

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXXI—No. 3

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

On Conversion

ALTHOUGH we are in the year 1951, it is obvious that the belief in miracles is, in many circles, as strong as among the Jews in Palestine 2,000 years ago. For example, hundreds of people on January 5 last waited, in pouring rain, to see if the "Holy Thorn" tree at Kingsthorpe, in Herefordshire, would bloom at midnight. It appears that the story goes back to Joseph of Arimathea who came to Britain in A.D. 35, carrying a staff which commenced blooming on "old Christmas Eve," that is, when it was believed that Jesus was born on January 6, before his birth came into line with other Saviours like Mithra, on December 25. Our Holy Thorn tree is supposed to spring from an offshoot of the original staff. That Joseph is pure myth, and had no more real existence than Sinbad, would be rejected as impious blasphemy by almost all Christians; and that this perfectly ridiculous miracle is just unmitigated nonsense would never be allowed in any respectable Christian society.

If the unthinking crowd swallow this kind of tomfoolery, why should we be surprised when we find scientific men accept, almost without investigation, equally silly stories from Spiritualists, or seriously tell us that there is "mind" behind the phenomena of the Universe; though that which for convenience we call "mind" had to evolve with "matter" like everything else? The Universe is a "mystery," therefore God (undefined) must have "created" it. And you get intelligent people in almost everything else proudly declare that at last they "believe"—and once they believe, there is nothing too silly which they are not prepared to believe.

I have been looking into a book called *The Road to Damascus* (W. H. Allen, 10s. 6d.), which describes over a dozen "conversions," and I admit that the reasons given for going over to the Church of Rome stagger me. I can understand Newman's conversion quite well. He had an intensely religious nature, and a very sceptical mind. He became quite certain that the Church of England was not the Church founded by God, but an offshoot; and, therefore, that it must be the Church of Rome into which the Grace of God was deposited (or whatever religious rigmarole is used for the same thing). Therefore, by surrendering his reason (or scepticism) in joining Rome, he had at last the certainty that God was with him, and nothing else mattered.

Most of the people who have gone over to Rome and who describe their experiences in this book and elsewhere surrender their reason without Newman's excuse. They have not his brilliant intellect—an intellect, I must add, which in more than one quarter in the Catholic Church roused suspicion of heresy. In any case, was Newman really "converted"? He only exchanged one Christian sect for another. He was always a believer in religion.

And I find that this is the case with almost all the "conversions" in *The Road to Damascus*. You get the story of some writer well known, perhaps, in certain circles in America for articles or novels none of which, I suspect in most cases, would bear re-reading. Who knows here anything about Dorothy Day? She appears to have written for Socialism and Communism, but we are expressly told that "though Miss Day gave up religion, she retained her belief in God." What does her "conversion" matter when she knew so little of the case for Atheism that she could, writing for advanced movements, still retain belief in the greatest absurdity of all? For it cannot be too strongly pointed out that if one can swallow Theism, the other ridiculous beliefs in religion are very minor ones in comparison with this major one. I fail to see why, if one accepts God Almighty, a belief in the Resurrection of the Jewish saints which accompanied that of Jesus should be dismissed. One can go further. Why, if there be a God, should one kick at the story of Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp. Isn't God Almighty capable of creating such a Lamp?

This lady and all the other converts in *The Road to Damascus* never question the "records." The Gospels are all Gospel truth, the Church of Rome is the veritable Church founded by Christ who is really God, exactly as described in the Gospels. Every word is true, everything is history. It is all history for a converted Jew like David Goldstein who appears to have swallowed everything in Judaism as a prelude to imbibing without question "Catholic teaching." These people have no sense of humour; if they had, they would recognise that the story of their conversion is uproariously funny.

As a boy, I used to collect Protestant tracts in which was set out how brutes, burglars and convicts were won for Christ, and they wrote in almost the same terms as these poor "converts" writing in this well-printed book. I could never even then follow the logic of their conversions. And I was not surprised later to see the appalling ignorance and superstition which pervaded all the stories of conversions that I read. I do not except here the story of Miss Toynbee, the sister of Arnold Toynbee (who is, I believe, if not yet a Catholic, on the road to becoming one). She was an Anglo-Catholic and the step upwards (or downwards) to Rome does not seem very important. She could not accept one so she went bodily over to the other.

But the chief characteristic of all these stories is their incredible boredom. A gentleman called Merton has received some recognition for writing *Elected Silence* which details his path into a Trappist monastery and which is supposed to be a masterpiece. I always suspect these inevitable adulations of converts. In any case, the account given in *The Road to Damascus* of how he discovered, faith and happiness in Rome bored me to tears. When he writes, "We are all baptised into one supernatural life, into one Christ," or "Now this

Mystical Christ, the 'whole Christ,' head and members, is not a static moral organisation," and insists on "his own weakness," and "the thrice Holy God"—I feel that I am before pious drivel it is hard to characterise otherwise. There is not in it the least understanding of logic or life to say nothing of science.

This book is "part two," the first relating the conversion of people like Evelyn Waugh, Claire Boothe Luce, Sheila Kaye-Smith and others; but one specimen of this kind of dreary nonsense is enough.

To get out into the clear sunshine of Freethought after all these nauseating experiences is a wonderful relief. It is something to belong to the liberators from such superstitions as Heaven and Hell, Devils and Demons, Myths and Miracles, and Ghosts, Goblins and Gods.

H. CUTNER.

BRITAIN UNDER ROMAN RULE

FOR more than three centuries ancient Roman dominion was exercised over Southern Britain. Their ruined records remain and are rediscovered from time to time. But Roman influence over our island was transitory and never shaped its subsequent history as it stamped Roman traditions on the Imperial province of Gaul, now neighbouring France. Roman influences in Britain reached their further limit at the close of the first century A.D., when, under the sway of Agricola, and during their ascendancy, the province was divided into a Civil and Military region. The Midlands, the Southern and Eastern areas were chiefly inhabited by a Romanised population, while the North and West were largely utilised as Military stations to protect the country from foreign foes.

The Civil zone contained the towns and villas and the agricultural areas. This geographical arrangement was mainly determined by the lie of the land. As Prof. Trevelyan observes in his luminous essay, *Social Life in Roman Britain*, "For thousands of years before the coming of the Romans, race after race had poured in from Northern Europe by the easy gateways of the South-East with its flat coasts and navigable rivers. And after every fresh invasion, the older races had maintained their independence, or at least their old ways of life, in the more barren and inaccessible mountains of North and West. And so it was once more, when the Romans came."

Yet, what are now among the richest soils of England remained fen and forest, and husbandry during the Roman occupation seems to have been restricted to regions already cultivated and it was only with the later advent of the Saxon and Scandinavian invaders that the widespread oak forests and marshes were slowly converted into arable and pasture lands which met the needs of the growing population. But, if the Roman settlers left the dense woodlands and waterlogged districts untouched, their world-famous highways running straight over hill and dale and overcoming every obstacle, constituted the chief safeguard of their civil and military supremacy. Thus, city was linked to city, and the path made clear for the communication of one municipality with another. New towns rose on the Roman roads of which Cambridge is a notable example, but as a rule the Roman Villa and the native farm stood in districts apart from the highways.

Pagan Rome was a model of toleration and no offence against the Imperial power was punished save that of rebellion. As Prof. Trevelyan testifies, while Rome

"erected her own monumental civilisation in cities, forts, villas, inscriptions and statues up and down the conquered land, she spared to the subject his own gods, his own tribes, his chieftains and his ways of life, hoping merely that the barbarian would learn to imitate the civilised model so impressively set up before his eyes."

Roman cities were sometimes erected on the sites of old British hamlets and became the centres of administration, and the civilised influences thus exerted over urban barbarians reached the native tribes dwelling in adjoining areas. The new cities were adorned with well-built houses, public baths, amphitheatres and temples resembling those of Italy and the South, but apart from London even such towns as Silchester never possessed a population exceeding five thousand.

These Roman centres were designed for expansion and opulence, but neither in population nor prosperity was this expectation realised. So the taxes borne by the rural community defrayed the heavy costs of the municipal buildings and other amenities of urban life.

London alone became an imposing cosmopolitan port, but by the middle of the third century A.D. the provincial cities showed signs of decay and Imperial interest became centred on the villas as the most promising agencies of Roman penetration. At this period, partly constructed edifices in Wroxeter were never completed, and it appears that "at Verulam near the modern St. Albans, already by A.D. 275 the theatre was abandoned and used as a quarry, and the town walls were in ruin."

The more palatial residences were the homes of officials, mostly Romanised Britons. A culture similar to that of Italy prevailed, but only to disappear with the withdrawal of the Roman legions and never to be restored in England until relatively recent times. Superior residences were heated by underground hypocausts while, as Collingwood and Trevelyan attest, the water supply service and sanitation "would stand the test of modern inspection." The baths were free to all urban dwellers, while spectacles of every description were available in the amphitheatres without charge. "Bath in the third century," avers Dr. Trevelyan, "was very much what it became once more in the days of Beau Nash and Jane Austen." In truth, the standard of living, entertainments, sanitation and other amenities were immensely superior to anything known in Northern Christian Europe for more than a thousand years to come.

If the provincial cities were not an entire success, Londinium, as a great port and commercial centre exceeded the most sanguine expectations of its Roman founders. The two great Roman road systems were connected on the two sides of the bridge that spanned the Thames. From their enterprise, they gained important advantages in the opening years of their colonising of the island. As Trevelyan states: "Londinium was a noble city of stone and brick, three times the size of any other town in the island both in area and population with, perhaps, 15,000 inhabitants of many different races. Its long river front was alive with merchant ships from overseas. . . . It stood where medieval London afterwards rose between the Tower and Ludgate Hill, but its streets were laid out on a more rectangular plan."

Although agrarian extension was small, Roman methods of farming probably increased the productivity of the soil in regions neighbouring the villas. Still, the mass of the population remained primitive in their cultivation of the enclosed fields revealed by modern aerial photography. Roman agricultural appliances were not, however, completely unknown to the native Britons, but

these advantages were almost absent in the North and West of the province.

Several foreign deities were introduced by the Romans and were honoured and worshipped where Imperial influences prevailed. But in rural retreats it seems that: "Every spring, wood, river and hill was haunted by named or nameless spirits. . . . Such very ancient gods and the fear of them were strong with the strength and terrible with the terror of the untamed, all enveloping wilderness. Even after Christianity had pronounced the outlawry of such woodland deities, they continued as fairies and goblins or as old Puck, to haunt the forest till it was felled, and the fen till man had drained it."

The fourth century witnessed the rapidly declining Majesty of Rome, and roving barbarians from Ireland and the Baltic extensively plundered and burnt opulent houses. Indeed, the framework of society was broken; the food supplies of the cities imperilled and anarchy reigned where order had so long prevailed. In the fifth century, when the remaining Roman legions departed, Britain was reduced to misery and ruin. But even during Roman ascendancy our coasts needed protection from piratical raiders. Roman galleys patrolled our coasts. In the third century Saxon sea wolves became so destructive that fortresses were built eastwards from the Isle of Wight as far north as the Wash. Their ruins, it is recorded, of these concrete walls, "sometimes 25 ft. high, are the largest of the Roman remains in Britain. They can be seen at Pevensey, Richborough and Borough Castle near Yarmouth." Each of these defences would hold a garrison of from 500 to 1,000 men. Thus our island was saved from invasion for 150 years. Then with the barbarians besieging Rome itself and with the withdrawal of the legions, Picts and Scots ravaged the North, while Saxons and Scandinavians in turn entered Britain, plundered, massacred and later intermarried with the natives, made permanent abodes, and have remained a substantial percentage of our population ever since.

T. F. PALMER.

THE MIRACLE OF THE ASSUMPTION

II

THERE are really two groups or premises upon which the Roman Catholic Church bases her deductive logic. The first is the group referred to by Mr. Ridley in his article of September 24, and therein shown by him to have been demolished, namely, that group arising from Biblical revelation, in particular the well-known text in Matt. XVI, 18: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," etc. The second group is really independent of Biblical revelation. The following are the premises which form this group:—

(1) This world and indeed the whole universe and everything in it, including all living creatures, were created by an omniscient, omnipotent and benevolent God.

(2) A God who was omniscient, omnipotent, and benevolent would see to it that some institution on this earth would define without any error whatsoever all matters relating to the supernatural which he wished it to define, and which he would, therefore, reveal to it, and also all matters of moral conduct to be observed by all mankind.

(3) The One, Holy Catholic Apostolic Roman Church is the only institution which could possibly fulfil the functions described in (2).

One might perhaps grant the validity of premise number (2), provided that premise number (1) was a valid premise, but in the light of the facts of nature observable by everyone, premise number (1) is utterly absurd, for if God is omnipotent, he cannot possibly be benevolent, and vice versa. As for premise number (3), it also is utterly absurd, because of all institutions which the world has ever known, the Roman Church, by her fearful history of crime and cruelty, would be one of the least likely to be chosen by a benevolent God to define his will towards mankind.

I cannot help referring to what Lecky on page 14 of the second volume of his *History of the Rise and Influence of Rationalism in Europe* (Watts & Co., 1910) says on this subject. After describing what so often happened in Spain at the time of the Inquisition on special festive occasions, such as royal marriages, namely, the horrible spectacle of the burning of heretics in public, and of sometimes as many as four hundred witches struggling in the flames in the market square of Toulouse, concludes an eloquent passage of denunciation by saying: ". . . when we consider all these things it can surely be no exaggeration to say that the Church of Rome has inflicted a greater amount of unmerited suffering than any other religion that has ever existed among mankind."

The Church of Rome, however, having entirely to her own satisfaction accepted all these premises as true, can then by a perfectly valid process of deductive logic purport to define without any error what supernatural matters have been revealed to her by God, i.e., matters of faith, and all moral precepts to be observed by mankind, because according to these premises God is guaranteeing the truth of all that she defines.

It should be explained that the Roman Church purports to act thus with infallibility in any of the following cases, namely: (1) when that part of that Church constituted by the faithful (*ecclesia discens*), universally believes a matter of faith or morals; (2) when the teaching part of the Church (*ecclesia docens*), in the ordinary course of its duty universally teaches a matter of faith or morals; (3) when an œcumenical council of the Church defines a matter of faith or morals to be held by the whole Church; (4) when the Pope *ex cathedra*, i.e., as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, defines a matter of faith or morals to be held by the universal Church.

Apparently, the above cases are methods of defining a particular part of what is called the deposit of faith supposed to have been handed down by the apostles either by means of the scriptures or by means of tradition. (See generally *Catholic Dictionary*, 10th ed., pp. 183, 184.)

As Mr. Ridley very rightly shows, this matter of the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary into Heaven has been universally believed by the faithful of the Roman Church, and has also been universally taught by the Church "docens" since the seventh century. Moreover, a special day in the year has been all that time set apart to commemorate this wonderful event, and at present that day is August 15, upon which date all Roman Catholics must hear Mass in honour of the achievement of "Our Lady" in making her long distance flight, and they are liable to eternal damnation in the real fire of hell if they deliberately fail without adequate excuse to perform that duty. It follows, therefore, that when on November 1 the Pope made his solemn declaration on this subject, he was merely confirming an already established article of faith.

J. H. G. BULLER, L.L.B.

BACK TO THE STONE AGE

IN these days when B.B.C. "comedians" think their main job is to bore us with Tory electioneering quips, it is good to get something to laugh at. And I did get a good laugh when the announcement came over the Wireless that someone had taken a lump of sandstone out of Westminster Abbey. No Scot Nationalist can wish more earnestly than I that the wretched thing never finds its way back to the Abbey.

If the possession of this brickbat from the darkest age of ignorance, and symbol of superstition at its crudest, gives joy to the Scottish heart, here is one Sassenach who does not begrudge them possession of it.

But I feel it should be pointed out to Miss Wendy Wood, who asserts that it has not been "stolen" but merely "retrieved," that there may be other claimants who will regard her friends as just another gang of thieves and that further rescue work is required to return it to its original owners.

For tradition says that this particular bit of dirt never came out of Scottish soil, but was the hard pillow on which Jacob laid his weary head in the plain of Luz, Palestine. It would seem, therefore, that the Israeli Government might with some justification send a rescue party—say, some of the Haganah tough boys—to "retrieve" it for the modern sons of Judah.

And should the descendants of Abraham not feel inclined to press their claim, there are several others who may rank in priority over the Scot.

According to tradition, a Greek gentleman of the name of Gathelos visited Egypt, where he got on such friendly terms with Pharaoh that the latter gave him his daughter in marriage, a damsel of the name of Scota. History does not state whether Gathelos kept Jacob's stone in his suit-case, in the old oak chest, or where. But we hear of it again from Scota Gathelos' son Hiberius, who seems to have had his full share of the family *wanderlust*; for like many another young man he went west, taking the lump of gravel as ballast in the boat that brought him eventually to a distant isle.

As the intelligent reader has guessed, this island was not Britain, north or south, but Ireland, known after its Greek emigrant (by those educated in the classics) as Hibernia.

There it rested until in the year before Grace, 330 B.C., a mean foreigner, to wit, one Fergie, King of Scotland, came and stole the erstwhile property of Jacob Israel and Hiberius Galethos away. For the next thousand years or so the old stone seems to have been rolling round Scotland, until King Ken, having a tidy mind, found the stone a home in the Abbey of Scone in A.D. 850.

In spite of a build-up by the Propaganda Department that Scots would rule wherever the stone was, they were unfortunate enough to lose it a few centuries later to the horrid Sassenach, who came over the border, beat them up and stole away the stone of Scone. This was in A.D. 1297, and the English marauders stowed the old thing in Westminster Abbey under a chair, as later generations used to stow their top hats. And there it remained until 1950, when the Northerners came down over the border and "retrieved" it. Scotland for ever!

While tremendous issues are being fought out in distant Korea, with a supine Europe never more divided in the face of mortal danger, with income tax at 9s. in the £, with power cuts and the prospect of serious unemployment if a hard winter eats up our coal stocks, we witness the pitiful spectacle of the whole British police force chasing—after a bit of sand!

I have no sympathy with the fanatical Scotch Nationalists. I deplore the national rivalries in Europe and elsewhere, and the effort to create further national splinter groups seems to me nothing short of suicidal. But I hope with all my heart that the Scots will hold on to this wretched clod.

And if the chase, at the cost of thousands of pounds of the taxpayers' money, gets too hot for them, let them take a cold chisel and hammer and break it up into handy pieces to hurl at the importunate Sassenach. Alternatively, they might throw it to the Loch Ness monster; perhaps he would swallow it, which is more than I can do, this fatuous fable out of the darkest age of Animism.

And we fancy the age of superstition is past! Back to the Stone Age! Well, perhaps the ignorant Chinese coolie in Korea will die of laughing at this sample of Western culture, and thus spare the U.N. expeditionary force. But every Freethinker must be revolted by this reversion to the crudest of superstitions and the spectacle of a whole nation running down hill after a rolling stone.

P. C. KING.

WHICH IS REAL—BODY OR MIND ?

IN the seventh of the series of eight talks which he has been giving in the Home Service programme of the B.B.C., Sir Cyril Burt, under the above title, deals with what he regards as the most interesting and the most difficult of all the problems the psychologist is called upon to consider—the connection between body and mind. He asks: "How precisely are the thoughts, the feelings, the struggles of will that go on in consciousness related to physical processes that go on in the brain?" He evidently looks upon consciousness as a kind of locality in which thoughts, feelings, etc., take place in a somewhat similar way to that in which the physical processes go on in the brain. He says that the answer to the question he asks, that nearly everyone would think most natural, is that each particular mind is housed in some particular body, and that the two act and interact the one upon the other. There can be little doubt that this is by far the most popular view at the moment. But, as Sir Cyril Burt reminds his listeners, there are also other less popular views, some of which he proceeds to enunciate. In addition to the common-sense or interactionist view to which he has just referred, in which both body and mind are real, there is the materialist view, in which matter alone is real; the idealist, or spiritualist view, in which mind alone is real; and what he describes as the neutral view, in which neither body nor mind is real.

Confining our remarks to a consideration of the materialist view, it is interesting to note, first of all, that Sir Cyril Burt adopts the favourite device of misstating his opponent's case in order the more effectually to demolish it. No reputable materialist would attempt to maintain that matter alone is real. What he would maintain is that the only reality is matter *and its functions*. But the misstatements go still further than this. Sir Cyril Burt says: "A number of psychological and medical writers, as well as several philosophers, have flatly denied the reality of mental processes. There is here some ambiguity in the use of the term *mental* which needs to be cleared up before the argument can proceed."

There is, perhaps, nothing which renders modern psychological theories more deceptive than the general lack of precision, and the inconsistency, in the use of the terms employed. We find ambiguous words used first in one sense, and then in another, as the course

of the argument requires, and words of widely varying import used to represent the same idea. Thus we find *psychical* and *mental* used as interchangeable terms to represent the idea of an *immaterial* constituent of our being. We may well use the word *psychical*, derived from the Greek *psyche*, which originally meant nothing more substantial than *breath*, for the representation of such a mythical idea. But, surely, the word *mental* is worthy of a more solid significance. Aristotle appears to have been the first to draw a distinction between vital and mental phenomena, but the distinction which he drew was by no means of so fundamental a character as the distinction that is drawn to-day between life and mind. It appears to be fairly clear that Aristotle regarded life as the *general* form of organic activity, and mind as one of the *special* forms of this activity, and that he considered both as nothing other than *functions* of the material organism.

We are now in a better position to appreciate the force of Sir Cyril Burt's remarks above. When he says that "a number of physiological and medical writers . . . have flatly denied the reality of mental processes," he is using the word *mental* in one sense, and intending it (though probably unconsciously) to be taken in another. In the sense in which the word *mental* is used, i.e., as a synonym for *psychical*—something spiritual—his statement is true. But in the sense in which it is intended to be taken—that the materialist denies the facts of consciousness, it is certainly not true. The conscious processes remain whatever theories we may hold concerning them. What Sir Cyril Burt has evidently overlooked is that the question at issue is one of interpretation only: whether the conscious processes have a material or an immaterial foundation; whether they are spiritual or organic; whether they are due to innate constitution and environment or to an immaterial *something* occupying a portion of the brain.

Sir Cyril Burt further says that as applied to the problems of psychology the materialistic theory plainly involves two propositions each of which requires proof: first, that conscious processes are produced solely by physical processes; and, secondly, that physical processes can never be produced by conscious processes. In view of what has already been said, this is another misstatement of the materialistic position. To the materialist conscious processes *are* physical processes and therefore the supposed distinction does not arise.

It is no criticism of modern materialism to refer to the eighteenth-century *L'homme machine* of La Mettrie, or to the foolish remark of Cabanis that the brain secretes thought just as the liver secretes bile. It is another matter when we come to such names as Maudsley and Mercier. Though these have both passed away, their materialistic theories of human behaviour remain unanswered. Sir Cyril Burt deals with one of the latter's arguments as follows. "Surely," writes Dr. Mercier, "it is quite inconceivable that anything so flimsy and elusive as consciousness could operate on the material substance of the brain to guide the nerve currents and so move the limbs." Consciousness has no weight or mass; consciousness is not extended in space. In short, consciousness and matter are "utterly incongruous and disparate; there is a gulf between the two which can never be bridged." "Such an argument," says Sir Cyril Burt, "may sound plausible; yet it is quite fallacious. Inconceivability can never be used as a test of truth. All action at a distance, so Newton declared in his letter to Bentley, is 'inconceivable.'" Here Sir Cyril Burt avails himself of another ambiguous word

which has caused philosophers a good deal of trouble, and which was once the subject of a prolonged and lively discussion between Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. When we say a thing is inconceivable we may mean either that it cannot be framed in thought, or that, though it can be framed in thought, it is still unbelievable. Although both Newton and Mercier used the same word, it is fairly clear that they used it in different senses, Newton using it in the former sense and Mercier in the latter. So Mercier's argument would not appear to be quite so fallacious as Sir Cyril Burt imagines. But, says Sir Cyril Burt, "there is a still more obvious retort. If mind and matter are so different that mind cannot possibly act upon matter, for the very same reason matter cannot act upon mind." It is difficult to see the obviousness of this retort unless mind is to be regarded as synonymous with consciousness. This is but one more example of lack of precision in the use of the terms employed. The materialist has nothing to fear from a dualistic psychology of which the terms have not yet been defined, and whose adherents are driven to rely on the *Alice in Wonderland* methods of making words mean what they *want* them to mean.

FRANK KENYON.

SPIRITUALISTIC BLARNEY

FOR the first time—as far as I remember—the Spiritualist weekly, *Two Worlds*, has condescended to notice our existence. It heads an article "Scientists' Changed Outlook," and quotes from one of our articles, "Scientists who remain pure materialists are not any longer typical." And it adds, "Even *The Freethinker*, leading organ of British rationalism, agnosticism and atheism, has been forced to admit in an article by John Rowland, 'that there is a change of outlook in the world of science. . . .'"

Now there is such a thing as intellectual honesty and integrity even in journalism, and even *Two Worlds* might subscribe a little to such a code. It knows quite well, or ought to know, that we admit in this journal all sorts of unpopular opinions. We have invited, over and over again, any representative Christian to put his case before our readers; we gave space for weeks for a spiritualist to put his case for survival; and no opponent of Free-thought, who had something to say against us, has been denied hospitality in our columns.

Mr. John Rowland, after writing for us for years, has felt—as he has a right to do—that our uncompromising Materialism and Atheism no longer represent his views, and he has been allowed to say so. Most of the readers of this journal, and certainly its editorial direction, are completely opposed to him. We disagree altogether that Science has become "Theistic"—which is what Mr. Rowland is pleading. That some scientists are still Christians, or are prepared to believe in a "mathematical Deity," or a "living Unknowable," we are aware—but what these vagaries have to do with Science as such is quite another question. Mr. Rowland's views have been vigorously attacked, anyway, and for *Two Worlds* to take passages from his articles and trumpet the glorious news that *The Freethinker* has "changed" is a piece of brazen effrontery we did not think any journal was capable of.

We ask *Two Worlds* not only to admit that it has made a mistake, but handsomely to apologise.

H.C.

ACID DROPS

In New York, some people called the "diocesan authorities" have condemned an Italian film called "The Miracle," and an R.C. gent. called Kellenberg calls it "an open insult to the faith of millions of people in this city and hundreds of millions of people throughout the world." But surely all these hundreds of millions of people can stay away and refuse to see the film? In all probability, hundreds of millions of people would like to see it, and quite possibly would agree that it insults Roman Catholicism by pointing out its hopeless credulity. In any case, notice the hand of the censor whenever the Church of Rome can get it in—no longer able to burn, torture, and kill, it can still use the weapon of suppression.

Winning fame on the radio is no guarantee that a speaker cannot say something silly on occasions. Dr. Charles Hill, M.P., for example, may give us words of wisdom on health, but the other day, he said at a Rotary Club that the new dogma of the Assumption was the most historic event of 1950. This shows the benign influence of religion. It was, of course, quite the most stupid event of the year, and the people who proclaimed it have made themselves the laughing-stock of the world.

It is not often that in a Catholic country anybody has much chance against the Church of Rome in a court of law; so we were agreeably surprised to find a Jehovah's Witness winning a seditious libel appeal. This gentleman claimed, in a pamphlet, that "Quebec's burning hate for God and Christ and freedom is the shame of all Canada," for which he got one month in gaol. On appeal recently, five judges ruled that there was no libel, and four opposed acquittal; so the champion of Jehovah won his case, and 1,000 similar cases are now to be re-considered. This must be a dreadful blow for the Vatican, and proves that Jehovah after all is stronger than Mary.

It is good to learn from the *Universe* that Satan never enjoyed "the Beatific Vision." The reason given is that "he led the revolt from God"—and though "there may be something of a mystery in the fall of angels," after all, we humans do "fall away from God," and if we can do it, why not angels? The logic here is unanswerable, and we in this journal have always agreed that the Church of Rome believes literally in Devils and Angels—and, of course, in Beatific Visions.

The Bishop of Exeter has been discussing gambling which he considers, "within certain limits," can be "an innocent amusement." But gambling can be also a dangerous amusement "because it is easily capable of abuse." The truth really is that gambling through football pools, as it necessitates buying postal orders and stamps—and thus brings millions of pounds every week to the Post Office—is tolerated even by the unco' guid among our legislators. But lottery tickets, which so often can be bought for cash and necessitates neither postal orders nor many stamps, is absolutely wrong, and against the teachings of "our Lord." That is all there is in it.

It is not quite clear whether Father Divine is really God Almighty himself, or just an ordinary Messiah; but some interesting photographs in *Picture Post* of his white wife, who used to be a typist and is now known as

Mother Divine show her preaching to "hysterical followers." These now number in all, we are told, 22 millions, and God owns 10 million dollars worth of property, 15 million dollars in cash, 300 businesses, and two newspapers. The money, it appears, was mostly given by Angels—that is, by people who are sure Father Divine is God himself and not a Messiah. *Picture Post* gives altogether a beautiful picture of a religion in the making.

A writer to the *Christian* is very angry at the sneering the Dean of Canterbury is subject to just because he is a Communist. As he says, "I am confirmed in my belief that his prophetic ministry of universal peace is in accordance with the revealed word of God." And he would like to see how anyone could expose "as false or unchristian the Communism the Dean advocates." Perhaps the Dean's Communism is not the Atheistic Communism that other Christians blame for everything evil in the world, but the Communism of Christ and the early Christians. Or is it?

Apart from fun and games on Sunday during the Festival of Britain, what about the jolly old intoxicating liquor stunt? Will people be allowed to drink on Sundays only at stated hours or all day? Will God's Holy day be abominably desecrated by the sale of intoxicants which bring all sorts of wickedness in their train and, as one pious journal moans, "the possibility of ultimate eternal ruin?" God alone knows, we don't—though we suspect that ultimately more people will have a fine old time on Sundays than on weekdays.

Never, we are solemnly told by Prebendary E. M. Darling, since the invention of printing "has religion had such an opportunity of widening its influence as is given by the wireless." Of course. But when he goes on to say "that opportunity is being neglected," he is talking pious twaddle. Every day there are services for both adults and children, boring services, fundamentalist nonsense, and unintelligible sermons, it is true—but it is all in honour of religion. What would he say if the same amount of time was given to Free-thought?

The Bible House in Seoul, Southern Korea, has been utterly destroyed and is now a smouldering ruin. Nearly a million volumes of Scriptures, including unbound New Testaments and Gospels, have been burned. We wonder if an expression of sympathy would be wise because, as every true Christian would agree, God's will was behind the destruction.

Has anybody seen Jesus? On the authority of the Rev. Frank Martin in the *Sunday Graphic & Sunday News*, the Second Adventists are expecting that Christ will soon visibly appear from Heaven, but he is satisfied that Christ has already come. If he is right, the Second Adventists have been looking the wrong way for Jesus, and have been given the slip. If Jesus could be found, it might compensate for the loss of the Coronation Stone.

Some people have just discovered that the real reason why the Stone of Scone is "sacred" is because it was "the first revered object of religion." It would be difficult to estimate the yards of drivel the revered object has been responsible for.

"THE FREETHINKER"

41, Gray's Inn Road,
London, W.C. 1.
Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

Will correspondents kindly note to address all communications in connection with "The Freethinker" to: "The Editor," and not to any particular person. Of course, private communications can be sent to any contributor.

BENEVOLENT FUND N.S.S.—The General Secretary gratefully acknowledges the following donation: Bolton Branch N.S.S., 15s. 6d.

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. 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.

SUGAR PLUMS

We give in another column an account of the very successful dinner held last week by the N.S.S. in commemoration of the centenary of G. W. Foote, the founder and the first editor of *The Freethinker*. It was a huge success, and more applications for tickets were received than could be accommodated. Apart from the R.P.A. contingent, visitors were present from Leicester, Colchester, Benfleet, Southampton, Birmingham, Gravesend, Westcliff-on-Sea, Paignton (Devon) and Llanfairfechan; and a special word must be given to the veteran of the party. Mr. E. Pankhurst, of the West Ham Branch, who, at 92 years, enjoyed every minute of the proceedings.

Readers in Northampton are invited to attend a brief ceremony at the Bradlaugh statue at 1-30 p.m., Tuesday, January 30, the sixtieth anniversary of Charles Bradlaugh's death, when Mr. H. E. Cooper and Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner will lay a wreath in Bradlaugh's memory.

An international week-end camp will be held from Friday, 4 p.m., July 27, to Monday, 2 p.m., July 30, at Roy Hill Camp, near Buxted, Sussex. It is particularly for the under 40's, though veterans will be there as targets. The discussions will be mainly in English with French as a secondary medium. The subjects discussed will include Dedication to Freethought, Freedom of Thought in Present Circumstances, and the Roman Challenge. The camp charge, exclusive of travelling and extras, will be two guineas. The numbers will be limited, so early application to the Organiser, Mr. M. L. Burnet, 4a, Inverness Place, London, W.2, is requested. Those readers in the Home Counties who would be prepared to offer three or four days' hospitality continuous with the conference week-end to conference members coming from abroad or from the North are invited to contact Mr. Burnet. The proceedings are under the auspices of the London Committee of the World Union of Freethinkers and has the support of the Executive of the N.S.S.

gotten by all who took part. If the "shade" of G. W. Foote could have looked on he might well also have gone away with a feeling of exultation.

A word must be said for the "organisation" behind the scenes. Everything went off perfectly, and all responsible deserve more than a well-earned tribute.

H. C.

THE FORTY-FIFTH N.S.S. ANNUAL DINNER

It was not only the magical name of G. W. Foote which caused such enthusiasm at the Charing Cross Hotel where the forty-fifth Annual Dinner of the N.S.S. was held on January 13, but the fact that it was also the occasion when so many old friends could meet again in the name of Freethought and the Society to which they were so devoted.

There were, as usual, many visitors from the provinces and also a contingent from the Rationalist Press Association, headed by Mr. F. C. C. Watts and Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner, the two grandsons of two of the greatest Freethinkers of last century, Charles Watts and Charles Bradlaugh; and, of course, everybody was happy to welcome again Mr. and Mrs. Chapman Cohen both looking better than for many years. Mr. Cohen, indeed, though he no longer speaks in public, is still active on the journal he so ably edits. The President, Mr. R. H. Rosetti, was also at his best, aided by willing stewards all working for the comfort of the guests.

The dinner itself was excellent in every way, in fact, almost as good as the sumptuous ones some of us remember before World War I. Perhaps many of the guests were too busy talking to their neighbours to notice this.

There were two toasts during the evening—one to George William Foote, and the other to the National Secular Society. The President introduced the first with some well-chosen words and happy reminiscences of serving on the Executive under G. W. Foote when he was President in succession to Charles Bradlaugh. Mr. H. Cutner, who proposed the toast, then gave a brief account of G. W. Foote's work as writer, orator and debater, stressing the grave injustice of the twelve months he had to serve for the ridiculous "crime" of blasphemy, and pointing out how much is owed to him for the successful result in favour of Freethought of what is known as the Bowman Case. The toast was responded to with enthusiasm. Mr. Victor B. Neuberger—the son of a famous father in the history of Freethought—followed with an eloquent appreciation of Foote as a fine literary scholar and critic.

It was the guest of the evening, Mr. Sidney Silverman, M.P., who proposed the toast to the National Secular Society. Witty and urbane, Mr. Silverman made a delightful speech in favour of Freethought—as if he had been one of our oldest members; he was followed by Mr. F. A. Ridley and Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, both of whom warmly supported the toast which was also received with great fervour.

The "cabaret" show has always been a feature of our dinners, and this one equalled, if it did not even excel, most previous ones. Both Miss Eileen Cusack and Mr. Arthur Richards artistically and beautifully rendered their individual songs, while their duet, "Hear My Song," was particularly effective. Miss Pamela Cundell proved a delightful comedienne and raconteur, her witty stories—and the way she got them over, brought hearty laughter and applause. It was the same for Mr. Syd Reville's stories which were equally enjoyed. Accompanying them at the piano was an old friend, Mr. Cyril Addison, who proved to be equally at home with classical and popular music, and whose beautiful rendering of the first movement of Chopin's Sonata in B flat minor so well began the evening's entertainment.

The final singing of "Auld Lang Syne" brought a memorable evening regretfully to an end—but it was one the souvenir of which will, perhaps, never be for-

(Concluded in previous column)

“THE MEDIAEVAL MANICHEE”

WE recently made the acquaintance of a book published originally in 1947 by the distinguished mediævalist and historian of the Byzantine Empire, Mr. Stephen Runciman, entitled *The Mediæval Manichee*. As its name implies, Mr. Runciman's book deals with the Christian dualist sects of the Middle Ages who gave so much trouble to the Catholic Church throughout the mediæval era. It is too late in the day to write a formal review of *The Mediæval Manichee* which, in any case, is probably out of print by this time. But we must confess to finding the book so enthralling that we almost feel a moral obligation to introduce at least its subject-matter to the readers of *The Freethinker*. The following paragraphs are, accordingly, based upon Mr. Runciman's learned pages. For the benefit of any would-be reader who may be able still to obtain the book either from the publishers or from his local public library, we may mention that *The Mediæval Manichee* was published by the Cambridge University Press in, as remarked above, 1947.

Mr. Runciman's theme throughout his fascinating pages is the mediæval heresy or, more accurately, crop of heresies that flourished or, very often, conspicuously failed to flourish throughout the Middle Ages in what is often erroneously regarded as an “Age of Faith” exclusively dominated by the Catholic Church. Far from this actually being the case, the learned author indicates that, side by side with the dominant orthodoxy of the Catholic Church, there existed, usually in what may be termed the underworld of mediæval society a whole succession of dualistic heresies in both Eastern and Western Europe, which were savagely and impartially persecuted by both the Roman orthodoxy of the West and by the Byzantine orthodoxy of Eastern Christianity. Indeed, as our historian has reason to demonstrate, so uninterrupted and ultimately successful was this persecution that our knowledge of these heretical sects is derived almost entirely from the records of their orthodox Christian persecutors.

The common bond of all these “Manichean” heresies was Dualism; the belief, eminently plausible in the grim Universe which we inhabit, that Evil is a sovereign and independent power over which the good God of more orthodox theology has either no power or only a very limited jurisdiction. Such a belief in an everlasting duality in the Universe was common to all the heresies described by Mr. Runciman; to the Patarenes, Bogomils, and Paulicians in Eastern Greek-speaking Europe and to the better-known Albigenses in the West. It drew its basic strength from the very nature of life itself, in which what seems to us as evil so frequently triumphs over our conceptions of good in both nature and in human experience. When in an animistic theology, personified as Evil, Ahriman, Satan, the Evil One so often appeared to have the better of a supposedly beneficent Providence as to suggest that he was in fact an at least equally potent Deity and not merely a fallen angel as Christian orthodoxy has always taught. So it is not surprising to find that there were Gnostic heretics who taught that while God was busy elsewhere in the Universe, the Devil had actually created this world behind his back! Or, as one of the Albigenses told the Catholic Inquisitor who was examining him, “Nothing in this world is good; how then can a good God have created it?” To which Christian orthodoxy could only reply with the stake and the sword of the persecutor which, incidentally, only presented

“the Mediæval Manichee” with fresh proofs of his fundamental thesis that the world is in the grip of the Evil One!

It has been customary amongst the historians of the Albigenses to refer to these heretical Dualists as “Manicheans.” However, our historian, whilst himself using this designation in the title of his book, does so under protest. For, as he demonstrates, Manicheism itself, whilst it may have started as a Christian heresy, was really a separate, though eclectic religion outside the confines of Christianity, which narrowly missed the status of a world-religion. Its founder Mani was a Babylonian and a subject of the then Persian Empire who was barbarously executed by its Zoroastrian priesthood (274 A.D. is the traditional date of his martyrdom). Subsequent to which, Manicheism, which for a time included St. Augustine amongst its converts, was impartially persecuted by Christian, Pagan, and Muslim rulers as heretical and as an anti-social force.

Mr. Runciman, however, shows clearly that “Christian Dualism,” whilst similar in many respects to Manicheism and, no doubt, influenced by it, was not identical with it. Marcion, the first heresiarch of a dualistic theology within the Christian Church, lived before Mani (early second century) and founded a separate Church which lasted nearly as long as that of Mani. Most of the Christian Gnostics were Dualists who probably influenced Manicheism as much as it influenced them. It appears that not only the Albigenses but also the other Christian Dualist sects regarded themselves as Christians which the Manicheans did not, and endeavoured to reconcile their Dualist beliefs with traditional Christian theology. In an “Age of Faith” in which it was axiomatic that “the heretic is worse than the infidel,” it was the fact that the Albigenses and their Oriental spiritual kinsfolk claimed to be Christians that pre-eminently aroused the alarm and wrath of the Christian Churches against them in both East and West.

Thanks to the revealing archives of the Inquisition, we know actually much more about the Western Dualists, known collectively as “Albigenses” from one of their local French strongholds, Albi, than we do about the older Dualist sects in the Greek-speaking East. Mr. Runciman shows the general similarity between these sects and indicates that the Albigenses themselves probably derived their Dualistic tenets from the East. He further shows how the Dualist heresy influenced secular as well as religious history. For Dualism acquired considerable political power. The Bogomils established a kingdom in Bosnia and many of the feudal lords of Southern France were Albigenses.

Nor in the face of furious persecution, did the Dualist sects always retain their belief in non-violence. In the mid-ninth century the Paulicians set up a military state at Tephrike on the Euphrates which long defied the Byzantine Empire and put two Emperors to flight before finally succumbing to the armies of the Eastern Empire. While the Albigenses offered a long and stubborn resistance to the Crusading armies of Pope Innocent III and Simon de Montfort in the early 13th century.

Eventually, however, Dualism as an organised cult sank under the unequal struggle and has been extinct since the Middle Ages. It emerges from our author's pages that, however much we may sympathise with the victims of one of the most horrible crimes in the bloodstained history of religious terrorism, yet excessive sentiment must not blind us to the fact that the

ethics of Christian Dualism were, perhaps even more anti-social than were those of their persecutors. For the belief that the material Universe is the exclusive property of the Evil One led logically to extreme asceticism which tended to race-suicide even more directly than did Catholicism with its glorification of celibacy; incidentally, the present Catholic horror of birth-control may have originated in the course of its struggle with Dualism.

Mr. Runciman has laid all students both of religious history and of the Middle Ages under a lasting debt of gratitude. He has shed a flood of light upon a little-known epoch and upon obscure but fascinating chapters in the history of religious thought and mediæval social history. In expressing a hope that a new edition of *The Mediæval Manichee* will soon appear, we record our appreciation of one of the most illuminating studies of religious and cultural history that it has been our good fortune to meet in a very long time.

F. A. RIDLEY.

SCIENCE, RELIGION AND MORALS

XII—HUMAN IMMORTALITY

- (1) The last theological principle of Christianity it is necessary to consider here is Human Immortality.
- (2) This belief is so fundamental and essential that it is the keystone principle of the Christian system.
- (3) It should be realised that unless Human Immortality is true the whole structure of Christianity collapses.
- (4) The Incarnation and Atonement of Jesus are intelligible only in connection with a theological purpose.
- (5) Human Redemption is intelligible only as salvation for some distant purpose yet to come.
- (6) It is unnecessary at present to enter, in any detail, into the history of ideas on Immortality.
- (7) The immediate purpose of this inquiry is to ascertain, if possible, what are Christian beliefs.
- (8) The whole subject of Christianity has been re-examined during the past century or so.
- (9) Among educated leaders of Christian thought there have been considerable modification during this period.
- (10) While agreeing that some developments are allowable, Christianity should retain its fundamental principles.
- (11) A study of the Gospel Story indicates that Jesus believed in a dualistic system of body and soul.
- (12) This dualistic system also appears to have been the belief of his immediate apostles and disciples.
- (13) Since these early days Christian Churches seem to have accentuated this essential dualism.
- (14) The words "spirit" and "soul" seem generally synonymous and to indicate some immaterial "essence."
- (15) Right through the history of Christianity the belief in the survival of this "soul" is essential.
- (16) One great difficulty for the investigator is to find some definite and tangible meaning for this word.
- (17) Whether the words "spirit" and "soul" indicate fundamentally different entities does not matter here.
- (18) In any case the word "soul" can be used to indicate an immaterial entity attached to each person.
- (19) One presumes that the hypothesis is that each and every human has an immortal "soul."
- (20) It seems also that Christians do not believe in any form of transmigration of souls.

(21) Christians believe, it seems, that a body can exist without a soul, i.e., a dead human and lower animals.

(22) It is not obvious whether they do, or do not, believe that a soul can exist without a body.

(23) These hypotheses seem to be modifications of age-long ideas which were systematised by the Greeks.

(24) If, and how, a disembodied soul exists was not made clear by either Greeks or Christians.

(25) Tentatively, here, it will be considered that a "soul" includes a human's essence and personality.

(26) The reputed sayings of Jesus do not deal in any definite manner with the problems of philosophy.

(27) It is not clear how far "body" and "soul" were distinct entities in his thoughts or beliefs.

(28) The reputed Epistles of Paul have a very decided tendency towards mystic Gnostic Spiritism.

(29) The Gospel Story seems to have been deliberately intended to emphasise the contrary materialism.

(30) Here the three main Creeds of the principal Christian Churches will be taken as authoritative.

(31) In regard to Human Immortality the reputed sayings of Jesus are indefinite in details.

(32) His main topic was a "change of heart," or more correctly, mind; a change of outlook on life.

(33) This change was a matter of urgency owing to the pending "coming of the Kingdom."

(34) The general outlines of his teaching on both morals and immortality are fairly clear.

(35) What was meant by the imminent "coming of the Kingdom" is obscure, but it was said to be near.

(36) If the reputed statements of Jesus are to be taken as the basis of Christianity certain beliefs follow.

(37) The early Hebrews could not conceive of the immortal survival of humans except in bodily form.

(38) By the time of Jesus Greek ideas on the dualistic nature of humans had spread in Palestine.

(39) Jesus had this belief in mind, it seems, but not so accentuated as it became later in Christianity.

(40) The Gospel Story in its accounts emphasises that there is a material resurrection of the body.

(41) Jesus stated definitely several times that the end of the then existing world would soon occur.

(42) That then there would be a "Judgment Day" when the lives of all humans would be judged by God.

(43) That by this judgment they would be divided into the good to be saved and the bad to be damned.

(44) That this judgment was definite, final and irrevocable and lasted throughout eternity.

(45) That the saved went to Paradise and eternal happiness and the lost to Hell and eternal torment.

(46) There is in Jesus' teaching no evidence of any evolutionary salvation of the damned or of purgatory.

(47) There is no Gospel evidence for that humanitarian "Universalism" of modern theology.

(48) It certainly had no place in the teaching of Jesus nor of the great Christian Churches.

(49) Many of these points must necessarily arise again in subsequent consideration of morals.

(50) The basic theological principles briefly summarised above are sufficient for present purposes.

W. EDWARD MEADS.

END OF PART II

Of religion I know nothing, at least in its favour. We have fools in all sects, and impostors in most; why should I believe mysteries no one understands, because written by men who chose to mistake madness for inspiration, and style themselves Evangelicals? I am surrounded here by parsons and methodists; but not infected with the mania.—Byron.

GUESSING AND VERIFYING

FULL of turkey and stuffing, pudding and mince pie, and with peace towards all men: that's me. For it is Christmas Day, in the afternoon. The King is about to broadcast, and I, if I can overcome the effects of repletion, will try to set down on paper thoughts generated by reading the latest article in *The Freethinker* of my old friend, John Rowland. This article was headed, somewhat redundantly as I think, "Materialism and Science," and will be found in the issue of December 24, 1950. Redundancy, or superfluity of words, occurs in the employment of the first word of the title, for there is no spiritual science, except in the crackpot American religion of Mrs. Mary Baker G. Eddy, who claims that every blessed thing in the Universe is spiritual, and that matter is an illusion. Scientific people, on the other hand, have to deal with a universe of extended matter, and of force (or energy), which is activated matter. They deal with this through their material organs, the sense organs, and as scientists, *qua* scientists, they have nothing more with which to deal. A scientist may also be a religious man, an artist, a respectable citizen, or a disreputable poet. He may be all or any of these things, and many more, but as a scientist he is limited to the material in which he works. He examines matter with his senses, he experiments with it so far as he can, seeks for correspondences in phenomena, and on those correspondences builds "natural laws." If he is a wise man he listens to what the non-scientific person has to say on phenomena of all sorts. He may in this way pick up a hint or two that will be useful to him in his scientific work, but if he is a true scientific man he will accept nothing that has not been verified as a scientific truth.

All this friend Rowland will find, I still hope, as the veriest elementary statement of fact, for he has had, what I have not, a training in scientific thought, when he was graduating for his B.Sc. degree. Yet now, following, I surmise, a certain growth, or stresses, or at any rate, development in his mind, he seems to have a hankering to mix up the plain, orderly thinking of the scientific man with the ideas and guesses of the theologian. From physics he would "advance" to metaphysics, from substance to the shadow, to legend and myth and dream.

All the foregoing is not to say that the "new Rowland" does not render us Freethinkers and Secularists a sort of a service, one somewhat like the skeleton at the feast. He is also (I say this without offence, I hope) a sort of example of what we may become if we allow our mental muscles to become flabby. (I wish I had had a skeleton at the feast at dinner to-day—I should now have a clearer head!) For instance, in his article he makes what I take to be a true observation. He alleges that there is "a change of outlook in the world of science . . . that may make the whole position of the scientist quite different." This change, he avers, is "a new feeling of accommodation between the scientific and religious outlook." I rather gather that this accommodation is welcome to Mr. Rowland, but whether that is so or not, it is a service done to force us to think of this alleged change, and to ask ourselves, if this is true, Why? and what are we going to do about it? At a later date I may deal with what I deem are the causes of this fact.

A fact, then; but not a desirable fact. And a one-sided fact, in the main. There are few Bishop Barneses, Red and Gloomy Deans in the Anglican Church, while, of course, the oldest Church, that of Rome, stands pat.

What of the scientists? Let us examine Mr. Rowland's article.

First, we notice that of the four cited works, or quotations, of "eminent scientists," two of these are by Einstein and Max Planck, both mathematicians, while of the other two, Miss Gertrude Quinton is a schoolmarm, and Dr. G. D. Yarnold, at a seminary, lectures on physics. With every respect to the two latter, the lady and the gentleman, to put them in conjunction with Einstein and Planck is like comparing Punch and Judy with Forbes-Robertson and Ellen Terry. One might as well call me a second Shelley because we both happened to write poetry from the Atheist standpoint. The whole thing is ridiculous, and we can at once turn from the small fry to the question whether a mathematician, however eminent, is, in the true meaning of the word, a scientist.

I should say that, generally speaking, he is not. What! The inventors of the Generalised Theory of Relativity and the "famous Quantum Theory" not scientists! Without turning a hair, I say, without hesitation, I doubt if a man, however eminent in his line of study, is a scientist unless he undertakes the experimental verification that is half at least of the business of being a scientist. I have no evidence of such work, and until it is forthcoming I maintain that they are eminent mathematicians to whom the world owes a great debt for what may turn out, on verification, true and inspired guesses. A philosopher, a poet, in fact all true artists, work by inspired guesses, or inspiration, but we don't call them scientists in these days. In the Middle Ages we know that Theology was called the Divine Science, but few of the clergy nowadays would call their theology a science, as did Mrs. Eddy.

Mr. Rowland writes: "Einstein, Max Planck, and the like." "The like": yes, there are plenty of likes; there was Jeans, the astronomer, and Eddington, the physicist. They are all alike these people, using figures, as you and I use letters and words. They are thinkers, philosophers, using cyphers and algebraic signs, as musicians use notes, and Mr. Rowland and myself use words. Bertrand Russell is master of both figures and words. Are we three to be called scientists? We don't seek verification by experiment, we guess more or less brilliantly. Eddington and Einstein guess most brilliantly.

No; for me the scientists remain the plodding Darwins, studying their earthworms, the Ambrose Flemings, with their moulds, the Haldanes and the Huxleys with their gases and biological specimens, and not the expounders of unverified theories. The verifiers, not the guessers, are the true scientists.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

BISHOPS BLESS BRIDES' BEDS

WITH my antiquarian books, I have two large, thick volumes entitled "Private Letters and Papers, Domestic and Foreign, of the Reign of Henry VIII, Preserved in the Public Record Office and in the British Museum, For Private Circulation, under the directions of the Master of the Rolls, and with the sanction of Her Majesty's Secretaries of State. The authentic historical information is marvellous and extraordinarily curious as revealed in over 600 pages.

These "Papers and Letters" bring to the reader accounts of events during the Tudor Period and connect them with later modes and customs of after years. Here is a specimen of the church custom that no newly-

married couple could go to bed together until the Bridal Bed had been blessed by the clergy whose pride and bigotry were such that newly-married couples must wait until midnight, after the Marriage Day, before the pronouncement of a Bishop's benediction, unless handsomely paid, so that the married couple might undress before midnight and go to bed. The Clergy had a special form of ritual for Blessing the Nuptial Bed, and this ceremonial was observed at the Marriage Bed of a Princess, as:—

"All Men at Her coming, to be voided, except Woemen, till she be brought to her Bedd, and the Man, he sitting in the Bedd, in his Shirte, then the Bishoppe shall come in and Bless the Bedd and leave the Man and the Woeman to themselves."

Of *Baby Marriage*, the Record states that Princess Mary, Henry VIII's daughter, just Two Years Old, dressed in cloth of gold, was taken in arms by Wolsey and presented to her Parents, for their consent to the Baby's marriage which being granted, then Wolsey presented the diminutive gold ring, in which was set a diamond of great value, and the ring was fitted and passed over the second finger-joint. The Baby Bride was blessed, and her Bedd by Wolsey, at Greenwich where expensive entertainments of the most expensive description were held.

WM. AUGUSTUS VAUGHAN.

CORRESPONDENCE

"FROTHY"

SIR.—Mr. Cutner should not feel so smug over his frothy utterance re the use of the Atom Bomb.

Because only one letter of mild disagreement was received by him he assumed that the majority of readers of *The Freethinker* agreed with his ready acceptance of American civilisation's cure for all ills.

No, we didn't!!! Like myself, many must have been horror-struck with such dangerous emotionalism. Fortunately the good sense of the Executive is known to us and their resolution has come as an expected but nevertheless desirable antidote to Mr. Cutner's poison.

With the lights of freedom going out in U.S.A. and indeed all over the world, including Britain, can we be sure that dropping A-Bombs on America's enemies will save civilisation?

Finally, in order to clarify the meaning of aggression, does Mr. Cutner think that the *invasion* of Korea by troops of the Western World is really *United Nations* action?—Yours, etc.,
G. CAPLAN.

THE ATOM BOMB

SIR.—In his article (December 10) Mr. Cutner says: "I am of the opinion of Bertrand Russell, that if a nation, any nation, wants to bring about war, it should be stopped at all costs—if there was no other way, then let us use the atom bomb."

If it is necessary to use atom bombs to save civilisation, then such a civilisation is not worth saving.

Mr. Cutner's views are exactly those of the R.C. Press and their dupes. The only difference between Mr. Cutner and these reactionaries is that the latter say that the atom bomb should be used as a last resort to save "Christian Democracy." Mr. Cutner says to save civilisation. It is the same music to different words.

Mr. Cutner says that Bertrand Russell holds similar views to his own; but at the complimentary dinner given to Bertrand Russell by the Australian Rationalist Association at Melbourne last year, in reply to a question by their secretary, Mr. W. Glanville Cook, Mr. Russell denied that he had advocated the use of the atom bomb and that he had been mis-reported. This denial appeared in the *Australian Rationalist*.

Mr. Cutner may speak for himself, but I should be very sorry to think that he spoke for the great body of Freethinkers.
—Yours, etc.,
F. A. HORNIBROOK.

N.S.S. AND THE ATOM BOMB

SIR.—May I as a member of the National Secular Society protest against our Executive passing a resolution on the subject of the atom bomb as being outside their province. I should equally challenge their right to pass resolutions, as

representing members of the Society, on Communism, Socialism, Vaccination, Vivisection, or Military Strategy. Our Executive are not there to try and govern the country, but to advance the cause of Secularism and combat religion. The members of the Executive have their views of course on the atom bomb, which they are free to ventilate in the press. Now Mr. Cutner has done this, and I thought his article one of the sanest and realistic statements I have read on the subject.—Yours, etc.,
ALFRED D. CORRICK.

THE N.S.S.

SIR.—Re Mr. Cutner's article (December 12, 1950) and his comments (January 7, 1951). I wish to associate myself with him, and particularly with his comment on the N.S.S. Executive. It was refreshing to read his bold and spirited reply.

It was to be expected that the Stalinists would support the Movement, and some of us saw the danger of them gaining influence to the detriment of the cause. Can it be that they have dominated the Executive of the N.S.S.?

What has happened to the Freethought Movement in Russia? I have read that it has been liquidated.

Locally, a Freethought leader approved the payment of priests after the putsch in Czechoslovakia. I am told that it is of no significance that on the syllabus no longer is printed the Principles and Objects of the N.S.S., and excuses are being made for loss of Freedom in the *transitional stage* in Russia. In fear, I sign myself.—Yours, etc.,
AN OLD FREETHINKER.

ATOM BOMBS

SIR.—When I read Mr. Cutner's article I thought it might give rise to some controversy, but never did I suppose that it would call for official censure.

The words Mr. Cutner has italicised should have barred this. Probably we all have misgivings about the use of the Atom Bomb to terminate the last war, but who can deny that it did terminate it? The loss of life, if it had continued for another year—as it well might—would, perhaps, have been much greater. Surely it is a problem to all our minds, and Mr. Cutner stated it for many readers of *The Freethinker*. All turns on the little word "if."

At any rate, opinions expressed in *The Freethinker* editorials are hardly going to be taken as if they were *ex cathedra* papal pronouncements, so why the fuss? As it has come only from the executive committee of the N.S.S., it makes me think that perhaps the ordinary reader of *The Freethinker* is a more careful reader!—Yours, etc.,
WM. KENT.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK.

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

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

INDOOR

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

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, January 23, 7 p.m.: A. D. HOWELL SMITH, "Who were the Witches?"

Glasgow Secular Society (Branch of the N.S.S.) (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: H. J. HENDERSON (Neg.), PHILIP STEIN (Affirm.), "That Soviet Policy is Aimed at Ensuring World Peace."

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: R. BARNES, "Czechoslovakia To-day."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Rev. W. L. CHIVERS, "Living Scientifically."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: Dr. HERMANN BONDI, "Thoughts on the Universe."

WANTED.—Gerald Massey's works on Christianity and Egyptian Mythology.—P. Newell, 13, Anhalt Road, S.W.11.

★ FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF ★

- AGE OF REASON.** By Thomas Paine. With 40 page introduction by Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 3s.; paper 2s.; postage 3d.
- AN ATHEIST'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY.** A Survey of Positions. By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.
- THE BIBLE HANDBOOK.** By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 3s.; postage 3d. Ninth edition.
- THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH?** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL.** By Chapman Cohen. An Appreciation of two great Reformers. Price 3s.; postage 3d.
- CHALLENGE TO RELIGION** (a re-issue of four lectures delivered in the Secular Hall, Leicester). By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.
- CHRISTIANITY—WHAT IS IT?** By Chapman Cohen. A criticism of Christianity from a not common point of view. Price 2s.; postage 2d.
- THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.** By W. A. Campbell. With a Preface by the Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson. Price 2s.; postage 2d.
- DETERMINISM OR FREEWILL?** By Chapman Cohen. Price cloth 2s. 6d.; postage 2d.
- ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING.** By Chapman Cohen. First, second, third and fourth series. Price 2s. 6d. each; postage 3d. The Four Volumes 10s. post free.
- THE EVOLUTION OF THE PAPACY.** By F. A. Ridley. Price 1s.; postage 1½d.
- THE FAULTS AND FAILINGS OF JESUS CHRIST.** By C. G. L. Du Cann. (Second Edition.) Price 4d.; postage 1d.
- THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION.** By Chapman Cohen. New Edition. Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- GOD AND EVOLUTION.** By Chapman Cohen. Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- GOD AND ME** (revised edition of "Letters to the Lord"). By Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 2s. 6d., postage 2d.; paper 1s. 3d.; postage 1d.
- GOD AND THE UNIVERSE.** By Chapman Cohen. A Criticism of Professors Huxley, Eddington, Jeans and Einstein. Price, cloth 3s. 6d., postage 2d.; paper 2s., postage 2d.
- A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT.** By Chapman Cohen. An outline of the philosophy of Freethinking. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 4d.
- THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE MYTHICAL CHRIST.** By Gerald Massey. What Christianity owes to Ancient Egypt. Price 9d.; postage 1d.
- HENRY HETHERINGTON.** By A. G. Barker. A Pioneer in the Freethought and Working-class Struggle of a Hundred Years Ago. Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- HOW THE CHURCHES BETRAY THEIR CHRIST.** An Examination of British Christianity. By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 9d.; postage 1d.
- INFIDEL DEATHBEDS.** By G. W. Foote. Revised and enlarged by A. D. McLaren. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.
- LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, An Anthology for Freethinkers.** By William Kent. Price, cloth 5s., paper 3s. 6d.; postage 3d.
- MATERIALISM RESTATED.** Fourth edition. By Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 3d.
- MISTAKES OF MOSES.** By Col. R. G. Ingersoll. Price 3d.; postage 1d.
- THE MOTHER OF GOD.** By G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; postage 1d.
- THE NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY HANDBOOK—** (General Information for Freethinkers.) Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS.** By J. M. Wheeler. Price 2s.; postage 2d.
- PETER ANNET, 1693—1769.** By Ella Twynam. Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT.** By Chapman Cohen. Price 3s.; postage 3d.
- PSYCHO-ANALYSIS—A MODERN DELUSION.** By Frank Kenyon. Price 5s.; postage 3d.
- ROME OR REASON? A Question for Today.** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; postage 1d.
- SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS.** By G. W. Foote. Price, cloth 3s.; postage 3d.
- SOCIALISM AND RELIGION.** By F. A. Ridley. Price 1s.; postage 1d.
- SPAIN AND THE CHURCH.** By Chapman Cohen. A chapter from "Creed and Character," by Chapman Cohen. Price 1d.; postage 1d.
- SPEAKING FOR MYSELF.** By Lady (Robert) Simon. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2d.
- THEISM OR ATHEISM.** The Great Alternative. By Chapman Cohen. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 3d.
- THERE ARE NO CHRISTIANS.** By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 4d.; postage 1d.
- THOMAS PAINE AND THETFORD.** Six postcards illustrating Paine's birth-town, including a portrait of the great reformer. Price 9d.; post free.
- THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHURCH.** By Colonel Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- WHAT IS RELIGION?** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- THOMAS PAINE, A Pioneer of Two Worlds.** By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 4d.; postage 1d.
- WILL YOU RISE FROM THE DEAD?** By C. G. L. Du Cann. An inquiry into the evidence of resurrection. Price 6d.; postage 1d.

PAMPHLETS for the PEOPLE

By CHAPMAN COHEN

What is the Use of Prayer? Did Jesus Christ Exist? There shall not suffer a Witch to Live. The Devil. Deity and Design. Agnosticism or...? Atheism. What is Freethought? Must we have a Religion? The Church's fight for the Child. Giving 'em Hell. Freethought and the Child. Morality without God. Christianity and Slavery. Gods and their Makers. Woman and Christianity. What is the use of a Future Life? Christianity and Ethics. Price 2s. each. Postage 1d.

Complete Set of 18, Cloth Bound. Price 5s. Postage 3d.

THE PIONEER PRESS 41, GRAY'S INN ROAD LONDON, W.C.1.