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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The "Underground" Against God

And the earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, Cora, and Abiram, together with their wives and children and all their followers.—NUM. XVI, 33.

THE belief in religion arose, as we know, in a misunderstanding of the workings of natural phenomena. The startling phenomena of nature, the storm-tossed sea, the streams of fiery lava pouring down the side of the burning mountain, the earth rocking and gaping beneath the feet of trembling humanity; all these and similar phenomena struck terror into the heart of primitive man. Lacking, as he did, all sense of the perception of abstract "laws" of nature, and strange to the principle of causation, it was inevitable that he should interpret these dread phenomena animistically. For they were, and could in the very nature of his so limited experience, only be due to the agency of sentient beings and equally, it followed that the invisible Beings who "ride the whirlwind and direct the storm" came in time to be conceived anthropomorphically as physically endowed with human traits, and traits at that which, like those of their worshippers, were of the most primitive kind. For the primitive theologian knew nothing of gods "without body, parts, or passions": quite the contrary; it was the visible effects of their "passions," the tangible expression of their "parts" in the eruptions of natural phenomena, which convinced their savage worshippers of their real and terrible existence.

Theology, in its origins, represented a step forward from the primitive for it is an obvious mistake to imagine that anthropomorphism itself represents the earliest form of human thought. The famous, but entirely fallacious remark of the old Greek philosopher Xenophanes, that "if oxen could conceive of gods, they would conceive them as oxen," must not be allowed to lead us astray. It was, in fact, not until a relatively advanced stage of human thought that man developed to the point at which he became anthropomorphic, at which he came to conceive of the gods as men. The earliest practitioners of what we may perhaps term prehistoric theology, would no doubt imagine the gods, not as men, but as those prehistoric monsters who were stronger than men and destroyers of men: mastodons, cave-bears, sabre-toothed tigers and the like. It was only at a much later stage when mankind was already well on the way to become the master of nature, when he had come to regard his own species as higher and more powerful than the monsters around him and with whom he contended, that he could come to conceive of the gods as men. Whilst to revert to Xenophanes, his theological "oxen" would, no doubt, conceive gods as beings more powerful than themselves: there are many such in nature, as for example, lions, or more probably still, man himself, the terror of nature.

Thus we note two presuppositions for the emergence of Theism; a preliminary recognition of man himself as

the most powerful and excellent of terrestrial beings, and therefore as the animal in whose shape the still more powerful beings known as gods can be most appropriately conceived, and the agency of natural phenomena as the divine sphere of operations.

The preliminary conditions being once granted, theology, now both animistic and anthropomorphic, could take yet a further step forward, towards unity: the scattered acts of the gods visible in sun and moon, storm and earthquake, underwent a change, or more exactly, a centralising process. The Divine Pantheon underwent a drastic process of rationalisation, the many gods were reduced to the few, and the few were eventually merged into one, the whole process of nature became personified in unity, the acts of the gods became "the act of God." It was probably the theologians of Egypt who took this last step, and it was one which must have demanded a very high level of abstract thought, the end of a very long process of mental refining of primitive concepts. To-day, all acts of nature are "Acts of God."

However, as it progressed, theology became subject to a new infiltration: it was gradually moralised. The original gods were not moral at all. Contrarily, they were as ruthless, as amoral as the fierce outbursts of nature in which their power was embodied. There is nothing "moral" about cyclones or earthquakes. But as the gods became socialised and even, to a certain extent, civilised along with their worshippers, or rather, creators, it became increasingly difficult to reconcile their new-found beneficence with the stark horror of "nature red in tooth and claw," with the yawning chasm of the earthquake, with the annihilating streams of molten lava, with the merciless sweep of the tornado. And this last dilemma still haunts theology to-day. It is actually a dilemma insoluble upon its given premises.

At first, of course, in what we may term the pre-ethical era of theology, the problem did not arise. Then, fire, storm and earthquake were simply the appropriate instruments of an angry and amoral god. The savage Hebrew legend of the ghastly vengeance of the Lord upon Cora, Dathan and Abiram, quoted above, belongs to this pre-ethical phase of theology, but as man and god acquired the rudiments of civilised ethics, the insoluble problem of reconciling a moral god with a visibly amoral and indifferent nature arose in all its ever more obvious contradictions. Accordingly, we find the author of the Book of *Job*, the first civilised writer in the Bible, asking the Deity some very tricky questions in relation to which Omnipotence cut a poor enough figure as a logician when he tried to reply. And then we have Zoroaster, Manichaeus, and the Dualists, as it were, side-tracking the cosmic problem with their two perpetually conflicting gods of good and evil: an ingenious metaphysic which, however, suffered shipwreck on the obvious unity of nature.

In more modern times, the self-same problem produced two of the most famous works in modern literature, Voltaire's *Candide*, that tremendous satire on "the best of all possible worlds" as imagined by Leibnitz, or more

accurately, as Voltaire imagined that Leibnitz imagined it, and the French writer's hardly less famous poem on the terrible earthquake at Lisbon (November 1, 1755). It was actually this last terrible disaster, which annihilated in a moment a countless multitude, that inspired both the above works. For Voltaire was no Atheist, but a convinced Deist, who had to use one of the keenest brains ever devoted to critical thought to reconcile the irreconcilable concepts of a just god and an active nature to which justice is a merely meaningless term, as is indicated with transparent clarity by its normal activities. Even Voltaire, for all his incomparable mental clarity, evidently found the impossible task beyond his power. For neither *Candide* nor the poem suggests any rational solution, and Voltaire's Theism was evidently shaken, if not entirely destroyed.

The last few weeks have seen the same problem restated hardly less forcibly by another earthquake, this time in Ecuador, South America. Thousands have perished. And to provide fresh difficulties for the theologians, among the victims were 50 children actually engaged in learning about "God" in the Catholic Catechism when the earth opened and consumed them. Had they survived, the earth could have told them more about "God" than their Catechism! How can we reconcile their pathetic end with the justice of the God whom they were actually serving when he struck them down? "Incomprehensible," say the theologians. We agree! We go further: the catastrophic acts of nature only become rational when they are held to prove both the primacy and the amorality of matter and the contingent and dependent character of all conscious life upon the blind and indifferent reactions of matter the omnipotent, the unconscious, and the amoral. The Creator is effectively disproved by the Creation, "nature's god" by godless nature. And we solve the problem of "Divine Justice" by denying its existence. God is the oldest tyrant to be overthrown by the "Underground."

F. A. RIDLEY.

RATIONALISM

WHAT is a rationalist? I put the question because there seems to be much confusion in certain quarters with regard to the application of the word.

I turn to a dictionary, and I find (a) "Rationalist, one who proceeds in his disquisitions and practice wholly upon reason." (b) "One who resolves the supernatural into the natural, inspiration into insight, or revelation into reason." With the first part of the definition I am not just now concerned except to remark that, as regards our conduct in the ordinary affairs of life, it applies to everyone, the religionist no less than the secularist; we all claim to think and act in accordance with reason—a point to be considered later. It is with the latter half of the definition, as giving a specific and exclusive meaning to the term, that I would first deal.

If we examine the different clauses of the sentence we shall find that they may be resolved into the constituents of a more definite and conclusive term. To resolve revelation into reason, inspiration into insight, and the supernatural into the natural is to resolve rationalism into atheism. A god who reveals nothing, who inspires nothing and who transcends nothing is, manifestly *nothing*.

Many who are convinced atheists acknowledge the fundamental identity of the names, but are induced to call themselves rationalists as a euphemism less obnoxious to theistic prejudice. They are mostly to be found among those with a "career," professional or political, which a frank avowal of atheism might damage.

But there are others who make a distinction between the terms and who adopt the name of rationalist to mark that distinction. They reject what they are pleased to call "dogmatic atheism" in favour of agnosticism, a doctrine which exalts acquiescent ignorance into a philosophic virtue. They refuse to accept the gods of religion, but are obsessed by the idea that there may or must be "something somewhere"—a mysterious nondescript whom (or which) they designate by the title of "The Absolute" or "The Unknowable."

These, however, are only a few of the senses in which the word, rationalist, is now used. To get an idea of its comprehensiveness as at present applied, we have only to glance month by month through the pages of "The Literary Guide," the organ, par excellence, of "Rationalism," and the periodical rendezvous of all the various and conflicting views of what rationalism is or ought to be.

Thus (to give a few examples from articles and letters lately published), we have advocates for a "broader rationalism," that is a rationalism that "would cease its stupid attacks on religion," and devote its hitherto misapplied energies to "education, science, ethics and politics." Others again are all for a considerate and cautious rationalism that would not by "over-statement" shock the susceptibilities of the "religious doubter," and would treat with respect the views of "philosophical theists, religious scientists and scientific theologians."

Then we have a somewhat recondite rationalism that "is not a substance but a process, not content, but method, not a philosophy, but a discipline"; and that as such, "it cannot escape the destiny of having to build up a third force between the main developed alternatives of Christianity and Marxism."

Other arguments equally clear are advanced for a rationalism that would recognise the fact that nobody ever can be rational; while a voice as of one crying in the wilderness pleads for "a non-superstitious religious rationalism"—whatever devil's kind of melange that may be.

I might cite other examples, but the foregoing will suffice to show the almost farcical state of confusion to which rationalism, as now understood, is reduced.

The question arises: What is the cause of these different senses or nonsenses in the use of the term? All the writers I have quoted claim to be rationalists, and yet differ from each other as to what rationalism is. It is plain that if we are to put our own construction on the word it becomes nothing more than the expression of individual idiosyncrasy. The confusion arises from want of a single clear-cut definition confining its use strictly within its theological sense.

The formula adopted by the R.P.A., viz., "Rationalism is the mental attitude which unreservedly accepts the supremacy of reason," is vague and diffused. It embraces too much leaving the question of *what is reason* to be decided according to mere opinion, self-interest, stupidity or prejudice. We all "accept the supremacy of reason," but it is *the supremacy of our own reason*. In exalting the authority of reason the definition ignores the fact that what we call reason does not operate the same in all of us; otherwise there would be no disagreement on any question, we should all take the same view of the same thing.

Most of the questions which exercise the human intellect have given rise to opposing views, each of which is supported by what its advocates believe to be rational arguments. In philosophy, ethics, sociology, politics, art—even in science, what ultimate authority have we that may determine which of the diverse opinions on these subjects is most in accord with reason? Unlike a problem

is mathematics, the rationale of which may be demonstrated with clearness and precision, and the truth established beyond dispute, reason in such questions becomes a matter of opinion which varies with the character of the "reasoner."

Take politics for instance. Are we to suppose that the advocate for "left" or "right," socialist or capitalist, does not base his convictions on what he believes to be reason? What criterion have we by which we may pronounce either the one or the other to be the more rational, but our own reason, i.e., our individual view of the question? In such cases there can be no definition of universal authority; and he who claims the exclusive name of Rationalist on the score of his particular belief in such matters is merely arrogating to himself a title which may, on the same grounds, and with equal right, be claimed by others differing *in toto* from him.

In the case of religion (and by religion I mean any system of belief in a supernatural power or god) no such disability exists; for, so far as religion is opposed to reason—that is, so far as its doctrines are antagonistic to the known facts of nature and experience—we have, in rejecting it, the authority of reason itself. Belief in religion does not depend, as does belief in other things, on what the believer *thinks* is reason, but on the contrary, on what he *knows* is not reason; and his irrationality has classic authority, *Credo quia absurdum* (I believe because it is absurd.—Tertullian).

It is clear, therefore, that it is only in opposing religion that we "unreservedly accept the supremacy of reason," and that in no other sense are we justified in assuming the distinctive name of Rationalist.

A. YATES.

ETERNITY

Le Sartres existentialism is a philosophy of the soul without a God, that of J. G. Bennett is one with God but with no soul. He is a mathematical physicist with some years of experience in the Middle East.

In his book "The Crisis in Human Affairs" he attempts to reconcile Western Science and Philosophy with Eastern Mysticism. He is influenced by, though not expounding, the ideas of G. I. Gurdjieff; combining an historical survey with an introspective metaphysical analysis; concerning a modern problem; that "the world in which we live does not make sense." Mankind has grown worried, anxious, irritable, unable to use, and unable to master, the knowledge which it has acquired. We await a "catastrophe" that "cannot be averted."

We are at the end of an Epoch that began about the time of Confucius, Lao Tse, Buddha, Jain, Parmenides and Socrates. Before that time, human life was thought of in terms of demi-gods or heroes, divine rulers; man was incidental. Since then, we see the growing importance and power of man, in self-centred relation to the world at large, individually and psychologically. Not only man the measure of all things, but the "dangers and tensions" of the "present situation" springs from a "lack of balance" in the "arrogance and self-importance of man."

To-day, this exaggerated idea of man is disproved by facts, as those of astronomy and biology. So also, with the freedom of the will or choice of action. Observation shows this to be no more than a "few seconds" during a day. For the most part it is habit. "Study will always show that the choice was made unconsciously and unintentionally." We are lost in ambiguous language and illusion that careful observation will dispel. So it is

with the illusion of the self. Hume's argument against the separate identity of the self has never been answered. What we observe is multiplicity and inter-relation with, and throughout, the world at large.

Introspective consideration, continuing from Locke, Hume and Kant's "magnificent failure," leads on to what we mean by knowledge. Distinguishing this from information, our author finds seven kinds; vegetative knowledge, such as tropisms in biology; animal knowledge, as Pavlov's conditioned reflex; pragmatic knowledge, the knowhow, characteristically human; knowledge of values, what is and what is not important; effectual knowledge, involving choice in action; transcendental knowledge, what is possible or potential; with a final possible category, ultimate knowledge. And "no amount of knowledge of one kind can produce a grain of knowledge of another kind."

In our world of crisis "our ability to control *things* has outstripped our power to control *ourselves*." We have the illusion over intentions and actions. The way to Hell is paved with good intentions. We judge ourselves by intentions and others by actions. We are "confused and bewildered" in our "systems of value" and so become also in our actions. We do not distinguish knowledge of facts and knowledge by which we act. But, "pragmatic knowledge is different, not only in kind *but also in origin* from knowledge of values." We rationalise and so "do not, and cannot, learn from our mistakes."

These transcendental and eternal values lead on to a consideration of time and eternity. Eternity is not an infinite prolongation of time. Following Locke, time is transient, successive, and perpetual perishing; and this running down of the second law of thermodynamics is inconsistent with the idea of evolutionary progress. But eternity is potential, permanent, and creative. As with memory, which is contrary to time, so also is our concern with the future. We need to take eternity seriously; not to "hope for the impossible," but to think more of "what we can be"; and not merely in the future, but be more "awake" now, and extend those few moments of conscious choice.

If time is a fourth dimension, eternity is a fifth. We are "eternity blind," using "outworn meaningless terms—Freedom, Communism, the Individual, the State." In consciousness, personality fluctuates between temporal and eternal. Eternity is potential, does not come from "sense perception or reason" and implies "a kind of special language" as in "schools" of music, art, drama, literature, jurisprudence, religion; and imply also, community of interest, as well as "transcendental experience" in judgment of values. Civilisations persist through community of interest and not enlightened self-interest; and it involves moral responsibility and "the whole harmony of human life."

Such eternal knowledge comes to the individual as "a revelation from outside" and judgment of eternal values is mystical; and in learning from those who have had "true experience" of transcendental knowledge we need more community and humility, less arrogance. We need "help" different from "any that we can see around us to-day." Civilisations are the work of schools within humanity, but an Epoch originates in "Revelation from beyond humanity," and we must hope for a fresh "Revelation of the Divine Purpose to Mankind, and prepare ourselves to receive it."

In all this condemnation of egotistic humanism, there are no feelings, sentiments, passions. With means in the realm of time and ends in potential eternity, we have objectivity in contrast to existentialist subjectivity; but such an ineffective ending seems to show that

mathematical physics is no preparation for, nor metaphysics a method for, such a subject; for the conclusion logically follows, not from facts, but from the initial assertion of unavoidable catastrophe. But the book is an interesting example of what Chapman Cohen called philosophical theologising, for our author seems to accept a religious mysticism, with God as Ultimate Being.

H. H. PREECE.

MOSES AND HIS GOD

(Conclusion)

STRUCK by his observation that the Arabs in particularly solemn moments exclaim "Yā-huē" = O He! Dr. Abt came to the conclusion that the Hebrew Yahvæ may be of Arabian origin as can be assumed by several Scriptural passages such as Ex. iv, 24-26 and xviii; I Sam. xv, 6. Driver came almost to the same conclusion and as Dr. Abt has given us to understand, his own opinion is shared by Prof. Albert Vincent of Paris University—a Black Friar—whose book "La religion des Judéo-Araméens d'Élephantine" (Paris, 1937), he was unable to obtain.

Most Semitic languages have the exclamatory syllable of "yā" (for instance, Yā Ibrāhīm = Oh Abraham!), only in Syrian and Aethiopian it is ō. Interjection such as: ha, ho, hei, ah, oh, hello are common to all men as a signal preceding address.

Semitic languages have a vocative case, so a combination of these with a signal word is meant to be respectful. The second part of the God name, Hebr. hūr, means "He"—in High Arabic Hu-ūā (or shortened: hu-ā). The meaning of Yahvā-Yahuā as "Oh He" or "He-Himself" is not so far-fetched as it may seem; the Scandinavian *han sjolv* = he himself (and similarly the Russian sam ъ) denoted "pater familias" or patriarch, i.e., owner of women, children, cattle and slaves, a Mighty-One or Lord (German "Herr," lat. (h)erus, *esos from eses = the He; cf. the Teut. root AS or OS = God. Semasiologically this equals "Ba'1" = Owner (of sheep, family, etc.) or Demon, and Yahvā was the Ba'1, i.e., owner (and *daimon*) of Israel; a later tendency succeeded, however, in replacing the Owner-Demon (ba'1) by a Governor-Demon (adōn) or Kyrios. "Adonai" is a camouflage name for the ancient Yahvā who had a consort (cf. documents from the Jewish colony at Jeb-Élephantine, S. Egypt, 408-407 B.C.) of whom he only was deprived by the reform of 'Ezra-Nexemiā. Mrs. Yahvā's name is given as 'Anath-Bēthel (in one instance; 'Anath-Yāhū); with *th* being the Semitic ending for the feminine gender, 'anath is the feminine counterpart of 'Anu (fr. Sumeric AN = Lord + NU = sky; cf. the Egypt. Sky Goddess NUT),* the God of Accad. Hence she is the "Queen of Heaven" (Jer. xliv, 17-25) or simply "The Goddess." "Beithel" or "Bēth-el (+b'rith) is "House of the God" (of the Treaty)—probably not so much of a political confederation than of the Blood-Covenant through circumcision, since *Baitlylos* means a sacred stele or priap (Hebrew: mazzēba).

* NOTE.—Recently Prof. F. Hrozny, the Czechoslovak Assyriologist, pointed out (Archiv Orientalni, 1942) that the people of Mitanni or Maitani (which name, like Media, he translates with "Horde") had a Sky God Ya, Yai (with his consort Yayas) who like the Indian Vishnu, takes three strides over the sky (morning, noon and evening). The Southern splinters of the Maitani (cf. Gen. xv, 2) became semitized and so was the name of their God which was derived from the Indo-Europ. root EI = to step. Cultural influences on Palestine and Arabia from Asia Minor cannot be denied (Laws, knowledge of certain metals, terrace cultivation, etc.).

It must be seen that prior to several reforms (the last one about 621 B.C.) the genuine Yahvæ of Moshe was far from being a monotheistic God; nor was Israel the "Chosen People" other than the possession of its ba'1 (owner). He was not venerated in the form of hand-made representations but of natural stone idols (priap stele), and Bēthel, the House of Cairns, was considered a most holy shrine. There was Sacred Prostitution in the Temple, the two stone columns of which were decked and served by *hierodulae* = Temple slaves of either sex (2 Kings xxiii, 7. The "Song of Songs" was the Ritual Book for these Love ceremonies). In fact, it was a merry paganism with its Red Copper Snake (Num. xxi, 9; 2 Kg. xviii) and Bull images (the "Golden Calf" of earlier days). S. Freud, in comparing it (cf. "Moses and Monotheism," 1939) with the Aton-cult in the absolute and centralistic Empire of Exnaton, was under an excusable impression of nationalistic bias which is never critical. In addition, Freud meant to prove that Circumcision had been introduced by Moses, and that subconsciously the irrationalism of anti-Semitism is directed against this prerogative of circumcision. (George Maranz, in his interesting book "La malédiction d'Esdras," has enlarged upon this idea in assessing circumcision as a trick on the part of the Old Man in the Struggle of Sexes.)

However, that the rise of patriarchal society imposed self-restriction in an ascetical and even military sense upon subjects who had to obey rather than love, is not the full story. Circumcision—just only one of the manifold forms of traditional mutilation—had been motivated through different "reasons" (such as magical blood-bonds, fee for the admission to civic rights, etc.), but least of all that of a distinctive mark, for, with the exception of the Philistaeans, all folk in the neighbourhood of the Jews (and the Egyptians in particular) were circumcised. Ritual acts only differ from profane ones in that the latter are reasonable, useful and change according to changed situations and techniques. Religious acts spring from practical actions, though, but become fossilised and linger on as rituals, after having ceased to be rational or sensible. People no longer see the reason for such a traditional behaviour, but strictly keep it up as a holy rule; so it is highly probable that Moses did not know either of what use circumcision was. As a means of distinction it could only have been the characteristic of initiation.

Similarly, until quite recently, the Jews still used stone knives for circumcision; 4,000 years after metal blades had replaced the ones of flint and bone!

Needless to say that I do not agree with all Dr. Abt's views and particularly not with his historical conclusions from Scriptural statements. If admittedly these are an intricate amalgam of fact and fiction, it is far sounder to discard them altogether for scientific purposes than to indulge in any sort of conjectures about what part could have been factual. The question whether and to what extent the characters of Moses, Jesus, etc., are presentations of real personages is, I should say, of secondary importance and serves no purpose since the Biblical story-tellers were not concerned with historical truth; their characters had to fit a certain legendary pattern and it is only in this intentional form we have come to know them.

However, to a certain extent the setting of fables does give a clue to time and place, since as a matter of course the story-teller employs the local and habitual features of a surrounding familiar to him and his audience; and in this respect it seems to me that Dr. Abt's essay adds a great deal to our knowledge.

• PERCY G. ROY.

THE CHRISTIAN STATESMAN

THERE is, according to Sir Stafford Cripps, a spiritual power on earth, far greater than any material power, without which we can never utterly transform our lives and the whole of our society, and that power is God.

Sir Stafford has a deservedly high reputation as a lawyer and politician, and for sincerity. It is, therefore, interesting to examine some of his ideas on religion, to see whether, in this realm, he is to be regarded, as a reviewer has recently described him, as one of the strong minds of the twentieth century. Sir Stafford's remarks which I have summarised in the first paragraph of this article, offers an opportunity to apply the probe of reason to something fundamental in his ideas.

In the first place, what is the distinction between material power and spiritual power? If material power is merely a term for mechanical power, there is certainly something in the world other than that. There is mental power; without that the transport that has conveyed Sir Stafford to Switzerland for necessary recuperation could not have operated. But then, given the mental power and the material power, is anything else required? Some people will say there is required also courage and sincerity. Together these make saints and martyrs. Does courage come from God?

Recently a gorilla and a panther fought for two hours in a cage. Their persistence exemplified courage. Was that the gift of God? Adrenalin was excreted into their blood streams. With the adrenalin they acted as they could not help acting. Is God a manufacturer of adrenalin? In other cases animals of the timid kind have, in defence of their young, faced extreme danger. It doesn't matter whether we call courage a mental or spiritual quality. The point is that it is an essential ingredient in the make-up of certain animals. Their lives could not have survived without it.

Is it not the same with man? How could he have survived without the excretion of adrenalin into his veins in moments of danger to himself and his mates? How could he have survived as a social animal, had he not repeatedly sacrificed his individual life for his group?

It is sometimes asserted that intellect induces a man to save his life at the expense of his group. There is no justification for the assertion that he generally does so. Apart from automatic response to danger, and in aid of his community, there is the intellectual perception that a life of misery may follow certain self-regarding actions detrimental to society. Too much can be paid for life.

Then there is sincerity. Does God give that? Is it not probable that in an age of professed religion there should be some who study the works of the reputed master, and, believing, zealously follow his teachings? Is, however, an action good because sincere? Was it desirable to gouge out lustful eyes, and to unman oneself? Then, do not Socialists believe in Socialism, and Conservatives in Conservatism? What does God explain in this?

Then, says Sir Stafford, God is necessary, in order utterly to transform our lives and also the whole of our society. There is, at bottom, only one transformation needed here; the other follows. Transform society, and also our individual lives are transformed. We need not be frightened at Sir Stafford's "utterly." It is just his little way. He wants to smack us hard, as we lie sleeping in the sun; but merely to wake us. He doesn't want to change our sex, or to rob us of art and literature. He wants us to be Socialists, and provide equality of opportunity for youth, jobs for those who can work, security

for those who need it, preserve civil liberty, and end the privilege of the few.

Some Freethinkers will think these objects desirable, but why must God be there before we can have them? Social history is one of continual struggle of groups for what they consider good. Sometimes the aim is the good only of the particular group, but that group is always liable to the question of the other groups, "What about us?" There, accordingly, inevitably arises a criterion of social value that comprises the welfare of the whole of society, and finally of all peoples.

Must, for example, we have a God, before we realise the evil of war? Realising that evil, do we not inevitably aim at the peaceable settlement of disputes, internal and external to our countries?

Sir Stafford supposes that religion is necessary to induce a man to surrender a privileged position. This supposition is unnecessary, for a man will give up such a position if persuaded that his life will be better for the surrender. Socialist propagandists have usually proceeded on the basis that the society they envisage will be better for even the presently privileged.

It may be that some will never be convinced of this. In that case it still does not follow that they ought to be imbued with religion, in order to induce them to surrender their advantages. Religion is a body of doctrine concerning the nature of the world. It stands or falls according to its truth or falsehood. No lover of truth would seek to impose it on the grounds of its utility in advancing his political opinions. Sir Stafford, of course, does not attempt this. He believes in Christianity, but where does he provide us with any justification for his belief? Can it be that he has never examined his assumption of the existence of God?

That the teaching of Christ is true in substance is, he writes, a statement that cannot be proved as we prove a scientific law, because we are incapable of observing the supernatural working of the divine mind. We must either accept or reject this fundamental hypothesis as to the basis of our life on earth. But, says Sir Stafford, if Christ's teaching is true, then we are in a world of God's creation in which his purpose is being manifested and worked out.

I do not see how the statement that we are incapable of observing the supernatural working of the divine mind can be reconciled with the one that God's purpose is being manifested and worked out. If a thing is manifest it is observed. If a purpose of God is observed, then the mind of God is observed.

We are therefore left with the statement that the truth of Christ's teaching cannot be proved like a scientific law. Everything can, however, be evidenced in some way. Christ's teaching can be submitted to the test of reason in the same way as that of Confucius. But that test doesn't suit Sir Stafford. He says that it is sufficient that a thing is Christ's teaching; that is all.

If, then, Sir Stafford does not follow Christ because he agrees with his teaching, why does he follow Christ? I do not know, but I am afraid that he will claim an inner light. That leaves others in the dark.

J. G. LUPTON.

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More miracles for the faithful. Bishop Charue of Namur has just proclaimed two miraculous cures following the "apparitions" of "our Lady at Beauraing." Two very sick women made a pilgrimage to Beauraing and were immediately cured. So the Bishop has issued a decree, affirming without any doubt, that the Virgin had appeared to some children there in 1932-33 because "her maternal heart" anxiously appeals for the conversion of sinners. The way Catholics can swallow this kind of bilge is really amazing.

The High Commissioner for India, Mr. Krishna Menon, reports *India News*, took over on behalf of India, the British destroyer H.M.S. "Rotherham," after Lady Willis had performed the renaming ceremony when the "Rotherham" was named "Rajput." The customary benediction was pronounced, "May God bless this ship and all who sail in her." We are constrained to ask, did Lady Willis mean a white British God, or did she hand over to a darker Indian God, and if so which one?

General McArthur, military boss in Japan, may be in the top rank as a military commander, he seems, however, to be a little confused on other matters; particularly religion. He wants hundreds of missionaries for Japan, for, he says, "The Christian Church has never had such an opportunity, and Japan cannot have Democracy without Christianity." It is not recorded what the Japanese think of this nonsense, they could no doubt point to many examples of Christian "Democracy" to-day, as well as to the occasion when Christian missionaries were expelled from Japan. The General is not likely to worry over-much about the feelings of the Japanese. Missionaries and Gunboats usually go well together.

Cassandra, of the *Daily Mirror*, whose pungent column is usually a pleasure to read, is really beginning to "see the light." His description of the reverie into which he fell on beholding some of England's fairest country is delightful, even his alliteration is perfect. He was, however, rudely disturbed whilst, "getting around to believing once more in the perfection of creation," by a flying plague of dandelion seeds ready to infest fields and gardens, which made him begin to doubt the perfection of the "Creative Master Plan." "Must there," he says, "be a deadly nightshade as well as the honey-suckle? Must love and lilac-time include leprosy and lockjaw?" We can only add, yes, and earthquakes in Ecuador also. This age-old question of a beneficent deity and evil can only be solved by ignoring the deity and his master plan. However, doubt is the beginning of wisdom, and Cassandra may yet get round to reading the *Age of Reason*.

That eminent Christian, Lord Reith, in his "Behind the Scenes" series in the *Sunday Express*, does not, we are pleased to note, deny that he always expected a new recruit to the B.B.C. to declare his belief in Christ and Christianity—except for "a staff conductor, a research engineer, or a variety producer." He evidently felt that music and Christ, or a 5-valve amplifier (if there are such) and Christ, or a red-nosed comedian fiddling with a "dicky" and Christ, were rather incongruous.

But what an example of a public servant! It is heart-breaking that one of the qualifications for a job at the

B.B.C. should have been a belief in Lord Reith's particular brand of Christianity, with an occasional Roman Catholic thrown in to show Christian tolerance. And it also appears that an *innocent party* to a divorce was either sacked or not given a job. It is fortunate for the B.B.C. and the general public that the greater part of its programmes are purely secular. Fancy Lord Reith giving us a sermon!

Our heavenly contemporary, *The Universe*, makes a big splash of the destruction of hundreds of churches in that terrible earthquake at Ecuador. It even points out that poor mothers with terrified children fell on their knees "asking for forgiveness" while others crowded into churches—and God Almighty did not even lift a finger to save them. Even a statue of "Our Lord" up in the Andes disappeared in the destruction, an extraordinary mystery, if there is a God Almighty. Fortunately for his reputation, there isn't.

An East Dulwich Congregational pastor, perhaps wanting to emulate the "Red" Dean of Canterbury, has joined the Communist Party. He claims that the ideals of Jesus Christ are enshrined in the ideals of Communism—not the first Christian, either, who has made the same claim. We wonder what the late E. Belfort Bax—to say nothing of Karl Marx, both convinced Atheists, would have said about it? We wonder also whether the Red Dean, who is a Churchman, will hail his Nonconformist brother in Christ as "Comrade"? We wonder.

The erudite *Church Times*, in a burst of enthusiasm over some discoveries in a cave near the Dead Sea, claims that the Old Testament scrolls "are older than the Massoretic text by over a thousand years." The arithmetic here seems rather wonky. The Massoretic text is dated about 500-600 A.D. (no one knows for certain); the new discoveries are provisionally dated 200-100 B.C., so the "thousand years" seem rather premature. The real problem will be to settle whether the scrolls and fragments are *genuine*, for quite a number of most remarkable "discoveries" were eventually shown to be forgeries. But, of course, Christians are so used to forgeries, like miracles, that an extra one or two never bothers them.

The inability of Christians to agree is an old story to Freethinkers and the latest sample should amuse readers. The U.N.O. General Assembly includes so many representatives of religion who found it impossible to agree on a common form of prayer to open the proceedings that the Chairman, Mr. Trygve Lie, approved the recommendation that the session be opened and closed with a minute of silence for prayer. It appears to us that God ought to be warned in advance so that He will be on hand when this mass of *silent prayer* goes up. Or perhaps a course of the Piddington technique would be useful.

THINGS WE WOULD LIKE TO KNOW

Does Lord Raglan, who told the R.P.A. conference at Oxford that the principal hindrance to Popery is the Church of England, think so little of the work of the R.P.A. and of the N.S.S.?

Is God or "little David" (who was in heaven at the age of nine) to be blamed for the lack of cures?

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

G. VARLEY.—Thanks for religious literature. A pinch of incense burnt to the honour of the Pope, and there would be no difference between the Anglo and the Roman Catholic Churches.

H. E. SNOW.—Thanks. You have put the mentality of Christians who believe the sort of literature you have sent us much too high; the mental age would be about ten.

A. BULLOCK.—The religious effusion you have sent us will be filed under "comics."

T. BENTON, H. HOLGATE.—Thanks for cuttings.

For "The Freethinker."—A. Beale, 11s. 6d., R. Cronin, 11s. 9d.

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

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

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), THE FREETHINKER (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FREIDENKER (Switzerland), LA RAISON (France), DON BASILIO (Italy).

SUGAR PLUMS

The International Freethought Congress in Rome promises to be widely representative of the world movement. Delegates from different countries will concentrate in Rome for the reception on Friday evening, September 9, and three business sessions daily from Saturday till Monday will be held. The National Secular Society, the Rationalist Press Association Ltd., the South Place Ethical Society, and the Ethical Union will all be officially represented at the Congress, and in addition a contingent of visitors from this country will be present. It will be the 29th International Congress and will be held at the invitation of the Italian National Society, "Giordano Bruno." The Congress should materially help in the re-organisation of the continental Freethought societies. Mr. R. H. Rosetti will represent the N.S.S.

Every member of the N.S.S. should have received a copy of the Annual Report for 1949, and a copy of the Conference Report at Nottingham. Branch members should have had their copies from their Branch Secretary and members of the Parent Society from Headquarters. Any member who has not received a copy of each can obtain them from 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1.

It is not often that Christians can be persuaded to debate publicly, but our Kingston speaker, Mr. J. Barker, has managed to arrange to meet a representative of the Four Square Gospel in Castle Street, Kingston, at 7-30 to-day (September 4). The subject, "Is Christianity Practical?" is of topical interest, and will allow Mr. Barker full scope for his undoubted ability. Will members and friends note the date and turn up in force. We are certain they will not be disappointed.

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS CRITICISED

MR. FRANK KENYON, whose new book, *Psycho-Analysis Criticised: A Modern Delusion* (Pioneer Press), has just been published, has already made his mark with *The Myth of the Mind* (Thinker's Library) and the later book is the complement of the earlier one.

The problem of "mind" and "matter" goes back to the early Greeks, but Berkeley brought it to a head in the eighteenth century when he denied the existence of a "substratum" called matter and affirmed that we know nothing but mind. Berkeley was a master disputant, and Hume, in taking his argument to its logical conclusion, while admitting Berkeley was "unanswerable," claimed he carried no conviction. Moreover what did Berkeley mean by "mind"? When he (Hume) examined himself he discovered no entity called "mind" but merely a bundle of sensations. (I am writing away from my books but hope that I have put the case correctly.)

Since these giants wrote, the battle has waged furiously between the "Idealists" and the "Materialists" and it is still being fought. It has become more and more wordy and the Idealists have had a high old time in concocting metaphysical verbiage with astonishing ingenuity and, in the main, literally no meaning.

In his *Myth of the Mind*, Mr. Kenyon subjects the problem to a drastic analysis, and comes to the same conclusion as Hume. There is no entity called "mind." "The only legitimate use of the word 'mind,'" he claims, "is to signify a function of the organism"—and it is with this definition as a basis that he attacks Psycho-Analysis.

In the years after the First World War, it was my privilege to hear the most distinguished Psycho-Analysts in the country expounding their views in—very free—detail.

Although it was always claimed that Freud, when he used "sex," meant something far broader than the average man-in-the-street, I can only say that all the psycho-analysts I heard always meant exactly what we all mean by the word; and when, later, I read Freud for myself, it seemed to me he meant exactly the same. I must confess that I was duly impressed by the formidable authority of these male and female psychologists, who laid down the law with the assurance of a quorum of cardinals deciding for ever what God or Jesus meant. It was only when I began to ask inconvenient questions that I discovered "evidence," real evidence that is, was not necessary for a psycho-analyst. If Freud or Jones said it in a book, that should be accepted without question.

I once asked whether it was true that most of Freud's deductions were based on Austrian sexual degenerates, and it was amusing to see the shocked silence of the believers. I had blasphemed against the Holy Freud.

It is not surprising to find Mr. Kenyon, having discovered that "mind" was a myth should turn his attention to psycho-analysis, based as it is almost entirely on the repressions, the inhibitions, the vagaries of this "mind." There is a chapter in his earlier book on the question, but in *Psycho-Analysis Criticised* he has subjected all or nearly all the confident claims of psycho-analysts to a severe and drastic criticism.

All who have read works on psycho-analysis, or have heard lectures, will know the peculiar terms used for, like theology, it has a singular jargon of its own. There are the Oedipus and Electra complexes based on the two classical myths, when according to Freud, strong sexual instincts stir our infants to indignation and

jealousy. There is the "castration" complex based on the surprise children have when they note their sexual differences. And when these and other complexes are "repressed," consciously or unconsciously, there is later, according to our psycho-analysts, the very devil to pay. For repressions have to come out, and it is astonishing what they will make one do—until liberated by a psycho-analyst. If you spell an easy word wrongly, make a slip of the tongue or pen, miss a step going downstairs, and lots of similar things, you should be immediately psycho-analysed and release the devil. Mr. Kenyon examines these claims soberly and carefully and makes mincemeat of them.

He does the same for dreams which form so large a part of the technique of psycho-analysis. The way Freud and his followers interpreted dreams—making my old "dream books" look silly—used to astonish me. Here again, Mr. Kenyon should be carefully read, for step by step he subjects Freud to a devastating analysis. Most dreams are just nonsense and can be brought on in various ways; an indigestible lobster salad taken just before going to bed is one excellent method. But for psycho-analysts they have deep sexual significance which should be given the full light of day. If not, we are bound to suffer, become unhappy, and may even be compelled to take up crime as an outlet.

Mr. Kenyon shirks nothing, and with ample quotation deals forcefully with *Condensation*, *Dramatisation*, *Secondary Elaboration*, in dreams, and the way psycho-analysts provide for every contingency. It is almost always with them, heads I win—tails you lose. If you correctly describe a dream or even make one up, it's all the same to them. The fact that you had to make one up proves you should be psycho-analysed.

Moreover, the psycho-analyst has given an air of the strictest scientific accuracy to his "science" by using such words as Libido, Id, Censor, Introvert, Extrovert, and so on. It requires a deal of courage to stand up to a psycho-analyst in the face of such a stream of words—which, if properly examined, are seen to be nothing but hopeless jargon.

Mr. Kenyon writes from the point of view of the scientific Materialist and has no hesitation in agreeing with La Mettrie that Man is a Machine. To understand his point of view readers are specially requested to study the chapter on "The Mechanism of the Mind." Here the question of the problem of the passage from the physics of the brain to the facts of consciousness is settled by showing there is apparently no such problem. He gives a purely physiological explanation of cures in his chapter on "Psycho-Analysis and Disease" and deals in fine detail with many knotty points in "Psycho-Analysis and Morality," putting forward original views.

Psycho-Analysis: A Modern Delusion is, in my opinion, a very able work and it will appeal particularly to those Freethinkers who oppose the idea that they must have some sort of religion, say Buddhism, Spiritualism, or Psycho-analysis. I most cordially recommend Mr. Kenyon's work to all who can appreciate sound scientific, and above all, Materialistic argument.

H. CUTNER.

Modern Materialism is the assumption that mechanistic science can in principle achieve a complete and satisfactory account of the world and of man, his nature, origin and destiny. The assumption is widely accepted both by men of science and by philosophers; and the question whether it is well founded is the most important and burning question that confronts the mind of man at the present time.—Prof. W. McDougall.

OPEN LETTER TO MR. W. H. WOOD

DEAR MR. WOOD,—Contrary to your contention that I have misread or misunderstood your statements, it is you who have misread or misunderstood mine.

You state that to say "Life is a function of man" is to place man prior to life. Rubbish! You then state that "man is a function of life." Again rubbish! As man and life are as inseparable as water and wetness, it is unintelligible gibberish to argue which preceded which. Hearing is a function of the ear; but according to your argument the ear is a function of hearing. Do you mean to imply there is a Principle of Hearing which exists in its own right prior to ears having evolved? Your statement that man results from life-force in action is as unintelligible as the statement would be that ears are the result of the Principle of Hearing in action.

You suggest that the difference between organic and inorganic matter is that the former is animated by some vital force or energy while the latter is not. This is about as enlightening as saying that the difference between water and ice is that the former is endowed with Aquosity while the latter is not. Half a century ago Büchner suggested that the distinction between the organic and the inorganic consists merely in the kind, direction, and intensity of their motion. And speaking of a "life-force" he said, "To-day this *asylum ignorantie* is wholly abandoned." To-day, in 1949, the experts are reminding those behind the times that "Vitalism has virtually disappeared from science." As the biochemists tell us, "Life is only one of the innumerable properties of carbon-compounds."

Again, Mr. Wood, you completely misunderstand my point about a "heat-force" or a "life-force" which is that it is unintelligible to talk of these forces apart from things that are hot or alive. When you ask, "Would there be any heat but for the force or energy involved in combustion and radiation?" you agree in effect with my statement (though you say you don't!) that there would not be any heat apart from things that are hot. What do the words "force or energy" in the above question mean except "motion"? And how on earth can you have motion apart from things that move? Perhaps the meaninglessness of your question may be seen by paraphrasing it thus: "Would there be any sight but for the Seeing Capacity involved in the workings of the lens, cornea, and so forth?" Personally I can no more picture a "force" apart from things themselves than I can "sight" apart from things called eyes. Incidentally, the term you use—"a force giving life"—is as empty of sense as the phrase—"aquosity giving wetness". Would you contend that there is a force of gravitation giving things the tendency to fall, or would you not think it simpler to say there is not a thing called the Force of Gravitation and gravitation, but merely things that fall?

You ask, "What makes a living thing a dead thing if it is not the withdrawal, absence, or ending of some animating force?" Well, what makes a wet thing a dry thing if it is not the withdrawal, absence, or ending of some Aquositating Force? (This would probably need an Aquositator at the back of things to do the aquositating.) If you can answer mine, I can answer yours! You seem puzzled as to how matter ever came to be animated without postulating Vitalism. I am equally puzzled as to how Vitalism explains; for, did the waves of the ocean come to be animated by the insertion, presence, and continuance in them of some Aquositating Force?

A word on the Purpose of Life. You ask why man developed from the original slime if there is no purpose in so doing? Well, why do twice two make four if they had no purpose in so making? Why did deadly germs

volve to infest man with fatal diseases if they had no purpose in so doing? Really, Mr. Wood, this sort of argument is a two-edged weapon. After all, Haeckel long ago pointed out that there is a great deal in nature which excludes the idea of purpose, and he proposed the term Dysteleology to denote this fact. So you see it is not merely a case of Atheists "ridiculing" the notion of purpose, but of their using their thinking apparatuses and imbibing the many lessons on Dysteleology evolution offers us.

I am sorry, Mr. Wood, but if you wish people to accept your vitalistic ideas, you must really establish a case. To do this means the ability to discredit the enormous amount of literature on the subject of the nature of life. May I humbly suggest you start with showing up Prof. Wilson, one of the highest American authorities who, when asked if one should invoke a Vital Principle in his mechanistic conceptions described in his book, *The Physical Basis of Life*, replied, "No, a thousand times No." Perhaps, also, you might have a go at Prof. Hogben who is still more scornful of Vitalism in his *Nature of Living Matter*.

Yours sincerely,
RUBY TA'BOIS.

REPORT TO HIS EXCELLENCY

II

IN my previous despatch I reported upon the progress made by the statesmen with the now fashionable policy of creating ever-diminishing units within the wider "unity" of the "United" Nations, in the somewhat optimistic attempt to bolster up that frail and tottering organisation.

I am able to report a fresh development in the direction of "smaller wheels within the big wheel—smaller talking-shops within the big talking shop." From my latest report Your Excellency will have learned of the latest news of the so-called "Little Assembly," and of its Subcommittee. It has since been my good fortune to be present at the first meeting of an even smaller and more august body—the Diminutive Assembly—which claims (with what authority I cannot say) to have been entrusted with the task of arriving expeditiously at decisions (which UNO cannot do), and enforcing them without war (which UNO cannot do either). As Your Excellency would be quick to point out, such a task is beyond the mandate and the strength of any so-called "authority," unless it be a government responsible to an elected parliament and having the right to enforce its decisions directly upon individual citizens, no matter what their nationality. Nevertheless, the futile deliberations of the Diminutive Assembly (the Dim. Ass. for short) may nevertheless serve as an instructive example when the time is ripe for the extension of representative and responsible government across national frontiers.

The session opened on a note of informality from Mr. L. O. U. Costeller, of Ruritania, who protested that Britain was plotting to prevent Ruritania from re-incorporating into her territory the splinter state of Topright-handcorneria. Mr. Costeller ruled out force as a means of protesting further, because the Pope had spoken against the use of force in this and in other matters. Mr. Costeller objected to outside interference in the affairs of Ruritania. Ruritania would govern herself her own way and would tolerate no attempts by anyone outside her own borders to influence her course of action. If Topright-handcorneria were restored to Ruritania, Ruritania could stand against the world.

Mr. B. A. D. Ubbott, of Topright-handcorneria, suggested that Mr. Costeller was out of order, since UNO's job, as Mr. Evatt had already pointed out, was not to make peace but to tell the nations how to keep it when they'd got it.

Count Bellagrandi Fiasco agreed, and called the first item on the Agenda: the maintenance of the Charter of Human Rights.

Mons. Protocol pointed out that, according to the Charter of Human Rights, every human being has the right to an International Organisation capable of upholding and defending his rights. Doubts had arisen whether UNO was such an organisation. How, for instance, could UNO restore to an individual rights which had been denied to him by his national government? We should not get anywhere until UNO had its own police, like G-men or mounties, to supplement the separate state police.

Senator Dumbarton H. Oaks pointed out that G-men and Canadian Mounties knew where they were because they had specific federal laws to enforce and uphold, whereas UNO police would be a band of poor bewildered stooges with no clear terms of reference, there being no international legislature to make the laws they were to enforce. They would never know where their next pay packet was coming from, or how soon it would be before yesterday's orders were countermanded. If UNO's treatment of the Palestine problem was any criterion, the UNO police would be just a batch of enlisted Bernadottes, thrown to the wolves of either side, and expected to carry out half-a-dozen conflicting and contradictory policies in as many months. "Before you talk about law enforcement," he said, "you have to have some law to enforce. An international government must come before an international police force could be established."

Madam Dilys d'Alliance disagreed with this view, contending that the public would lose faith with UNO unless we did something sensational in the way of creating a UNO police or Guard in nice uniforms. And anyway, the nations should be asked to promise to give every facility to the UNO guard in the execution of its duties. The nations must sign away some portion of their sovereignty for the sake of world peace.

Mr. Serge Pantz considered that the nations could sign away their sovereignty until they were all blue in the face, but so long as they retained it *de facto* we were making no progress whatsoever. In his view, sovereignty could be merged only by merging electorates, i.e., by creating a common electorate for the election of a common legislature. The separate electorates could remain in being, for the election of national governments for purely national affairs.

Senor Postponi ridiculed this idea as utopian. Lake Success was rightly named, he averred. Diplomatic history was a long record of failure, and he was quite prepared to believe that UNO would succeed no better than the League of Nations. "But if at first we don't succeed," he said, "we should try, try again."

Mr. Serge Pantz agreed that the statesmen should try again, but they ought to try something else next time, instead of a league of sovereign states, bound together by paper promises. The meeting was dissolving into disorder when Count Bellagrandi Fiasco announced the adjournment.

HAROLD S. BIDMEAD.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. 4s. 6d. Five editions of this important work have been printed and the value of the book on this important subject is enhanced by its simplicity of style.

CORRESPONDENCE

OMNIBUS REPLY TO MY CRITICS

SIR,—My recent article upon Freethought and Totalitarianism provoked, as it was intended to provoke, a spate of controversial letters advocating very various points of view. This is all to the good, for Freethought never did anyone any harm, even professed "Freethinkers." Here I note that I am under cross-fire from three angles. Mr. Gallagher, M.P., wishes Freethinkers to attack Rome in alliance with what I termed the rival "Church of Moscow." Mr. Nicholson wants us to reverse this process and attack Moscow in alliance with the older Church of Rome. Mr. Cross agrees in substance with my article, but apparently considers it to be a matter of indifference to Freethinkers how long Freethought is submerged by the Total State, since it is bound to conquer in the end. Unconquerable optimism!

In such a predicament, Mr. Editor, assailed by the partisans of alliance with both Rome and Moscow, I can only take refuge with the classic dictum of Aristotle: "Truth lies in the middle."

As far as Mr. Nicholson is concerned, his position is purely defeatist, as Mr. Eric Maples has correctly indicated: its origins are, presumably, social rather than intellectual. For Freethought to ally itself with Rome would merely be, under any circumstances, a peculiarly ignominious way of committing suicide.

Are we supposed to make a beginning of this strange "marriage of convenience" by inviting the Pope to accompany the forthcoming World Conference of Freethinkers in paying homage to Giordano Bruno whom his predecessor sent to the stake? For the rest, I have nothing to add to Mr. Maples's admirable letter.

Re Mr. Peter Cross, my only criticism of his criticism is that his optimism is incredible. Does it really make no difference whether Freethought is victorious now or is submerged by victorious Totalitarianism for a millennium? This seems to be a rather literal interpretation of "all's well that ends well"! After all, we are most of us not spiritualists, and we have only one life. I suggest that it was rather poor consolation to the medieval Freethinkers who died at the stake to know that, centuries after their death, Freethought would finally triumph over their persecutors. I suggest to Mr. Cross that "time is of the essence of the contract" and that the time to fight the "total" plague is *now*. I am, otherwise, in agreement with his thesis.

Last but not least, Mr. Gallagher, whose letter indicates that even the House of Commons is not entirely closed to Freethought and "The Freethinker." I wish to make it perfectly clear that, as always in this journal, my article had no reference to party politics as such, which is not the business of "The Freethinker." I was there concerned solely with the philosophical question of the relationship of the Freethought Movement with the Totalitarian State, whether "Left" or "Right," Communist or Fascist; a vital question in our contemporary world which, in my submission, urgently calls for an answer. As far as my personal opinions are concerned, I take it that I am sufficiently well-known in the International Socialist Movement through my written work on social questions and through my past membership of the National Council of the I.L.P. and the "International Socialist Committee for European Unity," not to be accused by Mr. Gallagher of sympathy with political or economic reaction. Though, to be sure, the present sectarian policy of the Communist Party appears to regard all socialists who do not conform with the ever-changing "Party Line" as "social-Fascists" or some other similar not-so-red herrings.

However, to turn to the matter in dispute, Freethought versus the "Total State": I find the bulk of Mr. Gallagher's effusion quite irrelevant to the matter-in-hand. Mr. Gallagher appeals to the orthodox Marxist-Leninist theory of "the withering away of the State." So what? No-one can possibly argue that this purely hypothetical speculation has happened yet; anyone who acted upon such an assumption in Stalin's Russia or Tito's Yugoslavia would himself quickly "wither away"! I may relevantly add that personally I shall believe in the "withering away" process when I see it, and not before. The more so in the case of a modern Communist State where all opposition is illegal. "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." The world has yet to see a ruling class or State apparatus hand over power voluntarily, and as an old-fashioned Freethinker who does not believe in miracles, theological or political, I do not believe that the most autocratic of all recorded States, as the Communist State is, will prove any exception.

Mr. Gallagher says that the Communists will suppress Fascism. No doubt! and also, Socialism, Anarchism, and

Freethought, in short, anything which does not swallow the party-line, hook and sinker. Actually, on the good old ecclesiastical principle that "the heretic is worse than the infidel," it is the "left" rather than the "right" critics of Communism who usually go to gaol first, and there are thus more socialists than "Tories" or Fascists in Communistic goals. *Verb Sap* to Freethinkers! When the State has "withered away" as predicted, along with the Communist Party, then Gallagher and Co. can join us, until which, I fear, distant day, Freethinkers will be well advised to steer clear of both Totalitarian camps, and say, "a plague on both your houses" to Rome and Moscow.—Yours, etc.,
F. A. RIMLEY.

THE ELECTRONIC BRAIN

SIR,—I cannot understand the very violent attitude adopted by your correspondent, Mr. Carruthers, in the *Freethinker* of August 7, with reference to the letter to *The Times* of Dom Trethowen in connection with the subject of the "electronic brain."

It seems to me that some of the things which Dom Trethowen said are quite plausible. His letter to *The Times* is based on the fact that the inventor of the apparatus has suggested that there is a possibility of its being able to think for itself, and I notice that Mr. Carruthers does not deny that he did make such a suggestion. Why, therefore, should any one be so violently criticised for tentatively giving some weight to the suggestion of such an authority, even though it may ultimately be proved that there could not be the possibility which was suggested?

As a matter of fact and looking at the question entirely from the point of view of a materialist, why is it so absurd to visualize the possibility of inventing an electronic brain which can think for itself? The world is full of sentient creatures who according to the doctrine of materialism were evolved from some absolutely lifeless matter, because at one time this earth was a mass of burning gas quite incapable of supporting life as we know it.

It may have taken more than a thousand million years from the time when the earth had sufficiently cooled down so that life became possible on it before the predecessors of those beings first began to appear on the scene, but the materialist says that at one time during the remote past some absolutely lifeless matter became, entirely through natural causes, imbued with life. That was a very long time ago, but if life can arise as the result of the fortuitous and blind working of the forces of nature during a very long period of time, why is it absurd to imagine life being generated as the result of a few years of the careful and sustained design of a scientific mind aided by that mysterious thing which we call electricity.

If ever one of these things could think for itself, the results might be very startling. If in addition to the quality of cerebration there were added those of mobility and manipulative dexterity, it would require very little imagination to foresee some very dangerous possibilities. No doubt the cerebrating, mobile and manipulatory thing would be controlled by the fact that it was entirely dependent for its activities on its source of electricity, but if that control were to break down, even though it would only be for a time, the thing for the time being might well prove to be very unpleasant for anyone who happened to cross its path.—Yours, etc.,
J. H. G. BULLER.

GENIUS AND SHAKESPEARE

SIR,—I should invite and deserve humiliation if I were so ill-advised as to challenge one so scholarly as Mr. W. Kent, but perhaps it is permissible to comment that whenever I have been able to read what he has to say against Shakespeare I have always felt his case is vitiated by the fact of assuming that Shakespeare was nothing more than an ordinary man. And then demonstrating that such a man could not possibly have produced works of such transcendent merit. Mr. Kent surely quite ignores the possibility of genius. My submission is that until or unless beyond all possibility of doubt he can prove Shakespeare could not have had genius then the verdict must be "not proven." Little definite is known about genius; it appears in the most capricious ways in the most unlikely places and ancestry. It is something quite apart from the man and his character; it is capable of the most incredible achievements in every form of activity. It has an amazing ability to assimilate knowledge, of spiritual insight, of creative capacity. What would one not give to see the late Mr. G. W. Foote matched against Mr. Kent, whose admiration for Shakespeare was this side adulatory.—Yours, etc.,
M. BARNARD.

WORLD CITIZENSHIP

Sir—My interest in getting practical moves towards world government on free-democratic lines stimulates me to reply to Mr. L. C. Jenkins who writes in the current issue.

He says, "World Government . . . is not in itself sufficient" and goes on to suggest how necessary it will be to arrange for "the common ownership of all resources democratically controlled by the rank and file."

May I suggest that if Mr. Jenkins is suggesting that he will only support a movement for World Government on Socialist lines (if I may use the word "Socialist" as shorthand for his second phrase) he is guilty of splitting the movement for world government quite foolishly. Surely it is better to concentrate upon getting a world government of a free-democratic form and leave the secondary question of private or public ownership, etc., to the chance of the vote of the people.

After all when we consider the huge number of people who are nationalist-minded and imperialist-minded and racialist-minded and religious-totalitarian-minded and political-totalitarian-minded it is fairly obvious that those who have developed a mind for world government with freedom must try to stick together.

But, of course, we must try to be practical. I'm afraid that Garry Davis, in calling himself a world citizen without first creating a world state, is guilty of putting the cart before the horse. Nation states are not to be abolished by people tearing up passports and calling themselves citizens of the world! After all the nations have police and so on who are trained to handle people who do illegal things of this sort.

No, the sensible thing is to change the basis of legality and this can only be done by direct political action by means of a special political organisation which will go to work against the nationalist and imperialist parties in all countries. This is the only way to let the common people have the opportunity of giving their official political votes to the realisation of world government. There is, of course, no organisation of this kind in existence, and it is going to be difficult to get it going because the Press is so overwhelmingly in favour of nationalism and imperialism. This is true of the Labour as well as the Tory and the Liberal Press, and I think it likely that they will continue to soft-pedal the issue of creating a single world sovereignty in place of the existing separate national sovereignties until public opinion has been organised to force them to do this.

For a start I would like to see a World Parliament Party formed in Britain which will go forward at the next General Election to challenge the national parties on their conception of a correct foreign policy for democrats. What we need is not international co-operation such as is offered by Truman, Bevin, Churchill, etc., but the coalescence of the separate sovereignties, under a common sovereignty so that eventually the whole world will be brought under a single central government with devolution to subordinate sections all over the world. Our lives depend upon success in this quest.—Yours, etc.,

E. G. MacFARLANE

WHAT IS AN ATHEIST?

Sir—I venture to reply to the article under above heading of May 29. Mr. Wood writes: "To my mind the greatest mystery of all is Death," and further "does he (the Atheist) condemn scientific inquiry into the unsolved mystery of death," etc. When existence ceases death ensues as a result of purely natural causes. People die when they reach the stage when life is no longer possible. What then is the mystery? Certainly the atheist does not condemn scientific inquiry concerning any phenomena which appears to be necessary or desirable, indeed he welcomes investigation, but I assume that Mr. Wood has had no more success than many others who have delved into the so-called mystery of death, and the possibility of an after-life. He writes also: "Because I choose the right to think freely and individually," etc. He may have the right, but has he, or anyone else, the ability to choose an opinion? As I see it, one's opinions are formed by circumstance, environment, experience and other causes, and the opinions we hold are such as they are because they cannot be otherwise. Thinking and reasoning forces us to certain conclusions. I join with Mr. Turney in admiring Mr. Wood's excellent and witty articles, and hope sincerely that he may be saved from the spiritual Nirvana which Mr. Turney fears. We should do our utmost to prevent this dire catastrophe. There would be great rejoicing at the return to the Freethinking fold of the lost sheep which has gone astray. Death is so permanent.—Yours, etc.,

C. J. TACCHI

THE LIFE FORCE

Sir,—I have followed with interest the discussion in "The Freethinker" on the above subject. It seems to me that Mr. Wood is getting "all hot and bothered" about nothing. He is apparently trying to track down a particular little "packet" of life which has been shut up in a particular body, and on the death of that body has escaped and gone off to some mysterious destination. But life remains where it has always been—in the surrounding air. When the organs of a body are functioning normally, the body can inhale the air and utilize it in order to live; when for any reason the body ceases to be able to use the air in this way, it dies; and that's that. The life is still where it was, all round the body, but the body cannot use it.

Surely the whole idea of trying to revive a drowned person by means of artificial respiration is to get the body functioning normally again so that it can again use the air.

Mr. Wood is right, though, in saying that man should keep an open mind and investigate everything—even the possibility of there being another sort of life; but as the whole universe, including himself, is continually evolving, man will never be able quite to catch up.—Yours, etc.

(Miss) HELEN TYTLER.

Sir,—I cannot accept Mr. Wood's statement that I placed man prior to life when I said that *life was a function of man*. If he will refer to my article ("Freethinker," June 5, 1949) he will find my statement "*Life is a function of organic matter*."

The reference in the same paragraph to life as a function of man, and that in the subsequent paragraph, are subsidiary, and refer only to human life. That they are so intended is, I think, plain from my remarks on the theory of life's emergence at a certain stage of the cooling of the earth.—Yours, etc.,

J. G. LUPTON.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY.
- Burnley (Market).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Crawshawbooth.—Friday, September 2, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Great Harwood.—Saturday, September 3, 6 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Debate: "Is Christianity Practical"? Pro. A Representative of Four Square Gospel. Contra. Mr. J. Barker (N.S.S.).
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Messrs. KAY, SMITH and BILLING. (Alexandra Park Gates).—Wednesday, Messrs. KAY, SMITH and BILLING.
- Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Ranelagh Street, bombed site, Liverpool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. W. PARRY.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—12 noon: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY. (Highbury Corner).—7 p.m.: Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.
- Padiham.—Wednesday, September 7, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.
- South London Branch N.S.S. (Brockwell Park, Herne Hill).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: Mr. I. EBURY.
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Marble Arch, Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m.: Messrs. E. BRYANT, C. E. WOOD and E. PAGE.

OUTDOOR

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

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