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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### A Reasoning Faith

THE title of a recent book on Christian Apologetics more than intrigued me. It is *Reasoning Faith* by the Rev. T. C. Hammond, M.A., and it is a long way from Paley. The author is inclined towards Idealism, but he is quite certain that "Neither ancient nor modern philosophy can raise effective barriers against the acceptance of the revelation of God in Christ." This sentence appears on the very first page of his book, so the thesis is settled at once and I fail to see why the author spent nearly 280 pages of "reasoning" on Christianity at all if it is so simple as that. Whether either ancient or modern philosophy settles anything anyway, I leave to philosophers to discuss—and some of us well know how many are perfect experts in a battle of words and little else.

The good old days when the "masses" were told what they had to believe because they could not read for themselves have gone for ever; and the modern educated parson has to produce a case for Christianity which appeals to people who have had some education both in history and science even if not in philosophy. It has to appeal to reason, and it has to answer "infidel" objections whether put crudely or intelligently. Mr. Hammond knows this quite well—he has now, as he says (as a witness to Gospel truth), to "make his message acceptable to the ordinary man." He must make his argument "not merely a defence against particular objections," but it has to have "a certain measure of positive content that will dispose the mind of his readers towards the acceptance of Christian foundations of faith."

At the outset, Mr. Hammond is in no small difficulty over the Virgin Birth. The apologist is, he says, by no means forced to deal with it as there are "other lines offering evidence of the unique character of our Lord." After all, there are apologists who maintain that the story of the Virgin Birth "is an accidental circumstance, due possibly to the imperfect conceptions of the New Testament writers." I am not sure here whether Mr. Hammond agrees with these apologists, but if he does then what becomes of "Revelation"? What becomes of the "undoubted fact" that the New Testament writers were all inspired by God Almighty? If they were not inspired it would be interesting to know how they got hold of some of the incidents related in such detail by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, to say nothing of the equally true recitals detailed in our Apocryphal Gospels?

Mr. Hammond talks learnedly—or tries to—of what he terms as the Minimising and the Maximising school. The latter appears to believe in everything, commas as well, so long as they are printed in the New Testament. The former is not quite so certain of some of the holy stories surrounding "our Lord." In fact, "a close

study of particular subjects has revealed fresh difficulties," which is by no means surprising. As I have said, a priest or a parson can no longer say, "Thus you must believe." When he had the field to himself and there were such things as torture, imprisonment, and violent death, his followers just had to believe; nowadays, "the more we know, the more difficulties will appear." This is undeniably true—only Mr. Hammond might have noted that it is not we who are responsible for the difficulties. And the fact that, "Difficulties are not peculiar to the Christian system," as he admits, is no excuse or explanation.

It is to the credit of Mr. Hammond that he recognises in Scientific Materialism the "most far-reaching system of Anti-Theism." As his own feelings towards a thorough-going Materialism are, I think, those of a convinced Idealist, most of his arguments are—in the opinion of the present writer—just nonsense. He has to go to Hume to show what difficulties the Materialist has to face, but when it suits him he throws overboard Hume who "does not appear to have seen" this or that. Either there is an objective world or there is not. Mr. Hammond, after carefully giving us his objection to Materialism (which includes the difficulties of proving that there is an objective world) will, no doubt, go down to his dining room and there partake of a good materialistic meal. He will not ask questions, if it is well cooked, as to where "the thing in itself" resides. Every Idealist philosopher will partake of a good meal, when he can get one, completely unconcerned about the difficulties of an objective Universe, or whether it is right or wrong to say, "I think and therefore I am." Years ago, Bradlaugh put it that no amount of argument will prove to a man that he does not exist, and if he is certain that he does, then he is also certain that he exists somewhere—and we call *that* the Universe. I have deliberately put it simply because no philosopher likes this problem discussed in simple terms. He much prefers to go to Hegel or Kant or to Prof. Whitehead. Once you get involved in a discussion with Idealist philosophers, you get into a war of words and can almost say goodbye to understanding.

That is why the Christian will do his utmost to inveigle you into a perfectly fruitless discussion as to whether there is a *real* Universe—in spite of the fact that God, after all, created it, and he made the stars also. If there is nothing outside a man's mind, then what did the Lord create? Just Mind? And how?

The Evolutionist has the perfect answer to the Idealist. If this world of ours (there is no need to bother with the Universe) was at one time merely some extended gaseous matter, it could not have supported "life." If life was evolved, that is, at one time there was no life in the world, then it is obvious that "matter" preceded "mind." That is the case for Materialism, and in it there is no room whatever for a God or Vitalism. Such terms as "spiritual reality" have no



meaning whatever except to convinced Christians, and they can make the words mean anything.

Mr. Hammond devotes a chapter to the "Agnostic Position" and he soon begins the war of words all over again. "We are brought face to face," he declares, "in a new form with the old conflict concerning innate ideas." Locke and Hume and many other philosophers have a great deal to say about "innate ideas"; and one can get again involved into a very pretty discussion. The idea behind all this is to discredit science and plain thinking, bring in God Almighty as the "explanation" of everything, and from God it is a very short step to Jesus Christ. Once you have swallowed the biggest absurdity—God Almighty—the rest is easy. Christianity must be true.

Mr. Hammond cannot dispose of Evolution, however hard he tries, even with the help of the primitive nonsense of Mr. Douglas Dewey, the gentleman who believes every word of Genesis. But does he himself believe the Creation Story? The answer is that he tries in many very laborious pages to show that, in spite of the difficulties in understanding what the Lord meant or did not mean by the word "day," it is better for Salvation, to come to his (Mr. Hammond's) opinion, "that there is no necessary contradiction between evolution and creation." I can fancy nothing more utterly and more hopelessly nonsensical than that. Mr. Hammond could have said the same thing at once without going into his childish discussion at all. One of his "authorities" is a Lt.-Col. Turton, the author of a Fundamentalist work which once had a large circulation among the uneducated and is quite worthless.

If *Reasoning Faith* represents "reasoning" on the part of its author, I can only marvel at that of his publishers.

H. CUTNER.

## SAINT BERNARD SHAW

### The Truth About His Religion

THE greatest Freethinker of our lifetime was the late George Bernard Shaw. Not merely because he was easily the most famous and most influential in the whole world but because his free-thinking was so complete and uncompromising that it extended into every phase of human thought and activity. Freethinkers in religion, politics or economics are many. But complete freethinkers are rare indeed.

Now Miss Blanche Patch, his secretary, a long-standing friend of mine has sent me, very kindly, a copy of her "best seller" called *Thirty Years with G.B.S.*, just published by Gollancz. In that book is a chapter "The Mystic" dealing with Shaw's religion.

But before dealing with Shaw's religion, readers will want to ask: "Is the book good?" by which word "good" they mean "interesting to me." To Shavians and to all interested in Shaw the book undoubtedly is. But by the standard of the best biography (which is Boswell) I am bound to say that "B. Patch on Shaw is not A. Patch on Boswell." Miss Patch had the opportunity. But like the policeman in the ribald anecdote she had not the inclination—as Boswell had—to report in full at the time.

She did not wholeheartedly worship Shaw, as Boswell did his hero. Far from it. She prides herself on never being a Shavian. That does not matter. But she was not even a sympathiser. Quite obviously her employer

often repelled and exasperated her—especially when he regarded her as no more than a chair or typewriter. Her detachment, her efficiency and her serviceability (to all of which G.B.S. paid tribute) we can praise because they undoubtedly helped Shaw to greater output. She had every virtue except the one needful: an understanding heart. She was a Martha instead of a Mary. She was the critic on the hearth. Had she possessed the Marian quality she would have been a better biographer, giving us more of the real Shaw and less of herself and her family.

At times, and in bits, she is unbelievably disappointing. She trifles and belittles. She sees not the ever-young and spirited mind but the frail, feeble, troublesome physical machine. Who cares if Shaw was vain of his eyebrows or once wrote "bodge" for "job" in Pitmanic shorthand? The wart on Cromwell's face is not important to military and political students.

"No man is a hero to his valet" says the tag. And after all, a secretary is a mental, if not a physical, valet. However, Shaw is his own Boswell. No English author has so carefully, plainly, and fully delineated himself in his writings. So it does not matter if Miss Patch tries to be judicious and succeeds only in being judicial. Most of her book is competent journalism—which is all most readers want!

Some time ago I wrote in *The Freethinker* an article on Shaw's religion. Shaw read it and approved its accuracy. Another one of my articles, he declared, was "by a true son of Bradlaugh" which, as I had a limited admiration for Charles Bradlaugh, I thought no compliment. But I learned later to my astonishment that Shaw had the very highest opinion of Bradlaugh not only as a freethinker but as a human phenomenon. He regarded him as the most formidable platform speaker and debater of his lifetime and even feared him as an opponent. A case, I think, of Shaw's essential humility (which Miss Patch also noticed) and a case of the greater reverencing the lesser.

To deal again now with Shaw's religion. Was Shaw a religionist or a freethinker? The question is stupid: he was both, just, as for instance, atheistic Buddhists are. It was free-thinking that gave him a religion of his own, a temporary religion of creative Evolution, which he arrived at *via* Atheism, and the same free-thinking prevented him from regarding that religion as the "last word!" He was quite ready to change that religion for a better and wiser one, when human thought should arrive at a better one—and the language of his last Will and Testament makes that fact clear. What is this but the "religion" of freethinking and nothing else?

Shaw's religion is a confused and contradictory enigma to Miss Patch as to many Churchmen and atheists alike. Really, it is sensible, consistent, logical and perfectly understandable. The God of the Churches (looking very like Shaw in appearance) whom he following William Blake called Nobadaddy, he rejected as childish. The Cross-tianity of the Christians he denied and decried. But a purpose behind life, which he christened the Life-Force was his god whom he faithfully worshipped by his work, the fulfilment of that divine purpose. He was a Saint of his own religion. His prayer was self-expression by speech and writing.

Naturally enough, as we all do, he regarded other religion or non-religion whether Catholic, Protestant, Atheistic, or other, through the spectacle of his own religion. To this test he brought everything: "Is it



serving or dis-serving the true purpose of the Life-Force?" If yes, he approved it: if otherwise, he combated it.

So he would—of course—believe in such ancient theological concepts as the Life-to-come, the Communion of Saints, the Immaculate Conception (of all women) and the every-day reality of Godhead and the Kingdom of Heaven." The basic ideas behind these phrases were in harmony with his religion. So, too, he naturally appreciated the Bible and the Prayer Book while hating the superficial falsities in them. And, of course, he did not (how could he, holding the religion he did?) believe in the Resurrection (of the Body) and the (individual physical) Life Everlasting or in (what are ordinarily called) miracles.

It is all essentially simple. Shaw has been (as he claimed) most explicit about it (and most consistent and definite, too) in his writings and speeches. There is no excuse for misunderstanding him, even if one is hostile to his religious ideas. They are plain as paving-stones.

For Miss Patch, the misapprehension of the vulgar is Shaw's own fault. I do not agree. The "general" are "capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise" as Shakespeare complained. It is not, as Miss Patch declares, that Shaw "would frequently imagine a meaning of his own for someone else's idea." Rather was it that he gave the true (and often the old and forgotten and significant) meaning to what had been displaced and distorted and falsified, as where he, denying the Roman Catholic Church, yet said he believed in the One Holy Catholic Church, embracing, of course, in that expression, all mankind of whatever creed or no-creed.

Miss Patch badly misunderstands both Shaw's religion and irreligion. We can forgive her since most people do that. For instance, when Shaw improves the National Anthem with "Thine to Eternity" she says that Shaw did not believe in Eternity. Of course he did. What he did not believe in was eternal life for individual physical bodies of men, animals and plants (or planets). He believed in the indestructibility of the spirit within them as one believes in fire after the individual candle-flame is extinguished. This is very different. Where is any evidence that Shaw did not believe in the eternity of the Life-Force?

Naturally, too, intelligent men of more conventional religion (like Temple, the former Archbishop, and Dr. Inge) could see that Shaw was a righteous man, just as uncompromising atheists like Chapman Cohen would see the same fact from a different standpoint.

Miss Patch calls writing "an obsession" with Shaw. This is the wrongest possible word. Writing was his religion and his job—his fulfilment of the purpose of his Life-Force. He was no "unprofitable servant" but a good and faithful, an utterly loyal and sincere one, this Saint Bernard who was far more saintly than the other Saint Bernard of the Church. In the calendar of saints, both of Freethought and Creative Evolution, he is one of the very greatest. Miss Patch thinks Shaw wrote too much. But the world wishes he had written ten times more and is grateful for what he wrote well—some of his output is bad—and to Miss Patch for her part towards the quantity if not the quality.

The answer to that awe-struck question: "And did you once see Shelley plain?" so far as my friend Blanche is concerned, is: "Yes, I did. Too often, and I didn't think so much of him." Well, it might be worse. She might have answered: "Yes. And a nasty piece of

work he was"—for many contemporaries thought that of Shelley.

Everyone must read Miss Patch. There's no nonsense about her and she would not have "pandered" to Jesus Christ's egoism and vanity as Mary did. She couldn't do it any more than Martha, that other woman of plain, downright common sense, could do it. She provides the mittens as Martha provided the meals. But Shaws and Christs do not live by bread alone. They need a sympathetic audience. The fact that Miss Patch was Martha and not Mary is a thousand pities (I think) for Shaw during his life and ourselves after his death. She must forgive me for being in this article her candid friend.

C. G. L. DuCANN.

## THOSE "FLYING SAUCERS"

PROBABLY most readers will have seen something of the considerable bother that has lately been made in the Press about the so-called "flying saucers"—those queer objects that have been observed in the sky, mainly in the U.S.A. There are, of course, various possible explanations of these objects, most of which will have occurred to a thoughtful person with a scientific background. First of all, they may be the product of hallucination. After all, in the past thousands of people have believed something for which there is no genuine foundation in fact, and it is in every way possible that the "flying saucers" will take their place with these. Secondly, they may be merely some sort of new anti-aircraft weapon under development. Thirdly, they may be objects coming from another world. Fourthly, they may be explained by a combination of some or all of these.

Now, as with so many other problems, there seems to be a tendency to believe the more sensational of these explanations. And the two best books on "flying saucers" accordingly think that these objects are truly messengers from another world. The two books, which make interesting reading when taken together, are: *The Riddle of the Flying Saucers*, by Gerald Heard (Carroll and Nicholson; 10s. 6d.) and *Behind the Flying Saucers*, by Frank Scully (Gollancz; 10s. 6d.). Mr. Heard thinks that they come from Mars, while Mr. Scully plumps for creatures from Venus.

There is, in fact, only one objection to the theories put forward by these two gentlemen, and that is that both Mr. Heard and Mr. Scully appear to accept as fact what will seem to many a reader to be pure second-hand and doubtful evidence. And, in any event, is it not in every way possible that there is here a real confusion? May not some people have seen meteorities, others have seen new and secret anti-aircraft devices, and others, again, have been so impressed by these reports that they have thought themselves into a credulous state, and as a result have seen things that are not there? This kind of combined explanation of "flying saucers" is something which both Mr. Heard and Mr. Scully appear to ignore in the blandest possible manner.

I hope that what I have written will not dissuade prospective readers from studying the two books. I think that the volumes are extremely valuable as showing how intelligent men can let themselves be obsessed by a matter for which there is little real evidence.

J. R.



## ACID DROPS

**A survey of industrial towns** by the Methodist Church has resulted in the discovery that "Britain has not become a Pagan country," and that "material things are much more manifest than any conscious or aggressive Atheism." We are quite sure that among the mass of people there are very few who know anything more about Atheism than its name. But this is really a matter of small moment compared with the fact that, as is candidly admitted, "indifference to church and religion is widespread." The truth is that most people care little more for religion than they do for Atheism—and that proves how Freethought has slowly but surely undermined the "Faith."

**In truth**, the Methodist Church Press candidly admits that "indifference is the enemy." Indifference and apathy are the hostile twins, and they can only be overcome "by earnestness and enthusiasm on the Christian side." At least, that is what Methodists are told; but there is still something else and that is "truth." How do Methodists go about proving that religion—or Christianity—is true? Is the story of Jesus changing water into wine or feeding a huge multitude with a few loaves and fishes true?

**A correspondent** to the *Sunday Graphic* wants to know why the Churches don't follow the Master more closely. He evidently thinks it an original query, but it is asked perhaps a million times each year. However, the Master does not appear to have done any work while he was "teaching" or "going about doing good," and nobody seems to have paid him, anyway. Exactly how would our archbishops and bishops, to say nothing of our humble curates, manage to live if they followed the Master "more closely." From the air?

**We have never read** of a mission to non-Catholics or non-Christians which did not trumpet the conversion of an—unnamed—militant Atheist. "The very first convert," we are blandly told in the *Universe*, made by the Catholic Missionary Society at the Cenacle Convent, Liverpool, "was a militant Atheist journalist." It would be interesting to know his name—surely he ought to be as proud as Mr. Douglas Hyde of going over—and exactly what he knew about Atheism? Where was he "militant?"

**Whatever else** may be said about Mr. John McCloy, the U.S. High Commissioner, who is letting out Nazi war criminals by the dozen, no one can excuse him of being against religion. It seems that he earnestly and "devoutly sought divine enlightenment" before letting off monsters like the Nazi doctors who vivisected screaming children and women without anæsthetics. After all, the victims are dead, and who cares? But Nazi war criminals are alive, and God must look after his own.

**While it is quite true** that people are free to go to church in Russia, according to Mr. Richard Jones, the former editor of the *British Ally* which used to be published there, the communicants are mostly the elderly, and very few young people are seen praying. An active campaign regularly goes on against religion, but it can well be understood that habits learnt in childhood are not easy to overcome.

**A lady writing** from Switzerland to *Picture Post*, insists that Father Divine is God Almighty "in a bodily form," and we heartily agree—at least, we are quite convinced that the Father is just as much God Almighty as was Jesus Christ, and that's a big admission. Or is it? In any case, Father Divine "is a name," she shrieks, "before which every knee must bow and every tongue must confess." This rather reminds us of Newman who grovelled and confessed at the feet of an Italian priest—and this priest was not God Almighty like Father Divine.

**Speaking at Surbiton** recently, the Rev. Dr. H. Townsend said that the rise of Communism in Russia was due to "illiteracy, superstition, feudal slavery, corrupt government, and corrupt religion." He could not have bettered this description had he been speaking of true Christianity—and in a sense, Dr. Townsend would agree. He blames the Russian Church "for the part it played by ignoring the terrible conditions under which the people lived." But the Russian Church is surely *orthodox*?

**The B.B.C. looks like** getting swamped with letters from indignant Christians for allowing Mr. H. L. Beales to give a lecture on "Men and Machines" on a recent Sunday—of all days! It was uncompromisingly Materialistic, and among other things, he complained of people attacking Materialism on a materialistic typewriter. Mr. Beales had no use whatever for religion if we understood him aright.

**Whom are we to believe?** On the one hand, enthusiastic reports come in—mostly from lady teachers—that all is well with religious teaching in schools, that, in fact, the children are lapping it up more avidly than milk; and on the other hand, we have an Ilfracombe Grammar School teacher claiming that "religious instruction in schools amounted to no more than a pagan moral code masquerading as Christianity." He bitterly complained, speaking at the Rotary Club, that in the *Teachers' Handbook*, "It is never suggested that God claims us, is working for us, and has been sacrificed for us." But perhaps this is because the compiler of the *Teachers' Handbook* believed all this was hopeless nonsense, and deliberately missed it out.

**And on top of this** we get Canon Hay of Hawick, attacking a pamphlet on primary schools which was recently published by the Scottish Education Department and complaining, "that it might have been issued in Moscow for all the attention that was paid to religious instruction." This might not have been a bad thing if it were true, but the Very Rev. Dr. Mackay replied that "a great deal was being done for religion in Scottish council schools"—so perhaps the two rev. gents can fight it out between them.

**We always like** to give credit where it is due and we congratulate the Rev. J. R. Gardiner on his championship of Evolution against a Christian reviewer of Mr. Arnold Lunn's latest work in which the reviewer declared that "the case for Evolution was shattered." Mr. Gardiner brought in some trenchant arguments, and no doubt some of the readers of the *Church of England Newspaper* will wonder where the Lord came in. But Mr. Gardiner is right—"Nothing can be more certain," he says, "than the validity of the general principle of Evolution in Nature," though it is true no one expects Mr. Lunn to agree. What does he know, anyway, about Evolution?



# "THE FREETHINKER"

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS

L. CHARLES, E. H. COX, E. DYSON, and other readers. Many thanks for cuttings. Always useful.

A. STEPHENSON.—Please see Frank Kenyon's article *The Heart and the Mind* in this issue.

BENEVOLENT FUND, N.S.S.—The General Secretary gratefully acknowledges a donation of £1 1s. from Mr. W. H. W. Ballast, and 10s. from John Paterson.

*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.*

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*Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.*

## SUGAR PLUMS

On Thursday evening, March 15, in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London, W.C. 1, you can hear Messrs. C. Bradlaugh Bonner, M.A., President of World Union of Freethinkers, L. Ebury, Vice-President, N.S.S., F. A. Ridley, and J. W. Barker in a Freethought Demonstration. The President, N.S.S., Mr. R. H. Rosetti, will be in the chair. Inquiring Christians are heartily invited, and besides listening, they can put questions. Admission is free and proceedings begin at 7 o'clock.

Secretaries of N.S.S. Branches are reminded that March 13 is the latest date for receiving resolutions for the agenda of the N.S.S. Conference to be held in London during the Whitsun weekend. The resolutions should reach the Head Office by that date.

The Glasgow Secular Society holds its Annual Dinner on Saturday evening March 17, at which Mr. R. H. Rosetti will be the guest; we hope to have full details in our next issue. On Sunday evening, March 18, Mr. R. H. Rosetti will lecture in the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, at 7 o'clock, on "What is Civilisation?". It will be the final lecture of the Glasgow Society's indoor season. Admission is free, with some Donation Tickets.

In the Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street, Nottingham, Mr. J. T. Brighton will lecture for the local N.S.S. Branch on "Women, Worship, and Woe" to-day (March 11) at 7 p.m. Readers within range of the hall desiring an evening of wit and wisdom should make a point of being present. Admission is free.

The South London and Lewisham Branches have joined forces and will be known as the South London and Lewisham Branch of the N.S.S. We wish the combination a long life of useful service for Freethought. Applications for membership should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. A. S. Gibbins, 58, Overdown Road, Bellingham, London, S.E. 6.

## THE HEART AND THE MIND

(Concluded from page 84)

IN *The Freethinker* of December 31, 1950, Mr. Rowland expresses his opinion that international conditions have grown steadily worse with a decline of religious belief. We can well admit that international conditions have grown steadily worse, and also that there has been a decline of religious belief, but we need not, on that account, infer, as Mr. Rowland evidently intends us to infer, that there is a necessary connection between the two, and that international conditions have grown steadily worse as a result of the decline in religious belief. Mr. Rowland may well have added that other than international conditions have also grown steadily worse, and if he had done so I should have been inclined to agree. But, unlike Mr. Rowland, instead of associating the worsening conditions with a decline in religious belief, I should rather be inclined to associate them with the disintegrating social effects of two world wars and the threat of an atomic-deciding third.

Truly, a glance at the world around us to-day is not an inspiring sight. We see a world where crimes of violence—murder, maiming, theft, rape, etc.—are of almost daily occurrence and show few signs of diminishing; a world of strikes, official and unofficial, often under the most trivial of pretexts, in which one section of the community seems to take a delight in holding a pistol at the heads of the rest; a world in which a man's word seems less and less to be relied on as his bond; where each one seems increasingly to think of himself and less of others; and where we here so much of man's rights and so little of his duties.

Anyone who truly appreciates such a state of affairs should, I think, here agree with Mr. Rowland that what is badly needed is "a change of heart." And by a "change of heart" I mean exactly what Mr. Rowland means in his use of the phrase. I agree that, in the metaphorical sense intended by Pascal, "the heart has reasons of which the mind knows nothing"; and I further agree with Mr. Rowland's implications that there is a part of our life that is entirely distinct from what are commonly referred to as the "mental processes" though, I must add, not absolutely independent of them. These admissions are necessary if Mr. Rowland is to be effectively answered.

Having indicated my agreement with Mr. Rowland on certain points it now remains for me to show where I disagree with his interpretations. Perhaps it will help to set the matter in a clearer light if we glance at it briefly from a purely physiological point of view.

The sensations that contribute to the formation of conscious processes in the higher centres of the brain proceed principally, by way of the special senses, from the outside world. Broadly speaking, these sensations, and the processes arising from them in the topmost layers of the brain, may be said to constitute the impersonal, intellectual life that we share in common with our fellow-beings. On these sensations and their corresponding processes, and on these alone, depend all our scientific theories, all our philosophical systems, and, in fact, everything that we can discuss intelligibly and precisely with others.

The sensations that contribute to the formation of conscious processes in the lower centres of the brain proceed principally from *inside* the organism. Again speaking broadly, these sensations, and the processes arising from them in the lower centres of the brain,



may be said to constitute the personal and emotional life which we do *not* share in common with our fellow-beings, and which we can discuss with others only in the vaguest and often most misleading terms. Most of us know the difficulty of trying to explain a pain to the doctor.

In addition to the distinctions already mentioned between the operations of the upper and lower centres of the brain, there is a further important distinction to be noted. While the conscious processes in the higher centres are subject to constant and varied change, the conscious processes in the lower centres are subject to changes that are few and slight, and they thus come to be regarded as something comparatively permanent forming a stable background upon which are imposed the constantly changing impressions from the external world. But this background is not absolutely stable. The changes which it undergoes are, however, wider spread, and slower in their operation than those which take place in the higher centres. It is to these changes that are largely due the varying emotional states of hope, fear, joy, sadness, and most of our pleasures and pains; these changes also affect the manner in which the more transient impressions of the higher centres are received and, to a large extent, determine the nature of the response.

So far for the conscious life in both its aspects—intellectual and emotional. There still remains the unconscious, vegetative life, consisting of the processes of respiration, digestion, circulation, etc., which we share in common with the rest of the animal kingdom. It only remains to add that the intellectual life is dependent on a very minute portion of the organism which has been developed at the tail-end of a long evolutionary process; which is less organised than any other part of our anatomy; and where mistakes can still be made with impunity when a mistake in the so-called lower, vegetative centres would mean instant death. In view of all this it should not be difficult to understand why the emotions should sometimes gain the upper hand, nor why Mr. Rowland should ascribe the vague feelings of his animal and social inheritance to some extra-mundane source.

It is a well-known fact that a man's intellectual accomplishments give us no indication of what we call his "nature." With great intellectual accomplishments a man may be either a paragon of virtue, or morally corrupt. "Educate" a man who is a rogue by "nature" and the chances are you are merely providing him with the means of becoming a bigger rogue than he was before. Evidently, in such a case, a "change of heart" is more to be desired than a change of "mind." The question is "how is such a change to be brought about?" Mr. Rowland thinks it can be brought about by a belief in God. I cannot think that such a belief would be more effective than the knowledge that 2 and 2 make 4, or that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points.

Personally, I think something could be done in this direction if we were to show a little more respect for the emotional side of life. Why should we feel ashamed to be caught with tears in our eyes, and why should it be considered more manly to grit the teeth in pain than to give out a nerve-relieving yell? The Greek heroes who dedicated themselves to death at the pass of Thermopylae were not ashamed to cry out when they were hurt. And as with pain, so with other aspects of

the emotional life. We have only ourselves to blame if we concentrate solely on the intellectual side of life and thus leave our most precious inheritance to be appropriated by the gods. Both thinking and feeling ought to go together. Each by itself is inadequate for a real understanding of life.

FRANK KENYON.

## A CATHOLIC BIBLE

(Concluded from page 85)

SO far, so good! We can give our translator somewhere near full marks as a man of letters and, it would appear, quite good marks too as a translator. When, however, we turn to what it is usual to describe as the "higher criticism" of the Bible of dates, purpose, authorship, as distinct from the purely textual or "lower" criticism, there is a different tale to tell. It seems, indeed, almost incredible that a learned man, as Mgr. Knox evidently is in his own sphere, could be so incredibly ignorant of the ascertained results of modern scholarship as our translator appears to be. Perhaps in fairness to him, we ought to recall that, like all the professional exponents of the most authoritarian of the Churches, he is, so to speak, bound hand and foot by previous obscurantist decisions of his Church and is actually writing with his tongue in his cheek!

Anyhow, and whatever the motive, our translator appears to be totally ignorant of critical conclusions which are, nowadays, accepted by virtually all Biblical scholars, including those of virtually all Christian scholars themselves outside the jurisdiction of the Vatican. We could understand a Catholic priest defending the "historicity" of Jesus or the authorship of St. Paul against the more extreme conclusions of radical critics. But it is certainly rather surprising to find a man of Mgr. Knox's scholarship calmly ignoring critical conclusions that are now accepted by virtually every New Testament scholar of note, of all creeds and of none. That Peter did not write his alleged "second Epistle," or Paul, the "Epistle to the Hebrews," or John, the Fourth Gospel (which, in any case, is obviously, not from the same hand as wrote the Apocalypse); these and similar criticisms are, we repeat, the commonplaces of the most moderate criticism and they are all blandly ignored by our translator who ascribes all these books to their traditional authors. The only critical note that he strikes in his translation of the New Testament is to indicate that some *ancient* critics raised these questions. But what about the practically universal conclusions of far better-informed modern critics? Who, to-day, believes in the apostolic authorship of the Four Gospels?

However, unfortunately, there are "depths below depths." Where Catholic dogmas are at issue, Mgr. Knox becomes disingenuous as well as uncritical. For he repeats that hoary mistranslation from Isaiah, which every Hebrew scholar knows to be a lie, that "a virgin shall give birth to a son," where even the Catholic Encyclopædia has admitted that the Hebrew word "alma" means "young woman," and not "virgin." But the perpetual virginity of Mary is an article of Faith in the Church of Rome, so language has to be tortured into conformity with it. Hence, in the same connection, we find Mgr. Knox making the truly astonishing assertion (in a footnote) that Matthew and Luke traced the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph from David, because Joseph was his adopted father in Jewish law! Why



not admit the surely obvious fact, which is self-evident to anyone who can read, that the original authors of the Gospel knew nothing of any Virgin Birth and regarded Jesus as the actual son of Joseph, through whom they traced the descent of the Messiah from the national hero, King David. As now presented, the Virgin Birth makes obvious nonsense of all these tables of descent from *Joseph*, which belong to an earlier stage in the evolution of Christianity. But to admit this, would be heresy for a Catholic priest!

One last example of dogmatic disingenuousness must suffice, the most glaring of all. In the First Epistle of John V, 7, occurs the famous text, which is here translated as: "thus we have a threefold warrant in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, three who are yet one."

For the past century, every critic of note has known that this text is a forgery, probably dating from the 4th century, which is absent from all the best MSS. However, it is a "dogmatic text," an authoritative testimony to the Trinity. As such it has to be defended. So Mgr. Knox produces this, surely a masterpiece of understatement; his footnote adds, "This verse does not occur in any good Greek manuscript. But the Latin manuscripts may have preserved the true texts."

Comment seems superfluous!

As our readers will, no doubt, have perceived, the new Catholic translation of the New Testament will not convert us to Christianity, Roman or Protestant. The most we can honestly say of this lucid and very readable translation is that when the "Sacred Scriptures" eventually take their rightful place as source-documents of great value for the twin sciences of comparative religion and comparative mythology, the translation before us may well prove a more useful guide to their students than older and more pretentious translations.

However, we do not suppose that Mgr. Knox would regard this as a compliment!

F. A. RIDLEY.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### RE TRANSCENDENTALISM

Sir,—As a transcendentalist, Vernon Carter does not seem to like the idea that metaphysics is what we do not understand. But if he has "never doubted that science does not first frame an hypothesis" what is all the quibbling about? He forgets that Hector Hawton said that it did. But it is absurd for him to say that an hypothesis, "a provisional supposition," is prior to "experiment devised to test its validity," because, for instance, the Nebular hypothesis can never be tested by experiment, if only because it referred to the remote past; and a theory may be subsequent to experiment as with Charles Darwin's theory of Natural Selection, which was avowedly based upon the experiments of selective breeders.

It is equally absurd for him to speak of "the necessity for a new hypothesis to be compatible with a previously established one." This ignores the difference between them; and what about those that have been scrapped such as Phlogiston and Caloric? He says my arguments are inconsistent with what he calls "traditional epistemology." Exactly, how can one break with tradition and be consistent with it? I show inconsistency in it and he then says I am inconsistent.

He says that, in spite of his request, I do not give references where Russell "attempts to explain induction in terms of deduction." He seems to have forgotten. I would remind him that my article, "Once Upon a Time" was a criticism of Hector Hawton's book *Philosophy for Pleasure*; surely that book is my reference. But if he is really curious and wants it straight from the horse's mouth, Russell's argument is given at considerable length and repeated at numerous intervals, in his *Human Knowledge*.—Yours, etc.,

H. H. PREECE.

### EXPERT KNOWLEDGE

Sir,—Before a man can become a doctor, a professor, an accountant, or a barrister, he has to undergo a long period of special studies in order to acquire expert knowledge.

In commerce no business firm would pay an employee £1,000 a year unless he possessed exceptional mercantile abilities, gained by long experience in his particular trade.

Yet many a man draws £1,000 a year as a Member of Parliament without having any expert knowledge of ever a fraction of the several problems with which legislators are called upon to deal—their decisions affecting the well-being of the entire community.

I suggest that no person should be eligible for Parliamentary candidature before he or she has studied for, and passed, the necessary severe examinations in economics, social psychology, World Law and World Parliament. Also he or she should have attained proficiency in a universal neutral language, such as Esperanto.

Government is the most important of all activities, demanding the co-operation of the greatest intelligences, the most profound thinkers. It is a business as well as an art and a science, intimately bound up with dynamic issues concerning our relationship with people in other lands; so an ordinary education is insufficient training for the modern politician, who in this atomic age, should be scientifically trained and world minded.—Yours, etc.,

MARK WILLIAM KRAMRISCH.

## OBITUARY

### SIDNEY WILLIAMS

We regret to record the death of Sidney Williams at the age of 74. He began work as a miner in 1889 but set out to educate himself in spite of his poor surroundings. Although caught up in Welsh revivals, he left religion for ever in 1903 and became a member of the N.S.S. He read Darwin, Ingersoll, Paine, Voltaire, and other eminent Freethinkers and never wavered in his regard for truth and justice and kindness. The cremation took place at Glyntaft, Pontypridd, February 10, where a Secular service was read by Mr. J. S. Wilde, of Cardiff. To his surviving relatives and friends we extend all our sympathy.

## 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.: SID. ANDREWS (W.E.A.), "Democracy, East or West."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, March 13, 7 p.m.: Symposium: J. B. COATES, GUILFOYLE WILLIAMS, MRS. VIRGINIA FLEMING, HECTOR HAWTON, "The Future of Humanist Action."

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, W.C. 1.—Thursday evening, March 15: "Religion: Criticisms and Discussions." Speakers: C. BRADLAUGH BONNER, M.A., L. EBURY, F. A. RIDLEY, J. W. BARKER. Chairman: R. H. ROSETTI (President N.S.S.). Doors open 6-30 p.m., commence 7 p.m.

Glasgow Secular Society (Branch of the N.S.S.) (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture. Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: BASIL GIMSON, "Charnwood Forest."

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Parliament Street).—Sunday, March 11; doors open 6-30 p.m., commence 7 p.m.: J. T. BRIGHTON, B.E.M. (Chester-le-Street, Co. Durham) Vice-President N.S.S., "Women, Worship, and Woe."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: DR. HELEN ROSENAU, Ph.D., "Art in Contemporary Life."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: PROF. G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D., "Collective Security."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The "Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, Marylebone, W. 1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: E. W. SHAW, "Americanism."



## FREETHOUGHT AND THE PRESENT SITUATION

**UNCONQUERABLE OPTIMISM:** that is how my attitude towards the position of freethought within a totalitarian state was summed up by Mr. F. A. Ridley, when there was a discussion within *The Freethinker* of "Freethought and Totalitarianism."

I have just been looking through some old copies (1949) of this paper and thought that perhaps now would be a particularly good time to look back to see how, and whether, our position has radically changed within the past months. Totalitarianism in two forms is threatening to swamp this country and we are confronted with the possibility of a war breaking out, in which we, as members of British society, will be asked, or told, to take a side selected by our Government.

As a Freethinker (with certain reservations) I should like to say that I don't feel either *unconquerable* or *optimistic* about the effect of this upon myself and similar individuals. To be a Freethinker is not enough; that is merely to state your position in respect to certain things. One may be optimistic or pessimistic about any manner of things and still remain a "Freethinker" and it is around this that I should like to explain my position.

Let us assume that I am neither optimistic, nor pessimistic about my present situation . . . just deciding. I have to weigh the facts and do my best for the furtherance of that which I *know* to be right for myself and *my* truth. Ultimately, it may be argued, that truth being an absolute, my truth is your truth and so on . . . TRUTH being the same everywhere and for everything . . . assuming the logicity of our universe.

Be that as it may, I am sufficiently a realist to know that *my* truth and *your* truth are not the same. No two individuals, by definition, can believe the same things. They may overlap to a greater or lesser extent; but only with one person (or more) being dominated completely by a stronger will is it possible to say that two (or more) people are the same; even then, by virtue of superior strength, the two will not be essentially the same.

My problem, therefore, remains . . . what to do to preserve my truth . . . and if possible, *myself*. Quite frankly I don't think that we shall see real (whatever that may be) freedom for many, many centuries, if ever. Inasmuch as neither one nor the other form of impending domination (both essentially totalitarian) will result in freedom . . . even in the limited form we experience to-day . . . the only other chance is to work towards a great big crash and do one's best to keep clear, and intact, when it finally comes. This—I think—may be a line of escape.

You know, and I know, that everywhere you go you meet people who are "disgusted with it all." They are apathetic, and just wait like lambs for the slaughter to start. These apathetic sheep, I feel, may safely be slain, if such is the plan of the "powers that be" . . . no doubt they will willingly receive the blessings of a Church which they daily call by a varied selection of epithets. Apathetic hypocrites that they are, they deserve little less than they will receive.

Of course I pity the youths, who in their eagerness and enthusiasm will dash into the fray to "save freedom," or even make this the world fit for heroes . . . why say it! For them I really sorrow, because they it is who could really provide the energy that is needed to make a "better world." However, thanks to our wise

old men and their petty backbitings, it looks as though this branch of the tree is destined to be destroyed. The one consolation which one can derive is the certain knowledge that in another conflict, the politician, the churchman, parson, minister or what have you, will all be sharing in the dangers, which hitherto only confronted "our dear boys"—

WE don't want to lose you,

But WE think YOU ought to go . . .

Happy consolation that although THEY might go, IT will come. Two thousand years of the Christian's teachings in Europe has certainly given birth to an abortion of a child. Soon, perhaps, that child will be given the now disputed (for individuals) euthanasia, which will leave the way open for something else . . . what that might be no one can tell, I am pleased to think.

To revert to myself, naturally my most interesting subject (just as you are yours if you have the courage to admit it), I must consider my position and what I should do. Quite frankly I shall have but one object when the "trouble starts" . . . KEEP ALIVE. If I am privileged to see the end, I sincerely hope that there will have been enough destruction to allow for a completely new reassembly of human society, in which I may partake. When the cancer of modern society is destroyed, then, and only then, will I strive FOR a new society.

We live in horrible times, but then, they are only the culmination of what must have happened to a line travelling in the direction in which our "life" pointed.

I hope that this article may bring forward some stern rebukes from readers, for I deny the "Christian-ethical" position that we have been poisoned with for so long. I do not mind the cost that we shall have to pay. It is inevitable. The only point which can honestly be levelled against me, I feel, is that I am too egoistic to live through "it." That may be, but I *know* that I should survive, if for no other reason than the knowledge that what is here said is only too true!

PETER CROSS.

## "CORRESPONDENCE COLUMN"

"To the Editor, 'Weekly Church Organ,'  
"It's time all this Freethought was busted;  
"Only minds in a groove be permitted to move,  
"The others locked up."—Yours, "Disgusted."

"Dear Sir, I believe in Equality,  
"I'd like to see more men like me;  
"But I think it a slur, when they won't call me 'Sir,'  
"I'd have 'em imprisoned—'B.C.'"

"Dear Editor, give us Fraternity,  
"We haven't got much, I'm afraid;  
"If men won't be Brothers, then me and the others  
"—Will make 'em, Yours truly, 'Comrade.'"

"Dear Editor, we love Democracy,  
"We think those who don't are just rats.  
"They sound a wrong note—we should not let 'em  
vote—  
"Suppress 'em.—'Two True Democrats.'"

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.