempts will be made to restore some of the influence of the Christian religion, but the attempts will not be openly proclaimed. For some time social developments will take precedence of religion, particularly as a political war cry. Somehow one finds it rather difficult to picture Mr. Churchill as the leader of a religious revival. Mr. Churchill may have done some very good things—side by side with many bad ones—but he does not look as though nature had selected him as an instrument for the revival of the Christian religion.

Mr. Churchill says that eight years have passed since he conceived the idea of a "United States of Europe," and he is grieved at the "unhappy and dangerous plight of the Continent." Hence the appearance of an article in an American magazine, and which is now repeated in an English newspaper. Mr. Churchill asks for the creation of a new "United States of Europe." Quite a good idea if the reading of "United States of Europe" is a real union of different peoples in terms of amity. But I am afraid that Mr. Churchill has in mind much more of an armed frontier, carrying with it a preparation for war. If the end of that "United States of Europe" is the preparation for war, then war will come. If the new arrangement leaves us face to face with a Russia which we cannot trust, or if we are countered by an armed Russia that cannot trust us, then we are in for another war sooner or later.

Once upon a time "gentlemen" vindicated what they called their "honour" by pistol or sword. It was a fine game for bullies and blackguards. A man's honour was determined by his skill with pistol or sword. Anything more idiotic could not be conceived. Of course, the belief in God was mixed up with it. Then later, settling difficulties was sent to law courts, and the days of the armed bully passed. We have something of this stupidity in our

timid praise of war, which really settles nothing. It is an end to war that is needed; and perhaps Ruskin's suggestion that if women would wear black when war was pronounced, and keep on wearing it until peace returned, the abolition of war might be considered. It is useless mouthing that war is bad and at the same time glorify the soldier.

Mr. Churchill, while using the term the "United States of Europe," seems to think of it as mainly consisting in a new armed force governed by European armies. There is a glimpse of something higher and better when he quotes from Victor Hugo a desire for a peaceful union between European peoples. He said: "I will demolish my fortresses. You will demolish yours. My vengeance is fraternity. No more frontiers; the Rhine for all. Let us be the same Republic. Let us have the United States of Europe. Let us have Continental federation. Let us have European freedom."

Hugo might well have agreed with the abolition of national armies, but it is certain that he did not have Russia in view. He did not mean what we may well fear. Mr. Churchill is more concerned with arming a certain enemy rather than abolish the settling of differences by armed forces. If there is one thing that is clear to-day it is that you cannot have a guaranteed world of peace while you create armies and drill soldiers in the arts of slaughter. Atomic bombs have appeared, and their destructive activity depends not upon a sense of justice, but upon riches and power. We are just learning the lesson that if we would save ourselves we must do something to save Germany. Could any situation be more grotesque?

But why did Churchill go back first to his own discovery, eight years ago, or cite Victor Hugo in 1871? As an impassioned Englishman, he might have gone back to the close of the 18th century—to one man, named Thomas Paine, who declared for the first time the "United States of America" and so brought in a peaceful brotherhood, and saved the internal warfare that was eating away the lives of other people. It was Paine who gave America brotherhood in place of warring neighbours. Paine's "United States of Europe" might have saved the wars that we have gone through.

Why, then, did Churchill forget Paine? He was a far greater Englishman than Churchill has been. It could hardly be that Churchill was not aware of Paine's work in England, in France, in America. He must have known his great work for the independence of the United States. Paine died in poverty, for most of his important work was done without profit. Paine saw the way for better days clearer than any other man of his time. Why, we repeat, was not Paine recognised for the work he did, why not give him credit for the "United States of Europe"? Religion is a damnable thing, so is politics; and the two

together are infernal. Politics and religion! They are capable of much that is evil.

The Advance of Atheism

It was one of the far-seeing statements of Charles Bradlaugh that in broad terms the final struggle of Christianity would rest with Atheism and the Roman Catholic Church. In sober faith, that generalisation applies to religion as a whole, for ultimately all forms of religion are created substantially in the same way and end in the same manner. Religion involves fear, and it dies in understanding. Atheism results from the onset of knowledge and the power of human ability. Of course, blunders occur; scientific activities make blunder after blunder before the answer that is sought is discovered. All knowledge grows in that way. And in all stages religion retreats with the progress of knowledge and understanding. Blunders by the thousand are made, but bit by bit the honesty of search steadily displaces the mishaps of ignorance. All science blunders, but also all science reaches certainty in the end.

There is no mistake to-day that, to use a common term, Atheism is on the march. In my youth, a common expression when I easily and calmly pronounced myself as an Atheist the retort was, "Oh, you can't mean that." This was a polite remark. A more general one from the clergy was given by men of the type of Winnington-Ingram, who was as fine a sample of a born fool as ever I met in Holy Orders. He, by the way, we may note had his ground in Bethnal Green, and he always made it a point that his work in that district did not bring him a penny in the shape of payment. As a new man out of religious training that was true, but he always forgot to tell his audience that he was receiving £2,000 a year from St. Paul's. Ultimately, he became the Bishop of London, where the payment was heavier and his appointment an insult to his predecessors. His reply to anyone who declared he was an Atheist was, he said, to ask the Atheist, "What did you do last night?" The question was worthy of the priest. But Atheism grew. "Agnosticism" was introduced. It was as old as ancient Greece, and its only value in my time was that it enabled people, for various reasons, to avoid being called Atheist. The only real difference between the Atheist and the Agnostic was one had no god and the other didn't believe in his existence. Meanwhile, the number of avowed Atheists increased, and with numbers courage came to the more timid unbelievers.

But there was developing another feature. The priests of God spent a certain part of their time and money—the money was usually not theirs—among the poor to keep them in order. The poor had to thank God for alms given, and the givers of alms were satisfied if the poor could be kept quiet. Then there developed a change. The poor became restless; several forms of social development appeared. The people were getting "educated" in other matters beside those current in the schools. Freethought was also growing rapidly. The gods were being "put through it," and their worshippers also. More still, Atheism was making headway all over the civilised world. The Atheists increased in numbers, and, more important, they began to express their Atheism in what was really an unconcerned manner. And as apologies were not asked for being an Atheist none was offered. Atheism is

becoming something that is general without a God, and the Agnostic hasn't got one. It does not even weaken the believer in a God. The Atheist says that knowing the origin of gods we can judge the quality of any that is set forth, while the Agnostic believes he is justified in believing that God might be, but not what he is doing, what he looks like, and therefore could not be recognised as a god if we were having dinner with him. After all, to be recognisable one must have some kind of figure before it is seen. So on the whole the Atheist has played the more intelligible part, and therefore the most reasonable in the position he has taken.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES

THE World Union of Freethinkers held the first post-war meetings of the International Council and Executive Committee at Brussels on September 7 and 8. The following notes are compiled from the reports then submitted and from later information.

The Union had to face severe losses; Dr. M. Terwagne, who had been President for twenty-five years and had held that office with distinction, firmness and vision such as will be most difficult to replace; Emelyan Jaroslavsky, the moving spirit of the Russian UMA, vice-president; Richard Clerebaut, of Ghent, hon. treasurer; Jan Hoving, for long the president of the Dutch Dageraad, Renaud Strivay, of Liège, and Dr. Galpérine, of Paris, members of the Executive. To fill the vacancies the following elections were made: President: C. Bradlaugh Bonner; Vice-Presidents: Dr. L. Milde, A. L. Constandse (Holland); Senator Boulanger (Belgium) and H. J. Blackham (Great Britain) executive. Middle Pardon remains hon. secretary; L. Courtin (Belgium) assistant secretary and treasurer; J. de Ronde (Holland) assistant treasurer.

The reports from France showed an energetic resumption of activity both on the part of the National Federation and by the Rationalist Society. The Church had taken full advantage of the German occupation and of the reactionary Catholic Government of Vichy to strengthen its power, and was endeavouring to maintain its gains through M. R. P. and M. Bidault. As a result anti-clericalism has come once again to the fore in politics, particularly in respect of the schools. The new president of the French Federation is M. J. Cotereau.

In Belgium a somewhat similar situation has developed, though in a different manner; the former anti-clerical political parties had become appeasers, and as a result the Church once more has strengthened its hold on the schools to a degree that augurs ill for the future. The present Education Minister, Sen. A. Buisseret, is a rationalist; and our Belgian friends have taken up the struggle with their traditional vigour.

In Holland the Dageraad, under the direction of its president, de Ronde, and of Constandse, who both spent long periods as hostages in German concentration camps, and van den Brink, has not only increased its membership largely, but been able to broadcast once more, particularly as part of the celebration of its ninetieth birthday on October 6 last. It publishes a weekly with an emphasis on the philosophical, sociological and artistic aspects of rational thought as well as a monthly of more limited appeal and distribution. In addition, a Humanist Society has been formed. It may be recalled that at the last Dutch census (1938) one million persons declared themselves as without religion.

In Czechoslovakia a federation of the former Freethought societies has been brought about with the title of the League of Confessionless (Churchless). The president is E. V. Voska, famous as the adversary of Von Papen in two wars, the president of honour, Dr. Baytosek, who was one of the organisers of the

1907 Congress, and the hon. secretary, Dr. L. Milde. This league has received recognition by the State as on the same footing as the Churches, and will receive a State subsidy as a church. It is hoped to include in its ranks a substantial proportion of the million Czech churchless. Dr. Milde has been instructing teachers in non-religious moral education for children, in a series of lectures authorised by the Education Minister.

In all the occupied countries, Freethought activity was replaced during the war by resistance to the invader, and the suffering and losses were great; all the organisations are looking for fresh and young support and are handicapped by the almost complete depletion of their funds.

Freethought in Finland attained its peak about 1917 when there was a Parliamentary Commission charged to formulate a law providing complete liberty of conscience. This project was held back till 1923 when it became law. As a result a large number declared themselves churchless. In the reaction which followed these Freethinkers found it necessary to unite, and the present societies date mostly from that time. One of their first duties was to provide burial grounds since the Churches had refused burial to known Freethinkers; the second was to publish a periodical as the Press was almost entirely in the hands of the clericals. During the recent war Freethought activity ceased, but in the short time since elapsed eighteen societies have been established with a central federation; their two main aims are, firstly, the separation of Church and State, and, secondly, Secular education.

In the New World the power of the Churches during and since the war has led Freethinkers to greater activity. In Quebec where the Roman Church is supreme, an organisation has been formed to combat its influence. For the time being it has to work anonymously, a veritable underground resistance similar to those of the occupied countries against the Gestapo. In the United States not only has a very active Humanist Association been established, but the old Liberal League has been revived with great energy under Marshall Ganvin to check the growing influence of the Churches in the schools, while the A.A.A.A. is finding plenty to do. Those who have read Avro Manhattan's and Lehmann's books will realise the importance of their activities as a check to the immense efforts of the Church of Rome.

In Mexico there is no purely Freethought organisation; such work has largely been carried out by the lodges of the Freemasons. Dr. J. B. Viliesid, who was for some time hon. secretary of the London Committee of the W.U.F., has, since his arrival in Mexico, made contact with General Rodrigues, our correspondent there, and they have gathered about them a company of vigorous Freethinkers, mostly university men.

In Australia, the Movement made considerable progress during the war years. The Rationalist Association of Australia publishes a 32 pp. monthly, "The Rationalist," which circulates more widely than within the membership of the Association. Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland have each autonomous Rationalist Societies; and the Freethought Society of Melbourne University has been most active. All these societies organise programmes of lectures and publish periodicals, as well as holding social gatherings. The principal adversary of Freethought in the Commonwealth is the Roman Catholic Church, whose members constitute approximately 20 per cent. of the population. Catholic action is well organised and has infiltrated into all public activities from the Federal Government to the local cricket clubs. They hold a disproportionate influence in the Labour Party. In the State of Victoria six ministers are Catholic and of 71 Federal Labour M.P.'s 51 are Catholic. Moreover, for many years past, Catholics have formed 35 per cent. of the criminal population. At the last census, in 1933, 13,600 declared themselves to be without religious belief; this number is expected to increase considerably in the next census, in 1947. As elsewhere, the Catholics are endeavouring to obtain the largest possible State subsidies for their schools. It should be

remembered that in Victoria the State schools are Secular; there is no religious instruction. The Churches are trying to make such instruction obligatory. As in Great Britain, the Broadcasting Commission, though organising abundant programmes of religious broadcasting, refuses the microphone to Freethinkers; however, rationalist broadcasts have been made from commercial stations.

In India, the former Freethought organisation has largely disappeared, but the Movement has taken new forms; Renaissance clubs have been widely established whose main aim is the dissemination of scientific knowledge; nominally these bodies are not anti-religious, but in a country such as India they are effectively centres of Freethought propaganda. The political situation in India is infected with religious prejudices to such a degree that large numbers of thinking people have been thoroughly disgusted, and have broken away from the older political parties and have formed a Radical Democratic Party which is rapidly growing in strength, and which is openly anti-religious. In the universities, Psychological societies have been formed in which free discussion of religion is encouraged and are enjoying very fair success.

It is hoped to hold the next International Congress in 1948; in the meantime a session of the International Council will take place in conjunction with the Annual Conference of the Dageraad in Amsterdam next September; and a conference is planned to be held in Birmingham in the early autumn on "Humanism and the Roman Catholic Menace."

C. B. B.

STILL LOOKING BACKWARDS

Samuel Bradburn, the so-called "Demosthenes of Methodism" on account of his powerful eloquence preached at Woodlesford on April 30, 1784. In 1806-7 he was stationed in the Wakefield Circuit. The neighbouring village of Lofthouse having then no chapel, service was performed in a humble cottage at Mr. Parker's, at Langley. Bradburn himself being quite a little man, a large "cobblin" of coal was always saved for him to stand upon, and the back of an old armchair fully answered the purpose of a pulpit.

A curious gathering of out-door preachers, hailing from Leeds, used to visit Rothwell in by-gone days, who were commonly known as "Jumping Ranters." Their meetings were always held in a cottage in the Jail Fold. People went there purely out of curiosity to observe their peculiar antics. In their jumping fanaticism, the place being low, sometimes their heads came into very unpleasant contact with the ceiling, much to the amusement of the young ones. They did not, however, make many converts, and were not sympathised with by the true Primitive Methodists of the village.

Rothwell, as a parish, provided in its time a large number of local preachers. Some of them were humble and devoted men who worked hard during the week and on the Sabbath cheerfully buckled on their spiritual armour and went forth to *denounce sin and do good to others*. Others of this persuasion were queer characters, amongst which we can mention an old veteran known as William Wrigglesworth, a road-mender, and of a droll character, who eventually grew very feeble and trembling; next came Caleb Copley, a joiner, who, commencing his preaching "career" in 1833, spent a period of 43 years *earnestly proclaiming the truth*; John Hampson, who, when six years of age, became blind from being struck by a stone, which permanently injured one eye and caused the other to lose its sight. It is known that one preacher, Tommy Wilson, had to keep going round his chapel snuffing the miserable lights provided by candles which often diverted the attention of the assembly from the discourse of the preacher. Later, candles were done away with by the installation of oil lamps.

E. H. S.

ACID DROPS

Lord Norton, a well-known man in religious circles, has discovered that "Christian worship is gradually becoming just incidental to British life. Many people go to church only on special occasions. In the Forces, religion is merely a lifeless worship controlled by military necessity." It really does not take a very wise man to come to that conclusion. It is patent to anyone; and what is certain is the fact that when a man sees the light of commonsense he is not likely to forget his lesson. That is as true of the Forces as of the ordinary individual; and when soldiers are treated as responsible beings there will be a greater and greater decline of professed believing in the stupidities given to men and women of the Forces.

A peculiar case occurred recently at the Court of Newton Abbot, Devon. A man and his wife were accused of travelling on the G.W.R. without payment. The man sent a letter to the Court to say that neither he nor his wife would attend the Court because "we are acting strictly in accordance with our religious belief in that God never sanctioned laws which applied only to big business interests." Now this is a clean slash of religious conviction. God certainly did not officially sanction railways. The probabilities are that he never expected them, and when they appeared he probably called them, as some of his servants on earth, instruments of Satan. In any case, Christian conviction must be respected. And the clergy say so.

From a copy of the "Daily Mirror" we learn that Sir Richard Acland has entered the arena with a determination to save the Christian deity from the fate that has wiped so many gods out of existence. We are promised further details, but we are not very sanguine that he will meet with success. Gods have been very plentiful; they have been black and white, powerful and limited in their course, but sooner or later they shrivel into nothingness. In solemn truth, the one truth that stands forth in human history is that immortality does not belong to the gods. Meanwhile, we would suggest that Sir Richard marks the story of the procession of worn-out gods as given in Flaubert's book of the procession of past deities, in the powerful picture of the march past of the main gods of the world. The Christian God is going the way that other gods have traversed. But in the cases noted the gods are presented as discarded only. To-day it is not a matter of deposition. When gods go now they leave no successors.

The Rev. G. F. Braithwaite (Conisborough) tells a curious story of what he alleges appeared at a school when the time came for the religious lesson. The story runs that the headmaster said to the pupils, "Get your Bibles and read what you like"; and then, turning to a visitor, he said, "I don't believe in this stuff. Of course, I don't tell them so." Whether the story is true or not, we have the best of reasons for believing that a very large percentage of teachers do not believe in the religious lesson and have no faith in what they teach. The Rev. Mr. Braithwaite thinks the alleged comment of the head teacher indicates a very bad state of things. So do we. The difference is that while the vicar laments the teacher does not openly pretend to believe in the religious fairy tales, we are impressed by the fact that teachers should teach as true what they believe to be false under penalty of losing their positions. The "great lying creed" is very powerful—for evil.

The Vicar of Conisborough thinks it a very grave thing that the "moral Christian standard" should not be upheld by all teachers. But what is the Christian standard of morals? Honesty, truthfulness, goodness; to be loyal, to do one's duty, to be kind, to be honest in our relationships, etc., are not qualities that in any sense can be said to belong to Christianity. They are qualities belonging—as do their opposites—to mankind as a whole. All these were held long before the Christian Church was heard of. More than that, man practised these qualities long before man was fully conscious of the part played by them in the social group. Belief in a future life, and in gods, has nothing whatever to do with "morality," except so far as the Churches use it for non-moral or immoral purposes. They existed and were understood long before Christianity was heard of. They will be operative long after Christianity is forgotten.

The Rev. Braithwaite turns from alarm to impudence and says:—

"I believe it is the idle teacher who finds the novelty of the pigmy technique of destructive atheism do his job for him. If he is too idle and unintelligent to think out for himself and his pupils the meaning and the value of Christianity as a way of life, then the sooner he gets out of business the better. Better for himself, the future of the race, and of the children."

The priest is true to the type that finds a place of some importance—thanks to religion and the ignorance of his followers. The teacher was merely confiding to a friend what the majority of educated men and women are saying to-day. The vicar is relying upon the support of men and women who belong to a type of character that ignores all that modern science has to say, and which honest men and women are saying. The Rev. Mr. Braithwaite belongs to the religious bullies of a century ago. If there is such a place as the Christian heaven, he deserves to be sent there. Amid the great men and women whom the Churches have sent to hell, our vicar would be quite out of place.

Everywhere in general and nowhere in particular there can be found Christian advocates who make it their business to inform the world that it is their duty as Christians to see that people are given better houses, better education, etc. This kind of thing is nowadays very common, but one might well ask why Christianity brought into play concerning something that has no necessary connection with earthly well-being? That was not the cry of historic Christianity, and it is not the essence of Christianity to-day. The clergy, and other notable Christian advocates, permitted the slums of our towns and cities to develop, and the cardinal cry was not for better houses and sounder modes of living, but that all will be better set forth in the life to come. Gibbon's satire that it was not in this world that Christians hope to be either happy or useful really was the historic note of the Christian Churches. It was only when the religious plea began to lose its strength that that note began to drop. Unfortunately, there are a considerable number of people who are still fooled by this mixture of ancient superstition and the artfulness of a priesthood which alters the tone of its preaching when Secularism has been able to assert itself.

Our readers will remember that at the special meeting of the Tory Party Mr. Churchill said that the first aim of the Conservative Party would be the protection of the Church of England. It is worth noting that the Church clergy are shouting aloud that the Church is daily running into deeper dangers. But Mr. Churchill has said nothing, and done nothing, to protect the Established Church from the blows which are daily increasing in strength. Perhaps he thinks that the return to office will come by that road.

The "Catholic Times" warns its readers, "Do not make Mass a pagan Yuletide." But how can one honestly do other wise? There is, in fact, dishonesty in hiding it or avoiding it. It was born in pre-Christian days, as are all the main features of the Christian belief. They are often disguised by different names, but everyone who knows the history of Christianity, or has a mere passing acquaintance with anthropology, knows the truth. The "Catholic Times" is just impudent in trying to make the story anything but a re-hash of folklore.

It may have been noted that at this last Christmastime there was a striking absence of reports of sermons preached. Generally most of the papers give a report of sermons preached. This time the pulpit was simply ignored in most instances. Evidently to-day the Church is not so useful a "backer" as it used to be. Perhaps the picture of people rejoicing to escape damnation because an alleged innocent person was killed for their sake is not as pleasant as it used to be. The assumed Saviour died a terrible death as a bargain with God not to punish mankind and the people feasted on roasted fowl and drank plentifully of beer and whisky. When Christianity is carefully examined one smiles at man's curious notion of the human brain.

"THE FREETHINKER"

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C. 1.

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

E. J. CLARK.—Thanks for cutting, and not less for your appreciation of this journal. It reaches all round the globe; and if the number of subscribers were related to the area covered by "The Freethinker" it would have the largest circulation of any paper.

E. S. W.—Thanks for your appreciation. We do the best we can, and our writers do the same.

C. WATERS.—We have never underrated the power of the Catholic Church. Many years ago Bradlaugh said that the final struggle will be between Atheism and the Roman Church. Affairs seem going that way.

For "The Freethinker."—Mr. D. Finlayson (Edinburgh), 3s.; Mr. A. H. Deacon (Leeds), 10s.; Mr. A. Addison (Eltham), 10s.; Miss Louise Pye, £2 3s.; Mrs. Payne "In memory of Edward Payne," 10s.; Messrs. F. and R. Laws (Birmingham), £1; Mr. M. Mason (Thames Ditton) "Entertainment and Educational Tax for 'Freethinker,'" £1. Total, £5 16s.

Benevolent Fund N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges the following donations to the Benevolent Fund of the Society: P. M. Tovey, 3s.; A. Addison, 10s.; W. G. Wilkinson, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. W. Heal, £20; Mr. and Mrs. S. Miller, £10 10s.; G. A. Saunders, 4s.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, and not to the Editor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

Lecture notices must reach 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

The people of Lincoln voted four to one in favour of Sunday cinemas. That does not clearly picture the situation. The majority, as is usual, did not vote; and bearing in mind the matter in consideration, we may take it for granted that those who had a strong objection to Sunday entertainments did the best they could to prevent them. On the whole, it is therefore fair to say that had the vote been complete the four to one might easily have been ten to one. But that is not all that could be said. The voting cost the people of Lincoln £150, which means that people had to pay for a freedom that should never have been questioned. The voters in favour of Sunday entertainments did not hurt anyone in any way. No one is compelled to go to cinemas; no one is interfering with people who wish to go to church. Sunday entertainments interfere with no one, and to a really civilised people no one would be permitted to interfere with a form of entertainment that in itself interferes with no one, and supplies a clean entertainment for any who wish to attend the "show." We wonder how long it will be before Members of the Houses of Parliament take their courage in both hands and put an end to this interference with freedom of action and enjoyment.

In the situation we are inclined to pity these poor clerical leaders. The Churches, powerful though they may be—mainly on account of the protection offered to all sorts of vested interests—cannot retain their power for ever. They appreciate that as well as we do. They know also they are fighting a

retreating battle. Nevertheless, they strive by all sorts of fanciful or dishonourable manœuvres to create a confusion of thought and speech to hold their own. They adopt to-day what they discarded yesterday in the hope that the present may lead to a new tenure of life.

The following is from the "Daily Worker":—

"When clergymen begin to discuss, as they have been doing again lately, the question why people don't go to church, they ought to take into account the Church's foundation. Of course we know, having sung it so many times in youth, that the Church has only one foundation, but . . .

"Fourteen square miles of estate in Northamptonshire have just been sold by Lord Lilburn, and the property includes, besides a mansion and numerous residences, farms and cottages, the advowsons of three livings.

"An advowson is the right to appoint an incumbent to a living in the Church of England—in short, to decide who shall be parson in a particular place.

"The fact that such a right is still a piece of property for sale or barter must surely give progressive clergymen ground for thought."

To this we may add the degree to which the Roman Catholic Church is picking up land and properties to a very great extent. Not all these matters are known to the public, but an inquiry, if the law compelled the real owners of all property purchased to be registered, would be interesting, if not startling.

A STUDY IN MYSTICISM

I

JOAD once said that philosophy should not be attempted by anybody and should be eschewed by some. Something similar might be said about Aldous Huxley's "Grey Eminence"; though it may be that anyone with insufficient philosophical and psychological understanding could not read it. It is more likely that the apparently meaningless rignarole would be dismissed as double-dutch or gibberish, and the book thrown aside. But Huxley's keen analysis is full of interest. It is a philosophical treatise in an historical setting. His case is that history should not be over-simplified and that the ideological aspect can not be explained in terms of economics. In this "study of religion and politics," he appears to lose himself in his moralising and ends in an attempted justification of mysticism.

For this purpose he selects the case of Father Joseph of Paris. In the first chapter he gives a pen picture of the man and, incidentally, his mystical method. The problem then is to explain both him and his mysticism, as well as the consequences of his activities. No one, seeing this dirty, ragged, bearded Capuchin friar, lost in meditation, trudging barefoot on the road to Rome, would realise that he was the most subtle diplomatist, confederate and right hand of the great Cardinal Richelieu, Master of France. The influences of childhood and youth are considered and appear to clearly indicate the formation of his character; the effects of orthodox religion being very noticeable. Though he developed a keen intellect; for him, the proper place for woman was in a convent or behind the wicket gate of the confessional; woman should only be seen through iron bars. Although "the brilliantly accomplished Francois Leclerc du Tremblay" had a keen appreciation of the ability and attainments of many acquaintances this was tempered by the reflection that they were doomed; they would go to hell.

"The intensity of Father Joseph's aversion was proportionate—to the intensity of his early passion" and the "force he had to use against himself in order to master it." With a spartan tirelessness more zealous than Stoic fortitude, he hardened himself, both physically and mentally. Arising from his reading of mystical literature, and his later contact with practising mystics, he developed his own mystical method. "Thé young baron de Maffliers—made an excellent impression" and a

"brilliant military career" was expected. But he had other ideas. He set out for the Grande Chartreuse "hungry for a life—he knew would be the most difficult for him to bear." But circumstances determined otherwise, and he eventually entered the Franciscan order. After an unusually brief period of novitiation, he demonstrated a remarkable ability as an evangelist. At this period he found himself involved in "the reformation of nuns who did not want to be reformed." As a consequence of this he became acquainted with a young bishop, a "precocious ecclesiastic—Armand Jean du Plessis de Richelieu."

Father Joseph's mystical life of missionary zeal became more complicated. As he had previously made the acquaintance of Mme. Bourbon, his life henceforth was one of political power. "Vicariously, he was able to give himself to that life of orison," but which "Richelieu and the affairs of state made impossible for him to lead in person." This meant a lot to "a patriot who was convinced that a triumph for his country was also a triumph for God." The sketch of the political scenery is well done and Father Joseph's part in it picturesquely portrayed. The point is that "he had schooled himself into a condition in which he genuinely did not desire money and was indifferent to power." "As for fame, contemporary or posthumous, Father Joseph cared nothing for it." As a politician "he worked without show or noise—as a writer, he courted anonymity." His "temptation" was to believe that "a disagreeable task must be good just because it was disagreeable."

The tireless character of this remarkable individual is shown in that during his continuous political and diplomatic journeys, mostly carried out on foot; barefoot; he found time for a considerable amount of writing. Not only was he missionary evangelist, power politician and practising mystic, but also a poet. It is not surprising that his poetry was mystical "Baldly analysed," the 4,637 hexameters of the Turciad "seems almost uniquely preposterous—was it all merely a matter of literary convention, or a self-conscious imitation of the poetical machinery of another age?" Yet all this is inextricably bound up in the character of the man, and of his activities. He was at the same time engaged in intriguing for war, and the prolongation of war; not only organising missionary enterprise, but also espionage; both philanthropic and militaristic; both religious and political enterprise. His diplomacy, like his personal character was essentially duplex.

Aldous Huxley not only deals with the intrigues, but also their consequences; the misery and cruelty, the suffering and bloodshed, the inevitable consequences of war; he deals graphically with the Thirty Years' War. He goes further, in considering subsequent history. He also examines the general character of religious and political organisations, keeping in mind the consequences of power politics, but trying to see a moral case for mysticism. Huxley puts innumerable questions and tries to deal with his subject from a rational point of view; its logical and ethical considerations. In view of Huxley's case that the future can not be foreseen, two stanzas of a poem "are peculiarly illuminating." Father Joseph's "zeal was too burningly hot to be extinguished by anything short of a sea of other people's blood." Few political idealists "have spent half a lifetime brooding over the torture and death of a man-god." And in reference to the unseen future, "few politicians have ever had—the courage—to tell the disquieting truth."

In these and other passages Aldous Huxley shows that he has entirely misunderstood the character of mysticism. If we are unaware of the consequences of our actions, how can a mystic, lost in oblivion, be so aware? Huxley is reading his own consciousness into the mind of a man who deliberately cultivated oblivion. Also, Huxley assumes that suffering and bloodshed are undesirable, whereas, to this mystic, suffering was his life; the very means to the attainment of the love of God. "One wonders what went on in the friar's mind," says Huxley. It is unreasonable to seek logic in the mind of a mystic. It is not

a question of reason or justification. It was not that "Father Joseph reasoned as he knelt." He was not "threading the mazes of his own voluntary ignorance." The mystic does not reason in his orisons, though he may, at other times reason about them. Nor is it a question of "holy indifference." Nor a case of "from the depths of a nature in which the conscious had been systematically aligned with the subconscious." It is a case of delirious sublimation.

This is a brief outline of the book, but the subject has hardly been touched upon. With the Editor's permission and the reader's indulgence, we will go further in another article.

H. H. PREECE

LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

I WAS disappointed this Christmastide. I had hoped upon hope that my favourite would come to the microphone to cheer me with the old, old tale that told of the one who somehow seems to get born again every year.

For us poor mortals, once in a lifetime seems to be enough. It seemed a mockery when the masses gave vent to "Knees up Mother Brown" to commemorate the man of sorrows. Nowhere has it ever been portrayed by the Artistic fraternity of Jesus smiling or seeing a joke.

Oh no; for it is religiously intended to keep this time-worn fable still in the atmosphere of ancient and ignorant times; when messages as well as rumours were passed on by word of mouth and wild gestures.

They were not scientific in those days and carpenters, as such, believed in miracles far more commonly than they do now.

Why, even religious carpenters who go to high mass and cross themselves devoutly, feel it hard to believe that Jesus, on finding a plank too short, could "stretch it" to the required length.

What would the Dollar Producers of America give to solve the services of Jesus as exhibiting this miracle to the sceptical millions who will, and do, go to the Pictures on Sundays rather than to church?

Believe me or not, I've actually seen two of those Fathers of God give a furtive glance across the road towards the happy crowds lining up in their hundreds to see their heroic Pet "go through it" whilst these two companions of passion floated away towards their steepled cold store; therein to fill the ears of the devout with threats—religious threats, to those who will only patronise the church when they want to get married and buried.

The most that can be said in favour of the House of Sorrows is the occasional appearance of a real live comedian. Such a star turn is the Right Reverend Bishop W. J. Carey, D.D.; whenever the "Radio Times" announces his divine presence the pupils of mine eyes dance excitedly and tolls my bell with expectation.

My joy is unbounded, and in the peaceful surroundings of a Sunday morning with no other noise to disturb my pleasure except the milkeart grazing steadily from door to door, I switch on this wireless invention of the devil that I might listen to the much-travelled minister of mirth.

It's not so much what he says as it's the way he says it. He's a one-man pantomime to me.

I have no quarrels with Divines in the flesh who can give service sufficient to move, what is known in medical terms as the diaphragm (or large circular muscle that separates the ribs and the belly) up and down vigorously; that empties and ventilates the lungs and stimulates the heart mechanically, and sets it beating more vigorously than before.

This is one of the reasons why people feel so well after a hearty laugh. And such a comedian as this I declare is of great importance to our health and well-being.

The personality and charm of a Bishop of this grade is indeed very rare. I miss nothing if it's good providing I don't miss it, and whilst other folks are slumbering in their Sunday beds I'm preparing the table for a peaceful cup of tea. Even the cat and dog seem to know it's Sunday morning because, I suppose, of the absence of the usual scramble to get to the sink first on work-a-day mornings. But this morning belongs to me and if it's cold I stir the fire into a flame that lends colour to what I am about to receive. Solemn music bursts forth from the organ as though from far away and thrills my musical susceptibilities to the point of confession for my sins. And were it not for the fact that I expect to be rewarded, as we were as kids with oranges and nuts at the pantomime associated with Christmas, I think I would pipe a tear. I'm very fond of hymns, especially when the choir is well trained and chosen.

And while the introductory strains of the organ reach their climax I sip my tea and wait for the voice that bringeth me joy and understanding.

The service begins and, thanks to the wireless devices, can be cut out in preference to reading the "News of the curls." But not me, for I'm "religious" in the true sense of the word, for it means no more than "Tell me the old, old story" again.

Any student of philology will say I'm right, yet wrong, in describing myself as "Atheist" and, what's more, why shouldn't I take advantage of a service at home rather than go abroad?

I know with Dr. Carey that I'm a miserable sinner until he provokes, in his inimitable way, the snicker of mirth which listeners heard quite distinctly from those blissful maidens a Sunday or two ago.

Dr. Carey: may you live long and die 'appy.

TIMOTHY THOMAS.

CORRESPONDENCE

"A DEFENCE OF HATRED"

Sir.—Here in Paris, where an ebullition of hatred still deprives the people of milk and other necessaries, and where enough hatred still seethes to make sensible government impossible, I have read Mr. Archibald Robertson's eulogy of that silly and primitive emotion. One would have thought that this lunatic world had suffered enough recently from hate and sorely needed a little sensible goodwill. Mr. Robertson thinks otherwise.

Certainly it takes a humourless Scot or an over-solemn German to hymn the delights of hate: the English find such stuff only comical. And, indeed, what should poor little human microbes do, hating each other? Are not cancer or senility or premature death or the other ills that flesh is heir to, enough tragedy without mankind afflicting each other?

What is this hatred but spite, envy, malice and ill-will? And what are its fruits but war, disease, destruction, death and all other diabolisms? Further, when Mr. Robertson euphemistically talks of "liquidating" his political enemies, what does he mean but killing them? If he really means what he says, the Old Bailey starkly disapproves of "liquidating like a louse," which it brutally calls murder or incitement to murder. But, of course, he means nothing more than mere metaphor, or a little literary fustian.

Here in Paris, too, at midnight on Christmas Eve one could see outside the Madeleine Church a crowd of Christians-without-admission fighting a crowd of unticketed Christians for entry to the Midnight Mass to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace and Goodwill. It was an ironic sight, but Mr. Robertson would have approved the contest between privileged and unprivileged—and called for a little murder.

Surely toleration, not hatred, is the first lesson of Freethought, which bigoted intolerance is to prevail, Freethought will receive short shrift at the hands of governments and mobs of religionists and pseudo-religionists.—Yours, etc.,

C. G. L. DU CANN.

THE DOCTRINE OF HATE

Sir.—The tone of the articles by Mr. Archibald Robertson is deplorable. His thesis is, as I judge it, that the capitalist is an excrescence upon society; that he has never acquired—or has lost—the human virtues; that he lives on the backs of another set of people (the working man), and generally that he is a liar and a cheat. Life, by this token, is a comedy to those who think; a tragedy to those who feel. But it is all going to be different when an educated working class elects from its own number those best qualified to administer the State.

Vain hope. It will be just as well to make it clear now that the working man in the mass hasn't the least desire to absorb education; for him the football, or the dogs, or the cinema that gives him passing enjoyment.

This doctrine and these reflections inspire the question I wish to put. What shall it profit Atheism if, having rejected a God-superstition, it puts in its place and nourishes the tyranny of a superstition founded upon a Moscow-made creed without a foundation of liberty and justice? And there is another consideration. The drift from churchism will contain many men and women of integrity quite ready to adopt Atheism as a guiding principle if it is offered to them in its purity. If it is to be a texture of non-religion-cum-Communism, then good-bye to fruition. The prospect is repellent, and there is more than fanciful reason for fear that such a consummation may develop.

—Yours, etc.,

W. ROBSON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY.

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, January 14, 7 p.m.: "Art and Propaganda," MARJORIE BOWEN.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, January 12, 11 a.m.: "Insanity and the Criminal Law," Professor G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D.

West London Branch N.S.S. (The National Trade Union Club, 12, Great Newport Street, W.C. 1).—6-30 p.m.: "An Irishman at Home and Abroad," Mr. F. MCKAY.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m., a lecture.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Germany," MARY SAMAN.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: "The Political and Cultural Aims of the Roman Catholic Church," Mr. F. A. RUDLEY (Author, "Julian the Apostate").

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Fitzwilliam Room, Grand Hotel, Sheffield).—Monday, January 13, 7-30 p.m.: "The Beliefs of Unbelievers," Mr. F. MOSLEY (Nottingham).

AN ATHEIST'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY. A Survey of Positions. By Chapman Cohen Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

THE FAULTS AND FAILINGS OF JESUS CHRIST. By C. G. L. Du Cann. (Second Edition.) Price 4d.; postage 1d.

THE MOTHER OF GOD. By G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; postage 1d.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; postage 1d.

HUMAN TRAGEDY

IN the theatre, it has long been realised that a tragedy has a much more profound and lasting effect upon an audience than does a comedy. We may thoroughly enjoy a comedy and be delighted with it, but we are not moved by it as we are by the tragic. And the theatre is a reflection or a demonstration of ordinary life, however exaggerated or intensified. For in our everyday existence, it is tragedies and disasters, small or large, that have most influence upon us. We may sing and revel together, and experience great pleasure: it is desirable that we should. But our whole human relationship, from the family outwards, has its basis in the recognition of possible tragedy and the consequent effort to avert it. Parental care, without which human life would perish, exemplifies this, as does the readiness with which most men help their less fortunate fellows, to the extent of their ability.

There are, of course, many instances of "man's inhumanity to man," but these are usually the result of social maladjustment in one way or another. The average, ordinary human being has no desire to hurt or kill his fellow man. He does so under provocation of some kind—in a burst of temper, or believing that such a course is necessary to general human welfare—but he would rather live peaceably with his neighbours. And nationalistic struggles—the cause of much human suffering—arise, not from any inborn tendencies, but from artificially instilled prejudices.

Unquestionably, the sympathetic qualities of human beings are their greatest attribute. The love, tenderness and fellowship of which man is capable, have been responsible for his achievements. It is to our co-operative acts that we owe our successes in the utilisation of natural resources for human benefit. Indeed, co-operation is essential for bringing a child into the world, and a necessary condition for its development. Man, in other words, is a dependent creature: dependent upon other men for his survival. No human society could exist without co-operation: that is recognised among savage and barbaric tribes, no matter how small, and it is rooted in that smallest of co-operative units, the family.

To-day, human society has simply ceased to function tribally, nationally or even continentally. It cannot any longer be satisfactorily organised on anything less than the international plane, because of the complete interdependence of different nations, and because of the easy means of communication and transport—for peaceful and warlike purposes. The time has arrived for a co-operative venture greater than any before, and in some ways man is ready for it, but in other ways he is unfortunately not prepared.

John Hersey's "Hiroshima"¹ reveals this unpreparedness to an extent probably never before realised. Dealing with the feelings, sufferings and reactions of the victims of the first atomic bomb, the story is plainly and simply told, without undue exaggeration of the horrors. Yet it conveys to the reader a very real sense of the hopeless, aimless state of those who survived, and gives a picture of the terrible tragedy hanging over all. It is to be hoped that this tragedy will have a more moving effect than any which preceded it.

A city with a population of 250,000 was almost completely destroyed, 66,000 people being killed and 100,000 injured. Those are the bare facts, but John Hersey takes six of the survivors and, through their stories, some idea of the awful experience is brought home to us. Thereafter it is impossible to take a dispassionate view of the atom bomb. That is why all should read it.

Can it really be true that man deliberately dropped an atomic bomb upon his fellow man? Is it possible that the pitiable

creatures described by Hersey were men, victims of the ghastly destructiveness of others of their own species? "When he had penetrated the bushes, he saw there were about twenty men, and they were all in exactly the same nightmarish state: their faces were wholly burned, their eyesockets were hollow, the fluid from their melted eyes had run down their cheeks. . . . Their mouths were mere swollen, pus-covered wounds. . . ." Yes, these were once men, our fellow men. A different colour of skin, living in another nation, but they were men. They had wives, too, and children, homes which knew domestic joys and squabbles. Never more will those families be re-united, nor will millions of others throughout the world.

The tragedy of Hiroshima, of course, was not essentially different from that of other bombed towns. Sixty thousand dead from one bomb at one blow, is no worse, I suppose, than 60,000 killed in the course of twelve months. Individual pain and suffering is neither increased nor eased by the knowledge that thousands of others are in a similar predicament. But the gigantic nature of this tragedy makes it seem different and brings it home to us more forcibly. And it does inaugurate a new era in warfare. Let us hope that "Hiroshima" is read by the general staffs and military men of all countries. They will perhaps, realise then, that war is no game of cricket and cease speaking of it in cricketering terms, deploring the "unfair" and "deceitful" tactics of the opposing side.

Man prides himself upon being the most intelligent of animals—but in war he lowers himself, not to the level of other animals—but animals of the same species do not wage war on each other—beneath them. It is not surprising, therefore, that a number of thinking men have died as pessimists after striving for a lifetime to demonstrate the tragic folly of their fellow beings. For some, the spectacle has become unbearable and they have ended their lives prematurely. Probably all human benefactors have been tempted, at times, to give up the apparently hopeless task.

Now, however, the situation is more urgent than ever. "Hiroshima" conclusively shows. Christians have recently been echoing the chorus of the angels that there would be peace on earth and goodwill towards men, which was heralded over nineteen centuries ago and is yet to come. It must come quickly if man is to survive, but it cannot come through any sectarian teaching. It cannot originate from belief in a beneficent god, nor from the belief in a life of bliss after death! These are hindrances to its coming. Religions divide men, they do not unite them. They lift man's eyes to heaven, when it is the earth with which he should be concerned. They keep him in superstitious ignorance, when it is more knowledge that he requires. They breed hatred and antagonism, where love and fellowship are wanted.

Men cannot be united on any religious grounds. Jew, Roman Catholic and Protestant, Hindu and Moslem, and so on, can never agree over religion, but they have one essential thing in common—their humanity! This must form the basis of the unity, as it would if religious, political and other differences did not produce dangerous rifts. When the majority of men fully appreciate their common humanity upon this earth, peace will be assured. Then they will realise that earthquakes cause tragedy enough in Hiroshima!

C. McCALL

¹ First published in the New Yorker, August, 1946. Published in "Penguin Books," November, 1946.

² "War is an organised attack of one community upon another community, and as such is never fought by animals other than those of the 'human' variety. It is impossible to produce a single instance from the animal kingdom, outside of man, to show that within a definite species a form of behaviour resembling warfare is waged by one group of its members upon any other order or class of animals—as a means of improving the species or what-not." "MAN'S MOST DANGEROUS MYTH: The Failure of the Race," by M. F. Ashley Montagu, pp. 171/2 (Columbia University Press).