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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Bible and the Bible Only

FOR the first 1,500 years of the Christian Era, Christianity in its official form, was inseparable from the conception of the Universal (Catholic) Church "militant here on earth." Compared with the living reality of the Church, the Biblical writings, both the Old (Jewish) Testament and the New (Christian) one, cut a very modest figure as "Evidences" of Christian Truth. For the Bible was itself the creation of the Church; and this was its sole claim to any special religious authority. The Old Testament was the creation of the Jewish Synagogue, and the new, specifically Christian "New Testament" was the creation of the Church.

As Walter Cassels the author of "Supernatural Religion" proved with a devastating array of scholarship, the Gospels in the form in which we have them to-day did not originate prior to, at the very earliest, about 150 A.D., when the Orthodox Church found it necessary to contrapose its own "Bible" to the heretical "New Testament" of the Gnostic heresiarch, Marcion.* And it was the authority of the Church again, which made the historic decision at the end of the second century that, as there were four winds in the heavens and four cardinal points in the compass, so, equally there were four, and only four authentic Gospels.

It was thus, historically, the Church which was the author of the Bible, and not *vice versa*. St. Augustine of Hippo, the most influential theologian of the Early Church expressed the view of orthodox Catholic Christianity throughout the whole pre-Reformation era, when he declared that he "would not believe in the Gospel but for the authority of the Church."

A drastic change occurred at the era of the Reformation in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when the historic split occurred in the Christian camp between Catholic and Protestant. As is usually the case in major religious schisms, the primary causes of the Reformation were practical and not speculative. The Reformers revolted first of all against the practical effects, the political tyranny, and economic exploitation of the Papal Church, rather than against its speculative dogmas. It was against "Indulgences," a practical abuse and not a speculative theory, that Martin Luther raised the standard of revolt at Wittenberg in the first instance (1517).

However, as usual, the revolt against the practical oppression of the Church of Rome was followed by a revolt against its theology. And in particular, the Reformers found themselves under the urgent and logical necessity of justifying the revolt against the Church of Rome by an appeal to an authority higher than the traditions of that Church. It was in such circumstances that there soon emerged from the ranks of the Reformers the appeal to the inerrancy of Scripture, of the written

"Word of God," and thus emerged the famous formula: "The Bible and the Bible only is the religion of Protestants."

The slogan took on, it represented indeed, the only alternative to the open abandonment of Christianity by those who, rejecting its traditional authority, yet wished to remain Christians. And so it was that the most typical of the Protestant Churches, swallowed the whole Bible, hook, line, and sinker. The whole Bible (without the Apocrypha), Old and New Testaments were regarded uncritically as literally, absolutely, and verbally inspired, "The Impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture."

Such was the "fundamentalist" Evangelical Christianity which attained its zenith in the nineteenth century and against which the great Thomas Paine and a whole army of successors directed the critical thought of the "Age of Reason." Such was the "Religion of Protestants" when the modern critical analysis of ancient literature including the Bible, first made its entry upon the scene.

Towards the middle of the last century the Oxford theologian, Dean Burgon, defined the then prevailing view with regard to the "Word of God."

"It is the voice of Him who sitteth on the Throne; every chapter of it, every verse, every word, every syllable (!) is the unerring voice of the Most High."

How much of all this is left to-day? Very little, even inside the most Protestant churches, at least in the Old World. The age of Dr. Barnes has succeeded that of Dean Burgon. If, as even the Catholic Newman declared, the books of the Bible are "letters from our Heavenly Country," the Divine handwriting is now entirely illegible.

Regarded simply as literature the Hebrew authors have their points; after all one would expect so gifted a people as the Jews, sometimes at least, to express themselves intelligently! But the infallible fetish book of the Evangelical Churches has gone to join the snows of yesteryear. Only the crudest of crude theologians to-day attempt to defend it seriously.

We now know the Bible for what it actually is, the surviving literature, largely but not entirely religious, of the ancient Hebrews and the early Christians. As such, it reflects every conceivable phase of religious, moral, intellectual and social evolution. Great literature like Job and Ecclesiastes rubs shoulders indiscriminately with faked history and puerile legends. High ethics and the grossest superstitions make incongruous bedfellows. The Bible is now no longer Divine, but human; in large part, all too human.

Incidentally, if, as it is now the fashion to claim in "Modernist" circles, the Bible represents an evolution; it is undoubtedly an evolution *backwards*. For it can hardly be disputed that the Christian New Testament is, if and when considered as literature, and taken as a whole, greatly inferior to the Hebrew Old Testament. Even Bishop Barnes admits that our Gospels were the product of "an age of intellectual decline."

* "The Birth of the Christian Religion" by Alfred Loisy.

The contemporary collapse of the infallible Bible measures and signifies the current decay of the Reformed Churches of Protestantism. Indeed, so bad has the situation become in theological circles, that the present tendency is to return to pre-Reformation Catholic theology and, as in the days of Early Christianity, to shift the current emphasis again from the Bible to the Church which "guarantees" its truth.

But the bloodstained pages of Church history afford no more evidence of Divinely revealed Truth, than do the bloodstained pages of the Bible; the "infallible" Catholic Church will inevitably follow the "unerring" Protestant Bible into oblivion.

F. A. RIDLEY.

A CRITIC OF EVOLUTION

SINCE in 1859 Darwin's "The Origin of Species" first burst upon an astonished world, there have been many critics of the general principles which were enunciated by Darwin. Most of these critics have been so obviously ill-informed as to be laughed out of court. Few scientists have come forward to criticise the fundamentals of Darwinism, though the perpetual argument as to the inheritance (or non-inheritance) of acquired characters has gone on, and looks like continuing to go on, in a modified form, for a long time yet.

But a book which has just made its appearance seems to me to be the best and most informed criticism which the principle of evolution has yet faced. It is "Darwin. Before and After," by Dr. R. E. D. Clark (Paternoster Press; 6s.). Dr. Clark is clearly a scientist of some ability; he has written books on the problems of atomic energy, and he is able to look at these matters with the impartial eye of one who understands the scientist's feeling for evidence. He is scrupulously fair. He does not support the ideas of Darwin, at any rate in the broader sense in which they have been applied by many modern writers, but he can write this:—

"Anti-evolution protests are organised by bodies numbering few scientists in their memberships, books are written with question-begging titles; stupid and dishonest arguments are constantly used by the narrowest school of evolutionists, in which facts are almost deliberately perverted. . . Rubbish of this kind is more than enough to alienate all scientific sympathy."

Why, then, does Dr. Clark not believe that the principle of evolution can be widely applied? It is not easy to summarise his book, which is closely-argued; but I think that the main argument which he puts forward can be described within the compass of a short article like this one, and I think that it is of the greatest importance to all who aspire to freedom of thought that they should make up their minds on this matter. Many of us are inclined to use the word "evolution" as if it were an explanation of all that happened. A partial explanation it may well often be; but to explain not merely the "how" but the "why" something very broad in the way of theories is needed.

Dr. Clark's most important argument is connected with the theory of entropy. I imagine that the majority of readers of these columns will have enough scientific knowledge to know what is meant by that sometimes misused word. Put as briefly as possible entropy is a mathematical conception meaning, roughly, randomness. There is, in other words, a tendency in the universe for all things to become more random. Things in motion tend to dissipate that motion as heat. Hot

things tend to dissipate their heat into other forms at a lower temperature. And, as Jeans pointed out (I know the weaknesses of Jeans's philosophy; this is a scientific point) that the end of the universe, as far as we are able to forecast it from present conditions, will be a vast space in which there are a number of particles in surroundings the temperature of which is exceedingly low.

This is, in fact, the one truly scientific argument for some kind of creative act at the performance of which the universe was born. If entropy is something which is constantly increasing, there was presumably a moment when it was nil; at that moment the universe must have come into existence. I am not here arguing for or against that theory; but it is a concrete part of Dr. Clark's general approach.

But what, the reader may object, has this to do with evolution? Well, if we accept the fact that entropy constantly increases, there must be a general increase in randomness in the universe, taking the universe as a whole. There may be local places where this randomness may decrease, i.e., there may be places at which we can artificially make heat turn itself into mechanical energy. But this can be a matter only of purely local conditions, and cannot be held to apply to the whole universe of earth and stars. Yet evolution, if we try to apply it on a universal scale, would imply a reversal of this principle. It would imply a constant increase in complication, since, if we hold that living matter emerged from non-living, and that, beginning with some kind of primordial slime on a prehistoric sea we eventually reached the peak of humanity, it is necessary to agree that there has been a steady decrease in randomness.

That seems to me to be an argument which it is exceedingly difficult to controvert. I am not sufficiently a biologist to be able to say whether it is absolutely water-tight; but it is an argument which is intellectually respectable and is quite certainly not nonsense, like the arguments of so many of the fundamentalists.

Dr. Clark, in other words, is a man who deserves the attention of all thoughtful readers, whatever their views, and his own position is something which no one, whether scientists or artists, may be ashamed of sharing. While many of his views will be, I am sure, anathema to some of the readers of these columns, it is not possible to laugh him out of court. He writes on a plane of high seriousness, and he has to be dealt with sincerely.

JOHN ROWLAND.

WHAT EVERY HUMANIST SHOULD KNOW

IN my observations and reasonings about human behaviour, as given in my articles for various humanist journals throughout the world, I find myself continually compelled to realise the basic importance of a few biological facts. These basic facts form a background for and throw light upon all other facts; they also form a solid foundation upon which to build future work. Once these basic facts are realised, they are realised for always in your mind.

Recently I've given special attention to these basic facts in an attempt both to single them all out and to see them in relation to each other. As a result, there has been a very real overall simplification and clarification and co-ordination of my work. So I hasten to pass these basic facts on to you in the sincere hope that they will have the same very helpful result in your own obser-

vations and reasoning about human behaviour in our society to-day.

There is the basic fact of the human mind rising up as an inherent development in the aeons-long evolutionary process, rising up with its fascinating, its truly amazing power of self-consciousness, of perception through all its senses of itself and its environment, so that by its very nature its essential function is perception.

There is the basic fact, which Julian Huxley points out, that all our evolutionary evidence shows us that the biologic function of this perceptual mind is to intelligently guide our behaviour.

There is the basic fact, as observed by brain physiologists and as emphasised by the world leader in semantics, Alfred Kórzybski, and others, of the magnificent potential, but to-day as yet unrealised power of the average human mind.

There is the basic fact, as agreed upon by such leading biologists as Julian Huxley, J. B. S. Haldane, Alexis Carrel, and that truly great social thinker, H. G. Wells—and as given in detail in my article "Adventures In Thought"—that the societal idea content of the average mind to-day concerning religion, capitalism, nationalism, the slaughter of war, our own behaviour and so on, is very distorted and twisted and inaccurate; is in short sheer nonsense without any relation to the observable facts of ourselves and our behaviour.

There is the basic fact, as realised and propounded by Sigmund Freud and Havelock Ellis and Marie Stopes, of the thrilling beauty and power of the natural human mating instinct. As my dear friend John Cowper Powys puts it: "Sex is such a terrific force."

There is the basic fact of the existence within each human being of a combined emotional and intellectual quality which is that individual's attitude towards others, his or her interest in and feeling towards and reverence of fellow human beings which I call "human feeling." The amount or extent of this quality in each of us varies, and determines every single solitary act towards others, as well as being developed or else injured in turn by such acts.

There is the basic fact that the human being experiences pleasure and associated profits; pleasure in the sex relationship, profit in economic business life, and so on.

There is the basic fact, as developed by William Graham Sumner in his sociological "Folkways" and as emphasised by such fine social thinkers as H. G. Wells, Harry Elmer Barnes, H. Levy, and others, that the people of any age accept as right and natural and inevitable the prevailing idea content of the societal mind and resulting behaviour. Indeed, James Harvey Robinson observes that this is a well recognised principle of history.

There is the basic fact, as developed very clearly by the anthropologist, Wilson D. Wallis, that our whole societal ideas and behaviour form a closely interwoven unity, each part such as religion, capitalism, nationalism, war's slaughter, education, and so on, being interrelated and interacting. You cannot affect one part without affecting the whole, as proven by the innovations of Charles Darwin, Sigmund Freud, Havelock Ellis, and others, which had repercussions which extended far beyond the aspects of evolution, mind and sex.

There seems to me to be the basic fact that you cannot understand one aspect of human behaviour without seeing it in relation to all other aspects. Let me give an example: the movies to-day. At first thought it might seem wonderful that people in our civilisation can be entertained by going to the movies and enjoying what Henry Hayward calls "Moonlight And Kisses" and

"The Eternal Triangle." But when we realise that two-thirds of our earth's people now live in hunger in hovels, that our marvellous technological science even now merely awaits an intelligently planned social order to overwhelm us with an abundance for all, and that the average mind is a fine thing, it then seems utterly shameful and a mockery of human intelligence that these same movies with their puerile fairy tales should so tragically and insanely preoccupy and fritter away and waste the energies of our people. And to the exclusion of so urgently needed social thinking. It is as if one were to calmly read a book on Santa Claus while one's house burned down in full view. No wonder Julian Huxley says the cinema is to-day primarily an escape mechanism. And so it is with religion. No wonder J. B. S. Haldane speaks of "that vast diversion of effort into fruitless channels which is in some ways the most characteristic feature of the religions." But do you see how these two aspects of societal behaviour exhibit the same basic qualities: escapism into unreality, and a refusal by the mind to attempt to guide human behaviour? After all, they are but two aspects of the behaviour of the same individuals in the same society. Again, religion significantly is the avowed enemy of human reason.

Now let us briefly review these basic facts, and see them in relation to each other. There is the mind as an organ of perception, the mind as a guide of human behaviour, the innate power of the mind, the inaccuracy of the prevailing idea content of the mind, the power of sex, the quality of "human feeling," the existence of pleasure potentials, the current acceptance of the prevailing inaccurate idea content as accurate and right, the interwoven unity of all this inaccurate idea content concerning various aspects of societal life and thus of those various aspects themselves, and the need to see each aspect in relation to the whole of societal life in order to fully understand it.

Humanism, it seems to me, can only be fully understood when seen in relation to these basic facts. Our mind must guide our behaviour, and it must perceive ourselves and our lives factually, and apply reason to an intelligent understanding of these perceptions.

Incidentally, I'd rather write for humanist journals than any other type of periodical. For here, and here only, is the human mind free of every and all of the damnable taboos and prejudices against truth which limit reason in all other periodicals. We have a very grave responsibility to see that there is never any least censorship of honourable thought sincerely expressed. Humanist journals to-day are the only societal source of complete truth and as such they are the real intellectual hope of humanity.

GORDON CAULFIELD, Canada.

THERE WAS ONCE—

A GOOD MAN. He forgave all his enemies. He returned good for evil and offered the other cheek to those who smote him. He gave all his money to the poor and read his Bible thrice daily. He attended his Church regularly and prayed religiously to his Maker, always confessing himself a miserable and penitent sinner.

For all this he was duly afflicted with blindness and paralysis, and he eventually died a lingering and agonising death.

A PHYSICIAN. He amassed a great fortune attending rich old ladies who had nothing the matter with them.

One day a dear old lady said to him, "Dear Doctor—but for you my life would not be worth living."

And the Doctor answered, "Dear Madam—but for *you* neither would be mine!"

W. H. W.

ACID DROPS

A reader of the "Nottingham Evening News" states that Voltaire must have seen some good in religion, for he said that "if there were no religion man would invent one." Of course, we would not disagree with that opinion (which, by the way, is not the correct quotation), but our reasons would be different. Voltaire regarded religion as a soporific, or a policeman to keep the people in order. Voltaire's attitude to religion can be summed up in his fighting slogan, "écrasez l'infame."

The Rev. F. Musgrave Brown says that one of the conditions to bring outsiders into the Church is that there must be a "clear and definite preaching of Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, as a living Saviour." We suggest that this is a bluff on the part of the Rev. Mr. Brown. Imagine parsons being "clear and definite" on such a mythical (or quasi-historic) character as Jesus Christ. As soon be clear and definite on Red Riding Hood, which has as much foundation in fact as the existence of J.C. Better stick to the usual ambiguity, or those already inside the Church may join the majority outside, and our parsons may then have to find useful jobs.

Somebody has been pulling the leg of the erudite priestly adviser to the "Universe." He was asked whether it was true that in the "original" Gospel (claimed by Atheists and Communists to be the original one, anyway) Jesus appeared as a vision to the disciples while they were in a trance? The answer was an angry "No!"—and the enquirer was told that the statement was sheer invention. Of course it was. No Atheist could possibly admit that there was an "original" Gospel. The present ones are re-hashes of older ones, based on mixtures of Paganism, Gnosticism, and Judaism, with plenty of "imagination" eking out what could not be "pinched" from other sources.

Whatever other problems the India Governments have to face, the addition of 15 millions added to the population every year, and becoming proportionally greater as the years go on, has long been recognised by competent economists as perhaps the greatest. It is, therefore, very interesting to find Madras' Health Minister turning down any suggestion of birth control for the masses of ignorant peasants. Instead, we are given the enlightening statement that "Hindu India favours large families as God's blessing, and disfavors birth control." It is a pity, therefore, that God does not look after the unfortunate babies who die in millions every year, starvation being the principal cause.

The separation of Eire from England placed the Church of Ireland in a little difficulty. The well-known phrase, "O Lord, save the King," sung in Matins and Evensong, has had to be changed to, "O Lord, save the State." What effect this will have in actual practice in Eire is not quite clear—perhaps only God knows. In any case, we on our part could have assured both the King and the State that the change over would result in nothing at all. The phrase could have been deleted and the world would have gone on precisely the same.

The way in which the childish and transparent lies of ignorant children in Lourdes and Fatima, that they had seen and spoken with the "Blessed Virgin," was received, has made many other children attempt the

same imposture—with more or less success. The latest example is that of "a young postulant" in a Carmelite convent in the Philippine Islands who claims that she has several times spoken with "our Lady." One absolutely infallible proof was that the Celestial Visitor left a lot of red roses after her—and red roses do not grow in the district. How, as Mr. Arnold Lum would say, the sceptic can get away from that one, would be a mystery. The examining priest saw the red petals *himself, with his own eyes*, and he adds, he could "divulge" a lot more but hesitates as "it is so extraordinary." A few perfect cures of literally incurable cases would make the spot even more famous than Lourdes and it would be a serious rival. After all, one cannot expect the Virgin to shower her favours in one direction only.

Without a doubt, Irishmen take their sport as seriously as they do their religion, which makes it all the more puzzling how Jimmy Jones, Protestant centre-forward, found a place in the Catholic Belfast Celtic football team. With such a heretic as the centre of the team, how could Celtic expect to win? The match against the Protestant team, Linfield, was drawn, although in terms of casualties we think the Catholics Celts won, for although Jimmy Jones only got a beating up and a broken leg, the Catholics put two of the Protestants into hospital. Can we consider this another victory for "the greater glory of God" and the Pope?

The "Universe" this Christmas was seriously perturbed over "the date of Christmas," for it provides an inquirer with an answer (or rather several answers) which meant you pay your money and you can take your choice. The upshot of them all is that the date, December 25, we are told, was deliberately chosen "to counteract and destroy the pagan influence of the 'Unconquered Sun' held on December 25"—the view put forward for centuries by Freethinkers and for which had the Church then had the power, they would have been roasted alive. But let us be thankful—the Church is now admitting over and over again as correct many Freethought platitudes.

The R.C. Bishop Murphy told a few of his sheep the other day that "The experiment of secular education has failed." This leaves us almost speechless. Not even in our wildest dreams had we imagined that the fight for secular education, which has been one of the planks of the National Secular Society, was over, that secular education was an accomplished fact, and that now there was a complete reaction. But our sanctified Bishop went even further. He hotly declared that the "secular education system is rotten through and through" and that "its stench is in the class rooms and that it is poisoning the whole system." And after that typical holy outburst, the Bishop went on to mention "the agreed syllabus of religion" in our schools!!

The truth is, of course, that a system of education with *any* religious syllabus, which is not entirely controlled by the Vatican, is "secular education" for Bishop Murphy; and we should love to hear what the Archbishop of Canterbury has to say about this piece of foreign insolence. Once again—for the thousandth time—we can only reiterate that Secular Education in all State-aided schools is the only solution to these religious squabbles; and that those Christian and other religious sects who want to teach their pet superstitions to children should do so after school hours in their own seminaries and out of their own pockets.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

For "The Freethinker."—Miss L. Pye, £2 3s.; F. S. B. Lawes, 3s.; E. C. R., 2s.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.—Thanks for your letter.

H. H. HELIER.—Thanks for cuttings.

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary gratefully acknowledges the following donations: H. Beck, 10s.; H. Gale, 10s.; M. Feldman, 10s.

Has any reader a copy of "Bible and Beer" to spare? We would be grateful if they would send it to us.

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.

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 should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

The increase in our allowance of paper has brought in a number of letters from readers expressing the wish that "The Freethinker" should revert to something of its size before the war. Nothing would suit us better—but unfortunately the problem is a far bigger one than that of mere paper. The costs of printing and production have rocketed sky-high, and it is not always possible to get the best articles without paying in proportion. Even as we go to press, we have been advised as to a further increase in the cost of printing.

If every reader could introduce just one more regular reader during the year, thus doubling our circulation, quite a number of things could be done. But these are very difficult in the absence of growing funds. What a pity that some Freethought millionaire, with his heart in the work of Freethought, is not just round the corner. He would be heartily welcomed here.

The high standard always expected of the "Rationalist Annual" has again fulfilled its promise, and readers will find a feast of good articles representing not only many varied subjects but will also enjoy their literary presentation. In their various ways, Sir Arthur Keith, Prof. Gordon Childe, Mr. A. Gowans Whyte, Prof. M. Burton and many other leading Rationalists have all contributed first-class articles of intense interest.

We specially single out "Adventures with Australopithecus," by Prof. R. A. Dart, as being of especial significance for the theory of Evolution. No one can read it without seeing how every year brings stronger and stronger proof of the theory. Those interested in the drama will avidly read the article on Eugene O'Neill, while Mr. R. Skynner's handling of "Choice and Determinism" will appeal to those who love a closely reasoned and analytical disquisition on a very controversial subject. The price of the "Rationalist Annual, 1949," is half-a-crown. The publisher is Watts.

Enthusiasm is rising for the National Secular Society Annual Dinner in the Criterion Restaurant, Piccadilly

Circus, on January 29. Apart from the applications for tickets coming from London and suburbs, diners will be coming from Brighton, Southampton, Somerset, Cirencester, Devonshire, Derby and other distant parts, so a good mixture of town and country is assured. There is still time for tickets, and each 12s. 6d. each should accompany applications to the General Secretary, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. has a visit from Mr. Harold Day, chairman of the Bradford Branch N.S.S., who will lecture in the Chorlton Town Hall to-day (January 16). He will speak on "Atheism versus Godism." Mr. Day is a very enthusiastic worker for the Bradford Branch, and a speaker with something to say in a pleasant manner. Admission is free, and the lecture begins at 7 p.m.

The Glasgow Branch N.S.S. has arranged a double event for this week-end. To-day (January 16), Mr. J. D. Bell will lecture in the McLellan Galleries at 7 p.m. on "Freedom in Social Research," at which admission is free, and on Monday evening (17th) there will be tea, music and dancing in The Clarion Rooms, Queens Crescent, near St. Georges Cross, for members and friends from 7-30 p.m. Tickets for the social evening are 1s. 6d. each. Much work has to go on behind the scenes in the arrangements for such events, and the local branch deserves a full house and full support from all Freethinkers within reasonable distance.

DETERMINISM AND FREEWILL

HOW antiquated doctrines lend colour to modern thought can be seen in an argument now current; that although we can accept determinism in science and history, in every-day life we must behave as if freewill were true. The idea is that determinism can only be used in a general sense, and not in particular.

All this may mean no more than that closer inquiry is needed. But, with the determinist case admitted, it is merely a specious excuse; and implies another argument often put, that the scientific method cannot be applied in human affairs; that there is always an unknown quantity. The absurdity is shown in that, after admitting the case in history, an historic illustration is given. For instance, we might have foretold the French Revolution, but could not have foreseen that an obscure Corsican would become Emperor. Which at once connects up with another current argument, that we cannot foretell the future. It seems determinism is taken to imply prediction, and our inability to predict justifies the doctrine of freewill, and vice-versa.

This doctrine, accepted by some theologians, is closely connected with that of the freedom of conscience of the Reformation, and also with the introspective metaphysics of the period that followed; but which is in contradiction to the theological determinism of St. Augustine, resuscitated by Calvin. It is thus, a theological problem arising from the introspective metaphysical assertion that we have a feeling or sense of freedom of choice of action; but which contradicts the theological assertion of the omnipotence of God.

Freedom of conscience is a claim that individuals are personally responsible to God, as against coercion in matters of religious belief. We see, then, that freedom is a political or social concept, applied here in matters of faith. But with freedom of the will, this social idea of freedom is applied to introspective psychology. It

asserts that we have no sense of coercion in our normal choice of action. This plainly does not refer to cases where we *are* under coercion, and thus deterred in such a choice. So, we see here, a concept borrowed from social life, the idea of freedom, applied to normal personal feelings.

But the social analogy is false. From what are we supposed to be free, in this realm of feeling? Are not painful memories coercive, deterrent? This presumed unawareness of coercion, and the presumption of a conscious will, like the so-called "unconscious," is as absurd as the modern unconscious motive, the Old Adam. Further, there is no relationship between feeling and action, no indication whatever of what any choice of action is likely to be. It may imply that others also have a similar freedom in choice of action, but it is just as absurd in their case as in our own. For freewill denies prediction, even of our own actions, in this assertion of unawareness. Like the "unconscious" it is a negation.

It is absurd to assert that we cannot foretell the future; we can and do. Such an assertion makes our lives meaningless; for without anticipation much of our behaviour is nonsensical. We anticipate the sun will rise; that our alarm clock will wake us; we will breakfast and catch the usual train to the office, and so on. Again, we sow the seed in anticipation of the harvest; cook a meal anticipating someone will eat; build houses anticipating someone will live in them. It is doubtful if any single one of our actions does not involve anticipation. It certainly is absurd to assert that we are responsible for our actions if we do not anticipate their consequences.

There is no question whether we anticipate the future. We do it so often, so continuously, so habitually, that we are unaware of the fact. We are normally unaware of our heart-beat, or of our breathing, but our unawareness does not affect the facts. We are so accustomed to it, so accustomed to our anticipation being realised that we take it for granted. It is when something unusual happens, something different, that we are aroused into consciousness. We may occasionally be aware of them, but our consciousness does not make heartbeat or breathing voluntary action. It is a mistake to think our occasional consciousness of anticipation is voluntary expectation.

The fact is that anticipation of the future is as much a part of our psychological make-up as memory of the past. Indeed, they are necessarily related, and faulty anticipation may arise in faulty memory; as when we forget something is there and trip over it. The question then becomes, not, are our conscious calculations sufficient for accurate prediction, but whether our memory is reliable. In this case our consciousness would depend upon our remembering the existence of the thing and avoiding tripping over it. But the past has gone, it is as non-existent as the future; both anticipation and memory exist now, and a deficiency in either may arise in present feelings.

The doctrine of freewill is introspective; it does not refer to the objective world, to the other fellow, but to ourselves, our own feeling, and so, our choice of action and our own anticipation. And in asserting that we *can* choose different from what we *do* choose, it shows how easily we forget; in inhibition, fixation or obsession. It illustrates the smoke screen of excuses, the defence mechanisms and escape mechanisms. This not only concerns personal memory but also social memory in history. For instance, throughout history,

preparations for war have always led to war. In spite of protestations of a desire for peace, the means adopted have always led to war. But we still tell ourselves that the way to ensure peace is preparation for war.

We see then that we are anticipating the future in active preparation; making plans, designing new machines, manufacturing instruments of war. And not only are our anticipations physical but also psychological; carrying on a war of nerves; cultivating war mentality auto-suggesting ourselves into the necessary psychological aptitudes, personal animosities; thus making war more certain. In active anticipation—physical, psychological and social, we are making certain what the future will be; bringing the future into being.

To assert freedom of choice is to forget what determines such choice and also, to forget that such choice, in fact, determines the future. It is actual auto-suggested oblivion of actual fact.

H. H. PREECE.

TO BELIEVE—OR NOT TO BELIEVE!

IN a recent article "The Bible as Fiction" Mr. A. R. Williams raises a question which vitally concerns all Atheists who have children of school age, viz.: the question of allowing them to attend scripture lessons and religious observances.

Mr. Williams thinks it is very sensible to allow them to do so on the principle that a child is permitted to read fairy-stories but does not believe in fairies later in life. In my opinion such an argument is not only logically unsound but highly undesirable. If *all* religions were taught in school, and if the case for non-belief in *any* religion was also properly explained, then there would be no harm in it. If children were allowed to form their own conclusions we should be in favour of the practice, but unfortunately they are taught absolutely nothing of world's religions except Christianity.

Children are told that Christianity alone is true and that all other beliefs are false and wicked. By taking this mean and unfair advantage of a child's limited intelligence its teachers are able to bias the infant mind in favour of Christianity and to prejudice it against other religions or non-religion.

The fairy-story analogy is unsound because as children grow older they are *told* that fairies are unreal and that demon kings do not really exist, whereas they are *not* told that angels, spirits, God and the Devil do not exist. You cannot blame the child for continuing to believe what it was taught in infancy when you threaten it with eternal damnation and torture if it dares to disbelieve. Even if the child of an Atheist is enlightened by its parents it will, in all probability, believe that the parents are wrong, on the assumption that the *majority* must always be right—the majority being all their school-fellows and school-teachers.

Milk-sop, we know, is excellent food for infants of a very early age but as they grow older they are fed on something more solid and satisfying—or they would be sorry weaklings indeed. Religious sop is certainly not satisfying enough for anyone out of the infant class, especially that very weak and watery brand called Christianity. This does not mean that an Atheist's child need be kept in complete ignorance of Christianity or any other supernatural religion. It can be told quite enough by its parents at home to satisfy its natural curiosity; to forbid a child to read the Bible is to foster a morbid craving for it.

No child should ever be *forced* to become an Atheist

merely because its parents are Atheists: if we do that we are no better than the Christians who use compulsion in no uncertain manner. When it is old enough to reason for itself let it choose freely, for this is what no Christian will ever permit of *his* child. There need be little doubt as to the result!

The Christian, however, is forced to invoke the aid of Fear, Threats and Punishments. The Church knows only too well that without such charming and happy methods of persuasion as everlasting torture in the fires of hell its chances of keeping the sheep in the fold are practically nil. No promises of rewards or punishments are necessary to the Atheist. No threats of sadistic torture are needed to influence *his* child—common sense and normal intelligence are sufficient.

If there is any one reason more than another why a large number of people do not openly declare themselves Atheists it is not through any fear of *God*, or of *God's* vengeance—but of *Man's* vengeance. Yes, it is unfortunately too true that many people dare not admit disbelief because of the penalties they would have to pay for doing so. Hell hath no fury like a Christian scorned! There is no limit to a Christian's fear and loathing of a self-confessed Atheist. Any injury he can inflict on an unbeliever, either by word or deed, he considers justifiable in the name of his religion. A man may quite easily be deprived of his job and of his good name, with consequent suffering to his family, if he openly declares himself. Thus many Atheists are forced to keep underground, fearing to show themselves, lest they be penalised and persecuted by the gentle, brother-loving Christian.

There is no doubt at all that Atheism would make very rapid progress if it were not for the temerity of those who, for personal and private reasons, dare not publicly express themselves. Surely it is shameful indeed that a religion professing all the virtues of kindness, tenderness, sympathy and human understanding, should deliberately condemn all those who do not subscribe to it as wicked and sinful. Obviously, such intolerance must be the outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual *disgrace*. The psychologist would at once detect the operation of an Inferiority Complex. The Christian can never confound the Atheist and so he condemns him. Because he cannot convert the Atheist he must resort to coercion.

So long as one professes Christianity, or at least does not openly oppose it, one is respected as a good, honest citizen. Such a man may live his own life free from the sneers of his fellow men, no matter how big a *hypocrite* he may be; but no matter how *good* a man is, if he dares to oppose Christianity he is scorned and abused as the epitome of all wickedness.

So be it. Let Christianity claim the cowards—it is welcome to them. Atheism will be well-served by the courageous!

W. H. WOOD.

COMMUNISM AND RELIGION

Sir.—Marx's definition of religion as the opium of the people is certainly true. The claim of the freethinkers that religion is false is equally true. Where then does the writer stand when he chides Mr. Gallacher for pointing out the similarity between Communism and certain tenets of Christianity? The church is losing its hold on the minds of the people. By declaring themselves in support of the atom bomb, the church leaders realise quite clearly that the old opinion which Marx castigated is no longer working. A more powerful, man-made, heaven sent weapon must be used.

Where then is Mr. Gallacher wrong in appealing to the commonsense of members of the church? By enlisting them as allies against reaction, he is accomplishing more than those who ride the same old hobby horse year in, year out, shouting the slogan of the falseness of religion. There are more ways of breaking a wall down than of battering your head against it. Use your brains.—Yours, etc.,

T. W. SMITH, B.Sc.

OBITUARY

MRS. ELSIE THOMPSON

It is with regret that we have to announce the sudden death on January 2 at the early age of 42, of Mrs. Elsie Thompson, wife of the President of the Merseyside Branch of the N.S.S.

Mrs. Thompson was a keen and active partner in the work done on Merseyside, and we extend our sincere sympathy to her husband in his loss.

The cremation at Stoke Cemetery was conducted by Mr. J. V. Shortt. J. V. S.

ANNIE CATHERINE CRUNDY

With sorrow we announce the death of Annie Catherine Crundy which took place on January 1, the same day as her 83rd birthday. Both she and her husband were life-long Freethinkers, members of the N.S.S. and readers of "The Freethinker," also active workers in the Socialist movement. Her husband died in 1941, but she retained her interest in progressive movements until her death. The remains were cremated at Stockport Crematorium on January 4 where, before an assembly of relatives and friends, a Secular Service was read by Mrs. M. McCall, of the Manchester Branch N.S.S. R. H. R.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: Mr. L. ENRY and Mr. J. G. LUTTON.

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 18, 7 p.m.: "Discussion on Marxism and Intellectual Freedom," Mr. HECTOR HAWTON.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W.1).—Monday, January 17, 7 p.m.: "Intuition and Reason—Their Conflict in Human Behaviour," MAURICE BURTON, D.Sc. A Series of Six Lectures (Illustrated by lantern slides). 1st Lecture: "Evolution of Behaviour." Course tickets, 12s. (R.P.A. members, 9s.) from R.P.A., 4/6, Johnsons Court, E.C.4.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "King Charles' Head—1649—1949," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Birth Control—Its Past, Present and Future," Mr. J. HOME STEWART (Dr. NICOLA).

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Glasgow (Brunswick Street).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. S. BRYDEN, E. LAWRIE and J. HUMPHREY.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS and others.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "Birth Control," Mr. H. A. J. PEARMAIN, A.L.C.B.

Glasgow Secular Society (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Freedom in Social Research, Mr. J. BELL.

Glasgow Secular Society (Clarion Rooms, Queens Crescent, near St. Georges Cross).—Monday, January 17, 7-30 p.m.: A Social Evening. Tickets, 1s.6d. (see "Sugar Plums").

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (7, St. James Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Lantern Lecture, ELDER ROSE, Salt Lake City.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Atheism versus Godism," Mr. HAROLD DAY (Bradford).

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical Institute, Shakespeare St.).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Christianity—Dope or Dynamite," Rev. J. ALEX HEYFORD.

FOR SALE.—Assorted Books and Pamphlets. Send stamp for list to: N. CHARLTON, 72, Colbran St., Burnley.

LAMBETH CONFERENCE, 1948

(Concluded from page 13)

THEIR Lordships' meaning is plain enough when it comes to one form of revolutionary doctrine, Marxism. They are in no two minds about that, and declare it to be "the special duty of the Church to oppose the challenge of Marxian theory of Communism," which puts quite a few parsons I know on the spot. In fact, Communism is out, so far as the faithful are concerned, whether they be mere laymen or even deans. Marxian Communism, says the same Article 25, is contrary to Christian faith, "for it denies the existence of God, Revelation and a future life." It is not for me to refute the imputation, but when the bishops reproach Communism for treating "the individual man as a means and not an end," it seems to me to be a case of the kettle calling the pot black. I would like to know how else Christianity regards man. Nor do we need to look up their sacred books nor even their recent history; we have the answer right here, in the Encyclical.

"The world belongs to Him and in it He is working out that (His) purpose . . . He uses imperfect and sinful man to be its servants (p. 4). The Conference believes that the recognition of the responsibility of the individual to God (is) imperilled by any claim made either by the State or by any group within the State, to control the whole of human life" (Article 5). "The Conference calls on all Church members to find their incentive to work . . . as an offering to the glory of God" (Article 22). "A new understanding of the universal sovereignty of God" (Article 36). "Faith as a personal surrender and adherence to Christ" (Article 102) (my italics). Can anyone say that these phrases do not imply that the individual man is not "a means to an end," and that that end is servitude to the glory of the Christian god?

But it is through education that the Church, as always, seeks to fix its talons in the body and soul of man. Though it asserts that it welcomes the State's interest in human welfare, nevertheless there are "grave dangers when the State is unsympathetic or hostile." It is of no matter, of course, that if the ubiquitous penetration of the Church teaching into all our institutions, as the bishops aim at, became a fact, we atheists would be faced with grave dangers of an unsympathetic or hostile State. But then, the Church has never held that sauce for their goose is sauce for anybody else's gander, sauce being in their view their own proprietary article. But it is with some surprise that we read in Article 27 that "educational opportunity everywhere for all" should be handed out "without privilege for wealth." In the 400 years of its existence the Church of England has done more than most to found that class institution, the Public School. Since when have they become the advocate of class levelling? Can it be that Labour Party educative schemes appear as a red light to them? It seems a little late to be climbing on the bandwagon now, my Lord Bishops. Another bright suggestion is that "a chapel for corporate worship should be provided in every university and university college" (Article 32). Is this to be a common purposes building for all the sects to take their turn in holding services? If so, I wonder if atheists will be able to hire it, say for alternate Wednesday evenings.

Then there's films. The Church of England welcomes "the efforts now being made to improve their quality." Personally I have felt that since Rank achieved his monopoly of the industry, films have been showing a steady deterioration. But then I don't suppose the

bishops mean the same thing by improvement as you or I, for the Encyclical goes on to say that they are anxious that films shown to children should not undermine "sound educational influences" (Article 34).

So much for the doctrines of the Church of England, brought up to date at the Lambeth confabulations. A large part of the rest of the Encyclical is devoted to the efforts made to unify the various Christian sects. In this they seem to have had quite a measure of success, stretching all the way from the Eastern Churches and the Old Catholics to Methodism, only the Roman Catholic community holding itself severely aloof. The reason for this reversal of "free church" tendencies is not far to seek. In the face of their growing impotence to sway the people and, at the same time, the close approximation of their material interests, the instinct for self-preservation causes the urge towards unification to overcome the passion for sectarian divergencies. In the face of mass movements, of socialist teaching and Marxism, these essentially bourgeois institutions must consolidate their front. The Roman Church, indeed, must secretly sympathise and find their dogmatic structure not a little inconvenient at the moment. As a further indication of this trend of thought, one of the recommendations of the Lambeth Conference is the setting up of a Central College at Canterbury; the universities can no longer be relied upon to impart the necessary "conditioning" to the young candidate for Holy Orders.

The feminist gets no new deal at Lambeth in 1948, apart from a half-hearted approval of her activities in public life. The priesthood remains the male's preserve and women are relegated to the humbler tasks in the hierarchy. Finally, the Encyclical ends up with a typical and amusing have-it-both-ways decision. The passing of the sacramental cup from mouth to mouth is obviously a possible cause for the spread of disease, and Christian hygienists have as obviously been perturbed by it. At the same time the Church of England is reluctant to give the Roman Church (who believe in Communion in one kind), best in the matter. So, provided the local church has got a "provincial regulation" to cover it, the parson may now "dunk" the bread or wafer in the wine (as you or I "dunk" our biscuits in our tea), and withhold the wine chalice. The technical expression for this action, in ecclesiastical terminology, is "intinction."

P. C. KING.

THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Annual Dinner

will be held at the

CRITERION RESTAURANT
PICCADILLY, LONDON, W.1
(Entrance Lower Regent Street)

on

Saturday, January 29th, 1949

Chairman: Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN

TICKETS 12/6 from
R. H. ROSETTI, Secretary
41 Gray's Inn Rd., London, W.1

Reception at 6.30 p.m.
Dinner at 7.0 p.m.
Evening Dress Optional