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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Rome and Spain

WE were recently discussing the insalubrious subject of Franco Spain with an associate who had just returned from that delectable land, and who knows his Spain without any necessity for guides or interpreters. As is customary amongst critics of the Franco regime we referred casually to Spain as a "Fascist" country, as along with Portugal, the last of that ilk in contemporary Europe. Our friend, however, rebuked us sharply. "Franco Spain," he said, "is not a Fascist country like, say Italy or Germany were under the late Mussolini and Hitler, if it were, the Fascist Party would rule Spain effectively, like its German and Italian prototypes ruled Germany and Italy. But in Spain, what rules is not Fascism, but the Roman Catholic Church, using Franco and his Army as its political instrument."

"Spain," concluded our informant, "is not a Fascist State: it is a clerical-military state, it is still the spirit of the Inquisition that to-day, rules the Iberian Peninsula."

Our friend, we repeat, knows his Spain, and as his evidence agrees with what reaches us from other sources, we therefore think it very probable that what he says is true, and that accordingly, it is to the spirit of Isabella "the Catholic" and Grand Inquisitor Torquemada rather than to that of Hitler and Mussolini, that we must ascribe the present Franco-Salazar regimes in Spain and Portugal.

"A distinction without a difference" it may be argued. But hardly. For secular despotisms come and go; but the Holy Roman Church, "The Black International" once in power, does not relinquish its grip. Nowhere has this been more evident than in the case of Spain in the past. And we are quite prepared to believe that it was primarily the Church, rather than Franco and his aristocratic and military junta which first made up its mind that the anti-clerical Spanish Republic (1931-36) must go.

In confirmation of the above thesis we may relevantly refer to the contemporary example of Spain's little Lusitanian neighbour, Portugal, where long before Franco was ever heard of, the Church there also using the military clique as its tool, similarly got rid of the Liberal and Masonic Republic set up by the Portuguese anti-clerical Revolution of 1910, which overthrew the Monarchy and broke the power of the Jesuits, now re-established by Dr. Salazar.

In fact, south of the Pyrenees, the famous slogan of Gambetta in the 1870's has lost none of its force. "Clericalism, there is the enemy." The grip of Catholicism upon the Spanish Peninsula dates back to classical times. But it was the long "Eight Hundred Years War" against the Arab and Moorish Muslim conquerors of Spain which wielded Church and State into an indissoluble unity (8th-16th century).

It has often been observed that it is in the lands where a particular religion has become, over the centuries, inseparably associated with the National struggle against the foreign invader, that such a religion acquires an eventual stranglehold over all aspects of the National life.

In the particular case of the Church of Rome, Ireland and Poland represent excellent examples of this union. But Spain, where Nationalism and Catholicism were inseparable allies for eight centuries in unceasing war against a foreign race inseparably allied with a hostile religion, represents undoubtedly, its classical example. (Actually, without the international "crusades" of the Church with the express object of liberating Spain, it is very unlikely that Christian Spain would have succeeded in liberating herself eventually from the Muslim yoke).

Both modern Spain and Spanish Catholicism are, in fact, the offspring of three historical events, in all of which it was the Church rather than the State which played the leading role: successively the "800 Years War" against the Muslim crescent, the conquest of the New World by Spain "for Christ and Castile" in the sixteenth century, and the 300 years dictatorship, both secular and spiritual, of the Inquisition (1479-1808).

One may add that the Spanish Inquisition like the traditional Spanish State itself, was about half religious, and half political in character, its persecutions had a dual character, political equally with religious; and no institution did so much to unite feudal Spain into a single over-centralised monarchy, as that founded by "The Catholic Kings" of Spain their inquisitorial "gestapo."

In his splendid book, "The Spanish Labyrinth," Gerald Brenan has aptly remarked that every institution looks back with nostalgia longing to the days of its maximum glory, and seeks to reproduce those days. In the case of Spain, as our author proceeds to indicate, traditional Spain's classic epoch was her "siglo del oro" (golden century) the sixteenth, when Spain and Rome together conquered the New World to make up for the losses which the Reformation had inflicted upon both in the Old World. It is in fact, a decadent, and to-day, entirely outmoded version of the Spain of that era, that Franco and Spanish Catholicism are now seeking to preserve in defiance of the modern world and in the teeth of modern progress.

The long struggle to modernise the Spain of Loyola and the Inquisition, began in 1808, when Napoleon invaded Spain and abolished the Inquisition; and when the originally Spanish word "Liberal," first made its entry into the contemporary political vocabulary. But it was not until 1931, when the Spanish Republic was proclaimed (after an initial failure of the anti-clerical forces in the 70's), that the ideas of the French Revolution achieved what seemed a final victory, and President Azana declared that Spain was "no longer a Catholic nation."

Incidentally, the most powerful single anti-traditional force in Spain was, and still probably is, Anarchism, and whatever may be thought of his other theories, Bakunin, the author of *God and the State* was hardly *persona grata* at the Vatican.

However, the Church of Rome is not an opponent to be despised in the political arena, and she has never had the reputation for taking her defeats lying down. The bloody sequel was Franco. And it is to the point to recall, alone of his original backers, Rome still survives.

In the Iberian Peninsula the Church of Rome now enjoys its second Spring, or would "Indian Summer" be the more appropriate metaphor? Never since the age of Torquemada has the Church wielded greater power in and over the Peninsula.

How long will this Roman autumn survive? That depends to-day upon world events. Left to the Spanish people this obsolescent medieval regime could hardly last very long. However, if America and Britain continue for their secular ends, to pump political oxygen into all the reactionaries in Europe, it may last indefinitely, and if Franco is admitted to U.N.O. and to the Atlantic Pact, that will be a major diplomatic victory for Rome no less than for Madrid.

One thing at least we can be certain of, for we have not forgotten that Spain is "no longer a Catholic nation." Once given a fair field, the Spanish people can be relied upon to give short shrift to the Jesuits and their kind. It is the urgent duty, not only of Freethinkers, but of all who love liberty, to see that they get that fair field. For only so will the countless martyrs of the Inquisition be avenged, and the great Spanish nation integrated at long last into the modern world.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE PROBLEM OF PERSONALITY

I

MUCH water has flowed under the bridges since the first publication of Chapman Cohen's "Materialism Restated." Any need for reconsideration arises in the passage of time and not in any lack of profundity in that book. In considering the case against religion, beliefs and practices, institutions and customs, only have meaning in relationship to man. That the last chapter of the book was concerned with the problem of personality is a clear indication that we are, in the final analysis, concerned not merely with human behaviour and feelings, but with ourselves. The question becomes how did man and how does he think of himself; what is meant by personality?

Cohen quotes David Hume against the self, and William James against consciousness; he might have continued with J. B. Watson against thought, and McDougall against all the rest of the metaphysical faculties. Hume had argued that he was never aware of any self, but only numerous sensations and feelings. James asserted that he could find no use in his psychology for a separate consciousness. Watson showed that what we call thought is really verbalisation. Although McDougall denied the faculties, he continued to use the terms redefined with a number of instincts. So we see terms continue in usage, but with modified meanings.

It is significant that such terms should be questioned. And it is absurd to suggest that our idea of personality is a synthesis; for a synthesis of assumptions is no less

absurd than the assumptions in question. Such terms as idea, thought, mind, motive or will are metaphysical assumptions that are not based upon any physiological investigation, but based upon fallacious analogies, with words, ideas or thoughts conceived as things, having separate identity; the old metaphysical trick of separating in fancy what cannot be separated in fact. Consciousness, invented by Plotinus after the discovery of the nerves, is the first of these to be associated with any physiological function.

It is clear that neither metaphysical analysis nor physiological investigation is of any use here. Consider emotion and desire: the emotion, hunger, is the desire for food; the same seen from different angles. Again, can memory and forgetting be differentiated without consciousness; is not knowing, considered as recognition, an aspect of consciousness in memory? It is not only, as Cohen quotes Maudezlay, that we are dealing with variables and not constants. Nor is it only a question of intellectual confusion, the complexity is casuistic, erotic and even aesthetic.

The consideration of physiological structure and function is just as misleading. As witness the controversy over the localisation of function in the brain, and of the persistence of the idea that thought is a function of the brain. The idea of separate parts having separate functions is similar to these having separate identity. Here again, we see differentiation or distinction mistaken for separation and identity. The evidence shows, rather, that the organism functions as a whole, involving glandular as well as muscular and neural functions. As J. B. Watson so well puts it, the whole man thinks.

There is little or no physiological difference between ourselves and our primitive ancestors; there is no explanation that road. The biological relationship of organism and environment brings us a bit nearer. Just as we cannot separate identities and functions, neither can we separate organism from its environment. Here again, we must avoid mistaken identity. The law of survival does not apply to the individual but to the species. The individual dies, and death has a biological function; and we must avoid identifying the species with the individual as if it were sentient and purposive.

We see the appearance, in the biological field, of purposive action as a reorientation of effort or energy, in adaption; but development of the species is conditioned by a process of elimination. On the other hand the evolution of a neural system, and of the senses, appears in the individual. Such terms as purposive, or intelligent action can only be applied to the individual. Mimicry and gregariousness are types of adaption of a non-physiological character, of disciplinary action, of elimination or restraint. We see in all this the elements of psychological development. We get much nearer to our subject when we consider the anthropological field.

In the biological struggle, man has modified his environment; and so also, his reactions to it; for he is identified with his environment. And certainly death, discipline and restraint have played their part. Sweet are the uses of adversity, said the bard. An inhospitable environment certainly sharpens the wits, and intensifies the struggle. Man's inhumanity to man is evidence of the intensity of feeling, and of its personal character. In the biological relationship, we are up against the personal equation for we are, ourselves, the organism in question.

Our consideration is thus, not merely psychological, but vital and personal; for it involves the development of religion in the sociological evolution; actual cultivation of passion, of intensity of feeling. We begin with a dispassionate discussion on the self, and find that we are concerned with our own self. We begin with the separateness, the identity of the self, and find we are concerned with action, with passionate feelings. We are concerned with something more dynamic and vital than a physical space-time relationship, or a sense of personal identity. We are concerned with the psychological act of personal identification.

From what has been said it seems the question needs straightening out. The one at issue is not that stated; and the opposition has changed its ground. We are aware, of course, that Chapman Cohen was answering what he called philosophical theologising; and it involves contradiction. For instance, we see the baby discovering itself, yet the self is a manufactured thing; we see the development of personality from the baby onwards, but the adult is not identified with that far-away baby; yet this denial does not question the sense of personal identity. To assert the self as a bundle of bodily and mental characteristics invites the question. How are these characteristics judged, and by what criteria?

To assert that the environment shapes the personality ignores the personal reaction and its contribution in the development. The assertion that the soul was a psychological blunder of the primitive savage does not touch prevalent misunderstanding. In considering the origin of the soul in dreams, the identification of the soul with motive is not discussed, although this is a feature of Tyler's animism theory. In considering personality and environment, moral sentiments are mentioned, but not aesthetic tastes; feeling is mentioned, but not motive, nor passion. Cohen is concerned with personal identity, and not with identification. We have another case of mistaken identity, for the soul and personality are by no means synonymous.

H. H. PREECE.

THE BISHOPS AND DEMOCRACY

THE Bishops have been at it again. In the sheltered confines of the House of Lords his Grace, the Archbishop of Canterbury, has succeeded in blocking the Bill which would allow a man to marry his divorced wife's sister. Owing to the untiring opposition of the Church of England, it took years before the law enabling one to marry one's deceased wife's sister was put on the Statute Book. Now this Bill, described by Lord Reading, a famous lawyer, as the logical consequence of the earlier Bill, is meeting with the same uncompromising resistance from the priesthood.

With the unconvincing assertion that he was uninfluenced by his prejudice against divorce, Fisher of Canterbury made some noteworthy observations in the course of his fight to deny this legal facility to the citizens of this country, regardless of whether they belong to his Church, share his views, or are opposed to both.

The functioning of natural selection in the breed, homo sapiens, sometimes described as sex urge, is, according to his Grace, determined by the arbitrary rules of his organisation. This is, of course, biological nonsense, the only thing unnatural and oppressive laws can do being to cause an inhibition derived from a fear complex. Nature's laws, whether to do with sexual impulse or what not, are not affected by such artificial restraints.

If, however, the "sanctified violence" of police-backed laws excludes the possibility of John marrying Mary's sister Ann, then (according to Fisher) naughty thoughts will not possess John's mind, when sister Ann comes to stay with them. Whereas, "if a door is opened," there's no knowing what may happen!

It would seem to follow from this, that, if the "door" has been safely banged to and barred by these prelates, then it were safe for Mary to ask Ann down for a spell, but not her old school friend, Jane. John's biological waywardness, being responsive to the ethical enactments of the Church of England, will remain inoperative in the case of Ann, but Jane would hardly be so safe from John's predatory inclinations. *Ergo*, wives, don't ask your girl friends to stay with you; it really isn't safe, husbands being what his Grace says they are!

It can, perhaps, be conceived that John might contrast the position of sisters of deceased wives with that of sisters of divorced wives, and ponder on the relative liberty of the former. He might even be drawn to the conclusion that if Ann could qualify as a deceased wife's sister instead of a divorced wife's sister, how much happier they both might be. So what about bumping the old girl off? Thus his Grace would, unwittingly, have added yet another incentive to murder. To the sex urge would have been added the "liquidation" urge. Fanciful, you say? Yes, but not more fanciful, and hardly more ridiculous, than this talk of open and shut doors, of unnatural and tyrannical laws sublimating man's emotional reactions.

What we are witnessing here, of course, is just another instance of the essentially undemocratic character of the Church of England. It is of a piece with the presence of eight priests on the permanent staff of the B.B.C. doling out religion at all hours, while, on the other hand, not only are there no Atheists, but not even the right to propagate the ethical principles of Atheism. It is of a piece with the Freedom of Religion, as one of the "four freedoms," that freedom denying the right to expound ethics not based on some superstition or other. It is the determination of the Church, at all costs, to force its views on all the people, brutally if it cannot be done with finesse, by foul means if fair will not serve, and in defiance of all democratic principle. For what is Democracy before the imperiousness of their God?

P. C. KING.

THE MIRACLE

The reverend Mr. Smart believed in topical sermons, and in his church, situated thirty miles from London, he had a reputation as a preacher. It was his custom to advertise the text of his forthcoming weekly lecture on a sort of "Wayside Pulpit" arrangement. But his notice board was not large enough, so he commissioned a joiner in London to make a big one, and it was to be fitted with a sliding compartment so that the cardboard notices could be quickly changed.

Now the reverend gentleman was not quite sure of the exact opening measurements, and it was customary for him to get his signwriting done by a local worthy who was something of a "character."

Mr. Green set off for London just before Christmas to a conference. He was also to see his joiner, and make sure that the structure was sent off so that it would be displayed before the end of the week. He had told the local signwriter that he would telegraph the exact dimensions, and also the title of his sermon. This had given him much thought, but he felt that he had contrived something very clever, to make his parishioners think of divinity and royalty.

He certainly caused a sensation, for when he reached home on the Saturday, he saw a large crowd outside the newly-erected notice board in front of his church. In large block letters could be read (the words of his telegram):—

UNTO US A CHILD IS BORN
SEVEN FEET LONG, THREE FEET BROAD.

J. EFFEL.

ACID DROPS

Dr. W. R. Matthews, the Dean of St. Paul's, has discovered "the Lonely Cross"—that Jesus was the loneliest man that ever lived. At least he would have liked to claim this but, while in Mark Jesus died "completely alone," in the other Gospels he had many disciples "to the end." This leads us to add that if, for the purpose of an article or a sermon, Dr. Matthews wanted to show that Jesus had more friends than anybody else in the world, he would, of course, have gone to the other Gospels. In any case, although Jesus was so "lonely," according to Mark he now "draws all men to Him." He even, according to the Dean, draws "many who doubt or falter." One day Dr. Matthews will learn that there are also many who completely reject the myth of Jesus as they do that of Osiris or Krishna.

How easy it is to be an ass in the opinion of a fully-believing and sheep-like Roman Catholic! For example, Pasquin of the *Universe* was asked his opinion of Pascal. The answer was easy. "Pascal was a very great man and occasionally an ass"—that is, he was great when he blindly followed his Church, and an ass when he attacked the Jesuits in his unforgettable "Provincial Letters." To most of us the position should be reversed. Pascal was an ass because he actually believed in such a monstrous superstition as the Roman Catholic Church, and he showed at least some sanity when he poked fun at the Jesuitical stupidities of the Jesuits. If only he had left religion alone, Pascal would have been a very great man.

There was some discussion in the papers the other week about the dog-collar parsons—and incidentally many Jewish rabbis—wear because one clergyman wants to discard it. Considering that so many, if not all modern inventions and discoveries, are either claimed by Russia or Rome, we are not surprised to learn that the dog collar came to England first through Father Luigi Gentili of the Rosminian Fathers over 100 years ago. This dreadful truth will make many members of the other sects most uncomfortable about the neck—or ought to. But as the "Universe" says, it might be worse for "Father Gentili might have been a Jesuit."

The old laws of fasting and abstinence in the Roman Church were, we are told, "practically swept away in 1941." New ones are being instituted by the Pope—which means that God is ordering them—but, as in the days of old, fasting and abstinence must be observed on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday; in addition, abstinence is again to be observed on Fridays. The eves of the Assumption and of Christmas are added to the list, but it should be noticed that fasting and abstinence mean that eggs and all milk products can be eaten, so that the "hardship" seems rather dubious. In any case, it looks as if most of the country will soon imitate the Church in these matters, not because of religion, but because of economics.

A new film dealing with Joan of Arc, with Ingrid Bergman in the title role, has had a mixed reception from the critics—though Catholic journals are always ready to write slush when it comes to St. Joan. For Freethinkers, the one fact to remember is that it was not the brutal British that condemned her, but the Roman Catholic Church. She was put to death as a witch and a witch she

would have remained if the Church had not been astute enough to re-evaluate her. The Roman Church, in fact, has cleverly put the guilt on the English soldiers who urged her trial, but it was not a military trial but an ecclesiastical court that ordered her to be burnt at the stake—and it was the same Church in France and England. And Joan was not the only martyr—there were thousands who suffered a similar fate for opposing the bloodthirsty Roman Catholic Church.

The B.B.C. now never lets Christmas or Easter go by without repeating, in many instalments, the utterly boring "Man Born to be King," specially written for the radio by Miss Dorothy Sayers. On the one hand, of course, is the Angelic Deity, and on the other, are the damnable Jews always shrieking for the blood of the lamb. This radio play of necessity keeps up the myth of the Crucifixion and the bloodthirsty Jews, and no doubt will do its duty in still more fostering the most rabid anti-Semitism.

The new German Constitution in process of being drafted, is meeting with some opposition from the Roman Catholic Church. At a special meeting of the Hierarchy, Cardinal Frings has made the Catholic point of view quite clear—under no circumstances will German Catholics renounce their demand that parents' rights in religious education should be given full protection. Superficially, the demand sounds reasonable but we cannot help but point out that Catholics are not so eager to give a similar opportunity to other religious sects. Actually, when a Catholic talks of parents' rights, it usually means clerical interference. Up to date, the majority on the Constitution Commission, composed of Liberals, Socialists and Communists, have blocked all efforts of the Catholics to control the Commission. We have repeated again and again that the role of the State—any State—should be neutral on religious questions, and not favour one sect over another.

The unseemly squabbles in Parliament over the Analgesia Bill, is typical of a certain type of religious mentality. The same type were vociferous when Dr. Simpson first used chloroform in childbirth, in the Victorian Age. He was threatened with dire punishment in the world to come for flying in the face of God by circumventing the Biblical curse "in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children." We could do with another Simpson, who flayed his critics unmercifully and showed how inhuman God could be where his own children were concerned.

We are doubtful whether Dr. Hewlett Johnson, the "Red" Dean, will be unduly upset by the action of the Canterbury Chamber of Trade who have publicly stated that they will not reserve the Dean's customary seat at their annual dinner, nor is he likely to lose any sleep because some of the City Councillors have threatened to boycott the Easter Service in the Cathedral. The Dean's job is quite safe, and at a guess, the royalties from his "Socialist Sixth of the World" should keep him from selling matches in the rain. In fact the Dean is almost irremovable, and he must be regarding the worthy councillors with amusement, for he is in a happy position of being able to enjoy the best of two worlds, to quote the *Manchester Guardian*, "Sofia pays him compliments and Canterbury pays his stipend."

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SUGAR PLUMS

It is remarkable, to say the least, how tolerance for the opinions of others can be construed as weakness; and because the *Freethinker*, which has no "Party Line" and welcomes opposition, and within its limits endeavours to give space to articles which are obviously not accepted by the majority of its readers, and this includes "Spiritualism," *Light*, a spiritualist journal, pretends to see in the recent articles of W. H. Wood, an indication that Freethinkers are finding it difficult to answer the Christian apologetics. *Light* comments that "Freethinkers are in a poor way if they have to fall back on the golden harp jibe." Is it so difficult to understand that the mere fact that the *Freethinker* publishes articles that appear to oppose atheistic ideas, does not necessarily mean that we are weakening to the extent of supporting the "hogy theory"?

A most enjoyable evening was had by all on the occasion of the Annual Dinner of the West London Branch N.S.S. on Wednesday, April 13. Mr. L. Ebury proposed the toast of the Branch in a few well-chosen words, and paid tribute to its work in Hyde Park and the Laurie Arms. The Chairman, Mr. F. A. Hornibrook, in his inimitable manner, thanked all those who had helped. The evening's entertainment was of a high order. Mrs. Bryant sang, Mr. McKay gave amusing monologues, and the Cypso singing by Mr. "Lord Beginning" in which he, quite impromptu, sang of the characteristics of guests present, was warmly applauded. "Auld Lang Syne" ended one of the most successful and enjoyable Dinners of the West London Branch.

To-day (April 24), Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture in 38, John Bright Street, Birmingham, for the local N.S.S. Branch on "God or Man?" The speaker is looking forward to meeting his many friends in Birmingham, and it is hoped that they in turn will bring along new ones. The lecture begins at 7 p.m.

THE MEANING OF THE APOCALYPSE

THE book of the Bible which has most attracted commentators—both the orthodox and the cranky—is the book of Revelation, sometimes called the Apocalypse. Its odd processions of strange characters, which many extreme Christians of various schools have managed by some queer contortions to identify with their own doctrinal friends or enemies, have obscured its meaning for many people. It has also a strain of oddness in its phraseology, which has not helped its sensible interpretation.

The Apocalypse, then, has been a part of the Bible which has always been obscured. Most Freethinkers have probably tended to dismiss it as a mere piece of mysticism, written somewhere in the first two centuries of the Christian era, and without any kind of satisfactory meaning which is available for the present time.

A recent critic, however, has worked out an interesting theory, which I think is worth a few lines in these columns. He is Mr. Frederick Carter, and his discussion is published in an article entitled "Drama and Apocalypse," which appears in the literary monthly, "Life and Letters" for March, 1949. Some readers will no doubt be familiar with J. M. Robertson's contention that the gospel story, as we have it in the New Testament, is a truncated version of an old mystery drama, designed to be performed at some specified occasion in the theological year by the early Christians. Well, Mr. Carter's theory of Apocalypse is not unlike this. He suggests that what we have is a version of the grand climax of a world history that began with the book of Genesis. The tale which it tells, in his opinion, is the tale of the destruction of a worn-out and evil civilisation and the institution of a new one.

And this tale, he holds, was told in a form originally designed to be acted. Mr. Carter does not express any opinion on the truth or error of the story; he is discussing the book purely as a work of literature. And taking it from this point of view he lights on some extremely interesting and significant facts. John (if the central figure is John—not necessarily, of course, to be identified with the St. John of the gospel stories) is the protagonist, and seated around the temple throne are twenty-four elders who act, in the classical manner, as the chorus.

There is no space here to give the details of the way in which Mr. Carter successfully breaks down the book into its constituent scenes and speeches; it must be enough to say that he holds much of it to be performed and danced by masks or mimes in the true classical mode, and that his analysis is far more convincing than many of the fantastic theological interpretations of the book which have been brought forward from time to time by advocates of one or another of the many conflicting schools of Christendom.

This makes an independent writer wonder whether it is not, after all, the best way of dealing with many of the problems of Biblical criticism. After all, it is not at all easy, in this year of grace, to interest the young in such questions as that of the existence or the myth-belief of Jesus. And there are many other similar matters which are of some importance, to Freethinkers and Christians alike, which the man in the street stubbornly ignores.

But many people are interested in literary questions, as witness the popularity of literary biography. Might it not be good to concentrate on some of the purely literary aspects of many of the books of the Bible, dealing with them as literary problems (which they often are)? Might it not then be that we should succeed in

interesting those who are concerned with literature? Might it not even follow that some of those who now take certain literal nonsense in the Bible as being satisfactory accounts of life would see that these matters are not all that they appear to be on the surface?

Whatever may be the truth of the larger question which I have here merely touched upon, there can be no doubt that Mr. Carter has started something which is of the most extreme interest. I hope that many readers may get hold of his essay. It is a stimulating piece of reading, and I hope that one of these days he will feel disposed to expand it, and to give us his version of the Apocalypse, in which he has written in the stage directions and other points which he holds now to be missing. Then one of the greatest problems of Biblical scholarship might at long last be settled.

JOHN ROWLAND.

SENECA

HAVING taken an aspect of Seneca in regard to his philosophy and literary offerings, it may be interesting to examine tradition, or rather, a legend concerning him. Both of them, however, are doubtful in their role as handmaids to history. The legend is that the Spaniard Seneca and the Hebrew St. Paul were acquainted with each other, and occasionally wrote a letter, the one to the other. They lived in the time of Nero and both were Roman citizens. The dramatic works that Seneca wrote were Greek in subject, and Paul, in his address to the Athenians, manifested knowledge of Greek literature and and of Stoic philosophy. The stoicism of Seneca was of an eclectic nature. Being a statesman, as well as an author or considerable repute, the Cordovan had to be aware of the manifold nations, and members, of the empire, and this would include the people of Israel, who were somewhat of a bugbear to Roman officials. If he was acquainted with St. Paul he probably gained information regarding Jahweh and his only begotten son, Yeshua. This must have caused Seneca to ponder, facetiously. The sons and daughters of Jupiter are sequence to be expected on account of that Olympian deity having amorous proclivities. But Jahweh was a celibate, there being no Goddess the Mother. Nor did Jhvh. to give Jahweh his original tetragrammaton, descend to "Mother Earth" (as Lucretius designates her, saying, "The Mother! How merited is that adopted name of earth, for out of her all are begotten") in search of the stray feminine, as say, Europe.

Yet there was Yeshua, or Jesus. Not to mention Miriam! Seneca probably opined, drily, that this was another case of "idle words, an empty tale, the value of the report counterfeit," as in the Chorus of one of his plays. The nature and opinion of Seneca and Paul being so diverse would seem to render any form of acquaintanceship improbable. (Sometimes this acts as a magnet, however.) It may be taken for granted that Paul never heard that uncompromising Chorus of Trojan matrons in the "Troades" so opposite in doctrine to his fervent Epistle to the Corinthians regarding a future life and resurrection. And if Seneca ever read that Epistle, which is doubtful, he must have ejaculated: "Enge, Paule! Crede, autem, quod habes, et habes!" ("Go on, Paul! However, believe that you have something and it is as good as if you did!")

But, as is known, this satisfaction does not pertain to what is material.

GEO. F. LAWS.

THE MIRACULOUS WELL

AS many people were flocking to Fatima, and no water was available, on October 12, 1926, the Bishop of Leiria gave the order to Senor Manuel Carreira, to open up a well, as there was known to be water in a certain part of the valley. The well was sunk and water gushed up in abundance. The well remained unfinished and uncovered till 1928. Many came and bathed their sores and left their bandages full of pus in the water, while all drank of it and all felt better, even if not actually cured. The Holy Virgin, Our dear Mother, laughs at the rules of hygiene and of science laid down by the cultured classes, and she brought about miracles from what would have been in the natural way just a source of infection.

But those responsible for the Public Health began to be unnecessarily alarmed, and on July 22, 1927, the Regedor of Fatima received the following communication from the Administrator of Ourem.*

The Doctor of Health of this district has called my attention to a well sunk in Fatima by Manuel Carreira, where people with running sores are bathing and of which water many people are drinking and carrying to their homes to be drunk by their sick; I hereby order you, emphatically to see that the above-mentioned Manuel Carreira closes the well to the public till it is properly cleaned and disinfected, and then closed in, the water to issue by means of taps. His orders having been ignored, the Administrator went personally to Fatima, accompanied by Dr. Alves, the Doctor of Public Health. They first visited the well and then interviewed the Parish Priest, who recounts the conversation he had with them:—

"That well up there is putrid," said Dr. Alves, "It is imperative that you have it closed, after having it cleaned and disinfected. It is shameful to have it in such a condition!"

"Those who have faith will never be harmed by the well," I answered, "on the contrary, many affirm they have been cured by drinking of its waters; God takes care of those who believe in his wonderful works!"

They left, warning the Parish Priest that he must put a cover on the well at once; but he could not do so as the people would look on such a procedure as an act of sacrilege.

In the following year, 1928, on August 14, the godless Administrator wrote the following letter to the Doctor of Public Health:—

"I am informed that the well at Fatima still remains open to the public, and continues to be a danger to the public health, as the waters are full of pus and microbes. I beg to be informed what you are going to do in the matter; if you don't move I will have the well with its putrid waters completely done away with."

How strange the concern of the Freethinker Administrator! Still, in order not to be disagreeable, the Bishop ordered the well to be disinfected and covered.

* From *The Miraculous Well of Fatima*, by Padre de Marchi. Translated by N.F.

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ANXIETY AND AMBITION

FREETHINKERS are, rightly enough, sceptics in many kinds of ways apart from the ways purely stemming from the religious world. One of the necessary scepticisms refers to the claims of some scientists to be able to deal with all the problems of existence—to be able to explain the "Riddle of the Universe." That there are mysteries as yet unexplained seems obvious enough to any open-minded Freethinker who takes the trouble to look at the world. But the reason why the claims of religion must be resolutely opposed is that the theologians do not in any way simplify the matter, or give an explanation which is even plausible in many cases.

Another field, apparently unrelated, is that of psychology and particularly psycho-analysis. That Freud and his followers have done much to explain the working of the neurotic mind it is difficult to deny. But there is a trace of dogmatism in the announcements of many of the Freudians which reminds one of the similar dogmatism of the Marxists in the field of applied economics.

What has given this trend to my thoughts this week is the reading of an interesting little book by a doctor. This is Mr. John Yerbury Dent's "Anxiety and Its Treatment" (Mullen, Belfast; 7s. 6d.). It is a revised version of a book originally published in 1941, and it deals with all kinds of psychological difficulties, particularly those arising from alcoholism. Mr. Dent writes clearly and well, and he is not tied to the beliefs of any one school of psychology—which is what makes his book, I feel, of especial value to Freethinkers who are interested in psychological problems. We are, in the present-day world, faced with a life which must be an anxious business to many. The worries of money in a period of high taxation and (for many people) shrinking incomes, above all, the anxieties associated with the menacing trend of international affairs—all these have to be faced, and faced boldly. No good can come from worrying about matters which are beyond your control. And Mr. Dent has useful advice to offer the anxious. He describes the changes that take place in people when they are worried, anxious, or frightened. His book is a warning that the ordinary man's reactions—"drinking to forget"—probably make things worse.

This is, then, definitely a book for Freethinkers, though there is little which one would normally call Freethought in its pages. What there is, is more implicit than explicit.

S. H.

WORTH IT!

Father O'Grady believed in being up to date. At the monthly concert he had organised a "Quiz." Boys and girls were selected, and had to answer questions. Now, Paddy Reilly was what is spoken of as "simple minded," but his father had great belief in him, and coached him beforehand with a lot of answers in Scriptural knowledge. But Paddy was too slow in formulating his replies so the father had a plan to help him. He had a stick with a sharp pin at the end, and the idea was that a little jab in the posterior was his cue for answering the quiz.

Came the night of the concert. The children were lined up, and Paddy's father stood behind, with his little stick in his hand.

"And now," said Father O'Grady, after a few preliminaries, "when we speak of Our Redeemer, who it is we mean?"

It appears that Paddy's father was too vehement with his signal, for the boy literally screamed, "Jesus Christ!"

"Quite right," said the priest. "Give him the money, Barney."

J. E.

CORRESPONDENCE

LIFE AFTER DEATH?

SIR.—Mr. Wood is a mystery. He does not believe in "spirits, Gods, or any other supernatural flapdoodle," and having thus shown his reasoning powers, he then accepts the possibility of another life "which goes on precisely as it did before in this same world."

What earthly difference is there between the "flapdoodle" of the religionists, and the strange notions of the Spiritualists? I see none!

With regard to Mrs. Roberts and the R101 disaster, I remember the disaster quite well, and I am inclined to doubt the accuracy of Mr. Wood's statement that no theory as to the cause of the accident had been in print prior to the one given by Mrs. Roberts. fl

Mediums are, to my mind, rather queer people, and queer people have queer experiences.

I knew a man who although not employed as a medium, appeared to have the necessary qualifications—or defects! He saw things normal people didn't.

The strangest story he told me was that the previous night whilst holding his youngest child in his arms, a strange sensation came over him, and he found that from a distance of a few yards he was watching himself nurse the child.

But we who worked with this man knew that owing to some heart defect, he was apt to fall asleep at odd moments even whilst reading or writing a letter.

His head would drop forward and for a short space he would be asleep.

We assumed, and I think, correctly, that he dreamed these strange occurrences.

What kind of a natural law does Mr. Wood expect to find, under which brains will function although absent, and people go about without being there at all?

I am rather shocked to find a Freethinker who thinks there is any possibility of life after death. Such a belief is, to my mind, not rational, and I imagined that all Rationalists rejected it. I still think they do, and that Mr. Wood isn't a Rationalist.—Yours, etc., W. O. BOWER.

SIR.—Ted Smith's notion that we die from birth strikes me as either a poor joke or excellent bughouse. I prefer the dictum of the other jester—first we ripe and ripe, then we rot and rot. Pity is, mankind has been having a rotten time because of the rot of religion in its headpiece. Let's get rid of that rot, allowing us to place our world in a healthy, happy state and then be satisfied with three score or more years in such a delightful place. 'Tis the only way.—Yours, etc., H. FIDDIAN.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "Freedom and Authority," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Messrs. WINTER, WHITTAKER and BARKER.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

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

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street, Room 13).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "God or Man?" Mr. R. H. ROSETTI (General Secretary N.S.S.).

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MUSCULAR CHRISTIANITY

IT is sometimes supposed that Christianity has only to be preached to be believed. Christians have usually acted as if that were not true, for it was long a principle of constitutional law that the religion of the subject could be only that of the prince. The Spanish treatment of the natives of America is another illustration of how the great civilising religion of Christ was spread over the world.

When after the first voyage of Columbus, the Pope drew his celebrated line of partition round the globe, the Spaniards believed that America, notwithstanding that it was already inhabited, belonged to them by right. They consequently considered the Indians as dispossessed, and in their first messages they addressed them as subjects. If the latter offered opposition to the Spaniards, they were treated not as honourable enemies and patriotic defenders of their country, but as rebels, and when prisoners were taken, these were punished as traitors to the State and the Church.

The conquerors called their proceedings "pacification." Their generals they called "pacificadores." "The Pacification of the Indies" became a favourite phrase of Spanish authors. A few truthful and humane authors, like Las Casas, called the process by another name; for Las Casas, in his history of Spanish America, used the title "History of the Destruction of the Indies."

In accordance with the view that the Pope's partition gave the whole of America to the Spaniards, the King of Spain gave Christian names to parts of the country no Spaniard had ever trodden on; and the land was divided into provinces, measured out in miles and degrees. When, therefore, the governors appointed to these unseen lands came to take possession of them, they believed that they were entering upon a soil belonging of old to the sovereign of Spain, and they treated the natives as rebellious subjects. They were usually provided with proclamations to the Indians resembling those fierce addresses of the Duke of Alba, when he marched into the revolted provinces of the Netherlands.

The Spanish historian, Herrera, has handed down one of these documents, armed with which the Spanish "pacificador," the wild knight Alonso de Hojeda, in the year 1510, marched from the coast of New Granada into the interior. The proclamation is as follows:—

"I, Alonso de Hojeda, servant of the most high and mighty Kings of Castile and Leon, the subduers of barbarous nations, their ambassador and general, notify to you herewith, and cause you to know, as well as I can, as follows:

"That God, our Lord, the only and Eternal One, created heaven and earth, a man and a woman, from whom we, you, and all people in the world are descended. As, however, in the course of five thousand and some years, during which time the world has existed, a vast number of families have sprung from those two beings, it has followed of necessity that these descendants have spread over many lands, realms, and provinces. Now over all these peoples and realms God has given the supervision to one. This one is called St. Peter, and this St. Peter became lord over all men, and all men are required to worship him, and he became the chief of the whole human race. God gave him the whole world to be at his service, and under his jurisdiction, and He commanded him to reside at Rome, as the most suitable

place from which to govern the whole world and to pronounce the law to all people, Christians, Moors, Jews, heathens, of whatever sect and belief they may be, and likewise to you.

"And this St. Peter is called 'Papa,' the Pope which means that he is the venerable head, or father and shepherd; for he is the father and shepherd and ruler of all mankind. To this St. Peter all those who lived at that time rendered obedience, and the same has been rendered since to all who have been elevated to the pontificate, and it shall always be the case until the end of the world.

"One of these aforesaid popes, as master of the world, made a gift of these islands and continents in the ocean to the Catholic monarchs of Castile, who at that time were Don Fernando and Doña Isabella, of glorious memory, and to their successors, with all and everything that they contain.

"And this aforesaid gift is contained in certain writings drawn up by both parties, and these writings can be seen by you if you desire.

"Now, from the above, it follows that his Majesty, our King, is lord of all these lands, and the inhabitants of almost all the islands to whom it has been notified—as Cuba, Haiti, and others—have rendered homage unto him, and they obey him as subjects are bound to obey their king. And your brothers on the islands have done this of their own good will, and without opposition, as soon as the above was made known to them. And they have obeyed the pious men whom the King sent to them to teach them our holy faith, and all of them, of their own free will, have become Christians, and continue such. And thereupon his Majesty commanded that they should be treated like his other vassals. And you now, you are, as you see, required and bound to do the same.

"Wherefore, I beg and entreat you, as well as I can, that you will well consider all that I have said to you, that you will acknowledge the Christian Church as your mistress, and as the head of the whole universe; and, in her name, the most high Pontiff, called Papa, and in his stead, his Majesty, as the royal master of the islands and continents, according to that duly authenticated gift, and that you will agree to it without delay, and allow that the pious fathers whom I bring with me shall further explain all this to you, and preach to you about it.

"But if you will not do this, or obstinately delay unnecessarily in doing it, I declare to you that, with the assistance of the Almighty, I will employ force, and will overrun your country with a powerful army, and attack you on all sides and in every possible way, until I shall have totally subdued you, and exacted obedience to the Church of his Majesty. And then I shall make slaves of yourselves, your wives, and your children, and sell you as such; and I shall take all your goods from you, and altogether do all the evil to you that I possibly can, and like as it is the custom to do to rebellious vassals who refuse to obey their lords.

"And herewith I enter my solemn protest, that all the blood that shall be spilt, and all the mischief that shall be done, shall fall upon your guilty heads, and shall not be laid to the account of his Majesty, or me, or of the noble knights who accompany me. And that I have thus spoken, and exhorted, and warned you, I request of the royal notary, who is present, to give to me a duly signed testimony."

J. G. LUPTON.