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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Progress Without Religion

THE charge most frequently brought against Free-thought is that it pulls down more than it builds up—an accusation that fits either Freethought or reformers in general. Both groups are far more concerned with building-up than pulling-down. There is nothing unusual in this. In a revolution it is the noise, the street fighting, the breaking of rules that attracts the most attention. The deeper aims of the revolutionists, the work of reconstruction that is attempted escapes notice. The old order shrieks at the threat of dissolution, the new can scarcely make its voice heard.

Actually the charge to which the reformers are open is that of too great a zeal for reconstruction, forgetting the difficulties in the way of effecting a radical change. People make too small allowance for the unexpected and the incalculable, both of which play a part, and often a large part, in human affairs; and they are so obsessed with the idea of reconstruction that destruction seems no more than an incident by the way. Were they less eager for reconstruction they would be more concerned over what it is that is pulled down. The two greatest "destructive" movements of modern times, the French revolution of 1789, and the Russian revolution, are strongly illustrative of this. The main figures in both movements were men who were obsessed with the idea of building a new world, and they saw this new world so clearly that many things were lost sight of. It is the manner of reconstruction that was chiefly responsible for the rash scenes that occurred.

Those who are so fearful of the consequences that will follow the disappearance of religion, argue as though human conduct was governed by a single idea, and religion is that one. But at the very utmost, religious beliefs represent a part only of the vast mass of influences that determine conduct, and when we see how largely these beliefs are dependent for their existence upon stimulation and protection, it is not likely that their relation to life can be of a very vital nature. Left alone, and subject to the play with natural things, religions wither and die. Indeed the decisive proof that religion does not exert the greatest influence over life is the fact that it tends to decay unless artificial efforts are brought to keep the gods in existence. A careful examination shows this to be the case. A profound religious conviction may be accompanied by the loftiest of ideals or by the meanest of motives. The unbeliever may be, and often is, a better man than he believes. Whenever in the business world a profession of religion is made the condition of employment, the fact is taken, not as indication of honesty, but of shrewdness, but is only a sign of bigotry. Normally, we find men and women of all creeds and no creed playing the same part in social life and exhibiting the same mixture of good and bad qualities. Religion does not provide us with the least

indication that it gives us a certainty of good character.

It has been said by some very prominent men that religious belief is no security of cleaner minds. I will take but one evidence as given by Professor Leube—one out of large numbers—he says:—

"Our alleged essential dependence upon transcendental beliefs is belied by the most common experiences of daily life. Who does not feel the absurdity of the opinion that the lavish care for a sick child by a mother is given because of a belief in God and Immortality? Are love of father and mother on the part of children, affection and serviceableness between brothers and service between brothers and sisters, straightforwardness and truthfulness between business men essentially dependent upon these beliefs? What sort of person would be the father who would announce divine punishment or reward in order to obtain the love and respect of his children? And if there are business men preserved from unrighteousness by the fear of future punishment, they are far more numerous who are determined by the threat of human law. Most of them would take their chances with heaven a hundred times before they would once with society, or perchance with the imperative voice of humanity heard in the conscience."

In whatever degree the fear may be justified in special cases, the indictment will tell. A transference of conditions may easily result in certain ill-balanced minds kicking over the traces, but in the long run, and with the mass, the deeper social needs are paramount. The fact is that men of experience do not lay great trust in religion. In fact, where there is much religion "on the carpet" most people of experience would prefer to leave religion aside. Of course, it is difficult to depict what the future will be. But we may safely assume that no change in religion can alter the fundamental facts of social life. The tragicomedy of life and death would still go on through all its variation. The glory of art and the greatness of science, the complexities, the wonders of the universe, will remain whether we believe in a god or not. Our scales of values may undergo a change, but the main principles will continue untouched. It may be taken for granted that what are called aesthetic values will not increase. The cant talk of "self-sacrifice" will die. There is no value in self-sacrifice, as such. With Christianity, it was given a very great value, first because it helped men and women to tolerate injustices, and also because Christianity pictured the world as a preparation for another life. The keynote of rationally organised life will give a better life for all.

This sketch involves an enlargement of our conception of justice and of social reform, two things lamentably weak under Christian power. There will be less time wasted on what is called philanthropic work, which often is the most harmful of all social labour. There will not be less feeling for the distressed or the unfortunate but it will be under the guide of intellect. There will be a rise in the scale of values of what one may call intellectual virtues. A very high value will be placed upon

the duty of investigation and the right of criticism, and one cannot easily over-estimate the consequences of a generation or two brought up in an atmosphere where such teachings obtain. It would mean a receptiveness to new ideas, a readiness to overhaul old institutions, a toleration of criticism such as would rapidly transform the whole mental atmosphere and with it enormously accentuate the capacity for, and the rapidity of, social progress. But we can well afford to let the future look after itself provided we deal intelligently with the present. A world without religion would be a world in which the sole ends of endeavour would be those of human betterment or human enlightenment, and probably in the end the two are one. For there is no real betterment without enlightenment, even though there may come, for a time, enlightenment without betterment. It would leave the world with all the means of intellectual and aesthetic and social enjoyment that exists now, and one may reasonably hope that it will lead to their cultivation and diffusion over the whole of society.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE APOSTLE OF THE SUPERMAN

THE remarkable personality of Friedrich Nietzsche and his constantly increasing influence have occasioned another study of his life and works. Professor H. A. Reyburn in conjunction with philological and psychological colleagues in the University of Cape Town, are the authors of this volume entitled, "Nietzsche—The Study of a Human Philosopher" (Macmillan, 1948, 21s.). Reyburn's analysis is distinctly discriminating and is entirely free from theological animus. Nietzsche is treated throughout as a philosopher of immense imaginative power, and as a splendid prose writer in a language in which few authors possess that light and delicate touch which is one of the glories of French literature. Also Nietzsche's inconsistencies are viewed as those of all other men with expanding concepts, while his failings are virtually attributable to the intermittent ailments that harassed him through his working life until the overthrow of his intellect darkened his days, when death at last released him from his sufferings and sorrows.

The child of a strictly orthodox Lutheran parsonage, his early years were spent in deeply pious surroundings. The family was loyal and patriotic and intensely proud of its alleged aristocratic ancestry. Traditional observances and social conventions were sacrosanct. Still, little Fritz had ways of his own which troubled his commonplace mother. From early childhood, the boy had decided opinions of his own importance, while he was critical and aloof, and made few friends. Eye trouble soon appeared, and this delayed his studies yet he distinguished himself at school. Even in his adolescence, Nietzsche began to question the family faith, and joy unalloyed accompanied his liberation from sterile Lutheranism. Naturally, he was sometimes guilty of boyish pranks, but on the whole he proved an exemplary pupil.

In 1864, Nietzsche and several of his school fellows were enrolled as students at Bonn University. There, the increased freedom he now enjoyed acted as a tonic. To pacify his pious mother he was enrolled as a theological student as well as that of Classics, although religious themes were promptly neglected and he was for a time enraptured with philological research. Strauss' "Life of Jesus" met with his approval,

although later he assailed in violent language the famous Biblical critic he had once acclaimed as "the incomparable Strauss."

Nietzsche soon lost interest in his once adored Bonn. He deprecated versatility while becoming its victim and much of his time was devoted to music. He removed to Leipzig and was for the moment contented. There he became acquainted with the philosophy of Schopenhauer which revolutionised his opinions. He welcomed Schopenhauer's denial of the existence of a personal God and his dismissal of the soul's immortality. The German idols of the period were Kant, Fichte and Hegel, while Schopenhauer was scarcely regarded, although he was a lucid and readable writer, while they were apt to be ponderous and obscure. Nietzsche was delighted with Schopenhauer's sparkling epigrams and phrases, and was held captive for a time.

Nietzsche was offered and accepted a Professor's chair at Basle in 1869 where he was granted considerable latitude in his method of teaching and, of this freedom, he took full advantage. At Basle he became intimate with Wagner and his unconventional household at Tischen and the undiluted praise he then lavished on the celebrated composer reads very strangely when compared with his later estimate of the author of "Parsifal." "I have found a man," once wrote the enthusiastic Nietzsche, "who reveals to me, as no other does, the image of what Schopenhauer calls the genius and who is penetrated through and through by that wonderful deep philosophy. This is no other than Richard Wagner, concerning whom you must not accept any judgment to be found in the press, in the writings of musical experts, etc. No one knows him and can judge him, for the whole world stands on a different basis and is not at home in his atmosphere. In him there rules such an unconditioned ideality, such a noble seriousness of life, that near him I feel as if I were near the divine."

The "Birth of Tragedy" was Nietzsche's first important publication, and it purposed to prove that Greek tragical drama evolved from the choral dance devoted to the worship of Dionysius. In addition to this, this work is an endeavour to reevaluate Hellenist culture, while extolling the message of Wagner. It is both mystical and paradoxical, but it foreshadows Nietzsche's later conclusions.

Several essays dealing with classical subjects which were composed by Nietzsche in the seventies of last century remained unpublished until after his death in 1900. His "Human All Too Human" is an arresting work and is well termed a gospel for free spirits, which denies freedom. Pessimism pervades its pages and as Reyburn remarks: "In spirit it is far from the optimistic rationalism of the rough, hearty, robust, positively minded freethinking man of the world, and is rather the cry of a sensitive soul, deeply interested in a life into which he cannot fully enter."

Nietzsche resigned his chair at Basle in 1879 owing to serious illness and tried to recuperate abroad. But his mind continued active, and he was oppressed by his inability to proclaim his supposedly important revelation to mankind. The few friends he valued he lost one by one through death, their marriage, or estrangement. Abnormal in several ways, his love affairs never ended felicitously and although he was constantly deploring his loneliness he sometimes deliberately sought seclusion.

The Superman emerges in "Zarathustra" in which the present human race appears past praying for. "I

teach you the Superman," he declares. "Man is something to overcome. Heaven can only come on earth, and there is no real God. The future, therefore, is called in to replace the world beyond, and if there is no God, there must be a demi-god, a hero, a Superman."

When the fourth book of Zarathustra was completed Nietzsche suffered from melancholia. Indeed, his bad health almost made him despair and chloral hydrate became his remedy for insomnia. Also, trouble with his publisher aggravated his ills, and when "Zarathustra" at last appeared it fell practically stillborn from the press. Other troubles added to his mournfulness, for he was mortified when his adored sister consented to espouse an anti-Semite, while former friends drifted away. In these trying circumstances, the highly-strung Nietzsche retired within himself. But peace was denied him, busy as he continued with his pen.

As we have seen, Nietzsche's ideal was Nature's aristocrat trained to rule the common crowd upon whose labours he rested. For he realises that there must be hewers of wood and drawers of water to perform ordinary tasks. Therefore the only practical use of religion is to keep the mob in order, while the dominant aristocracy are afforded leisure to secure their culture and maintain their sovereignty. Moreover, an insurgent multitude must not merely be restrained but positively degraded to enable a natural élite to emerge. Reyburn sums up part of "The Will to Power" as follows: "Along with the gradual degradation of the upstart rabble there must go the education of the new élite class. How the candidates for this supreme position are to be selected is not stated, but they have to be trained and disciplined for their destiny. They must be taught by creative philosophers who will practise them in self-control and accustom them to think of themselves guiltlessly and proudly as the creators of value, the ends for which society exists."

Perhaps Nietzsche's powers of invective are most plainly expressed in his stormy "Antichrist": "I call Christianity the one great curse, the one great inner depravity, the one great instinct of revenge, for which no means is poisonous, secret, subterranean, petty enough, I call it the one immortal blot on mankind." Nietzsche died in 1900, after a mental breakdown lasting more than a decade.

T. F. PALMER.

LYSENKO AND SCIENCE

MR. ROBERT F. TURNEY, in his brief review, appears to me to be most unscientific in his leaps to conclusions. Prof. Harland referred to a meeting in 1933, since when much has happened, and in any case, it was only the Professor's opinion. On our radio, most of the professors merely let themselves go in a political, prejudiced attack, and did not seriously and scientifically discuss Lysenko's statement. Freethinker, Atheist, Marxist and Communist, Prof. Haldane was the exception. The stories of the circumstances of Vavilov's death and the persecution of other scientists in the U.S.S.R. are nearly as old and notorious as some of the Christian lies.

Even if we are not scientists, there are some elementary facts we know, and can see right before our eyes if we will only look. The Soviet Union uses and encourages science more than any other State on this planet. Its unparalleled, rapid rise from backwardness to a position in the world to-day second only to the U.S.A., was based on science plus democracy. The struggle between the

old and the new has been going on all this time, so that the Soviet Government and the Communist Party now have sufficient practical results to indicate that Lysenko's theories put into practice have produced the goods and will continue to do so on a scale we never dreamed of. Sir John Boyd Orr has stated that Soviet soil scientists lead the world. Does Mr. Turney really believe the Soviet Government is going to spend enormous funds on a line which is doubtful, and so lay the country open to possible economic ruin and disaster? The capitalist press has screamed because it is well aware that the U.S.S.R., by taking this step, is going from strength to strength, and, in two or three years, will have a standard of living higher than that ever witnessed in the world before, and despite its heavy losses in the recent war.

"Science is the enemy of accident." Changes in heredity "always occur only as the result of changes in the body of the parent organism as the result of direct or indirect action of the conditions of life." "It is possible, with man's intervention, to force an animal or plant to change more quickly and in a direction desirable to man." "We cannot await favours from nature, we must wrest them from her." Those are statements of men like Michurin and Lysenko. They are statements of sense and promise. Mr. Turney conveniently did not tell us what part of Lysenko's statement was a "hotch potch of pseudo-science." Like Prof. Harland, he ridicules the statement without mentioning it.

C. A. MORRISON.

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

AT the risk of once again stirring-up a hornets' nest (thank goodness I am sting-proof!) I would like to make a few observations on that most controversial of subjects—Spiritualism.

When that word is mentioned Materialists shudder and Atheists either spew in the nearest cuspidor or just curl-up and die. Perhaps the mental picture of some senile old ladies seated in a semi-circle, with the lights dimmed, endeavouring to contact the "dear spirits" through the agency of a blowsey and perspiring "medium" is too much for them. We are all, I think, only too familiar with that pathetic and pitiful scene, the old harmonium wheezing out hymn-tunes, while credulous widows and inhibited spinsters lap up the fatuous nonsense supposedly uttered by "Little Rosie" or "Big Chief White Feather" from the Great Beyond. One cannot help thinking that if life really continues in another plane then the departed ones must be splitting their sides over such silly and childish antics. Nothing, surely, can ever be gained by these sordid displays of superstition and ignorance.

If the problem of survival is ever to be solved then we must have properly conducted experiments and tests, carried out by men of knowledge and scientific ability. By making a popular religion of Spiritualism it has become a money-grabbing racket, fattening itself on the bitter sorrows and acute mental distress of the bereaved. I can see no reason why occult research must be tied up with Christianity, or why one cannot take an intelligent interest in it without having to endure the hymn-singing and religious addresses which always accompany demonstrations of clairvoyance.

Now what is clairvoyance? Is it the gift of mind-reading? Is it a clever hoax? Or is it clear evidence and proof of human survival? Those who have seen the best mediums will dismiss any suggestion of trickery and fraud. There are, of course, many impostors, but

they are mostly among the smaller fry. Such well-known mediums as Ronald Strong and Estelle Roberts are genuinely clairvoyant—they have been tested too many times to admit of the smallest doubt. That they possess super-normal abilities is unquestionable—but is there no other explanation of their amazing powers than direct contact with those we regard as dead?

I do not know—but I want to know. And I believe we should all want to know—most of all *Freethinkers*. Do Atheists disbelieve without question merely because they fear to know the truth? I believe the most essential possession of an Atheist is an open and inquiring mind. It is only by inquiring into Christianity and other religions that one sees their foolishness. A Christian only remains a Christian so long as he does not *inquire*. We must not then deny human survival just because it has never been proved. We condemn the Christian for his dogmatism and bigotry, but by disbelieving without inquiry we are just as narrow and bigoted ourselves.

It was announced recently in the press that experiments to prove scientifically Man's survival after death are to be undertaken by an American scientist, Dr. Joseph Rhine.

By an elaborate series of tests extending over many years Dr. Rhine has discovered that there is a *non-physical* entity in each human being which gives off a mysterious energy unlike any other known to science, and which makes possible extra-sensory perception. Spiritualists, of course, will find nothing startling in this. A genuine psychic medium certainly possesses extra-sensory perception in a high degree. Distinct auras or emanations of light surrounding human beings, though invisible to the normal eye, have yet been photographed by means of infra-red rays. Also, a semi-fluid albuminous substance known as protoplasm has been produced by certain mediums under the most exacting scientific tests. This substance is regarded as the ultimate basis of physical life, from which all living organisms are formed and developed.

Hard-boiled materialists who scoff at these things and ignorantly condemn all psychic phenomena as trickery might do well to study for themselves the published reports of the Society for Psychical Research, whose business it is to examine and test by scientific methods the claims of mediums all over the world. The Society does not exist to prove that Spiritualism is a fact or to bolster up fake mediums, but rather to discover fraud where it exists and to establish the truth or falsity of all psychic manifestations.

Mere incredulity is not a sufficient excuse for wholesale condemnation: rather let us preserve an open mind and welcome investigation—especially scientific investigation.

Even if survival can be scientifically proved I see no reason at all why this should alter the case for Atheism one iota. Atheism implies non-belief in a primitive supernatural God—not because the existence of such a God has never been proved scientifically, but because it is contrary to common reason and experience. Furthermore, Atheism is definitely pledged to accept the findings of science, otherwise it can be neither progressive nor truthful.

If we subscribe to the view that what has not been proved cannot be, then we are no more intellectually advanced than our forbears in early history who, knowing nothing of modern science, would have regarded the use of telephone, radio and television as absurd and

impossible. They would have said such things could not be—but they would have been wrong. So, to-day, may not they also be wrong who regard as impossible human survival merely because it has not yet been scientifically proved?

If science *can* prove an after-life we may be quite certain it will not be the after-life of Christian teaching. There would be no angel hosts, no harp-playing or floating about in a nebulous heaven, singing anthems of praise to satisfy the conceit of an autocratic and all-powerful God.

No, It is not *Atheism* that need fear the proof of human survival—but *Christianity*. If Man survives then Christianity cannot. The childish nonsense now preached by men who should know better would be silenced for ever. If Man survives he must do so as a rational and intelligent being, going about his business in a normal manner—not as an invisible spirit-cum-bird flying about in the clouds with a golden harp tucked underneath his wing!

Spiritualists claim that death is but a change-over to a different rate of vibration, and that we do not become disembodied spirits at all, but remain as we now are and behave just as normally as we do now.

Surely, if the end of this life is utter and complete oblivion then the whole tiresome business of living seems to be rather a waste of time. But if we continue where we left off, rectifying our past mistakes and learning what we have been unable to learn in this life we might eventually become more worthy, individually and collectively, and perhaps in time discover the real meaning and purpose of existence.

There is so much useful work to be completed, so many hopes to be realised, and so many discoveries yet to be made that will eventually benefit mankind, that a continuance of existence in another sphere of life must promise a finer and nobler future than the feeding of a few earth-worms.

I recall Sir Arthur Keith's contention that even as the flame of a candle is snuffed out completely, so it must be reasonable to suppose that human life may be extinguished in the same way—entirely and for ever. But, surely, no flame—or anything else—can be completely destroyed: it merely suffers a chemical change into some other form such as smoke, gas, soot, ash or liquid. We know that the human body changes its form when its physical substance decays at death—but it does not dissolve into *nothing*: the solids, liquids and gases still remain. But what becomes of the *life-force* that once animated the physical body? As yet we do not know, but we have no reason to suppose that it is completely destroyed. If *matter* cannot be destroyed, then it is even less likely that a *force* can be destroyed.

Does this life-force continue to operate in some changed condition when released from its physical container? That question is as yet unanswered—but will it always remain so?

W. H. WOOD.

RELIGIOUS FORGERY

In the fourth and the following centuries a monstrous literature of saints, miracles and martyrs was fabricated. Writers like Lactantius and Eusebius adorned Christian history with myths, and Popes began to derive authority from fraudulent decrees or canons of Councils. . . . Under this mass of forgeries the power of the mediæval Church was based.—“A Rationalist Encyclopedia,” J. McCabe.

THE CONCEPT OF FREEDOM

IT is, I think, true to say that the majority of Atheists and Rationalists are determinists and to such men the Existentialists' insistence on man as a free, responsible individual will constitute a stumbling block to the sympathetic consideration of their philosophies. From the earliest days of philosophy the problem of freedom has tormented the bewildered man striving to understand himself and the world in which he lives, and the importance of our decision upon this problem is manifest when we consider that upon our decision hinges the possibility or impossibility of formulating ethical criteria and judgments.

The strength of the determinist case appears overwhelming when we reflect upon our past experience and consider our actions: we can trace the influence of circumstances in shaping our "decisions," the predominance of one motive over all the rest. The determinist can also appeal to the scientific method which searches for the causes of the events we observe, treating those causes in their turn as effects of some other cause and so on. We must also keep in mind the probable effect upon the Atheist or Rationalist of the fact that Science has been the traditional opponent of Theology, and the opposition of Scientific determinism to the Theological idea of Free-Will posited to explain the "sinful nature" of man. But we shall have cause later to examine whether we can, with any justification, extend the conclusions of science on this point to a sphere which lies outside its method.

Certain modern exponents of the theory of Free-Will have attempted to show that science is not really deterministic and have seized upon recent developments of modern science, i.e., the principle of indeterminacy, to bolster up their case. As Jean Wahl* points out, "... it is unnecessary, as well as somewhat questionable, in order to preserve freedom, to have recourse to the more recent discoveries of physics and to revive the doctrines of Epicurus and Lucretius, who compared the movements of the Human will to those of the atoms." It is, however, pertinent to remind ourselves at this juncture, that science does not constitute the whole sphere of human knowledge, nor is it the only fruitful method of investigation. There are spheres (i.e., the inner activities of human life, thoughts, feelings and emotions) which science cannot study. The actions of a physical object in a given set of circumstances can be predicted, but not those of an individual human being. Granted the movements of a crowd can sometimes be foreseen, but such prognostications are only statistical and tell us nothing of how specific individuals will act. In any consideration involving human beings we must not make the mistake of trying to deal with them solely as physical entities. Man is something more than a mere physical object; he does not merely respond to his environment or his inherited tendencies but he also acts upon or against them. He tries to modify his environment and to resist those tendencies within himself which he esteems harmful. Man has a *spiritual* side to his nature—and here I am using the term "spiritual" with no theological connotations—I use it merely to differentiate between two aspects of human existence, the physical and that which is not physical.

Here I will break off for a moment to review what I already said. I have stressed the strength of the case for determinism and have mentioned the support it appears to receive from science. But I have also mentioned the limitations of the scientific method and have asserted a

dichotomy in human nature of the spiritual and the physical—a dichotomy which I know many of my readers will not admit—unfortunately I cannot substantiate my assertion in this article but it is a theme to which I hope to return in a future article. All I can say here is that even monistic philosophers recognise the existence of such a dichotomy, but attempt either to negate it or else to explain one of the factors in terms of the other.

We are now in a position to consider the meaning of the term freedom for the existing, human individual. The first point which is obvious, is that man is not completely free—we must not posit an "Either/Or" where one does not exist. We cannot say "either wholly determined/on wholly free." The one alternative is as ridiculous as the other. Limits do exist. I cannot transcend the limitations of space and time, I cannot walk through a brick wall, however much I may wish to do so; implicit in every situation are the "immovable fixtures," the situation limits. But we must not go to the other extreme and postulate only the limits—granted that the limits do exist, what is it that is limited? We may here use the analogy of a prisoner within his cell. His movement is limited, but within the confines of his cell he is permitted a certain degree of movement. Similarly, within our own particular situation, we have limits imposed upon us but nevertheless we are still permitted some degree of choice.

Let us now revert to the consideration of our past experience. I said at the beginning of my article that when we review our past action we can see the determining effect of one set of circumstances or motives over all the rest, a point which exponents of determinism have not failed to emphasise. But do not forget that in so assessing the relative values of our motives, we are, as it were, "judging at a distance"—*evaluating in the light of subsequent experience*. Furthermore, we have only succeeded in raising a new problem—why was such a motive dominant? And who chose to regard it as dominant?

For the existentialist philosopher, freedom is regarded as the dynamic of existence, destroy the concept of freedom and human life becomes meaningless; throw the concept overboard and along with it go ethics, judgments and values; any philosophy which rejects the possibility of freedom becomes nihilistic. What values can be attached to the actions of a being who is merely reacting to the stimuli of his environment and inherited tendencies? How can the actions of such an individual be judged to be either praiseworthy or blameworthy? Yet even determinists condemn that which they believe to be wrong.

Probably the most important objection to those who deny human freedom is the fundamental consciousness of being able to choose. Explain this consciousness away as being an illusion and we are faced with the problem "Why not explain away all our fundamental impressions as being nothing more than illusions?" Even the consciousness of the existence of an outside world is, in the last analysis, of the same order as my consciousness of being able to choose. It is merely a fundamental awareness which all men share. We do possess certain fundamental ideas about which it is impossible to argue, but of the truth of which we are quite convinced. I have cited the existence of a world outside ourselves as an example of such an idea. I submit that the concept of freedom is another such idea and is a concept which must find a place in any philosophy which is to avoid nihilism—or to avoid negating itself.

* Jean Wahl, "The Philosopher's Way." Page 123.

ACID DROPS

The "Daily Express" recently discovered from a questionnaire on religion that "young men are the most atheistic of all; almost every other one believes there is no God . . . but with increasing years there is a gradual change in this viewpoint." We have always tried our damndest to discover these young Atheists; in general, those who do discuss it claim that they are not, or have never been, "Atheists," but "Agnostics." And further discussion has proved that these Agnostics knew literally nothing about even Agnosticism. What they meant to say was, not that they were Agnostics, but were ignoramuses, and a minute's talk with them proved that almost all they knew about religion was that Christians believed vaguely in Jesus Christ and miracles; but why or how or what, was utterly beyond their ken. These young "Atheists" were far keener on football pools . . .

On the other hand, when they grew older and got married, it is quite true that they often went to church—to please the wife or her mother or both; yet again, this did not make them Christians, only that their belief was contained in the well-known formula—"Of course, there must be something!" And that is all that is meant by "a gradual change of view'point." The rule can be definitely stated, once an instructed Atheist, almost always an Atheist.

We have referred more than once to the notorious forgery of "the Letter sent by Publius Lentulus to Tiberius" describing the "Son of God," but, as is well known, once a good Christian lie gets properly going, one can never catch up with it. A correspondent sends us, for example, a cutting from the "Cape Times," for December 24, 1948, which is, we understand, a reputable journal; it contains an article by "a South African ex-soldier" describing a visit to the Vatican. There it was that he saw this marvellous "Letter" and he quotes it as if there was not the slightest doubt as to its authenticity. It is astonishing how thoroughly credulous even a South African soldier can become when he visits the Vatican.

We can only repeat again that this "Letter" is an impudent forgery, perhaps of the 13th or 14th century; and that the Roman Church has long since given it up as such. For proof, let anybody read the Catholic Encyclopedia. It is such an obvious fraud that any serious discussion about it is a mere waste of time. That is why—we beg to inform our kind correspondent—it has not been referred to for many years in these columns.

Water from the miraculous well at Fatima, which the Bishop of Leiria ordered to be dug at a spot where water could not possibly be expected—hence its miraculous virtue—will be sent free. Just send your name and address, and a donation. Numerous cures are claimed, including spiritual conversion (?). Full directions are sent with each container. Very economical, as it is used drop by drop for nine days, together with a "child-like trust in our Lady." Fantasy? Oh no, this is an advertisement, and presumably many gallons have reached the U.S.A. So send your orders to the Shrine of St. Anthony, U.S.A., and not to the "Freethinker" office.

We have been informed by an Oxford reader of "The Freethinker" that High Mass was celebrated in honour of "Saint Charles," the Royal Martyr, on January 30, at St. Magdalen's (pronounced, we believe,

"Maudlin"). That one of the last "Kings by Divine Right" should still evoke such adulation 300 years after his death is an indication of the extent to which orthodox history can give a misleading picture of this political tyrant. The best comment we can think of is the recent article by F. A. Ridley in the "Freethinker."

The marriage of Mr. Tyrone Power, and the fact that he has been received by the Pope, is still worrying a good many Catholics who are by no means convinced that a marriage in a registry office is not a marriage—in spite of the Church. The "Universe" has to point out that if "our Lord" received penitent sinners, surely the Pope can do so as "our Lord's" representative. And in any case, did not Jesus give the world the Parable of the Prodigal Son? And, finally, did not "our Lord" welcome sinners "at the altar rails"? It is all very beautiful, and we congratulate the Church on always proving that it is right—with God's help. Yet there are Catholics who still are completely bewildered! Oh, ye people of little faith!

"Misery Martin," the Lord's Day dictator, must be feeling quite important these days. A National Conference at Hastings has suggested that the Home Secretary should approach the Lord's Day Observance Society to ask them not to interfere with "live Sunday entertainments." The suggestion that the Home Secretary should approach (apparently) cap in hand, to ask a favour of a minority of "Holy Willies" is too grotesque but in these days when politicians defer to potential voters, it is quite possible. How long are we going to be dictated to as to how we shall spend our Sundays rests entirely on us.

The condition of things in Germany last Christmas for our young serving soldiers there has already been referred to in these columns from letters sent to the "Church Times." It was only to be expected that strong denials would be given but the original letter has been confirmed, and has now been extended by the writer. Here are some relevant extracts:—

"I wish to say that my statements on insobriety in the barracks over the Christmas holidays were neither false nor exaggerated. Large numbers of the men were drunk including N.C.O.s and officers. . . My barracks block literally stank as the result of the men vomiting. . . the level of sexual morality is very much lower than among troops in the U.K., and the incidence of venereal disease is still considerable. . ."

Another soldier in the same unit declares:—

"I was sickened to see fully-grown men, the majority of whom were drunk, staggering and vomiting. . . my duties over Christmas gave me knowledge of various acts of hooliganism, one of which was the wanton destruction of all that was breakable in one of the barrack rooms. . . no disciplinary action was taken against them. . ."

How perfectly divine are the teachings of true religion, especially at Christmas!

A question disturbing the Roman Church is whether excavations now taking place in St. Peter's Basilica will discover the tomb of St. Peter. So far, according to "The Times," those working have been pledged to silence—but surely the tomb will be found intact with all the necessary evidence if the Vatican thinks the time is ripe for such a discovery? There is no more evidence for the existence of Peter than for Paul, or any of the dozen satellites called the "apostles." They are all myths, but they have proved a source of great wealth and power for the Church, and as such will be defended for many years to come.

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

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

A RATIONALIST ENCYCLOPEDIA

3.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

HEBER ROCHE (Canada).—Passing the "Freethinker" on to friends is a good way of helping the Cause.

F. H. WALKER.—The "Freethinker" has no Party Line. As we have so often stressed, we publish opinions of all shades, leaving it to the intelligence of the reader to sort the "wheat from the chaff."

A. BRIGANT.—Back numbers of the "Freethinker" are always welcome for re-distribution.

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

There is just time for this last reminder of the Brains Trust to take place in the Town Hall, Stratford Broadway, London, E., on February 24: full details appear on another page of this issue.

We have recently received complaints from readers of the "Freethinker," that they have had difficulty in ordering copies from their newsagents, either for their friends, or because of their moving to another district. Now that our paper quota has increased, there should be no difficulty whatever in obtaining extra copies. A subscription can be taken out and the "Freethinker" will be sent every week from this office. We prefer, however, that readers should get their paper from newsagents. Should any newsagent make any difficulties, readers are asked to send his name and address. A gentle hint to transfer one's custom will often have the desired effect. Do not be put off with excuses that there are not enough copies to go round.

The detective stories of Mr. John Rowland (one of our esteemed contributors) are well known to readers who enjoy that type of literature, and we are pleased to recommend his latest, "The Orange-Tree Mystery" (Herbert Jenkins; 8s. 6d.), which is as exciting and as readable as its several predecessors. It also has had the honour of recommendation in the B.B.C. "Bookshelf" Programme, which is in itself sufficient indication that it will have an appeal to a wide public.

The debate on Atheism v Christianity between Mrs. Ruby Ta'Bois and the Rev. H. J. L. Hunter aroused considerable interest in the Woodford, Essex, district. The Parish Church gymnasium was crowded, and from reports Mrs. Ta'Bois put up a very good show. Mrs. Ta'Bois wields an active pen and tongue on behalf of Freethought and we congratulate her on the part she played in the debate.

A GREAT deal more can be said on the problem of Tacitus and its relation to the Christ myth than can be got into one article, and I hope one day to go more fully into it. But what I have already said is enough to prove that it cannot be dismissed in the airy way Mr. McCabe does in his "Encyclopedia" by getting Dr. Conybeare to hold the baby, so to speak. Not only the English writer, W. G. Ross, in his "Tacitus and Bracciolini" assailed the genuineness of the "Annals" with some weighty arguments but also the Frenchman Hochart in a number of works. In addition, Prof. W. B. Smith gave in his "Ecce Deus" more arguments against the authenticity of the passage about Nero and the Christians (or "Christians") and the so-called replies to these writers are too contemptible for words. It is true that the English editor of Tacitus, H. Furneaux, gives what he considers a sufficient reply to the sceptics in his Introduction; but nowhere does he deal with Ross or Hochart in the editions I have consulted. On the contrary, he sends inquirers to the "Edinburgh Review" for a reply to Ross.

Let us now look at the second wonderful argument used so often by defenders of the man Jesus. It is that the Jews never denied his historicity.

Years before I had read either Robert Taylor or J. M. Robertson, I bought a small volume entitled "The Christian Fathers," edited by the Rev. E. Bickersteth. It deals with Clement, Iginus, Polycarp, Justin and other Fathers, with either selections from their works, or the works given in full. The "Dialogue with Trypho" is given in full, translated by Henry Browne, and I saw for the first time the passage in which Trypho the Jew, as reported by a Christian, clearly and unequivocally tells Justin that he "formed for himself an imaginary Christ." But I had better give the passage in case some reader has not read it. This is Browne's translation:—

"But Christ, if he is come, and is anywhere, is unknown, nor doth he know himself, nor can he be endued with any power, till Elias shall come and anoint him, and make him manifest to all men. But you, having got an idle story by the end, do form to yourself an imaginary Christ . . ."

I assert here, as strongly as I can, that if Trypho had known of the story of Jesus Christ as reported in the Gospels, he could never have spoken thus. Did he know nothing of the Crucifixion, and the turmoil that followed that event, according to Acts? Why, he even twits Justin: "Prove now that that fellow who *you say* was crucified and is gone up to heaven is the Christ of God." How could he use the words "*you say* was crucified" if there really had been a Jesus crucified? If the story of the Crucifixion was true, Trypho must have known that thousands of Jews had gone over to the "suffering Messiah," and he must have known that Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and all the Apostles preached "Christ crucified." And nothing confirmed to my mind the utter non-historicity of Jesus as much as these words of Trypho; for if a Jew, only 100 years or so after the Crucifixion, could argue in this way, it proved—to me at any rate—that there were Jews who denied the story of a real Jesus.

Faced with this passage, those Rationalists who believe that there was a real Jesus have moved—almost literally—heaven and earth to destroy it. They know it is one of the most conclusive proofs that Jesus is a myth. We are blandly told that this "Christ" of Trypho is not, of course, Jesus Christ, but some other Christ or "Messiah."

If that is not good enough, then naturally the translation is a bad one, or quite incorrect, and a new one must be provided which can be twisted to mean anything. Let me give the most notorious example.

In his "Witnesses to the Historicity of Jesus," Prof. Arthur Drews quotes the relevant sentences: "Ye follow an empty rumour and make a Christ for yourself . . . If he was born and lived somewhere, he is entirely unknown."

The hysterical Conybeare in his "Historical Christ" almost foams at the mouth when he deals with it, and Drews. And Mr. McCabe, in his article on Jesus, calmly tells us,

"Dr. Drews says that the apologist Justin makes his (fictitious) Jew Trypho question if there had ever been such a person, but Drews wrongly translates the passage which is given correctly in Conybeare's *Historical Christ*."

The reader should first note that the passage was given by Drews, not in *English*, but in *German*, and that this translation was made by Mr. McCabe himself. Drews either translated the original Greek of Justin, or used the current—and in that case, the orthodox—translation of Justin in German. As I have neither before me, I cannot say which he used; but if "Drews wrongly translated the passage" as Mr. McCabe contends, it was his duty, as translator, to append a note to that effect. He did not do so, and I consider this is the grossest negligence on his part. To wait 31 years before telling Rationalists that the passage in Drews is wrongly translated (in English)—and it is his own translation—is not what one would expect from a Rationalist with the reputation of Mr. McCabe.

But is the passage wrongly translated? Here it is as given in the very orthodox "Ante-Nicene Library of the Fathers":—

"But Christ—if he has indeed been born and exists anywhere—is unknown . . . and you, having accepted a groundless report, invent a Christ for yourselves . . ."

I have now given three translations and as far as words have any meaning, I claim that they are all in agreement. Trypho clearly says that Christians have "invented" a Christ for themselves, or "do form to yourself an imaginary Christ" as Browne puts it; or as Drews says, "Ye follow an empty rumour and make a Christ for yourself." One has to be a very reverent Rationalist to see any difference.

But we are told that Conybeare gives the correct translation. Here it is:—

"But Messiah (or Christ) even supposing he has come into being and exists somewhere or other is *unrecognized* . . . But you (Christians) having lent ear to a vain report feign a sort of Messiah unto yourselves . . ."

I suppose Conybeare must have rubbed his hands with glee when the word "feign" suddenly struck him; but all I need add here—it hardly seems worth while discussing it further—is that for me (and I'm sure the majority of readers) there is no difference between "following a groundless report" and "lent ear to a vain report," or "feign a sort of Messiah" and "invent a Christ for yourselves." I find it almost incredible that Mr. McCabe sees any genuine difference.

The only other point worth noting is, however, that Conybeare looks upon the passage as having "exactly the opposite bearing to what Drews imagines"—meaning that Trypho can now be cited as proving that there

really was an "Historical Christ." I have read a good deal of balderdash from Christians in my time, but that seems to be the biggest piece of utter rubbish I have ever come across. Whether there was a Jesus or not may well be a subject for serious discussion, but the Conybeare twaddle will get us nowhere.

Apart from the article on Jesus (or rather a portion of it) I have nothing but praise for most of this "Rationalist Encyclopedia." It is a splendid work for Freethinkers to have on their shelves, and can be confidently consulted on a large number of the problems we have to face. But—I hate to use this word—but I hope that in a future edition a few corrections will be made. Mr. McCabe surely knew that the author of "Mademoiselle de Maupin" was not Guy de Maupassant and that Soloviev's "A Modern Priestess of Isis" was written after Mme. Blavatsky's death—in 1895, not 1875. Of course, in such a huge work it is not surprising if a few errors of this kind creep in; but there is no excuse for the omission of Robert Blatchford, who did a thousand times more for Freethought than a good many of the Theists and very reverent Rationalists who get a large place in the "Encyclopedia." And the same can be said for Gerald Massey, who seems to have got as little appreciation of his splendid work as Robert Taylor—or even less. Massey looked upon Jesus as a myth just as Taylor did—which accounts, perhaps, for the way he has been deliberately neglected. His six volumes on Egypt are a monument of fine scholarship. Again, why should the quotations in Godfrey Higgins' "Anacalypsis" be "better verified before us?" Apart altogether from the fact that the two huge volumes of this work are extremely scarce, or very expensive to buy, and therefore not likely to be used much by modern Freethinkers, Higgins was particularly careful in his quotations, and took immense care to verify everything for himself. But as I have already pointed out, Mr. McCabe could not easily be quite impartial.

The printing and general get-up of the "Encyclopedia" is excellent and it should have a well-deserved sale.

H. CUTNER.

SOCRATES REVISITS ATHENS

THE boss called me into his office. He said there was one of those national heroes, a fellow named Socrates, returned to the city of his crimes after being dead in Hades these three thousand years. Yes, I said, I had heard of him, trying to put as much contempt in my voice at his lack of education as I could.

"Go and get his impressions of modern Athens," said the boss, unaffected by my manner, "if he ain't speechless with wonder."

So I sought the old man out. I found him sitting in a disreputable café in the poorer quarters round the Acropolis, drinking ouzo.

"Good morning, Mr. Socrates," I said, approaching him respectfully. "I'd like to know what you think of our Athens after your long sojourn in Hades?"

"Well," replied the old man slowly, "I don't see any great changes since I was last here."

"No changes!" I exclaimed. "Oh, come now, you must see a vast difference between the vill—, the Athens of your day and our great modern city with its teeming millions." I admit I overdid it a bit, but the old geezer's air of indifference riled me.

"Yes, yes," returned the ancient in his slow way. "it's bigger, to be sure, and you have all these gudgets for getting about and doing things, all to little purpose."

it seems to me; but I don't notice that the habits of people have changed much. Your government seems to show the same indifference for the common people and the same purblind dislike of new ideas."

"At least," I answered, nettled, "you must admit we have preserved the grand tradition of democracy, which your generation handed down to us."

"Can't see it," retorted the sage. "As a matter of fact the grand tradition of democracy, as you call it, was a bit of myth even in my day. Perhaps you recall a trivial incident that happened to me and which led to my arriving in Hades a bit before my proper time."

"Of course we remember it," I responded warmly. "It is inscribed in the most glorious annals of our long and distinguished history. In fact, we think you get a raw deal, chief."

"Don't see why you should," retorted the old 'un surprisingly, as he looked penetratingly at me from underneath his hoary eyebrows. "It'd be the same to-day, except that I wouldn't be opening a vein and dying in the comparative comfort of a hot bath. Your methods nowadays are considerably rougher, not to mention the water shortage there is in Athens."

"To-day," I declaimed rhetorically, ignoring his last remarks which struck me as not in the best of taste. "we should acclaim you a national hero. You wouldn't have to fear you would be hailed before a court and condemned for your ethical principles."

"But that's just what your courts do, and your prisons are full of people whose ideas aren't quite to the liking of your government."

The old fool was getting under my skin. "Not at all," I retorted with some heat. "those people are in jail because they are a danger to the State."

"Is that so?" he queried with sarcasm. "They seduce our young men into joining their rebel gangs and have even taken to kidnapping our children, to bring them up in their beastly and disloyal ideas."

"Corrupting the youth, eh?"

"I'll say they are."

"Just the same old charge as they brought against me," sighed the seer of yore. "So you do still throw men into gaol for their ideas, eh?"

"Naturally we don't permit," I responded sententiously, "that people shall attack the fundamentals of the State."

"And why not?" demanded Socrates unexpectedly, "if they think those fundamentals unsound."

"Why not?" I repeated, somewhat at a loss. "Well I don't really know. But it's not done even in Russia."

"Never heard of the place," retorted this wiseacre of the ancients. "And do you find you can keep things quiet and unco-dory with all this suppression?"

"Well, not altogether," I admitted. "In fact just at present we're having a spot of bother with recalcitrant political parties, who stir up rebellion and are trying to upset the government."

"Isn't that what political parties are for—to try and set a change of government?"

"Not in times of national emergency," I replied firmly. "We consider that all parties should get together, in times such as these, on a common policy."

"In that case why have different parties if they're all to have the same policy?"

"Oh you must have. Otherwise it wouldn't look democratic. It'd be totalitarian."

"That's a new one on me," commented the sage.

"And what do you do with these fellows who try and upset your government?"

"Oh, we execute 'em or send 'em into exile."

"Just like old times," murmured this old timer.

"No, young man, I don't see much change in Athens."

"What you don't realise, Socrates," I answered defensively, "is that we've had a lot of trouble, in Macedonia, in the Peloponnese, in fact all over the country—all bolstered up by Russian gold."

"More and more like our day," said the millenarian, nodding his head in mournful satisfaction. "Why, Thebes, Euboea or somebody was always on the other side in our scrap with the Persians. And, ah! Persian gold! How we all scrambled for it when we were having a go at each other. Then we had that do with the Spartans in which, you may recall, young man, if you still read history, we got the worst of it. Finally the Macedonians came down and ended by smashing the lot of us. No, I don't see much change in Athens."

I looked the old codger in the eye. "Say, Socks, old boy," I observed, "that was a bit after *your* time, wasn't it?"

"That's so," answered the corrupter of classic morals, quite unperturbed. "but we've got a good news service in Hades, you know. And now, with the radio . . . and lately some new announcers have come down—from Germany. Very good they are, too."

"Yes, I guess I know who you're referring to," I answered drily. "Well, they seem to have taught you something, Sockie, at any rate," I added nastily.

"Yes, we die and learn in Hades, which is more than you, living, do apparently."

"Well, well, perhaps you were best off, down there in Hades. Soek, old lad. How long do you propose to honour our city with your distinguished presence?"

"Not longer than I can help young man," returned the sage. "There's nothing new to be seen in Athens anyway, and if I stay much longer your police will be rounding me up with the next batch of rebels. I don't want to go through all that performance again."

"Perhaps you're right, old wisecracker. You certainly read better in the school textbooks than you sound to me here. But then I'm no Plato."

"Nobody would accuse *you* of that, young man. Well, I must be getting along. If I stop nattering with you any longer I shall be late for the football match. You can pay for my drinks, now you're here," with that the old man got up and began to move away.

"I'll see you get a copy of our paper with the interview in," I called after him.

Muttering something about our paper which I couldn't catch but which sounded rude, Socrates disappeared round the corner.

P. C. KING.

DEATH OF THE CARDINAL PATRIARCH OF LISBON—OR, HOW SAINTS ARE MADE

YESTERDAY at 2 p.m. in the abandoned monastery of the Monks of St. Augustine, the scene which I am about to relate took place.

In a great salon with its two French windows open to the sun, and adjoining the bedroom of His Lordship the Cardinal Bishop of Lisbon, lay the body on a great table turned towards the light. It was the remains of the Prelate Dom Ignatius de Nascimento, who died on the previous day from softening of the brain, 71 years of age, 12 of which were spent in the administration of the Diocese.

The doctors had arrived at 9 a.m. to embalm the body which the Master of Ceremonies and two other clergy-

men, assisted by two of the dead bishop's attendants, had previously washed in wine, water and aromatic herbs.

The embalming was carried out by Drs. Brandao, Barbosa and Baldi, and the method employed was that of Suequet.

The cheeks having been injected externally through the carotid arteries with a solution of sulphate of ammonia tinged carmine, the right carotid artery was struck and the injection of the arterial system was carried out with 6 litres of a solution of chloride of zinc, the suffusion being spaced at intervals of 5 to 10 minutes and continued till the liquid bubbled out through the nose of the corpse.

As the pasty face of the Bishop, newly shaved and with his white hair cut close in preparation for the tomb, still presented a livid aspect in spite of the coloured ammoniac injections the Master of Ceremonies, moved by a sinister coquetry, painted them red with rouge bought at the *Perfumaria Lubin*, furnisher to the Grand Opera Company. The colour was subtly applied with the point of the finger to the cheeks and the lips of the venerable Prelate.

After wrapping the stomach in lengths of English cotton, sewed and arranged in line with carotid arteries, strips of cere-cloth were pasted over the scabs which infested certain parts of the bishop's body, the mouth and nostrils of the defunct were stuffed with cotton wool powdered with quino and the ceremony of investment began.

The doctors now ordered that the door should be opened to give a strong current of air which would blow away the heavy smell of the balsams. The clergymen, the attendants and the Doctor of Anatomy placed their hats on their heads.

"Lift him up straight from the waist I want to put on his shirt," said a voice.

His vestments had been laid out over the wonderfully rare pieces of furniture in the apartment. His socks and shoes on a chair: his mitre and gloves on the table by the open jars of acids, of chlorides, of herbal waters: the pastoral staff at the side of the basin of water in which the operators had washed their hands and their bistoury knives, the quino powder spilled all around, the great Moliere's syringe of the injections, and two lighted wax candles.

The corpse, was now lifted up by the armpits to be vested in the alb. The face, with the chin hanging down on the chest had taken on a very inconvenient sulky expression. Each time the head fell back on the board which had been placed underneath to keep it in a horizontal position, an impatient hand righted it.

A dazzling beam of light from the sky, immaculate, profound and of an intense blue, exalted by the aquatic reflections of the Tagus, beat gaily on the shrunken form. At the other side of the river could be seen the Bay of Alfeite and the hill, covered with soft green grass at the side of which shone the white palpitating wings of a mill, slowly a yacht with shining sails clove through the glassy surface of the water.

The Bishop now robed in the alb tied with a silken girdle, the clergy were about to place the stole round his neck, when one of the Bishop's attendants wisely remembered that the chasuble was missing. Prelates did not put their vestments over the alb: that was a procedure for the lower clergy. The chasuble is a liturgical robe exclusive to the princes of the Church.

"Where the devil have you people put the chasuble!" bawled one of the priests.

Meanwhile the others were putting the yellow gloves on the old hands knotted by age and blackened by death, while the priest with his biretta on the back of his head, pushed his right hand in and out amongst the bed clothes in search of the chasuble while with the left he held the Ritual in which was to be found written in red and black print the Latin which had to be chanted as each vestment was put on the Bishop.

"It is wonderful weather for the crops," said one of the attendants respectfully addressing the Doctor of Anatomy, who had remained to help.

"Wonderful weather," answered the other, glancing through the window at the first swallow of the season which was circling round the window.

On placing the mitre, it was found to be too large and one and all gave his opinion on how the difficulty was to be met. The brim fell down over the face and the two points on top fell in one against the other as if they too were dead. The Doctor of Anatomy rushed forward: "Give me some tow and I'll arrange this."

The tow was procured from the man who was arranging the coffin at the side of the room.

The Doctor of Anatomy filling the mitre as if he were stuffing an animal, for the museum, pulled and pushed it into shape, embalmed it so to speak, as he had its owner.

"It was God himself who sent this man to help us," said one of the priests. "When His Eminence Dom Manuel died they sent us some fools who were no good."

Finally the body of the Bishop duly dressed for the grave bandaged, stiffened, the feet in the Pontifical sandals placed close together, with yellow chasuble, Metropolitan Palio (ornament of white flannel with black crosses conceded by the Pope to certain prelates) the Pastoral Staff, the eyes closed, the arms crossed over the breast; there was a jovial sense of relief amongst all the helpers.

"What a dandy he looks!" exclaimed one priest.

Then the Doctor of Anatomy, the priests and the assistants after washing their hands went off to dine.

And it is so adorned, richly dressed and sealed, that the departed dignitaries of the Church are launched into the mysterious silence of eternity.*

Translated from the Portuguese of Ramalho Ortigao by N.F.

* Compare the funeral of the pauper who is taken to the cemetery in a hired coffin, the body taken out and thrown into the "Vale Commun" on to a heap of other bodies and the coffin taken back for its next cargo.—N.F.

MUDDLED THINKING

The Bishop of Liverpool has been writing on the divorce problem and how, if you sin, there is always Christ to give you the gift of a new start and forgiveness. It has all been said more or less as beautifully or just as stupidly—it depends on what one thinks of the Church's paper God—before, but it has always gone down well with the unthinking, and it has raked in the shekels for the Church and its bishops. The "Church Times" feels it is its duty to say, "What perturbs us, however, is the Bishop's muddled thinking on the subject of repentance." A live Bishop, the Bishop of Liverpool guilty of "muddled thinking!" Whatever are we coming to! Obviously, there is no need for us to comment on the muddled thinking if it cannot be swallowed by the "Church Times."

CORRESPONDENCE

A CHRISTIAN RATIONALIST

Sir.—Your contributor, Mr. A. Yates, in his article in the current issue, "A Christian Rationalist," objects to my describing the Anglican theologian, Dr. W. R. Inge, by such a title.

The difference between Mr. Yates and myself appears to be purely one of terminology. Mr. Yates using the term "Rationalist" in its literal sense, whereas, upon the occasion complained of by your contributor, I used the word in its technical-theological sense with which Mr. Yates is not, perhaps, familiar.

In modern theology a "Rationalist" is one who accepts the use of scientific, literary and historical criticism in relation to the Bible and to the creeds, in contradistinction to the traditionalist authoritarian school (technically described as "Fideism") which denies altogether the jurisdiction of reason in matters of faith.

It is, for example, precisely in the above sense that the learned Jewish historian, Dr. Joseph Klausner, refers to certain Christian liberal theologians as "Rationalists," because they accept critical methods of studying the New Testament, and do not like the older Pietists commentators, exclude such critical methods from Biblical study.

Using the word exclusively in the above technical sense, there is no doubt of its applicability in the case under discussion. And, I may add, it was in this sense, and only in this sense, that I referred to Dr. W. R. Inge, as a "Christian Rationalist." I do not need Mr. Yates to tell me that, in the *literal* sense of the term, no Christian can be a Rationalist.

Incidentally, I note that Mr. Yates does not appear to question "the Gloomy Dean's" right to be called a Christian. There he might be on stronger ground! But that is another question.—Yours, etc.

F. A. RIDLEY.

OPIUM

Sir.—Well, really, Mr. Harbour! Who would have supposed Communists would ever join the goodly company of Apologists, of which our dear friends, the Christians, are the founder-members?

Freethinkers have for so long become accustomed to the volumes of excuses and explanations of what God *meant* to say when he said something entirely different that we pay not the slightest heed to them. But Marx being to the Reds what God is to the Christians I suppose, after all, Professor Farrington is only *doing what comes naturally* when telling us that Marx did not really mean that "Religion is the opium of the people" when he said precisely that.

We have always thought this famous axiom a gem of acid wit and one of the truest things Marx ever said. Now we are informed that he really meant something much more *kind and tender*. Does this mean, I wonder, that our Reds are beginning to turn slightly Pink?

I commend to Mr. Harbour's notice the excellent letter of your correspondent, Mr. Corrick, in the same issue of "The Freethinker."—Yours, etc.,

W. H. WOOD.

TOTALITARIANISM

Sir.—In reply to S. E. Parker, I am aware of the large and well-organised output of anti-Soviet literature, and have spent much time in studying its origin and quality.

The evidence available has convinced me that the 1936 Soviet Constitution is democratic not only in theory but in *practice*. The matter is really a legal one, but we can also judge by results. Thus the morale it inspired contributed to the defeat of the greatest and most savage invasion ever known. It has also played its part in going a long way in a short period of time to establishing a "new civilisation" (in the words of Beatrice and Sydney Webb). I regard the charge of "totalitarianism" as being on the same level as "the raggy Russian troops," "the murdered Bishops," "a protocol in," the "Iron Curtain" of Goebbels, etc., etc., and nauseum.—Yours, etc.,

F. H. WALKER.

ENTROPY AND EVOLUTION

Sir.—Mr. David Moore's discussion (your issue of February 6) of my recent article about Dr. Clark's book on Darwinism raises some interesting points, though as Mr. Moore admits, it is not at all easy to discuss a closely-argued book from reading a review of it.

I should like to make a further comment, however. First of all, the increase of entropy is undoubted, as far as our observation goes. Perhaps I have misled Mr. Moore by my analogy of heat radiation, for that is only one aspect of the matter. Entropy is, in some respects, a difficult mathematical conception, and it really means, as I said in my article,

"randomness." That there is a constant increase in randomness throughout the universe, and that (to take one example) we cannot make heat become more concentrated, i.e., that we cannot cause heat to flow from a place at a low temperature to one at a high temperature, is one of the fundamental laws of physics.

The other point—that temporary effects which apparently offset this general rule can be observed—is true enough, and the evolution of various forms of life on this planet may be accounted for in such a manner. What, as I read him, Dr. Clark was trying to do was to "debunk" the writers who assert that the word "evolution" accounts for everything, from the nebula to man. The evolution of life, in Dr. Clark's view, may be a possible explanation; but to assert that the idea of evolution solves the riddle of the universe is, he would say, taking the matter too far. That is the point in his thesis to which I was drawing attention, and it is a point which I think has not yet been adequately dealt with in evolutionist literature.—Yours, etc.,

JOHN ROWLAND.

THE REALISTS

If life is an exam,
The secret is that man
Must give himself his marks,
Not wait for priests and sharks
To say
He may
Put butter on the bread he'll lie upon!
The wise will not be long
To burn their boats not sacrifice,
To claim the certain prize.
Not promises in starry skies
(Those ancient pies):
No need to judge them when they're dead,
They've done that work themselves instead.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, February 22, 7 p.m.: "What do we Mean by Value in Music?" Mr. ASHTON BURALL.

Rationalist Press Association (Alliance Hall, Palmer Street, S.W. 1).—Monday, February 21, 7 p.m.: "Intuition and Reason." 6th Lecture, "The Dawn of Reason," MAURICE BERTON, D.Sc.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Is Impartiality Impossible?" Mr. Archibald Robertson, M.A.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Buddhism—A Freethought Philosophy of Life," Mr. R. J. JACKSON.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

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.: A Lecture, Councillor J. BACKHOUSE.

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

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Problems of Poland To-day," Dr. OSIAKOWSKI.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: "Ireland and Partition," Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

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