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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

"All Men are Brothers"

THE present age is that of the Unity of the World, for to-day, it is the problem of world-unity that dwarfs all others in its desperate urgency. An age such as is ours which sees the aeroplane making a laughing stock of national boundaries, and submarine cables encircling the earth in eighty seconds, can only think realistically on a world scale. The nation-state which once represented undeniable progress in the pre-industrial era, is to-day a hopeless anachronism.

To continue thinking on nationalist or imperialist lines spells doom to our generation — atomic war, scientific power misused for human destruction and perhaps a new Dark Age, such as followed the downfall of the last rationalistic culture in European history.

To-day then, the choice before us is simple: it can be reduced to this stark alternative: world-unity or renascent barbarism following upon the next atomic holocaust. To-day, Humanity stands precariously poised on the edge of an abyss, or to vary the metaphor, Humanity stands to-day at the Cross-Roads of History.

The unity of the world, however, is not only, or even primarily a mechanical matter, an affair of purely technical progress. Indeed, were it so, it would already have been achieved by such agencies as the jet plane and wireless telegraphy. Contrarily, world unity is a social matter, a matter of conscious ideology not less than of mechanical technique.

To effect world unity permanently, consent and not force is the primary prerequisite. The effective creation of the United States of the World obviously presupposes a common will to unity on the part of the human species. The already ancient, but hitherto ineffective, slogan "All Men are Brothers" must be brought down from the realm of abstract idealism where it has hitherto exclusively dwelt and be made an actual part of contemporary history. For elsewhere only madness lies.

Seeing that the above represents the actual condition of our times, I regard it as a peculiarly relevant to inquire at this point how stands religion? And since we live in a nominally Christian land, how in particular stands Christianity in its capacity as a "world-religion" in relation to the so vital contemporary problem of world brotherhood?

The above question is particularly appropriate to-day, the more so as we note a new type of religious apologetic emerging from the abler minds in the camp of Christian theology. For the current tendency in "modernist" circles to-day is to sit loosely to the Bible and to the traditional creeds, and even to adopt in large measure the traditionalist conclusions of modern scientific and historical criticism towards them.

Whilst in place of trying to defend now hopelessly discredited dogmas, they take refuge in lofty generalisation about the "Fatherhood of God" and the "Brotherhood of Man," thus striking an altruistic note which has,

in addition, the advantage of seeming to place them in the progressive camp of all realistic people who to-day advocate, in one form or another, the unity of the world, with its indispensable corollary "The Brotherhood of Man."

In brief, a new "modernist" form of Christianity is now appearing which is based primarily upon the "Fatherhood of God" and the "Brotherhood of Man" which seeks to ensure Christianity a new future by allying the two concepts, the one denoting religious mythology, and the other the most urgent contemporary social reality. In this new theological alchemy, the Carpenter of Nazareth becomes the first and most successful preacher of the ideals of U.N.O. and U.N.E.S.C.O.!

It is to Freethinkers a rather serious matter that such a point of view as the above is apparently endorsed by contemporary thinkers of repute who would not usually be classed as Christians. A striking example of such endorsement was recently provided by Mr. Bertrand Russell in his current B.B.C. "Reith Lectures," when that distinguished author specifically referred to Buddhism and to Christianity as world religions which had first taught the Brotherhood of Man. A rather unexpected gift to the Churches from the author of "Why I am not a Christian."

However, let us have a look at the historical facts of the case. In the first place it can hardly be disputed that none of the known "World Religions" was founded consciously as such. Buddha, Mohammed, Zoroaster and Mani, were all national religious reformers who directed their activities towards the reform of their local cults. It was posthumous circumstances unforeseen by them which subsequently expanded their creeds from the national to the world scale. Jesus of Nazareth—or if one prefers, his impersonators—undoubtedly belonged to the same category of exclusively nationalist reformers; this fact is obvious, even from our bowdlerised Gospels. Nor more than the other religious founders did he foresee the dazzling fortune that history was to hold in store for the movement of which he was the nominal founder.

Christianity, as distinct from Christ, became, it is true, cosmopolitan. In the given historic milieu dominated by the cosmopolitan Roman Empire it could hardly have existed, much less expanded, had it not been so. After the destruction of Jerusalem there was no room for a purely Jewish sect. When Paul (or his impersonator) made the historic declaration that "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, circumcised nor uncircumcised," he spoke like a realist in a Western world united by Rome, and ensured the future of Christianity. Incidentally, it were much to be desired that some superficial Freethinkers stopped denigrating Christianity as a matter of course and occasionally admitted the social relevance of the Church. "Extremes meet" and such people are the best allies of the theologians. For an institution which, as they seem to think never had any social utility but which nevertheless managed to last for 2,000 years, would

indeed be an authentic miracle which defied every known law of history and sociology.

However, human brotherhood in Christian thought has always been exclusively Christian brotherhood. The heathen world was automatically excluded from the Divine Plan. Hence, from the moment that Christianity failed to "win" the world, it necessarily became an obstacle to human brotherhood. For it henceforth divided the world afresh into sheep and goats, Christians and Unbelievers, and so it remains to-day. Christianity makes human brotherhood impossible.

Human brotherhood will be realised. It is coming, for the alternative is too horrible to endure. But it will not be realised in, or by, the Churches. Humanity will only stand erect in human solidarity when it has finally emerged from the shadow of God.

F. A. RIDLEY.

QUESTION, ARGUMENT, REASON

THE Brains Trust; any questions? It seems childish, when questions are as carefully selected as those put up to answer them. Yet, like Puzzle Corner, and other Quiz programmes there is an inveterate appeal to children of all ages from nine to ninety.

Questions, characteristic of childish curiosity, are also a feature of primitive culture; of the childhood of the race. Some simply childish, some absurd, others fantastic; many survive in books of riddles and conundrums published for children; many are found in the evolution of religion; others in the history of philosophy. It is often said, a fool can ask more questions in five minutes than a philosopher could answer in a lifetime. But it is also said, it takes a wise man to be a fool. We need to appreciate how much depends upon the framing of a question, as well as its purpose.

Questions range from childish conundrums, such as, when is a door not a door, or which came first the chicken or the egg; onwards to modern scientific riddles that are puzzling the ingenuity of scientists. Some have an apparent profundity, like the old Greek paradoxes; such as, the All in One, the identity of opposites; or of Zeno's Achilles and the Tortoise; or his Flying Arrow. The characteristic is that of apparent unanswerability. The Ancient Sceptics' question of how, living in a world of illusion, can we be sure of anything; has its parallel in that of the Yogi, am I a butterfly dreaming I am a man or was I a man dreaming I was a butterfly.

In primitive culture it is the medicine man who knows the answers. Instead of thinking of philosophy as a search for wisdom, we need to appreciate what it developed from. In the Biblical story of the Plagues of Egypt we see a primitive practice; when Pharaoh called the magicians to demonstrate their magic. Now, whatever is demonstrable in magic ceases to be a matter of controversy, which is thus shifted into the realm of theory; while the unsuccessful magician defends himself with riddles and conundrums. The power of magic is succeeded by the force of argument; the magician, by the seer or soothsayer. It becomes question and cross-question and to put an unanswerable question is to win in controversy.

Early philosophers argued one against the other. With one arguing water, others, earth, fire, air, number, question developed into methodical argument. And it involved the wit, irony or satire of the Comedy. Such names as sceptic, cynic, sophist, as with academic, epicure and stoic, have become characteristic synonyms of age-old usage. It is said that the Socratic question

shows the need for clarity in definition, but it also shows that the way a question is put determines the answer. And the Platonic dialogues show that Sophistry is knowing all the questions and none of the answers. In demanding clarity, Plato gets away with the vaguest myth and analogy, by dumbfounding everyone with questions.

To these early philosophers, question and cross-question, this dialectic controversy, was reason. Aristotle went further in his Logic; classifying modes of argument and framing method and rules of logic. But in his Politics, advocating the study of ethics and rhetoric together with militarism; and further, in his Metaphysics, confuses matters by distinguishing between reality and actuality, with motive or will as cause or reason. Militaristic conquest involved the Stoic necessity of duty, and Epicurean pleasure, even in the pains of discipline; so that the outlook became more emotional, less intellectual; and an age of reason led to an age of faith.

With the exaggeration of rhetoric, myth and analogy, into allegory; with reason identified with the Logos; and cause with Animus; the dialectic conflict of the gods came down to earth; in manichean conflict in militaristic feudal animosities. There were abundant reasons for what Mrs. Langley Moore called an eager suspension of the intellect. Although logic continued in discussion over "pure being" and whether abstract ideas exist except as names or words, and whether truth is intuitive or derived from experience; "putting the question" in popular parlance, meant not merely cross-question, but torture.

No one knew whose turn was next; some braved Hell's torment, others wriggled intellectually. In the Renaissance a new age of reason was born. Physical science questioned metaphysical doctrine. In a quaint mixture of science and mysticism, questions came from quacks and cranks as well as orthodox thinkers. With an inversion of questions, the arguments involved are as much a heritage as the doctrines in question. Descartes', I think therefore I am, led to Locke's essay on human understanding, and Berkeley's work on the theory of vision, to his new Idealism. With God as cause, we live in a world of ideas in reason, and as ideas in the mind of God, just as the objective world exists in our minds as ideas.

In Hume's Materialism there is no self but sense impressions in habitual association, and causation is simply invariable sequence; thus questioning both innate reason and cause. In considering reason, Kant failed to discover the thing in itself or its moral equivalent, the categorical imperative. To Schopenhauer, reason is fourfold; conditions are the reason for a thing's coming into being, its composition, the reason for its being, our recognition of its form, the reason for our knowing of its being, and escape from pain, the reason for our choice of action. In dreams and insanity, the unconscious will sees what it wants. And in Nietzsche's Superman, the madness of genius, the will to power, is the reason.

Hegel's Idealism discovered an objective reason in historic conflict which reproduces the characteristic modes of argument of dialectic controversy. Any and every mode of argument is used to demonstrate the contradictions of history. History is the reason. This inversion is also seen in Dialectic Materialism, for just as Hegel found an objective reason, so the materialistic conception of history finds a subjective reason, in the motives of Marx's personifications of economic categories. Any and every mode of argument is justified in the conflict of motives. These motives are the reason.

It is one thing to put conundrums and another to find the answers. Question and cross-question was the old dialectic of the Greeks. The new dialectic, argument and counter-argument, is a new sophistry. Just as the old sophistry knew all the questions and none of the answers, demanding clarity and finding vaguery; so also, this dialectic knows all the arguments and none of the reasons, demanding logic and finding contradiction. Perhaps we should go back to question, and question the argument as reason.

H. H. PREECE.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN A PRIEST AND A DYING MAN

(Written at Vincennes prison in July, 1782; first published by Stendhal et Cie, Paris, 1927.)

(Continued from page 32)

THE PRIEST: At this rate it seems superfluous for me to talk to you of religion.

THE DYING MAN: Why not? Nothing amuses me more than the proof of the absurd degree to which men have carried sheer fanaticism and imbecility on this question. There are among these specimens of humanity some freaks which are so prodigious that the whole picture, though horrible to me, is nevertheless full of interest. Reply frankly now, and above all avoid egotism. If I were so feeble as to allow myself to be taken in by your ridiculous premises of the fabulous existence of this being who provides the necessity for religion, tell me, what form of religion would you recommend me? The fantasies of Confucius rather than the absurdities of Brahma? Should I worship the great serpent of the negroes, the star of the Peruvians or the god of Moses' armies? Which of the sects of Mahomet would you have me follow, or which of the Christian heresies might be preferable in your view? Reply carefully.

THE PRIEST: Can my reply be in doubt?

THE DYING MAN: An egotistic reply, after all.

THE PRIEST: No. In demonstrating to you my beliefs I am showing you a love equal to that I bear myself.

THE DYING MAN: Well, we both show very little love for ourselves in paying any attention to such untruths.

THE PRIEST: But who can blind himself to the miracles of our divine redeemer?

THE DYING MAN: Anyone who sees him to be the most vulgar swindler of all time and the meanest of imposters.

THE PRIEST: O gods, you hear him and you do not thunder!

THE DYING MAN: No, my friend, all is quiet, because your god—whether he represents impotence or reason or, indeed, anything else you like in a being which I admit only for the instant out of condescension for you, or if you prefer, so as to lend myself to your petty views—because this god, I repeat, if he exists, as you are mad enough to believe, is incapable of convincing us by means as ridiculous as those which your Jesus claims.

THE PRIEST: What! The prophecies, the miracles, the martyrs, are all these not proofs?

THE DYING MAN: How, in the name of good logic, do you expect me to accept as proof anything which is itself in need of proof? For prophecy to become a proof, I should need first of all to be completely convinced that it has actually been made; but since this matter is relegated to history books it can no longer impress

me any more than the other tales of history, of which three-quarters are extremely dubious. If to this I add the more than probable likelihood that such tales are only handed down to me by partisan historians. I shall, I think, be well within my rights in doubting. Furthermore, how can I be sure that this so-called prophecy was not made after the event, that it was not just the result of a perfectly simple kind of trick, such as that which deduces a happy reign when the king is just, or ice during winter. But, this being so, how can you expect prophecy to be considered a proof when it is in such grave need of proof itself? As for your miracles, they do not impress me to any greater extent. Every swindler has perpetrated one and every idiot has believed in one. To persuade me of the truth of a miracle, you would need to convince me that the happening you label in this way is absolutely contrary to the laws of nature. For it is only that which is beyond those laws which can pass as a miracle, and who knows nature closely enough to dare state at what precise point she halts or at what precise point she is transgressed? Only two things are necessary to give countenance to an alleged miracle—a mountebank and a few foolish women. Come now, do not bother to seek any different origin for *your* miracles; every new sect has produced its own, and what is stranger, has found imbeciles who will believe them. Your Jesus did nothing that Apollonius of Tyana could not have bettered, yet no one ventures to claim *him* as a god. As for your martyrs, they are certainly the weakest of all your arguments; enthusiasm and opposition will together produce them, and as long as some rival cause can offer as many as your own I shall never be in the least disposed to regard one lot as better than the other. On the contrary, I would tend to consider them both equally wretched. Ah! my friend, if it were true that the god you preach existed, would he have need of miracles, martyrs and prophecies to establish his kingdom? And if, as you say, the heart was his work, would that not be the sanctuary he should have chosen for his authority? Such authority, equitable because springing from a just god, would have been irresistibly engraved equally in all hearts, from one end of the universe to the other; and all men, united through this delicate and sensitive organ, would be united also by the homage they would pay to the god from whom they derived it. All would be able to love him, adore him and serve him in the same way, and it would become as impossible for them to misprize this god as it would be to resist the secret attraction of his cult. What do I see instead of this in the universe; as many gods as countries, as many ways of serving these gods as there are different heads or imaginations. And is this multiplicity of opinions, among which it is physically impossible for me to choose, the work, in your view, of a just god? Come now, preacher, you insult your god by presenting him to me in this manner; allow me to deny him altogether for if he exists I insult him far less by my unbelief than you by your blasphemies. Come to your senses, preacher; your Jesus is no better than Mahomet, Mahomet no better than Moses and all three no better than Confucius who did at least lay down a few good principles whilst the other three talked sheer nonsense. But in general all these people are mere impostors whose philosophy is a bad joke, who have gulled the riff-raff into believing them and who should have been judicially hanged.

Translated by SIMON WATSON-TAYLOR from the French of
D. A. F. DE SADE.

(To be concluded)

ACID DROPS

Not content to monopolise the B.B.C. for the presentation of the most primitive type of Christianity, the Churches are now straining every nerve to get hold of the Television Service—a good start having been made with Miss Dorothy Sayers' Nativity play, "He That Should Come," on the last Christmas Eve. As many technical difficulties appear to be the obstacle in televising direct from the various churches, religious leaders want a kind of permanent clerical staff—fully paid, of course—to be ready at any moment to get Jesus over to viewers every Sunday. Needless to add that they will be helped in every way by the Director General who has already given out that England is a Christian country—when it is nothing of the kind; and needless to add also there is no chance of viewing a Freethought "service" with a typical hard-hitting lecturer showing up the childish fatuities surrounding Christianity as unworthy of a civilised community. The task of Freethought is still one that must never be slackened if we want to beat the bigots.

The rumour that the Communists in China are "Christian Communists" may or may not be true; many readers will remember perhaps that that very pious Christian, General Gordon, who is rarely referred to except as a great Christian hero, was called in to put down the Taiping rebellion by the Chinese government, and a very fine job he made of it. But the fact that the rebels were Christians is generally forgotten and rarely mentioned in the notices given to Gordon in our encyclopædias. Still, there may be some Christians among the present rebel Communists.

A sigh of relief went through Christian America—at least, that part which is not Roman Catholic—when it was declared that a marriage service solemnised by the Rev. Marjo Gortner, generally dressed like Little Lord Fauntleroy and boasting of being four years of age, was declared quite legal. How could it be otherwise? He was "ordained" by the Rev. Essie Binkley West who also became God's Divine Representative when holy hands touched her shoulders. The Rev. M. Gortner regularly preaches and shrilly exhorts the adult men and women in his congregation not to "sin." It is all just too heavenly divine.

We note that the Pope recently prayed God's blessing upon the King, the Royal Family, the Government, and all the people of Britain. This is a little different from the way Henry VIII, that noble Defender of the Faith, was treated by the Pope of his day, and a little different from the way poor Anne Boleyn is still treated by Catholic journalists and writers whenever they mention her name. All the same God's blessing will have just as much effect as the Devil's curses.

Somebody must have written to the "Universe" about the "Epistle of Lentulus" from which our Tory contemporary, the "Recorder," recently published an extract describing "our Lord." It was too much for even a Catholic journal to swallow for this is the reply:—

"The supposed description of Christ in the 'Epistle of Lentulus' is valueless. It is described by Canon Arendzen as a quaint and childlike production which can be traced to the 13th or 14th century. It is an obvious fabrication."

But no doubt the "Recorder" will still quote it to show what "our Lord" really looked like.

We have no idea where the Rev. W. Elliott (the Radio Parson) gets his figures from, but we will take them as correct. He says that he can guarantee that not three children in ten can say the Lord's Prayer, not one in ten know the Ten Commandments, or two children in ten say their prayers, or know anything of the Gospels and the wonderful tales of the New Testament. That is a very poor result after all the religion that children get in schools, Churches and from the Radio, and it is quite an answer to the oft-made assertion that this is a Christian country, and a religious revival is just around the corner.

According to the "Sunday Express," thousands of letters are pouring into the Vatican from Catholics all over the world, pleading with the Pope that the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary be proclaimed an article of Faith. The fact that there is as little verifiable evidence for the B.V.M. as there is for her son, makes no difference to these "thousands of Catholics." In fact, the more preposterous a belief, the more certain are Catholics to believe it. The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, celebrated on August 15, is in commemoration of the miracle when Mary was wafted bodily up to heaven. If she did not travel faster than a jet plane, she is still on her way.

The same report adds that the tradition of infallibility "goes back to the beginning of the Christian Faith." The "Sunday Express" obviously knows the intellectual level of its readers when it tries to get away with that statement. In actual fact, the Dogma of the Pope's Infallibility was first proclaimed in 1870, and although the idea was discussed by various Councils, it does not at all go back to the beginning of Christianity. Presumably before 1870, Popes could err. We hope readers will agree with us that the great thing nowadays is to keep a sense of proportion, and we commend to the Chaplain of the House of Commons the example of his brother in the Lord, Dr. Peter Marshall, Chaplain to Congress (U.S.A.) who said: I am supposed to pray that God will guide these men, but I am too late. They already know what they are going to do. So what chance does God have? We are, however, certain that Dr. P. Marshall will not follow his comment to its logical conclusion, and give up his prayers and find a useful job; that would be too honest.

The week's tall story from the "Evening News": "In Japan the Bible is so much in demand that it has found its way into the black market, says the British and Foreign Bible Society." We understand from McCartney's "Walls Have Mouths," a book dealing with prison life, that the Bible is also in great demand in prison. The thin paper among other uses makes good cigarette paper.

According to a newspaper report there has been eight months of drought in Brazil. So the Churches got to work and from town and country pulpits, prayers for rain were brought into action. The praying, however, seems to have been overdone because the heavens opened and torrents of rain fell unceasingly. Rivers overflowed, bridges collapsed, houses were wrecked by the hundreds, and 1,200 square miles of Brazil have been devastated by floods which in some cities were nine feet deep. So far 400 dead have been recovered, and hundreds are missing. This case should knock flat all disbelievers in the efficacy of prayer.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 4s. from the Blackburn Branch N.S.S.; also, in memory of Basil S. Dixon, 5s.

K. GRIGSON (W.4).—You seem to have missed the point. "Mary's Little Lamb" by G. W. Foote, reprinted in "The Freethinker," December 26, was "writ sarcastic."

We must apologise for the misprint in "Attack on Christendom," by L. W. Smith (January 23). For "unauthoritative" read "authoritative," six lines from end of article.

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

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

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

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

SUGAR PLUMS

A last word on the N.S.S. Annual Dinner on January 29 in the Criterion Restaurant. All tickets have been sold and there have been a few disappointments. We regret that could not be avoided as we were limited to the accommodation available. We wish a very happy evening to all those who will be present.

Mr. F. A. Ridley will speak for the West London Branch N.S.S. to-day (January 30) in the Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1, on "The Shape of Things to Come." The speaker's name is sufficient guarantee for something instructive and interesting and a full house should be certain. Admission is free and the lecture begins at 7-15 p.m.

Another book on London has been written by that indefatigable Londoner, Mr. William Kent, one of our valued contributors. This time it is on "Mine Host London"—a particularly interesting account of the many foreigners who have visited the capital and recorded their impressions. Here are given many extracts from their works—and we can fancy few accounts more engrossing than those of such a variety of writers like Voltaire, Bruno, Erasmus, Karl Marx, Zola and Lenin, out of the fifty-odd chosen by Mr. Kent. London was not always praised by them and they sometimes felt it necessary to hit hard against our sins, foibles and eccentricities—or what they thought to be such. The most surprising omission is the account given by Casanova, a brilliant piece of keen observation and journalism even if it does deal with the eternal question of love. "Mine Host London" is published by Nicholson and Watson at 8s. 6d.

A POET'S SKILL

It is not often that the reader has the opportunity of studying the development of a contemporary poet. After all, it is rarely that a poet publishes his collected poems in his lifetime. This is usually done by a pious admirer after the poet's death, so that the reader can assess the importance of a writer of poetry only well after his death; though it is good for the souls of critics of literature that there are exceptions to this general rule.

The most recent example is Mr. John Gawsworth, whose "Collected Poems" (Sidgwick and Jackson; 10s. 6d.) have just appeared. Born in 1912, Mr. Gawsworth first came within my ken somewhere about 1932, when he published an interesting little booklet of love-poems entitled "Lyrics to Kingeup." He has moved a long way since then. The smooth, easy "ninetyish" style of his youth has, by degrees, become modified by the harsh contact of the modern world. Increasingly the lover who still remains the central figure of many of his lyrics, is disillusioned and cynical, less the romantic figure of the early poems. Still, the work of John Gawsworth remains the work of the typical romantic writer, as opposed to the severity of the classical writers, like Mr. T. S. Eliot.

But what, the reader may well ask, do I mean by tracing the development of the poet's work through the roughly seventeen years covered by the contents of his book? Roughly this; that the consideration of typical poems, separated by years, will soon make the reader see that the mind of the poet has moved on with the passage of time, and, possibly, with the development of what we must, for want of a better word, perforce call civilisation.

Here, then, is the first poem in the book, "The Mill," which comes from a volume originally published in 1931, when the poet was nineteen years of age:—

Turville Mill is broken,
The fabric sadly rent;
Yet stands it to betoken
Decay's slow argument.

In wind-blown dereliction
The shaking antic spars
Creak their last malediction
Against the eternal stars.

I think it is not altogether unfair to say that such a poem is a remarkable production for a youth of nineteen. There are a careful choice of words, balancing of images and play of sound, which are typical of those writers of the 'nineties which were for long Mr. Gawsworth's literary gods.

Then consider this, written (or at any rate published) in 1938:—

The grapes of thought hang heavy
Upon the vines of life,
For few men exact levy
And lighten with the knife.

Ay, few embrace philosophies,
And the world may turn for aye
Before life's tendrils know soft ease,
Thought's crop be borne away.

I think that the development must be obvious to the least percipient reader. The search for the ideal phrase is still there, but now there is a deeper thought. No longer is there merely the painting of pictures; there is a careful analysis of the idea behind the picture.

And, finally, let me quote the poem with which the book concludes. It is "Hindustan," and is dedicated to that very great Indian, Pandit Nehru. It was written in Bombay three years ago:—

How may he love who masticates
In every year sour loaves of hate?
Three spinning Women were the Fates,
Spinning *Khaddar*, early, late.

We spin it now; and what have we
But hope to shame the doubting ones?
With tolerance, of Eternity,
We wait for moons, we wait for suns.

Sometimes we think our freedoms near
And then like clouds, they veer away.
We spin and spin, contain our fear.
Disconsolate night may lead to day.

Give us, each dawn, our rightful bread,
One God, who gives us strength of Peace!
They *may* count our last martyred dead.
We *will* pray for their first release.

The development again is clear enough; and, even though Mr. Gawsworth is by no means a hundred per cent. Freethinker in the sense generally understood by readers of these columns, I think that the majority of Freethinkers will appreciate much of his work.

As a poet he has the immense merit of writing verse which is easy to understand and is not obscure, contorted, and difficult. In other words, he has not fallen in with the current fashion of writing verse in a private idiom, understandable only to the poet and his immediate circle of friends and compatriots. The absence of the private jokes and illusions which have characterised poets of the Auden school, and the equal absence of surrealist ideas, such as will be known by readers of Mr. Dylan Thomas, are, of course, negative virtues, but they are virtues which Mr. Gawsworth has always possessed. His more positive merits are that he has looked at life squarely and made up his mind where, as a poet, he stands. He is in the tradition of the great romantic poets of past ages, and his work, I am assured, will continue to be read when many of the fashionable writers of the early twentieth century are forgotten. Admittedly, he has never attempted a large work in the grand manner. He has always remained a lyric poet, perhaps in the same class as W. H. Davies. But he is still a young man, still under forty. What he may yet achieve, given reasonable conditions in the world, it is difficult to estimate. What I have given here is a sort of interim report on his work up to 1946—the date of the last poem in his new book. The war obviously speeded up his development, as it did of many writers. What the troublous conditions of the present and (one fears) the future will do to him it is not at all simple to decide. But that he will remain a romantic at heart, faced with optimistic or pessimistic developments, is certain. I, for one, shall look forward with some eagerness to whatever he may write in future; and I hope that the readers of these columns may share my interest in a man who is one of the most striking writers of the last twenty years.

JOHN ROWLAND.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN A DEMOCRACY

By L. H. Lehman and F. V. Riggs. An account of how the Catholic Church obtains money, property, and power. It includes a chart showing the proportion of religious denominations in the U.S.A. Congress. 32 pages. Price 1s. 6d., post free.

LYSENKO AND SCIENCE

BY this time most freethinkers must be fairly conversant with the details of "The Lysenko Controversy."

I think it is only fair to say that the Lysenko affair is a typical product of the conditions at present prevailing in Soviet Russia. Something similar might possibly have arisen in Nazi Germany, but in this country, or the U.S.A., such a social anachronism is hardly possible.

T. D. Lysenko, the present virtual dictator of the biological sciences in Russia, is, in the words of Prof. S. C. Harland, "a man completely ignorant of the elementary principles of genetics and plant breeding... to talk to Lysenko was like trying to explain the differential calculus to a man who did not know his twelve times table."

Lysenko has apparently ousted Vavilov (well known as one of the world's great scientists) from the post of President of the Academy of Agricultural Sciences and that of Director of the Institute of Applied Botany. Vavilov died in relative obscurity and eminently suspicious circumstances.

Those of us who do not know Russian, have to hand Lysenko's report to the Lenin Academy, translated under the title "Soviet Biology," published by "Birch Books Ltd.," price 2s. 6d.

It is not necessary to be a scientific specialist in order to realise that for a mountebank to put over this hotch-potch of pseudo-science and Communist jargon, before an English or an American scientific society would be unthinkable and impossible. To those of us who had held out to the end great hopes for the Russian Experiment, it is indeed a pitiable exhibition, to be compelled to admit that this man Lysenko, an ignorant peasant, has been the instrument—backed by the "Central Committee of the Communist Party" in Russia—to close down great institutes for biological and genetical research, and to condemn their professors and scientists to social obloquy.

We know that there are many rational minded men and women who happen to be Communists, but are they just going to sit tight and silent while this outrage upon Science has been and is being perpetrated?

On the face of it, it seems pretty evident that every form of society, religious or non-religious, must be compelled to realise, by its freethinkers, that "the price of freedom is eternal vigilance."

ROBERT F. TURNERY.

TRIUMPH OF REASON

The doom of good and evil gods was knelled
When Reason dawned, and man-like ape first kissed
His chosen mate, and recognised he held
A flint-tipped weapon in his hairy fist.

From every clime where slaves still hugged their chains
The good news crept—"The gods are old and grey!"
No voice sublime now thunders, and there reigns
No list'ning god to succour those who pray.

It's queer that God still dominates the fashions,
As "Law" as "Evolution," any dumb thing.
A Being minus body, parts, and passions,
Resembles more a Nothing than a Something.

Fair Science much credulity has banished
Adown the path that Supernature trod.
The age of the miraculous has vanished:

At last man's Reason triumphs over God!

"PIONEER."

CORRESPONDENCE

PEOPLE VERSUS FOOD

Sir,—Mr. Caulfeild is, of course, right in stressing the population problem, and right, too, in stressing the reactionary part played in this, as in so many other matters, by the Catholic Church. He might have added that Sir John Boyd Orr, who lately drew attention to the same facts over here, emphasised that the problem was made much worse by the war preparations of the Powers, which divert many millions of hands and brains from productive to destructive enterprises.

But what are we to do about it? We must beware of the one-track mind. We are in a vicious circle. The natural increase of population creates the problem of feeding it. With agriculture unscientifically organised as it is at present, and with labour and capital wasted on war and preparation for war, we cannot feed it. Not being able to feed people, we need an opium to drug them into apathy lest they should run amok. So big business supports the Catholic Church (or the Jewish Church, or the Moslem Church, or the Buddhist Church, or what-have-you, according to geography), and the Churches in return help to keep people apathetic and ignorant and incapable of any pleasure except that common to man and the rabbit. So the system perpetuates itself, like its victims!

At what end are we to tackle it?

It is no use going to Catholic, Moslem, Buddhist and Hindu peasants to sell contraceptives. The men of God will see that you don't; and big business will deny you publicity in its press. We are up against not simple ignorance, but ignorance carefully organised and guarded, like a bacterial culture, to keep the world safe for the big boys. Unless Freethinkers are content to be forever isolated on a pedestal, pluming themselves on their superiority to the common herd, they have no option but to take sides in the class struggle. It is an old saying that however many parties there are in Parliament, there are only two division lobbies. Similarly, however many opinions there are in the world, there are only two forces that cut much ice in it to-day or are likely to cut any to-morrow: on the one hand what Marx called "Christianism," i.e., big business allied with dogmatic religion, both equally interested in keeping the people poor, ignorant, pious and prolific; and on the other hand, what Tridon in the last century summed up as "in economics Communism, in politics Republicanism, in religion Atheistic Humanism." *Ni dieu ni maitre.*

Fight the class struggle, spread the message of revolt, shake off the opium habit, propagate hatred of the bosses and warmongers, and you will create an opening for pushing sane views on family limitation and similar matters that just isn't there as long as we are hampered by social conservatism and the fear of alienating rich old men with money to leave!—
Yours, etc., ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

MARX AGAIN

Sir,—I think the following should be of interest to your readers. It is taken from "The Communist Answer to the Challenge of our Time" (Thames Publications, 2s. 6d.), and is by Prof. B. Farrington.

... The attack of the Marxists on religion as the opium of the people is also misunderstood. Marx was quite right in seeing religion as something often devised and used in a reactionary sense. But when he spoke of religion as the opium of the people he meant something more subtle than people think. Opium is not something administered by somebody else, but something people crave for and take for themselves—if they can afford it. But religion is cheaper than opium. Marx was thinking of the ignorant and starving millions who hug some illusion to their hearts which could not survive modern education and standards of life. His strident words have their tender side.

Incidentally, the story of the "introduction" of opium into China is a scathing exposure of the alleged morality of capitalism.—Yours, etc., SYDNEY HARBOUR.

THE SOVIET UNION

Sir,—Your correspondent, F. H. Walker, advises a visit to Russia to see how Russians really behave. It is reputed that there are 40,000 Communists living in the United Kingdom, and it is very doubtful whether they would like to live under the Soviet Regime. If Russia is such a marvellous place why don't they flock there? There is no hope of converting England to Communism. Some years ago Sidney and Beatrice Webb visited Russia to investigate Communism at

work. The Webbs praised many things, but found "a total absence of freedom, a lack of variety and an effective and operative tyranny evidenced in the universal presence of spies. The price which would have to be paid, the total destruction of liberty; the placing of the life, livelihood and liberty of every man and woman at the disposal of State Commissars, is far too high a price for the efficiency of a cast-iron bureaucracy. It is quite certain that our people would never stand it. Even in our casual contact with members of the Communist Party, the repression of free thought and free expression was obvious. There is the physical terrorism; the trapdoor disappearance of unwanted personalities, and the ostracism and persecution of innocent but inconvenient workers."

I have been reading a book by Ingleborg Wells called "Enough, No More," published as recently as September 1948. She and her husband have left Berlin after living there for seven years, at first under the Hitler Regime, then under the Russians, and finally under the English. Evidence and proof is submitted that Soviet methods were similar to those of the Nazis, and horrible in the extreme. It was a relief when the English came.—Yours, etc.,

ALFRED D. CORRICK.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, February 1, 7 p.m.: "Voltaire and Modern Thought," Mrs. N. SPILLER.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W.1).—Monday, January 31, 7 p.m.: "Intuition and Reason." 3rd Lecture: "Structure and Mechanism of Sense-Receptors," MAURICE BURTON, D.Sc.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The New Legal Scheme," Mr. R. C. FITZGERALD, LL.B., F.R.S.A.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "The Shape of Things to Come," Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

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

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street, Room 13).—7 p.m.: "Political Problems of Germany," Mr. L. R. FLETCHER.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "Scepticism," Mr. JOSEPH GREENALD.

Glasgow Secular Society (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (7, St James Street).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: "Why We Behave Like Human Beings," Mr. S. ROBINSON.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Enemy Within," Mr. M. BADEY.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Catholicism and Politics," Miss EDITH MOORE.

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THE FREETHINKER

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THE SCAPULAR—OR WHY GO TO FATIMA ?

ON reading of the scapular, I came to the conclusion that the miracles wrought by the waters of Fatima and of Lourdes are as nought compared to those wrought by the Scapular.

The Scapular guards the wearer from all dangers. It preserves them from all sicknesses, from pests, from lightning, from dangers of drowning, from falls, from bullets and even from cudgelling. In the book entitled "Miraculous Virtues of the Scapular, Demonstrated by Cases of Protection, of Miraculous Cures," by the Rev. Padre Huguet—Saint. Didier, Paris, Lyons, Antwerp, Brussels, all these virtues are confirmed by various examples.

People who fell from very high towers remained unhurt, not even a button of their suspenders having burst, and if they had been reading their newspapers on the top of the tower they continued reading it while passing through the air, and when reaching the ground they were still found reading it with legs crossed and with their whole attitude one of unspeakable content.

Monsieur A., of Lyons, who had taken part in the insurrection of Var with his scapular round his neck, received 29 shots from a revolver, which fact was obvious from the 29 bullet holes in his coat. He, himself, was without a scratch. "It was not possible to kill him; we had to desist," said a gendarme." (Book above referred to page 21.)

At the height of a dreadful conflagration, a pious man remembered to throw his scapular on the fire. The fire was immediately quenched and in the middle of the now unwanted fire engines the scapular was found intact except—as Padre Huguet says in the work quoted—for a slight smell of singeing. (Page 17.)

A soldier in the Battle of Navara saw all his comrades being shot down around him. In the end, he was the only survivor. When the soldier was examined it was found that he had a scapular in his mouth and one under each arm. (Page 20.)

An unfortunate wishing to commit suicide threw himself four consecutive times into the sea, without the desired result. Each time the sea threw him back on the beach, obstinately refusing to submerge him. The unfortunate then remembered that he had a scapular round his neck. He removed it and left it on land. It was then and only then that the sea consented to finish him off.

Besides freeing those who wear it from all earthly dangers, the Scapular also gives complete freedom from eternal damnation. The Abbot Guglielme, author of "Collection of the Scapulars of the Immaculate Conception, of the Rosary, of Mount Carmel," etc., says decidedly on page 231 that the devils in Hell complain bitterly of the souls snatched from them by the Scapulars.

The pontifical approbation of all the Popes from John XXII to Pius IX confirms the powerful attributes of the scapular.

The Scapular of Mount Carmel has the special property of sending the wearer to Heaven on the Saturday after his death, no matter what were his crimes on earth.

The use of the Scapular is very handy as its graces and benefits carry no burden; it saves independent of confession or communion; it also does not deprive the wearer of any pleasure or vice in which he wishes to indulge; so affirms the Rev. Guglielme. The essential thing is never to take off the Scapular even when going

deliberately to sin; it is on this point that the Rev. Guglielme specially insists.

Of all the scapulars the one most recommended to the faithful is the Scapular of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as it doesn't even need to be blessed. It is sufficient to get all the indulgences if it is made according to the model approved by Our Holy Father, Pope Pius IX, which is the following: "Cut out a small piece of white flannel—the piece must be square or oblong in shape; if round, oval or polygonal it loses all its virtues—attach by applique, a heart-shaped piece cut out from red flannel. Place a piece of the same size as the white piece at the back and join with top-stitch in brown silk to imitate the Crown of Thorns; this can be accompanied by drops of blood embroidered in red silk. On a separate strip of flannel embroider these words in large letters: "Halt! The Heart of Jesus is with me."

So a man having one of these round his neck is free from all evils both in this world and in the next; he can fall from the highest of towers, throw himself into the raging sea or the devouring flames, defy the thunder and the lightning with no more risk than if he were safely home in his bed. Why take the trouble to go to Lourdes or to Fatima whose miracles pale before the power of the simple Scapular? N.P.

ATHEISM AND DOGMAS

A DISPROOF of the religious dogmas is not only logically and empirically possible, but is actually quite a trivial matter. The religious dogmas contain *twofold* propositions.

(1) Empirical statements about man-like gods, devils, angels and souls. These statements are all empirically disproved as (empirically) false by applying the principles and methods of zoology and anthropology, and the genesis of these beliefs and myths is accounted for by the psychology. (2) Analytic definition of "spirit" (God) as simultaneously having the properties of "everywhere" and of "not somewhere." This statement is logically disproved as (logically) false by logical analysis, viz., by demonstrating its incompatibility with the Axiom of Excluded Contradiction which states: There exists no Entity X, to which a Property P applies and *does not* apply. In order to cease to be nonsense and to regain meaning it has in myths, the concept "God" (spirit) must have only *one* of these contradictory properties, viz., "somewhere" (because in the absolute sense, *only* the Universe can logically have the other property "everywhere," and *only* Nothing is "not somewhere = nowhere") and then "spirit" (God) falls under the class of empirical statements and is disproved as false accordingly. So for the theologian there is no getting away from the dilemma: Either to maintain nonsense (in the technical sense of self-contradictory definitions) or to perpetuate anthropomorphic mythology! The genesis of such a nonsense like the trinity dogma, etc., is explained by the history of theology (see Turmel, *Histoire des Dogmes*).

Precisely the failure in differentiating between the above-mentioned *twofold* disproofs accounts for the stupid perpetuation of the *agnostic* muddle among men who should have been atheists—the belief that philosophy can neither prove or disprove the claimed "truth" of religious dogmas (cf. B. Russell, "History of Western Philosophy," p. 863).

GR. SMELTERS.