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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Just An Ancient Story

"NOW the birth of Jesus was on this wise." He was born of a union between a Jewish maiden and a ghost. And the death of Jesus was to fill a promise given to a father that was said to be in heaven. He was executed on the eve of the Jewish Sabbath, and afterwards Christians called it a "Good Friday." They were curious folk; ordinary humans would have used a kinder term. But the Christian—real Christian—moves in very peculiar ways. Jesus died. The Christians think it was a good thing—the thing to get someone to die to beatify them. The Father of Jesus could have managed things with less pain to his Son, but it would not have been so interesting. Years and years ago, when common criminals were hanged in public, the said public complained if the "show" could not be seen. So the date of the death of Jesus worked well. Some people were saved—in the next world—and every Christian thanked God that he sent his Son to be crucified. It is said to be a great story, but we have seen better people and have heard better things. There is an unconscious satire in the fact that the commemoration of the death of Jesus is determined by the phase of the moon. The moon it must be remembered was connected with insanity. Hence the origin of the word lunacy. It is not history that settles the date when Jesus had to die. It was astronomy. Sun gods, resurrection gods, etc., are all determined by these mysterious powers. Sun gods, vegetation gods, with many others, belong to the same group as Jesus.

Still more curious is the long series of magical ways to health or to death. But Easter has no practical connection with the death of poor Christians—save it is of the magic working kind in general. A Pagan who was awakened from the grave, after being there for thousands of years, would be quite familiar with the celebration of Easter. He would thank the gods for their conquest over the unpleasant gods who brought cold and death. It is quite reasonable to say that Adonis and Tammuz, and others, all belonged to the same group. If Jesus ever lived the first sacred festival he saw was the Passover. There was also the making of a god in order to get good food. Historically, Christianity was a reversion to early superstitions. Easter is an ancient nature festival, and whether it be in the name of Jesus or Adonis does not make any difference. Really there is no doubt whatever in the minds of anthropologists as to the truth of what has been said.

But there are some suspicious features about this alleged transaction. In the first place, when we commemorate the death or birth of a man, a real man, we do it upon a date not upon a day. If a man dies on the first of April the date of his death remains the first of April for ever and ever. For a man can only die once, and when he dies he

does it all at once. But in the case of Jesus Christ we commemorate not the date but the day. No matter what the date we must have the commemoration of his death on a Friday. And whoever heard of any man's death being commemorated in this fashion! Historic facts do not occur in this way, and they are not commemorated in this way. If we do not know exactly when a thing happened we say it occurred "about" such and such a date. It is only in the case of Jesus Christ and his kind that we must have his death on a Friday whatever the date may be.

As I have already intimated the commemoration of the death of Jesus Christ is determined by the phases of the moon—for of old the moon was supposed to have some causal connection with insanity. Hence the origin of the words "lunacy" and "lunatic." It is not history, but astronomy that settles the date when Christians shall celebrate the death and resurrection of their god. In this respect Christianity was but following the fashion with all sacrificed and resurrected gods. Sun gods and vegetation gods had always been killed and resurrected in this fashion, and it would not have been practicable to depart too widely from the fashion. A difference of name was nothing, it was the thing itself that mattered. Still, in a religion such as Christianity, God Almighty, whom Christians believe arranged their religion for world dominancy, ought to have looked ahead and have arranged a fixed date deathday as well as a fixed birthday, so that the game would not have been so clearly given away. As Abraham Lincoln said, you cannot fool all the people all the time, and the perpetuation of Christianity depended upon fooling all the people for ever, and not for a period.

Easter has no possible connection with the supposed death of a Jewish peasant just over nineteen hundred years ago. It is not even Christian, save in the sense that it is part of the historic religion known as Christianity. It is far older than Christianity. A Pagan who was suddenly awakened from the sleep of centuries would find nothing unfamiliar in the Christian celebration of Easter. He would only feel that he was once again assisting at the celebration of the sun god's victory over winter and death. He would see in what was being done in the name of the slain and resurrected Jesus, only what had been done in his day in the name of the slain and resurrected Adonis and Tammuz. Even the name of Easter gives the game away. It has nothing whatever to do with Jesus Christ. It is most probably the name of a goddess, the Saxon Eostre, who was annually glorified in the revivification of vegetation. If Jesus ever lived the Spring festival which he knew was the Jewish Passover, a festival in which the sacrifice of the first-born yearlings played a part. This, one may assume, was a refinement on the more primitive custom of making a god by sacrificing a human being, and so securing a good harvest. But, as in so many other directions,

Christianity was a reversion to a less civilised form of religious belief. Our Easter is an ancient nature festival, and whether it be in the name of Jesus or Adonis or Osiris or Attis does not make the least difference to anyone who really understands religion.

I think at this point I may call attention to something that I think is worthy of notice. I have often called attention to the value of Arnold Toynbee's "Study of History." It is unique in its character, and stands almost alone. The work was to run to at least eight volumes, each volume containing about five hundred pages. I have six volumes, and there we stayed. Then, some years ago the supply stopped. At first enquiries brought the reply that the books would come in due course. But week by week went by and still they were silent. What is the cause for this stoppage of one of the greatest and most important histories yet written?

Curiously, the last volume of the work spent about 500 pages on the Christian religion, and there was printed one of the most illuminating accounts that I have seen. It took the whole story of Jesus and, step by step, showed the Christian story was in action long before Christianity was heard of. I think I may fairly say that I have some knowledge of the history of Christianity—at least enough to understand what is being written; and I can say fearlessly that no greater attack on historic Christianity have I ever seen. Is it a wild assumption that pressure has been brought to bear on the author, and the work will remain unfinished—under pressure from our religious leaders? If we are right in our conjecture, then we have light thrown over the frantic way the early Christian leaders worked so hard to destroy the literature of Egypt, Greece and Rome.

We come back to our main theme. Those who read properly and think soundly will have found that the Christian Churches are merely giving a rehash of ancient superstitions that the people of to-day are laughing at. Historically, Christianity was never essentially a superior cult. It was only a competing one, and the distinction is important for Christianity merely reinstates some of the most futile philosophy that civilisation knows.

At any rate, the nature and origin of the "Christian" festival of Easter is unmistakable. The early Christians did not deny this. They lived too near the source of Christianity for them to do so, even had they been so inclined. It was only as time passed and Christians became more ignorant of the nature of their creed that affiliation with the older cults was resented. The relation was commented on by the Pagans and admitted by the Christians. The former said that Christianity was a copy of their own beliefs, the Christians retorted that it was the work of the Devil, who, knowing that Christianity was coming, copied it while it was on the way. But whether from heaven or hell, the identity of Christianity with the older creeds is plain. The slain Saviour and the resurrected God, the event fixed by the first full moon following March 21, the eating of the newly-baked bread, and the eating of Easter eggs—an egg being the universal sign of life—the numerous practices that still continue in all parts of Europe in connection with Easter, leave no doubt that Christianity is not, as is so often said, a disguised Paganism, it is Paganism with a new name, but in a form that would be at once recognised by an ancient Pagan could he be brought to life. Had Christianity not been the old Pagan nature-festival it might still have survived, but it would probably have been recognised for what it was. In taking a nature festival

and making it represent a commemoration of the death and resurrection of an actual human being, Christianity did but make what might have become an interesting piece of poetic symbolism a ridiculous impossibility.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE INCEPTION OF POPULAR EDUCATION

PROFESSOR BARNARD in his "History of Education" (University of London Press, 1947, 18s.) has presented an informative survey of our various school and university systems. Our author chose 1760 as his starting point because at that period England's economic and social conditions underwent a momentous change. This, as he observes, "is known as the Industrial Revolution which involved the development of large scale industry, the rise of the factory system, and the growth of large towns. It was also associated with the progress of enclosures." But even then, half of England was still enclosed, but with the appropriation of arable land, cultivated under the ancient open-field system and enclosure of the commons, much of this land passed from public into private ownership. Naturally, the peasant farmer suffered severely. For while, during the reigns of Anno and the first two Georges there had been only 244 private Bills for enclosure, during the reign of George III (1760—1820) there were no less than 3,266 such Bills, besides a General Enclosure Act in 1801." Although stock breeding was greatly improved, and the crop yield markedly increased, the shrewd observer, Arthur Young, declared that by "19 Enclosure Bills in 20 the poor are injured and in some grossly injured."

In circumstances such as these, the education of the poorer classes, where it existed, was extremely meagre. There were Dames' schools where parents paid a few pence weekly for their children's very elementary teaching. There were also common day schools and private schools where older pupils received a slightly better grounding. But it was only too obvious that the very poor could afford no payment for instruction. Even if some feared the results of increased knowledge, others asserted that if the poor and oppressed were taught to respect their better opinions. So, as Barnard notes, "over and above the idea of popular education as a humane or religious duty, there was a feeling that some modicum of education would prove salutary and would combat vice, irreligion, and subversive tendencies among the poor. They must be taught to live upright and industrious lives in that station of life in which it had pleased God to call them. This helps to explain the great stress which was laid on so-called 'religious' education in philanthropic schools for the poor."

Charity schools were then instituted in which the pupils were catechised by the clergy, and the masters were selected from the members of the Anglican Church. They were also to be of meek temper and humble behaviour; to have a good government of themselves and to keep good order." In these establishments, religious teachings usually consisted in learning the church catechism by heart, with a little reading, while in a few, writing and arithmetic were added. Also, considerable stress was laid on industrial training, for the pupils were to become labourers or household drudges, so they were taught to form industrial habits. Again, the "needs of the charity schools were kept before the public by the attendance of the children in church, where seats in the gallery were reserved for them. On certain Sundays, charity school sermons were preached and special collections were made."

These schools, such as they were, answered their purpose for a time, but they soon declined, and that pious lady, Mrs. Trimmer, complained in 1792 that although they were intended

to provide charity children with "a comprehensive knowledge of Christianity and to exercise them betimes to the practice of piety, it must be acknowledged that the education of children brought up in the charity schools is, in general, very defective in these particulars."

Pitt and others proposed improvements, but few were made. Sunday schools, however, were introduced which won the approval of factory owners, for if children were instructed on Sundays, they were more at liberty to work during the week. These schools certainly prepared the way to better things, but as Barnard points out: "At the same time they gave to our educational system a religious and denominational colouring that still survives."

In the "Wealth of Nations," Adam Smith had stressed the crying need for popular instruction, but Thomas Paine advocated bolder measures in his "Rights of Man," when he urged that "a nation under a well regulated government should permit none to remain uninstructed." He also suggested a grant of £4 per annum to parents for each child under 14 in place of poor relief and he contended that all poor children should be taught the three R's. By expelling ignorance from coming generations, he wrote, there will be fewer poverty-stricken people because, when instructed, their inborn ability will enable them to rise in the social scale.

In his "Political Justice," another heretic, William Godwin, on the other hand, repudiated all State intervention in education on the ground "that a State system of education would check the growth of free opinion and perpetuate dogma and tradition." Unfortunately, this objection has been illustrated in most of our Education Acts from 1870 to 1944.

The Bell and Lancaster schools were established in the 19th century. Bell was an Anglican clergyman who, when in India, had made the experiment of placing his classes under the supervision of his elder pupils. This system Bell operated in London. At the same period, Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, adopted Bell's monitorial principle. For a time, Lancaster's seminary in the Borough Road, London, was so successful that Corston in his "Life of Lancaster" avers that foreign Princes, Anglican prelates, Society ladies, Jews and Turks visited the school as one of the wonders of the metropolis.

There were other contemporary educational reformers, among them Robert Owen. At an early age, Owen, who was remarkably precocious, was convinced that "there must be something fundamentally wrong in all religions as they had been taught up to this time." Education to Owen was all that is essential to enable the community to attain the higher life. To him heredity was unimportant, and he held that "the infants of any one class in the world may be readily transformed into men of any other class."

As a business man, Owen was outstandingly successful, and ultimately purchased the cotton mills at New Lanark near Glasgow. To test his theories in practice he strove to humanise the conditions of factory life. Free tuition was provided for his workers' children of from five to ten years of age. The mechanical methods of the monitorial system were abandoned, and lessons were imparted not only in the three R's but in history, geography, nature studies, dancing, singing and drill. An infant school was instituted by Owen in 1816, and children of from one year to 18 months, were welcomed. As Barnard states: "It is not surprising that New Lanark was visited by social reformers from all parts of the globe."

James Mill, Zachary M'leauday and Brougham, opened schools on similar lines to Owen's in Spitalfields and Westminster, and the Home and Colonial Infant School Society for the training of teachers was founded in 1836. Its college long remained in Gray's Inn Road until it was removed to Wood Green, where it was closed during the financial crisis of 1930-31.

From the middle of the 19th century onwards, the State interfered more and more in directing and controlling English education. After the Education Act of 1870, perhaps the most

far reaching measure was the Act of 1944. As Professor Adamson observes: "Secular education was the aim in the educational sphere which English Radicals and Liberals sought to attain throughout the 19th century." Yet, under the 1944 Act, religious instruction must be imparted under an agreed syllabus in a county school, while in a controlled school, denominational teaching may be given at stated times. In Prof. Barnard's words, the Act "laid down that in every county and voluntary school, religious instruction should be given, and that the school day should begin with an act of collective worship; though, of course, the right of withdrawal on conscientious grounds was safeguarded. This is the first time in our educational history that religious instruction and 'school prayers' have been specifically enforced by Act of Parliament."

Dr. Barnard, who is professor of education in the University of Reading, gravely doubts whether compulsory religious teaching will serve the purpose that political expediency and clerical pressure united to secure. To those who think that theological observances in schools furnish a safeguard for a sound education, Barnard urges that "in actual fact they are no safeguard whatever. In the last resort the efficiency of machinery of this kind, whether provided by Act of Parliament or not, depends upon the teachers who work it."

T. F. PALMER.

THE METHODS OF MOORE

MR. REGINALD MOORE is well known to the majority of readers in this country as an editor. In the pages of "Modern Reading", "Selected Writing", "Bugle Blast", and other somewhat similar miscellanies he has given the writer an opportunity of finding a wider and (dare I say it?) a more intelligent public than he is likely to acquire in the commercial magazines. But as an original writer he is less well known than his excellences deserve. His first novel, "Stranger than the Rest," was published in 1938, in the week of Munich, and it is well known that an international crisis will kill a book stone-dead. Since then he has written a short novel, "The Listening World," which was published in Great Britain and America in 1946 and attracted considerable critical attention. His short stories have been admired but not, until now, collected. Consequently, many readers will have picked up "Silence Comes After" (Century Press; 8s. 6d.) with considerable eagerness. I do not think they will be disappointed. These twenty-two stories are well written, and (unlike the work of more "commercial" writers) they provide a commentary on contemporary life.

Mr. Moore's method is not the anecdotal method adopted by the followers of Maupassant. He does not so much tell a story as provide an analysis of a mood. The reader of some of these tales with wartime backgrounds will find himself wafted back, almost miraculously, to the atmosphere of London under the blitz, and, while it may be true that some readers with "escapist" tendencies do not wish to be reminded of the troubles of the past, the fact remains that it is only by studying the past that we can acquire the necessary psychological strength to face the troubles of the present and future.

We are sometimes told that volumes of short stories are unpopular with the general reading public. There may be a certain amount of truth in this; I know that many of my friends do not like short stories in volume form. They will read a short story in a magazine or a newspaper; but they will not take the trouble to study such an art form if presented in a book. Yet there is a lot to be said for a book like "Silence Comes After." It does give one much within short compass. It enables an author with an alert mind, like Mr. Moore, to say what he thinks on many subjects and many types of humanity. And, from the point of view of the reader, it provides him with a book which can be "dipped into" at odd moments,

without giving him any trouble in picking up the threads of what he has read a few days earlier. For that reason, and because Mr. Reginald Moore is a man with a point of view particularly his own, I feel that his first collection of short stories is a book which will find a place on the shelves of many readers not normally interested in this kind of writing.

JOHN ROWLAND.

A THEISTIC PROBLEM

"... as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion... and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on."—*King Lear*.

IN his interesting essay on "The Necessity of Sin" (*The Freethinker*, January 25), Mr. John L. Broom, M.A., rings a few changes on a problem that has sorely troubled Christian theologians and apologists in their attempts to "justify the ways of God to man." His purpose is, as he states, "to show that sin is an indispensable cosmic factor, and that its abolition would immediately reduce life to the animal level"; and he assures us that, though the truth of this is so evident "yet the slightest attempt to elaborate upon it is greeted with shrieks of protest from every type of moral reformer, from the most thorough-going theist to the most uncompromising infidel." In order to prepare the way for the subsequent development of his thesis he tells us: "Fortunately, it will not be necessary in order to proceed with the discussion to assume that the word (sin) can be satisfactorily defined." On the contrary, it is of the utmost importance, if we are to arrive at the truth, that it should be satisfactorily defined, for it is just by not giving a precise meaning to the term that he manages to make out his case. For instance, if we define "sin" as an offence against divine law (and as a clergyman, Mr. Broom must accept the definition) we should quite expect a "thorough-going theist" to greet with "shrieks of protest" an argument that would prove that the all-good and all-wise lawgiver he worships had so bungled matters as to make the breaking of his laws a necessary condition of human life; but how "the uncompromising infidel" who does not believe in a divine Legislator should be so affected is by no means clear. To him, sin, in the theological sense, has no significance, and, if he uses the word at all, he means no more by it than an offence against a natural or a social law. Mr. Broom goes on: "It is clear that one man's sin is frequently another man's virtue", and he illustrates this as follows. "Every sane person agrees that cruelty, intolerance, pride and avarice are sinful; but, if we select a dozen representative people, and ask them to give specific examples of each of these sins we shall receive as many (different?) answers as there are answerers. In short, argument on this question in the abstract is widespread; in the concrete, it is almost infinitely variable." I think Mr. Broom has insufficiently considered this passage. It is obvious that a clear-cut definition would make it impossible so to confound sin and virtues as to make them interchangeable terms. If sin be the violation of a certain law, and virtue the observance of it, no sophistry can make them undistinguishable from one another in any predicament. That a dozen people should have different notions of cruelty, intolerance, pride, etc., proves nothing; it is only what we might expect. It would be surprising indeed if each one's idea and description were exactly alike. We must allow for the difference which self-interest, ignorance, custom or a natural disposition to the vice in question would make in their answers. But, as the nearest approach to truth is through personal experience, and as pain from the same cause will produce approximately the same feeling in all of us, the crucial test in this case would be to subject each one of the dozen to the same kind and degree of cruelty, intolerance, pride and avarice. This would be really removing the question from the abstract to the concrete. The result, I take it, would be

an opinion regarding these sins which, if not quite unanimous would be near enough to make the difference negligible.

By the way, what Mr. Broom means by "an agreement on this question in the abstract is widespread; in the concrete it is almost infinitely variable", I am at a loss to know. Agreement may be widespread, but it cannot be infinitely variable.

His next illustration is political in character: "Sincere conservatives and socialists both hate injustice; but the former believe it consists in measures of nationalisation while the latter hold just as firmly that it involves wholesale private enterprise."

When public and private interests are opposed the only rule and criterion of justice is the primary social law of the greatest good of the greatest number, according to which, the expressed will of the community at large is the only arbiter of right and wrong. Economic justice requires the suppression of every form of private advantage or privilege that conflicts with the general good.

In support of his thesis that sin is a necessity of human life Mr. Broom gives numerous instances of its indispensability in literature, to the legal profession and to the clergy of the Christian Churches. Here again, it becomes necessary to restrict him within the limits of a definition. We can no longer allow him to use the word "sin" indiscriminately for "evil." If, as one of the "clergy of the Christian Churches", believes that sin is an offence against God, he must take the logical consequences of his belief. To the atheist, "sin," in the sense in which Mr. Broom must accept it, does not exist. Evil and good are to him merely different modes or aspects of the forces or agencies of nature; and as such, are necessary conditions of life. We cannot have the one without the possibility of the other. Pain is the real evil of life, but it is not an unmixed evil. Pain is a gain when it acts as a warning or a corrective, or when it stimulates to necessary exertion. If we could not feel pain we could not feel pleasure, for the same faculties convey both sensations. Good and evil are so balanced and compensated that neither is absolute—the one potentially contains the other. "There is a soul of good things in evil" and vice versa. Who has not known of a misfortune that has eventually proved to be a benefit, or of a stroke of luck that has led to disaster? Many proverbs are the expression of our experience of this co-mingling of good and evil in human life. "One man's loss is another man's gain." "It is an ill wind that blows nobody any good", and so on.

Viewing the question thus, we as rationalists, can readily understand how necessary a part evil must play in every production of art or literature that would present a true picture of life. Mr. Broom asks: "Which of Shakespeare's plays does not owe its greatness to its graphic presentation of one or other of the human frailties?" But the question he might, as one of "the clergy of the Christian Churches," have asked is: "Why should there be human frailties?" In other words, how does he account for moral evil?

One answer is that man has evolved from a lower form of life and has, by the law of heredity, retained many of the characteristics and impulses of his brute ancestors. As Joseph McCauley puts it ("Riddle of the Universe To-day"): "The steady expansion of life has actually reduced the number of scientific men who can tolerate a theistic interpretation of it. It is a story of carnage, cruelty and suffering during the five hundred million years since consciousness began; of appalling waste and aimlessness during the previous thousand million years. It is unintelligible except as the inexorable action and reaction of the unconscious agencies of nature. It has so deeply implanted in man himself certain vicious tendencies that five thousand years of civilisation have not sufficed to eradicate or even greatly to feeble them." That is the natural or scientific solution of the problem. What is the supernatural or theological explanation? As a matter of fact, there is none. Christian apologists and theologians are forced to confess that, on the hypothesis of a God of wisdom, power and goodness the problem is unsolvable.

But this acknowledged failure does not deter Mr. Broom in the least. He goes on giving instance after instance of the necessity of sin when, as a Christian minister, he should be among the first to deny it. He seems oblivious of the fact that he is thereby affording one of the strongest disproofs of the God he believes in; and that he is labouring to prove his case at the expense of his religion. If "sin" be a necessity, Christianity is an absurdity. One or two of Mr. Broom's arguments will make this plain. As thus: "He (Jesus) died for the sins of the world; and if it were not for the sins of the world Jesus could never have died, could never have taught, could never even have lived." But if sin is a necessity, why did Jesus die for it? Surely not to save mankind from that which, as God, he had made an inevitable condition of their existence. In that case his death was an utter futility, for humanity is still sinning and suffering as much as ever. If Jesus could never have died, taught or lived but for the sins of the world the only conclusion is that he must, as God, have ordained sin for his own sake. This is borne out by Mr. Broom himself when he says: "The Atonement would be a mere historical oddity if there were nothing to make atonement for." But an atonement can be made only for a fault. Whose fault was it in this instance? Why, that of the Being who made sin a necessity, of course. Ergo, Jesus died for his own fault, which, after all, is not such an "oddy" as dying for the faults of others. Such is the welter of nonsense in which Mr. Broom involves himself. But there is another view of the reciprocal relation between Jesus and sin which he has not yet considered, and it is this. The appearance of Jesus on earth (or the belief of it) was one of the greatest misfortunes that could have happened to mankind. Nothing else has been so effectual in rousing the worst passions of human nature. It has been the direct cause of more conflict, cruelty and crime than anything else. Can Mr. Broom disprove this? Before attempting to do so, let him reflect on the obvious fact that such things would not have been if Jesus had never been heard of. He may then realise what a hopeless case he would have on his hands.

A. YATES.

A PIGEON'S LIFE

I'm only a simple Pigeon
 With freedom all my own;
 Not troubled with religion,
 And free the world to roam.
 I please myself what I shall do,
 But that cannot be said of you.

No ration books for me to sign,
 No forms for filling in;
 I have a very happy time
 Among my kith and kin.
 You know that what I say is true,
 You can't do what you'd like to do.

I also have no rent to pay,
 No creditors to square;
 And if I want to go away
 I never pay a fare.
 But these are things you have to do,
 Free for me, but not for you.

I'll meet you in Trafalgar Square
 As soon as Spring time comes;
 But if you have no oats to spare
 Just bring along some crumbs.
 Kindly see what you can do,
 Crumbs for me and thanks to you.

EDWARD W. JAMES.

THE REACH OF THE MIND

THE issue of "The Readers' Digest" for March, 1948, contains a condensation of a book entitled, "The Reach of the Mind". "The Readers' Digest" is a very widely read journal, published in nine different languages, Braille, and a Talking Record edition, hence its influence is world wide, and its contents are accepted by seriously minded individuals. It is, therefore, with mixed feeling of amusement and dismay that I have read "The Reach of the Mind", for this book is the latest, and what may prove to be the most severe attack by the priesthood on the sanity of man.

In essence, the subject matter is as follows: Owing to scientific discovery and methods, the idea of a "mind" additional to the physical matter of man is being rapidly discounted amongst the intelligent and thinking members of the population of the world; it is conclusive that man is a purely physical and animal being. However, researches by a certain J. B. Rhine, Director of the Parapsychology Laboratory of Duke University, U.S.A., the author of the book, have provided results which will, according to him, give new life to every priest of the Christian religion. By exhaustive experiments with packs of cards he has proved the existence of telepathy and, in addition, an extraordinary force which he calls PK (Psychokinens) or the direct influence of mind over matter. In regard to PK he claims to have shown that a man, by his will, can influence the fall of dice, or the arrangement of a pack of cards shuffled haphazardly. From these results his conclusions are, to quote:—

"Our basic problem—the nature of man—was worded at the start in terms of the familiar soul theory, a non-physical system. Individual theologians, of course, have many added meanings for the term. But our concern is merely: Is there anything extra physical or spiritual in human personality?"

The experimental answer is "yes." There now is evidence that such an extra-physical factor exists in man.

As far as it goes, the discovery of evidence that man is something more than a physical being supports the most basic of all religious doctrines, namely, that man has a spiritual nature. . . It is on the problem of immortality that religion and parapsychology have most often met. In order to avoid hopeless confusion over terms, the question must first be asked in its simplest possible form: Does any part of a person in any discoverable way survive the death of the body? . . . When E.S.P. (Telepathy) was found to function without limitation from time and space, this discovery was taken to mean that the mind is capable of action independent to some degree of the space-time system of nature. Now, all that immortality means is freedom from the effects of space and time; death seems to be purely a matter of coming to a halt in the space-time universe. That there is some sort of technical survival would seem, therefore, a logical conclusion from the E.S.P. research."

Whilst I cannot agree that any logical conclusion can be drawn from E.S.P. other than that it is possible that an organism possesses many powers of which we as yet know very little, it may be accepted that Telepathy itself is proved. But according to the professor, a subject engaged on our E.S.P. test is very susceptible to the administration of drugs. Hence it follows that the re-discovered Eternal Spirit is open to the attentions of very physical drugs, and is therefore itself physical.

The whole of this book appears to be another case of some mysterious and strange attribute of the human animal being seized by the priesthood as proof of the existence of a God. If there is anything unexplained, put it down to an Act of God!

DAVID MOORE.

ACID DROPS

Not so very long ago Wales was a very stronghold of supporters of Christianity. All the young men and women were lovers of music and religion. So far as we know, that love of music has continued, but the love of religion has steadily decayed. Religious outbreaks, once very common, are no longer heard. The older people have laid the reason for this to various causes, but the real cause is the influence of a better understanding of the nature of religions in general. The development of the people to better conditions and a keener education have served to give a truer and better understanding of life, and thus have helped to weaken their devotion to religion. It all makes an apt illustration of the value of Freethought.

According to an item of news in the "News Chronicle", the highest legal authority in Washington, U.S.A., has declared that "Religious teaching in State Schools is unconstitutional." This is not the first time that this decision has been given, and it is to be hoped that it will be followed in all American States. We are expecting fuller news of this item. Thomas Paine was the first to stress this as an act of injustice, and Christians did what they could afterwards to make Paine suffer for doing so.

It certainly looks as though they who live in the heavens are not attending to their business. Here is an illustration. The Vicar of St. Laurance, Catford, advises—speaking from the pulpit—visitors to the church not to put their gifts in the offertory box as thieves take both box and money. Of course, considering the great number of Angels that God commands, he should be able to look after his own Church, and some of them ought to be on duty watching the money bags. People have been wondering why God did not stop the World War, but if he cannot watch over a money-box, what can he do? It is really time that God did something.

Once again, "the Great Lying Creed"—the Roman version of the same—was boasting the other day that the Catholic Church is the only church to increase its members. Well, there is more than one way of telling a lie, and the rulers of the Roman Church know them well. The fact is that it is losing members at much the same rate as the other Churches. The difference lies in the fact that the other Churches confess their losses, whereas the Roman Church considers that once a member has been baptised he is always a member. To put the matter in another way, a child who is baptised becomes a member of the Roman Church. And when the child grows to manhood and wishes to cease being a member of the Church, he cannot do it by any action of his. The Church must turn out the man, the man cannot turn out the priest. In other words, the Roman Church is losing as many members as other Churches.

We notice an interesting case in the "Cape Times"—interesting enough to print as it appears in the paper:

"Bloemfontein.—Father Lucien Hamel, the priest in charge of the St. Theresa Mission Station, Bela Bela, Basutoland, was found guilty of attempting to defeat the ends of justice by Mr. Rivers Thompson in the District Commissioner's Court, Quthing, and sentenced to a fine of £20 or one month's imprisonment.

He was alleged to have threatened to excommunicate anyone who gave evidence against him.

The case was a sequel to a civil action against him by a native woman, Maria Maketha, for defamation, heard several weeks ago. Maria had alleged that Father Hamel had publicly stated that she was a witch. She claimed damages of £20 and costs.

Father Hamel did not defend the action and judgment was given in favour of Maria.

It appears that before the civil case, Father Hamel had invoked an established law of the Roman Catholic Church which forbids any Catholic to bear witness against a priest unless they are temporarily absolved from this law by the local bishop."

It is very difficult to get an ardent Christian to say what is true when he wishes to make Christianity much better than it is. An illustration reaches us from one of our readers in Ottawa, Canada, reported in the "Evening Citizen." Asked by friends as to the state of Christianity in England, a returned traveller said: "In Great Britain, since the end of the war, there was a great resurgence of religion within the Church, but the people as a whole have not joined it." Put in clear English, this runs: "The people don't care a damn about religion." We can endorse that. But we question whether the clergy of Ottawa will feel very joyful about it.

"The British Weekly," one of the oldest of Christian papers, sets before the people the question whether the Church should advertise or not. What we should like to know is whether the Churches have ever stopped advertising. There is hardly any public discourse, that comes before the public, any political issue, or anything likely to attract notice in which leaders of this or that church or chapel are not allowed to comment upon. Even one of our politicians, Sir Stafford Cripps, has to advertise religion for those who are foolish enough to be so influenced by his particular form of religion. It is really time that even Christians should be honest enough to remember that Members of Parliament are not appointed for the purpose of teaching or preaching religion, and also that when a man goes to the House of Commons he does not go for the purpose of advertising religion. It is a marked act of dishonesty, and the dishonesty is the greater when the Member holds a high position. We hope to live long enough to see simple honesty in this is recognised—even by Christians.

Considering the number of Christians in the world, that all Christians appear to hold different beliefs about Christianity, seems the greatest of all foolishness to talk of God saving the world in terms of Christian belief. What the Christian Churches have given us is a number of figureheads which when examined go in all sorts of ways. The result is that Jesus has been everything, which in practice leads to nothing. Not in history, but in pseudo-history, Jesus came to teach people to love each other, and ever since Jesus came they have developed more and more deadly implements of murder.

When a man talks about a wicked book, what does he mean? Some answer that it means the book will suggest evil things while reading the book. How does that happen? Another reader may find the book is dull, or badly planned, or illustrated, and so forth. But that is not the fault of the book, it is rather the fault of the reader. Most people will admit that it indicates the character of the author. May it not also be a picture of the reader?

Why do people stay away from Church? The answer given in the "Derby Evening Telegraph" was that people were too lazy to go to service. That seems very, very thin. Obviously, people originally went to Church to thank God to give them something, or to jog the memory of God that he had forgotten to do something. In some form or other that gives the reason for worship. Religions were based on the two parties named, and each began to neglect one another from the same motive. The essential cry of God is "Worship me, or I will refuse to help you when you need assistance." And man, again in substance, "Prove to me that you really do act for our benefit, and we will return to you praying." That seems to us the whole of the philosophy of man and his gods. Man is waiting to see if God gives help to man. Man is wondering whether God is doing anything worth bothering about. That seems the philosophy in the whole situation.

The clergyman who wrote to the newspaper, appears to believe that religion is fading away because it is given to people, by both the B.B.C. and the churches, in a way that is not impressive. We agree with that, but the suggestions are not very convincing. But to be honest to the B.B.C. it has done its best to prevent godism dying out. It has done what could be done regard to children by trying to make attractive talk about that many clergymen are getting ashamed of. Finally, the clergyman says that: "The same prayers, in the same order, in different ways, are trying." We quite agree. What is wanted is new conditions, new theories, and, above all, new gods. The old have nearly finished their days.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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SUGAR PLUMS

Will delegates and members of the N.S.S. requiring hotel accommodation for the Annual Conference in Manchester on Whit-Sunday, send definite particulars of their requirements to the General Secretary, 41 Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1. It is not sufficient merely to ask for hotel accommodation, the nights for which accommodation is needed must be given. The N.S.S. year closes on March 31, and all annual subscriptions received by that date will be included in the Annual Balance Sheet presented to the Conference.

In recent years we have from time to time published a number of articles and verses from the pen of Mr. John Rowland, who is a journalist and story writer of Freethought views. We have also occasionally mentioned novels by him which have provided pleasant relaxation for many readers. The latest, published not long ago, is "Puzzle in Pyrotechnics" (Herbert Jenkins; 8s. 6d.), a detective story with the unusual background of a firework factory. Mr. Rowland worked during the war for the Ministry of Supply, and had a good deal to do with wartime fireworks. So that his background is authentic. "Puzzle in Pyrotechnics" was recently selected by Ernest Dudley, the B.B.C. "Armchair Detective," as one of the outstanding thrillers to be partially dramatised in the B.B.C. programme.

"Can a Socialist be a Christian?" Mr. Ridley says emphatically "No!" and we are inclined to agree with him. Mr. Ridley's pamphlet deals with the semi-Christians of to-day who are doing what they can to fit anything into a Christianity that has always trimmed its sails to the needs of the moment. Unfortunately, a number of those who advocate Socialism are too fond of dragging in some kind of Christianity and this often goes a long way to check the development of healthy Socialism. We recommend Mr. Ridley's "Socialism and Religion." It will not please those political leaders who drag a bastard religion to the front whenever possible, but it will clear the minds of some on a point that is needed.

Will all Freethinkers in the Guildford, Epsom, Wimbledon and Richmond area, who would be interested in forming a branch of the National Secular Society for the purpose of Indoor and Outdoor meetings, communicate with the General Secretary of the N.S.S.

West Londoners please note! The Lecture by Mr. Carlton at the "Laurie Arms," West London Branch, N.S.S., originally advertised for March 28 has been postponed until April 1.

GREAT MEN AND RELIGION

WHAT great men and women have thought about religion—for and against—should make a fascinating anthology and one that Freethinkers in general would find particularly useful. And it is some thing to be thankful for that a start in this direction has been made by Dr. Ira D. Cardiff in America. His volume is entitled "What Great Men Think of Religion," and it is published by the Christopher Publishing House, Boston, U.S.A., for four dollars fifty (about 22s.).

The first difficulty in getting together such an anthology is, of course, deciding who is, or who is not, a "great" man. People of local or provincial celebrity are not always great in the eyes of the world in general, and however famous, say, a Cincinnati lawyer or a suburban school teacher may be in his own circle, it does seem to me that that does not make him a great man. It may be very difficult to give even a general rule in these matters, but an anthologist ought to formulate one for himself which could stand some small criticism, at least. I am afraid Dr. Cardiff was in too much of a hurry to discriminate as he should have done, and he has allowed quite a number of people to say what they think about religion whose opinion matters very little. The publisher seems to have gone even a little further for he claims that the Anthology contains "the findings and opinions of hundreds of the clearest thinkers who ever lived." It may well be so—if we can agree as to the selection; I am afraid I do not agree—even with the best wish in the world.

Another criticism I must make is that Dr. Cardiff does not give us any references whatever—except in a few cases, and in these he is often quite wrong. Moreover, his description of a writer here and there is just as erroneous. If there is one thing upon which he should have insisted in such a book is a competent proof reader. An author is often the last person who ought to read the proofs of his book from the mere technical standpoint—he may be in too much of a hurry, or his attention is distracted, or he may feel his time could be better put than to go through hundreds of pages every line in which should be almost mathematically accurate.

Not only names and dates are wrong in this book, but quotations are often attributed to the wrong people. After testing out some of these points, I feel it is difficult to be sure of any quotation. This is a great pity for no doubt the majority of the quotations are quite accurate though it would take a great library and much time to find out.

Let me give a few examples. The name of Jean Meslier is no doubt well known to readers of this journal as the author (or reputed author) of "Good Sense," a slashing Atheistic attack on religion, published in 1772. His "Testament" has not yet, I think, been translated into English, but it is, as John M. Robertson points out, "one of the most comprehensive Freethinking works of the 18th century." To call the famous Abbé a "contemporary English writer" is, surely, going a bit too far.

Then there is our own "Devil's Chaplain"—the Rev. Robert Taylor. He seems to have caused Dr. Cardiff quite a deal of trouble. He is listed under "Diegesis" as if there were a Mr. Diegesis. Then he comes under "Taylor, Dregesis," and again under "Robert Taylor, 1784." Dr. Cardiff probably felt that it would be a waste of time to put "1784-1844," the dates of Taylor's birth and death—though he gives both dates in many other cases.

Shakespeare's death is given as 1646 (it should be 1616), and it is a pity that Dr. Cardiff did not make every effort to quote the most telling parts of the plays against religion. There are a number of books—like W. J. Birch's "Inquiry"—which would have given him much information, and not have led him into a howling error. Everybody knows the famous quotation beginning with "Life's but a walking shadow . . . it is a tale told

by an idiot, full of sound and fury . . ." from "Macbeth." It is quoted quite correctly at first by Dr. Cardiff; then, forgetting he has done so he gives this:—

(in King Lear)
"Christianity. . . It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing!"

Of course it is not in King Lear, and it is not Christianity which is the "tale told by an idiot", and there is no final exclamation mark. Apart from all this, the quotation is correct.

Then Dr. Cardiff gives us that incomparable quotation from Chapter 15 of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire"—the famous passage Byron, no doubt, had in his mind when he pictured the great historian as "sapping a solemn creed with a solemn sneer." It is one of Gibbon's most celebrated efforts of withering irony—or sneering—at the balderdash put forward by the early Church, and still believed in by many of our stalwart intellectuals. It begins, "But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the Pagan and philosophic world . . ." The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the Church. . . ." Dr. Cardiff begins at "The lame walked, etc." and he attributes the passage to Mr. E. Royston Pike, a "contemporary English writer." Mr. Pike, I am sure, will be glad to be included in any list of great men, especially among some of the clearest thinkers who ever lived; but he would prefer no doubt to rest his laurels on his own work, and not on that of Gibbon.

Bishop Barnes looks rather unfamiliar as "Bishop Barns," as does Robert Arch as "Robert Archer." Joseph Barker, who was a stormy petrel in both the Christian and Freethought camps for over 40 years, and who was holding debates 100 years ago, is described as a "contemporary" English writer. Barker is always worth quoting when he attacked Christianity, only unfortunately, he changed sides very frequently, and quite often repudiated his own declarations at other times.

Claude Bernard, who was born and died in France—he died in Paris 70 years ago—is described as a "contemporary English scientist," while Sarah Bernhardt is a "contemporary American Opera Singer." Poor Sarah! Her great contemporary, Mme. Patti, would probably have fainted if she had heard the diva Sarah trying to sing in an American accent.

Charles Blount, one of the earliest English Deists, who died in 1693, is described as "contemporary," while Rupert Brooke, who died in 1915, is not only "contemporary" but an "American poet." I am quite sure also that Dr. Cardiff has mixed up the two Samuel Butlers, ascribing to "Hudibras" Butler something which "Erewhon" Butler wrote; though, as no reference is given, I cannot check it. Even Cobbett is "contemporary" though he died in 1835, while Sir Arthur Keith is made to die in 1927—though still living. Dozens of names are wrongly spelled, like George "Merideth," Alex "Menthe," Napoleon "Bonapart," Max "Nordeau," Francois "Rabelias," Bertrand "Russel," and others. Dr. Cardiff quotes St. Hieronymous as well as St. Jerome, obviously ignorant of the fact that they are the same man.

Why some of the people quoted should have been quoted at all is a mystery to me. For example: Mary Borden, the novelist, says of Jesus—whom she believes to be God Almighty—"No scholar of the period noted the day, nor was there any prophet left among the Jews to tell that strange religious people that something of peculiar importance had been accomplished." So what? I don't know, and I'm sure nobody else does. What kind of a reaction did Miss Borden expect to this nonsense?

Then Browning is quoted:—

For the loving worm within its clod
Were diviner than a loveless God,
Again, so what?

Then Charles Buller, who is described as an English politician (1806-1848), said: "Destroy the Church of England, sir! Why you must be mad. It is the thing which stands between us and real religion." Perhaps Dr. Cardiff still feels the want of "real religion; though why should I feel the same?"

There are dozens of similar fatuities, quite useless from any point of view, but it would only weary the reader to point them out.

Of course, a number of quotations are correctly given, and among them are many by Chapman Cohen and other prominent Freethinkers well known to readers of this journal. If only the fullest references had been given, Dr. Cardiff's book would still have been of great value. Perhaps in a second edition, the anthologist will correct the errors—any competent proof reader should be able to do this almost unaided—and fill in chapters and verse for the quotations. "What Great Men Think of Religion" would then indeed fill a long-felt want.

H. CUTNER.

SYMBOLS IN RELIGION

THE positive action of well-wishing has its negative complement in the warding-off of evil, partly by making a noise (crackers etc.), partly through more imaginative means. To understand the latter, we must keep in mind that in what might be called the "magic thinking," formal similarity is taken for equality in substance.

A snake-like root, for instance, is considered appropriate to snake-bite, the wriggling earthworm for gout-crooked limbs etc. He who eats the heart of a hare will turn coward whilst his flesh makes one bold; during pregnancy a woman must not see anything ugly or frightful, but behold works of arts since this will affect the look of her child.

The procreative organs were looked at with a certain awe by primitive men since through them a "supernatural" mystery is wrought.

THE CROSS AND TREE OF LIFE.

The creative male organ (let us call it "p" for short) has its symbol in the cross, plainly called the "mark" for it is the simplest and foremost sign of any compound. Every Egyptian deity carries it on a handle and can revive by it the corpses from the death. The significance of this cross-symbol is: "Life,"* as a symbol of the sex organs. The cross is a representant of the tree (or pole) as vegetation symbol on which the God of Life expires and comes to new life. Thus the forerunner of the cross is the Tree of Life in Paradise.

When taking an oath, you place your hand on a cross; in Gen. xxiv, 9, the servant "put his hand under the thigh of Abraham" for the very same purpose. Exorcism was conducted by the carrying of a cross, but likewise an exposed phallus can serve this purpose. At certain occasions a procession of women (e.g., in Egypt, see Herodot V, ii, 48) carried a movable phallus image in front of them; in India they wear it as an amulet (of gold or precious stone) and, filled with sweets, it is sold in Japan by children who shout "Engi no yoi no!" (Something to procure happiness). The Greek hermae—poles with this symbol attached to them—were erected for warding-off evil spirits. In the Bible such poles—or trees in Holy Groves—called "Asherah" (cf. Judge ii, 7; 1. Kg. xviii, 19; 2. Kg. xxiii, 4); they were anointed, festooned and people danced round them (Deut. xvi, 21-22; vii 5, 2. Kg. xxi, 14).

The "hermae" recur in the Jewish "Mezûzâ," a p-shaped capsule which, attached in a peculiar position on to the door post, is meant to be a preventive against intruding demons. In Ex. xii, 7, mezûzâ is the term for the two door posts whose protective cross-mark was painted with the blood of the

* As a word pronounced "Ankh" as in Tut-ankh-amon = Living Image of Amon.

slain lamb (cf. Ez. ix 4-6).* Whilst the door is a female symbol ("v" for short), the post, the bolt or lock are "p" (Talmud, Kethûbôth 10a; cf. Song of Solomon V. 4-5, which only gives that passage a meaning!).

The drilling to obtain fire in the primitive way was considered a holy ceremony; in Ancient India the active drill was called "Creator" or "Father," and the wooden cross in the centre of which the drill was activated, the Mother (Rig Veda iii, 29). To make it more stable, the latter was eventually crooked and became the swastica (from Sanskrit "svaha" = good luck. German: Heil), the symbol of the moving Sun Wheel.

OTHER SYMBOLS.

Fire or Life, therefore, is "born" in a cavity, hence the cause of nativity. Phallic stones were erected on mountains (p); the mountain is symbolised by the triangle or the pyramid, while the inverted triangle stands for v; composed into one sign, they form the hexagramme adopted, in later times, by the Jews as "Mâgen Dâvid"† the Shield of Love (dôd, David = the Beloved One, name of Love Gods all over the Middle East; cf. Ha-dad). In it the creative and pro-creative faculties of God are united. If the v-symbol is replaced by a ring inside the p-triangle, this is called "God's Eye."

The ring as a v-symbol is taken for "marriage," whilst the fingers are p-symbols. The hand as a whole is the symbol for "cover" or "protection"; as such it was used in prehistoric cave pictures, in Morocco and elsewhere you can still find it painted on house walls. The hand was the door amulet with the Phenicians.

Generally, trees are p, the leaves v; an emanation of Yahve (Ex. iii, 2) is the burning bramble, with the upright flame as another p-symbol (as is the pine cone). An exception is the date-palm—an old totem plant with finger-shaped leaves—which in Nagran is being adored as the local goddess. The Hebrew term for this palm tree is "Thâmâr" (her unchastity with Judah, the lion-man, see Gen. xxxviii, 6, 24; for tree and sexus cf. Jer. ii, 20, 27; Ez. vi, 13). According to the Korân (Sure 19) St. Mary gave birth under a date-palm.‡ In Europe, plants with a particular sexual meaning are myrtle and rosemary.

Since fig leaves are mentioned in Gen. iii, 7, it is supposed that there stood a fig tree in Paradise (with the Snake as p). Pole plus snake (nehushtân, the Brazen Snake)—the caduceus of Aesculap and other Gods of Health—is preserved as the symbol for chemists. The May Pole symbolises p as does the spear which, for instance in Ethiopia, is rammed into the ground in front of the tent door to signify that cohabitation is going on inside (Her. iv, 172). The tent is in Hebrew "Khubbah" = womb (Menakhôt 31 b).

Holy Poles—mazzêbôth—started as crude beams, but developed into trimmed and carved pillars, the finest specimens of which are the Egyptian obelisks. Conical stones were to mark the site of a sanctuary, they were also erected as a memorial (hence monuments and tomb stones). Phallic stone pillars stood in front of Solomon's Temple (Jes. xix, 19; cf. Gen. xxxv, 14-20).

P. G. ROY.

* In Catholic countries on the day of Epiphany the "initials" of the three Holy Kings are inscribed, with consecrated chalk, on every door anew—between cross-signs—in order to ward off all evil that may try entering. There are two little clay tiles in the British Museum, with nail holes; inscribed on them is the praise of Dibarra, the Babylon plague demon. They were probably attached above the threshold. In Morocco they have Koran sentences on paper slips put into the plastering or chinks of the walls. In the Talmud (Menakh. 33b) the mezuzah is expressly called an amulet against evil spirits.

† From Hebrew gâgan = to protect; in a v-sign the Jewish priest spreads his fingers for benediction.

‡ Palm or Lemon are symbols on coins from the Maccabean era; on one a palm tree stands between two fruit baskets (womb symbol); a tripod was represented on a Herodian coin.

FREETHOUGHT, RELIGION, AND "ROME"

SOME weeks ago in this paper, two correspondents called the present writer to book on account of his friendly references to the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore this article may serve as an explanation. Its writer was a Catholic but seceded. He would like to return, but could not do so unless and until he satisfied himself and the ecclesiastical authorities that he has not only such desire, but also a real and firm belief. Meanwhile, he writes in an impartial way, aiming at stating facts and eliciting truth.

What is Freethought: or Rationalism? The word "Rationalism" resembles another term ("Spiritualism") in this respect: it has had a changeable history. At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries it was the name of a special school of German higher critics of the New Testament: that of Semler and Paulus, who, while accepting the Gospel as true, tried to eliminate the miraculous elements from them by "rationalisation"—that is, by devising ingenious explanations of the events as explicable by purely natural causes. This theory could not survive long. It was exploded by orthodox critics on one side and by critics (especially D. F. Strauss in his "Das Leben Jesu Kritischer Bearbeitet"), more advanced than Paulus, on the other. The word Rationalism was revived in the later 19th century as meaning, "those who form their beliefs by reason alone, and disregard or deny alleged 'supernatural religion.'"

That meaning still generally holds; but a difficulty arises. In strict etymology (as being derived from the Latin *ratio*, "reason"), the word would mean "those who form their beliefs by reason alone"—the additional clause ("and disregard or deny," etc.) being an arbitrary addition. Of course, this does not necessarily discredit the added clause; for words alter their merely etymological sense by usage. As a matter of fact, however, there are, in the present writer's opinion, good reasons for limiting the word (with a qualification to be mentioned later) to its strictly etymological significance.

These reasons are found in the alteration in outlook on many scientific, philosophic, and religious problems during recent years. The scientific outlook of the later 19th century was excessively optimistic. Herbert Spencer's "First Principles," while laying down a theory of "the unknowable," yet was very definite in expounding a universal theory of evolution. Yet, logically, if, as Spencer believed, ultimate reality is unknowable, how can we know that it will not reveal powers and existences of which we as yet have no idea? This logical possibility must be taken into full account. For example, how about our "personalities"? If *all reality* is one chain of inevitable physical (monistic natural) "cause and effect," then it follows that nothing that exists or happens could be other than it is. Yet whenever we call a thing "bâd" (say, when we condemn tyranny, theft, or any form of vice) we imply that it might, and ought, to have been otherwise. In short, every ethical judgment implies the assumption of the existence of a degree of freedom from "monistically natural" cause and effect. Yet, if there be such measure of liberty, reality is not monistic but dualistic. To be plain, the possibility has to be faced of the existence of a "spiritual," or "supernatural" (to use terms admittedly hard to define; but scarcely if at all more so than "matter" and "ether"—of which the ultimate properties get more and more mysterious.)

The writer of this essay never at any time really has been able logically to dismiss that possibility. Years ago, on the cover of a book, "Hillaire Belloc Keeps the Bridge," published by Rationalist Press Association, he stated clearly that he did not give up *religion*, but only an erroneous (as he supposed) form of it. He has always held that position, and thinks a dualistic view of reality is implied in our moral and intellectual aptitudes. He does not, however, here wish to write dogmatically on these

perplexing problems, but only to advocate widest tolerance and open-mindedness. He thinks the Rationalist Press Association's definition of Rationalism, by repudiating "arbitrary authority," implicitly leaves such open-mindedness to those who accept the definition.

The foregoing comes to this: Rationalism should not be restricted to any special philosophic system, but is simply "going by reason." To limit it to "anti-religious" views would seem to be an exercise of "arbitrary authority" by one school of thinkers. Of course, if "anti-religious" theories are in fact true, right reason in the long run will justify them: but it does not seem right to limit the term Rationalism to them *ab initio*. Some months ago the present writer suggested in the "Literary Guide," a distinction which might help meet the case: between (a) "primary" Rationalism—that is, simply the intellectual process of going by reason alone in forming beliefs, and (b) "secondary" Rationalism—any beliefs finally proved true by that process. All candid thinkers, who honestly endeavoured to employ "a," would be entitled to be termed Rationalists in the "primary" sense; but, as to the "secondary," wide room exists for diverse views.

A few words as to the Roman Catholic Church. The present writer, once an ardent member of it, seceded because (mainly) of what he thought its oppressive governmental system. During recent times, however, the rise of State absolutisms, subversive of the bases of our historic culture, has cast a new light on the matter. There is at least something to be said for a strong, united moral power to resist such systems. Also, the general philosophy of Catholicism has—to put it at the lowest—much of value in these times. So it is here suggested that the Roman Church should be regarded in a less hostile way, as being at any rate a great historic institution which has conferred and can still confer many benefits to society. On the other hand, only full faith could justify joining or rejoining it: but that raises a separate problem, of which (February 12, 1948) the writer will say no more. His aim in this article has been to advocate fullest, open-minded freedom of mind and the greatest possible degree of mutual, tolerant understanding as the best way of reaching truth by reason.

J. W. POYNTER.

TWO PLUS TWO EQUALS FOUR

YES, Mr. Wood, there are some who dream of a pleasant world to live in (March 7), and in the mad world of to-day it is pleasant to dream of a sane one. But there are some who believe their vision can become a reality; they are opposed to those who, in their wisdom, prefer the present nightmare. They believe that the achievement of a Moneyless World Commonwealth, a world in which goods will be produced for use only and for free distribution, is the very pleasant world towards which mankind must surely aspire, and must soon attain—if we are to survive.

This is the alternative to the present social system, not the Universal World Government favoured by Mr. Wood. His is not an alternative but merely a change of form. It is doubtful whether such World Government could solve the "war" problem. It could certainly solve no other of the many urgent social problems.

Now it is possible that Mr. Wood has read the book, "Money Must Go!" by Philoren, and has given the idea of a Moneyless World Commonwealth some consideration. Even if he has not I do hope that my comments on his article may yet cause him to abandon his Utopian idea of World Government for the more practical alternative outlined in that book.

Of course, in a Moneyless World Commonwealth there would be equality of opportunity in the sense favoured by Mr. Wood. And equal freedom. But surely he should know that that does

not mean equal sharing. My lungs may be much larger than Mr. Wood's and for that reason I may consume a larger amount of air. Would he deny me that? Or, on a more practical note, would he or anyone else be envious of the vast amount of water I consume?

In the same way Mr. Wood would probably be horrified that "the idle enjoy the same privileges and rewards as the industrious." It is true that to-day they do not. The industrious enjoy the privilege of work (sometimes) and the reward of poverty (always). The idle enjoy the privilege of leisure and the reward of comfort and security. But then, the idle are the superior people. They have discovered the Great Secret; that it is possible to enjoy wealth without having to produce it. The industrious are as yet unaware that they produce the wealth of the world for others and reproduce poverty for themselves. They have yet to learn that in a Moneyless World Commonwealth all would work according to their ability and all would take, without payment of any kind, according to their need.

Quite rightly, Mr. Wood shows great concern for the man who, "by ability and hard work has accumulated a comfortable sum of money." Cross my heart, Mr. Wood. I can promise you faithfully, that the people of the Moneyless World Commonwealth will not be interested in one penny piece of your money nor in the five pound notes of anyone else. Mr. Wood could play with, or use in any other way convenient all the pound notes and hundred pound notes he could cram into Buckingham Palace. No one would be interested not even the psychiatrist.

It is quite true, Mr. Wood; men are not born equal. It has been pointed out by Mr. George Orwell that some are more equal than others. How ridiculous the suggestion which has been made that Professor Einstein has difficulties with the elementary arithmetic of checking his change of a bus fare. Is he not "equal" to the eleven-year-old who performs such calculations with ease? Or, on a more "elevated" plane would he be considered equal to Mr. Churchill, that master of profound rhetoric? Or—a depressing thought—are either of these worthies equal to (a) an agricultural labourer; (b) a sewage cleaner, and (c) a coal miner? I am getting a little worried since it seems to me that at a pinch we could manage reasonably well without our Professor Einsteins and our Mr. Churchills, but would suffer great hardships without (a) (b) and (c) above.

It is, however, on the subject of the next war that Mr. Wood waxes rhetorical. Presumably civilisation will be safe if we "banish every vestige of envy hate and greed" from our "nature." It is as simple as that. We hate to the order of our politicians and wise men. We love to the order, or suggestion of Mr. Wood. We are envious and greedy because there are so many things we want. We cannot have them because we haven't the money; and that due to our "idleness, inability or bad luck." So, like good Christians—sorry, good Freethinkers—we must keep a stiff upper lip, and do without. The fact that the majority, that is the industrious, have to do without, in Peace as well as in War does not occur to Mr. Wood.

Still, "it's the poor wot helps the poor," so if we can do nothing else, we can "work for the good of humanity." Of course, that's the idea. "There's an awful lot of coffee in Brazil" goes the popular song. So those who own that coffee will no longer burn it where there is a surplus that they can't sell. They'll give it away. Similarly the surplus of potatoes and wheat in the U.S.A., and the surplus oranges in South Africa. "There must be no monopoly of abundance," says Mr. Wood. "The rich nations must share with the poor." But methinks Mr. Wood doth protest too much. For has he not already rebuked those who advocate the "haves" sharing with the "have nots?" Has not Mr. Wood already made it quite clear that "such a system would discourage industry and thrift and encourage indolence and extravagance." True it may have been through "inability or bad luck" that the "have nots"

had not. But Mr. Wood should show himself made of sterner stuff. Has he not already said that "if he fails he cannot blame Society?"

Mr. Wood is not greedy but he likes a lot. He wants to eat his cake and have it too. He wants a world worth living in and expects that "professional statesmen and warmongering financiers" to banish "every vestige of envy, hate and greed" from their natures because Mr. Wood wishes it. They will be changed men, indeed. No longer will they persuade "the common people" to "die for a worthless slogan." Undoubtedly the new slogan is going to be worthwhile. "Duty to Humanity" instead of "Duty to My Country." It will be much more satisfying to die that way. Much. And if the bomb or bullet is labelled USWG, Bliss indeed!

I am surprised that Mr. Wood should feel disturbed at "our professional statesmen floundering around the conference tables, and failing to secure any peaceful agreement among themselves." Surely he should know that the problems they set out to solve are very difficult. To make a conference round-table produce square results cannot be Q.E.D. (quite easily done). Results have to be Q.E.F. (quite easily faked).

True, our "professional statesmen" now changed men would no longer flounder around conference tables. They would sit upright as befits upright men. And discussing the Ruritanian problem, would mildly express their surprise at the delegate's proposal. "Remarkable," one would say. "Wanting to secede from the USWG." "We can't allow that. Something will have to be done." And no doubt "something" would be done.

Mr. Wood has yet to learn that the problems of Society are not the products of greedy men or warmongering politicians. They are the product of an arithmetical equation which just can't be made to add up. Two plus two can't equal five. And the total amount of wages paid (even though they be "good" wages) can never be equal to the total value of the consumable goods produced. As the surplus belongs to the idle (and not to the industrious who produce it) they must, if they wish the present "Money System" to continue, become a little more industrious themselves, and apply themselves a little more energetically to the problem of disposing of that surplus. A war now and again is quite definitely not enough. Owning two or three cars and living in two or three homes is trivial. It is a big problem—to be solved in a big way.

But a big problem can be solved in a simple way. And a Moneyless World Commonwealth does that. When goods are not produced for sale, but because people want them, and distributed freely to them, there will be no need for war since there will be nothing to fight about. The world will be one country and humanity one people. And this means there will be no need for World Government. Goods will be produced in an orderly manner according to the needs of the world's peoples. They will need neither bureaucrats nor policemen to direct their appetites. They will know that two plus two equals four.

J. PHILLIPS.

HEAVEN

Heaven was invented in the East, and in the East to be a frontier has always been regarded as the supreme felicity. The feelings of men towards their god, in the period to which we have arrived, are precisely those of an Eastern subject towards his king. The oriental king is the Lord of all the land; his subjects are his children and his slaves. The man who is doomed to death kisses the fatal firman, and submits with reverence to his fate. The man who is robbed by the king of all that he has earned, will fold his hands and say, "The king gave, and the king taketh away. Blessed be the name of the king!" The man who lives in a distant province, who knows the king only by means of the taxes which are collected in his name, will snatch up his arms if he hears that this sacred person is in danger, and will defend him as he defends his children and his home. He will sacrifice his life for one whom he has never seen, and who has never done him anything but harm.

This kind of devotion is called loyalty when exhibited towards a king; piety when exhibited towards a god. But in either case the sentiment is precisely the same. It cannot be too often repeated that god is only a special name for king; that religion is a form of government, its precepts a code of laws; that priests are gatherers of divine taxes, officers of divine police; that men resort to churches to fall on their knees and to sing hymns, from the same servile propensity which makes the Oriental delight in prostrating himself before the throne; that the noble enthusiasm which inspires men to devote themselves to the service of their god, and to suffer death rather than deny his name, is identical with the devotion of the faithful servant who, to serve his royal master, gives up his fortune or his life without the faintest prospect of reward. The religious sentiment, about which so much has been said, has nothing distinctive in itself. Love and fear, self-denial and devotion existed before those phantoms were created which men call gods; and men have merely applied to invisible kings the sentiments which they had previously felt towards their earthly kings. If they are a people in a savage state, they hate both kings and gods within their hearts, and obey them only out of fear. If they are a people in a higher state, love is mingled with fear, producing an affectionate awe which, in itself, is pleasing to the mind. That the worship of the unseen king should survive the worship of the earthly king is natural enough; but even that will not endure for ever; the time is coming when the crowned idea will be cast aside and the despotic shadow disappear.—From "Martyrdom of Man" by Winwoode Reade.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting held March 18, 1948

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the Chair.

Also present: Messrs. Hornibrook, Rosetti (A. C.), Seibert, Bryant, Griffiths, Ebury, Lupton, Woodley, Page, Morris, Barker, Mrs. Quinton and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial statement presented. New members were admitted to Newcastle, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Birmingham Branches.

The General Secretary reported proceedings in the Bradford County Court in which judgment, with costs, was given against plaintiffs (Messrs. W. Hayhurst and H. M. Smith). Messrs. W. Baldie and H. L. Searle remain the proper officials of the Bradford Branch, N.S.S.

Correspondence to and from the B.B.C. was before the meeting and instructions given. Help from Headquarters was promised to Edinburgh and Halifax Branches.

Conference matters were discussed, resolutions noted, and decisions made. Messrs. Griffiths, Seibert and Morris were elected as an Agenda Committee and their meeting arranged.

General correspondence was dealt with, the next meeting of the Executive fixed for April 15, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI, General Secretary.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).— Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Whither Mankind?" Rev. DUDLEY RICHARDS.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool, 1). — Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Stream of Life." Mr. G. THOMPSON.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street). — Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "The Theatre in Modern Society." Mr. JOHN BAILEY.

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