

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Vol. LXXI—No. 38

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Has Religion a Future?

IT must now be clear to any unbiased observer that, since at least 1914, modern civilization has been moving into an ever deepening crisis; a crisis of which world wars one and two represented, so to speak, dramatic highlights. It is now, unfortunately, becoming equally clear that we are again in a pre-war period and that the fundamental crisis of twentieth century society, which two successive world wars have failed to remove, is now apparently due for a third instalment which is no more likely itself to prove final than were its predecessors in 1914 and in 1939.

The immediate causes for this unhappy but unmistakable social crisis are many and various: economic imperialism, the breakdown of the nation-state in the current world, the strife endemic to conflicting ideologies, all these and many other contemporary factors would take us far beyond the limits of a short article. However, the aforementioned immediate causes themselves represent the fundamental disharmony in human society that is at the root of all our contemporary ills; the radical root failure of the human intellect and of human social institutions to keep pace with the ever changing nature of the dynamic civilization that originated some two centuries ago, with the first impact of the industrial revolution upon society at large. Ever since the first impact of industrial society upon the static traditions of the immemorial past, the social order has been ever more deeply convulsed. All the stormy upheavals, the wars, and revolutions that have beset mankind since the French Revolution have resulted ultimately from this single fundamental cause. In static pre-industrial society, humanity moved slowly, dragging its social institutions reluctantly behind it. Whereas since the industrial revolution, human society has been sent hurtling forward under the ceaseless dynamic impact of a non-stop permanent revolution in its technical foundations. To-day, after two centuries of perpetual motion, a human society unable to adjust itself to the new tempo, appears to be demonstrably heading for the abyss.

Of the many revolutionary changes made in and upon the social order by the impact of industrial civilization, none has been more drastic than has been, and still is, its impact upon religion: it is not, we think, any exaggeration to affirm that two centuries of industry and of its essential concomitant, science, have done more to undermine religion than twenty thousand years of propaganda alone could have effected, unsupported, in a more primitive social order. Indeed, it would probably be true to add that, ultimately, and in final perspectives, the advent of the Industrial Revolution spelt the eventual doom of religion. We say "religion" advisedly, since it is not only in Christian lands that the advance of modern industry has caused a religious landslide: the same identical phenomenon has been in evidence all over the world.

The causes for this landslide are really self-evident and have often been pointed out by discerning critics: in

industrial civilizations, unlike their nomadic and agrarian predecessors, the *basis* of society and of the social order is constituted by science which, previously, had been at most, a tolerated supernumerary in the current scheme of things.

To repeat an often-used comparison, a pre-industrial community is at the mercy of nature, and the idea of "acts of god," of miracles, is, so to speak, just round the corner. Whereas an industrial society is regulated by a deterministic science; instead of hoping and praying for light, one just turns on the appropriate switch and light automatically comes; in a society so regulated, the miraculous just withers away and is referred, at most, to the distant, pre-scientific past.

Accordingly, it seems to be a reasonable assumption that an indefinite prolongation of the current technically based civilization must, sooner or later, but in any case, inevitably bring about the final collapse of the supernaturalist and animistic pre-scientific ideas which form the fundamental core of all religions. Or, put more briefly, that an industrial civilization must ultimately destroy religion. Such an assumption is, indeed, assumed by the most profound and influential modern social thinkers, however much they may diverge in other respects; it is, for example, common to such modern masters as August Comte, St. Simon, Herbert Spencer, and Karl Marx.

Assuming the truth of this axiom it will perhaps appear superfluous in an age of world-wide industrial expansion, to ask if religion has any future: in such circumstances it may well be asserted, with modern industry and technology striding over our planet in seven-leagued boots, its ultimate doom is assured.

However, super-optimism, like super-pessimism, has no assured scientific basis! The old Victorian certainties no longer appeal with their old force to an era which has endured as many frustrations as has ours. It seems no longer possible to assert with the same confidence as the age of Macaulay and Tennyson, that progress will continue to advance uninterrupted forward. In particular, the present "rearmament drive" that so steadily increases its inexorable momentum, holds out no promise either of present security or of a future Utopia. As has been aptly enough remarked, to drown mankind in a huge, specially constructed cage would be considerably cheaper than the current military programme of either of the contending power-blocs of to-day!

What, it may be asked, has all this to do with religion? In effect, a great deal. For it would seem likely to follow in fact, as it certainly follows in logic, that if the indefinite continuation of an industrial civilization implies inevitably the ultimate extinction of religion, by the self-same reasoning religion can only survive by the annihilation of the modern industrial order and of the accumulated scientific knowledge upon which it is based and which it is increasingly imparting to mankind at large. If the above supposition be indeed so, the current jargon about the impending "collapse of civilization" in the wake of atomic wars, does not mean for, say the Vatican and its

counterparts in other religions, what it means for the man in the street. Historically it is unquestionable that it was the breakdown of the classical Graeco-Roman civilization and the resulting "Dark Age" that made the fortune of Christianity. At present, it looks very much as if only another, this time universal, "Dark Age" can save religion—and not merely the Christian Church—from destruction. It would, indeed, be a not impossible paradox if science, in the concrete shape of the atomic bomb and similar creations of a prostituted science, were finally to prove the salvation of its old enemy, religion. The fact that it is even possible seriously to ask such questions, indicates how far the world has actually travelled since Victorian times!

Be that as it may, it is at least true that the ancient "conflict of science with religion" will be fought upon other battlefields besides purely theological ones. It is, to-day, actually in the current struggle to preserve our civilization against the present dangers that beset it, against war in particular, and to remove their present motivating causes, that we are laying effectively the foundations of the completely secular society of the future in which the ancient ghost of religion will have been finally laid.

F. A. RIDLEY.

A RUSTLE IN PHILOSOPHY

ANONYMITY in journalism had good points. There was no preliminary fan-fare, editorial "build up" or boost for the writer with the big reputation. But nowadays, to save us the exertion of thinking, we are told, in what is intelligently called a "blurb," what a wonderful guy the author is. Frequently a précis is given, which serves the useful purpose of saving a discriminating reader's time.

I am perverse. I like to consider the printed word apart from the author's past performances. When, in a recent issue of this paper, I find reference to "the eminent philosopher" and his recently expressed opinions about atomic warfare, I get my back up. For the none too subtle implication is "If that's the view of such a great thinker, we small fry must accept it." Some freethinking!

I cannot pretend that I am not influenced by the name of a person responsible for an opinion. I have my literary dislikes. Bertrand Russell is one of them. I have never read anything of his that gave me the glimmering of a new point of view, and I have listened to much of his talk that was piffing puerility where there was unique opportunity for getting in a word for rationalism. I come then, admittedly, as a prejudiced person, to Bertrand Russell's article in a recent *Radio Times*, "Living in an Atomic Age." So let the article speak for itself. Here is the first quote:—

"Many people at the present day allow themselves a mood of gloom which to my mind is not justifiable. It is true that there are present difficulties and impending dangers, but the difficulties are endurable, and I firmly believe the dangers to be surmountable. . . . I hold that there has never in the past history of man been better ground for cheerfulness than there is at present. Thinking and planning, both private and public, are overshadowed by the doubt as to whether a third world war is imminent. With every day that passes there is better hope that this danger will be averted. Before long the West will be so strong as to be obviously invincible. The time is therefore at hand when we need no longer be hypnotised by the Eastern terror, but can allow ourselves to think of the happier possibilities that modern skill has created."

I am one of those who "allow themselves a mood of gloom." This utterance of a great English philosopher deepens my gloom, and almost drives me to declare that all is for the worst in the best of possible worlds. Difficulties may be endurable for a philosopher in a comfortable old age, but whether the dangers will be surmounted is conjectural, and only time will tell. A fine case could be made out against the Mark Tapley assertion that "never in the past history of Man has there been better ground for cheerfulness than there is at present." We are frequently told by superficial thinkers that the labourer of to-day enjoys amenities unknown to monarchs in the past; a parallel thought is that the modern schoolboy has at his disposal facts unknown to Newton. We can never adequately compare the "grounds for cheerfulness" of peoples of widely differing epochs of physical achievement. But the important fact against the philosopher's contention may be put in this form: *Never in the history of modern wage-earning Man has a smaller share of the wealth of the age been enjoyed by the actual producers.* And, it could be added that never in the history of civilization was such a large proportion of the people occupied with the arts of destruction.

Let's have some more from "the apostle of humanity and freedom of thought" (caption to portrait in *Radio Times*):—

"There is no longer any need for poverty in the world. Enmities which once had some biological justification are now nothing but a survival into the machine age of habits of thought and feeling that belonged to past ages of inevitable scarcity. It is now possible for one man's labour to produce a great deal more than one man's subsistence, provided men can learn to co-operate rather than compete. The troubles in the world arise from the fact that people still have a restrictive and competitive way of thinking which belonged to ages of scarcity. Whatever scarcity exists at the present day is not due to natural causes but to human folly. Given the right outlook and wise action, there could within fifty years be abundance throughout the whole world, even in those parts which are now poorest. But if this is to be achieved, we must learn to regard other people in a friendly manner, not as rivals or enemies."

Elementary my dear Russell, pre-Atomic and hopelessly out of date. Fifty years ago I stood at street corners and spouted these exact sentiments, in pretty much the same words—and they weren't new then. Evidently in the half century there has not been "the right outlook and wise action!" That's an old gag about the next fifty years. It was worked differently in our propaganda, it always went something like this: *We may not see those happy days under socialism, but our children. . . . As years went by (the glorious prospect receding) it was our children's children, then I got expelled from the movement before my grandsons' descendants came into the prophecy.*

A mulish optimism was the hob-goblin of our little minds. But disillusionment need not indicate indifference. I certainly believe that there could be abundance, etc., but why fifty years? Our philosopher himself is still thinking along restrictive lines. If what we said long ago about the wealth available was true, the potentiality under present conditions of machine production, has been enormously increased, and as Bertrand Russell could show, using atomic power in industry, fantastic heights could be reached. So why wait? The answer is easy. *We cannot serve man and cannon. Any conceivable system of social well-being built up in years by patience and industry can be blasted to rubble and ruin, literally in*

minutes. And where guns are plentiful, butter will always be scarce. Yet Bertrand Russell can only offer us the utterly discredited old idea that the best way to get peace is to prepare for war. War will never end war. Preparedness for war always ends in war. A new approach is needed. I read: "Before long the West will be so strong as to be obviously invincible." To whom will it be obvious? Dictators are seldom deterred by rival boasts of invincibility.

Had this article been anonymous, I would have guessed its author to be an elderly conformist parson. For it is studded with wishful thinking, uplift and copy-book religiosity. Take a few sentences, I will put the exact words of the philosopher in italics:—

Human beings' adjustments with their fellow men are a matter of politics and economics.

Harmony with other men is only possible as a reflection of harmony within.

Most human beings are filled with fears in the depths of their being. . . . (Good old Freud!)

Fear is above all the chief cause of hatred between man and man . . . I see in my mind's eye a company of fearless and happy human beings, feeling kindly towards others because they are fearless and happy, and able to overcome obstacles which to men of a different outlook would be insuperable. I see a company of such human beings rapidly winning others to their way of life . . . (and much more in the same strain as the socialist pamphlets I wrote over fifty years ago).

If men can learn to hope. . . . If we can open our hearts to hope, the world can quickly become a world full of joy . . . (say after piling up hydrogen bombs for half a century).

What we suffer, we suffer owing to our folly. (And sometimes to our philosophy.)

All of which adds up to "love one another" and all will be well. I submit that to-day there is a better feeling between man and man than there ever was. Most enmities are artificial, and we do not fight other men because of hatred. One can feel some sympathy with combatants who are angry with each other. Centuries ago I would have shown my pacifism in a militant way by using a claymore against the Sassenachs, but the awful tragedy of modern warfare is that our sons and grandsons are sent out to kill men with whom they have no quarrel. And no amount of "learning to hope" will save the youth of the world, when the indiscretion of one man, soldier or statesman, can touch off a third great war.

I do not suffer philosophers gladly. It is true that every social question is overshadowed by the fact of actual war, and by the threat of terrible global conflict; I cannot see evidence to justify the hope that the tragedy will be averted. But, after all what has "hope" to do with it? Philosophy should not be made of yearner stuff. Emotional appeals are for evangelists, not for rationalists. Yes, man's adjustments with his fellows are a matter of politics and economics. But one does not tackle a problem in chemistry or electricity by opening our hearts, but by using our heads. Ethics and economics should not be mixed up. Sentimentality has no more place in the settling of sociological problems than in those of Euclid. One need have no love for triangles, no feeling of harmony with parallelograms, to master a proposition. To come back to our article, it is only true in a philosophic sense that what we suffer, we suffer owing to our folly. Wars are not caused by "our hostility to other men," or "hatred between man and man," but by the machinations of a mere handful of men. *We suffer owing to their*

folly.

Surely a philosopher could find a better way out of our present plight than by the West becoming a vast arsenal? I am puzzled. A long time ago the "Prince of Peace" admitted that he came to bring, not peace but a sword. And now a great rationalist philosopher, to achieve peace, would appear to bring Death more abundantly.

J. EFFEL.

THE MAYOR OF BABEL

In the days when the earth was young and the people spoke with one tongue, the Mayor of Babel said to his fellow citizens: "Let us build a tower so tall that we may write on the sky."

And they dug foundations deep into the earth and upon them built a tower that rose tier on tier into the clouds.

When God looked down and saw the tower rising towards him, he said: "Soon the people of the earth will reach my own domains and when we and they are on a level they will see that I and my heaven are not so wonderful as they suppose. It is their unity that enables these people to do great things; without it, they would be lost."

So God devised ways and means to destroy this unity, and one morning when the people awoke, they found not one could understand what the other said. Soon they fell to quarrelling among themselves, each calling the other a fool not to speak as he did.

Then their work came to a standstill, the tower fell into ruins, and before long, the city likewise.

When the people realised that God had brought their plans to naught, many said: "God is stronger than we are. We must respect and honour him and strive to do as he wishes." But the Mayor of Babel said: "God is a mischievous, spiteful and intolerant person, an enemy of the people and worthy of the hostility of all sensible men."

But he found it extremely difficult to make himself understood.

LESLIE HANGER.

BOUNDARY

Silence like the stir of secret swords
Guiltily come to make a felon thrust,
Breathes in my ear that now I am alone.
Night towers above the ramparts of the dust,
Nailed by the stars to the structure of the sky,
Who moves without? must only ghosts reply?

Ah, well I know within this dreadful hour
The perilous adventure of the soul,
Solitary sped upon a nameless quest
All creeds embrace the parts and leave the whole,
Whither and whence within the universe
Journeys the confined cargo of the hearse.

The priest who laid his blessings on my brow,
The doctor yielding up my ended clay,
The shapes who ring the confines of the bed
Have each within their orbits said their say.
All are assured but I who must depart,
Unanswered, ask the comfort of a chart.

The polished nails of night hold fast the dark,
Pale silence has engulfed the tumbling seas,
And quenched the mighty murmur of the hills,
And brought the waiting shapes their knees;
Who stirs beyond? Will no one hear my cry,
How sure are they who are not yet to die.

J. B. O'HARE.

ACID DROPS

In a recent issue, we mentioned the number of hells that are to be found knocking around in different parts of the universe. An Icelandic correspondent from the bleak and frozen north writes to remind us of another "hell" which we had omitted to mention. This is Hekla, the famous Icelandic Volcanoe. For "Hekla" means precisely "Hell." What is more, we learn that one of the entrances to the crater is known locally as "the gate of Hell." The same name is given also to one of the craters of Mt. Vesuvius at the other end of Europe. Hell has, apparently, many entrances—but no exit! Thus, again geography is found to confirm the sacred Scripture which has always taught us that Hell is a one-way terminus.

The late Cardinal Bourne, R.C. Archbishop of Westminster, once dedicated a Church to a Holy Monk, a relic of whom was buried beneath the High Altar. "Think, my sons," exhorted His Eminence, "how often upon this very spot the holy man raised in blessing the very hand which now rests beneath this altar." Unfortunately, subsequent research disclosed the relic in question was a shin-bone.

Mr. A. J. Cummings, of the *News Chronicle*, is distressed at the poverty of the clergy. In a recent "spotlight" in that journal he unfolds the sad news that 2,400 curates of the established church average £6 a week, whilst 12,240 incumbents, after paying their necessary expenses, average less than £9 a week. What, according to the eminent commentator of the *News Chronicle*, is the remedy for the present sorry plight of these underpaid workers in the Lord's vineyard? Is it "pennies from Heaven"? Is it a miraculous sending down of loaves and fishes from on high? Not at all! Mr. Cummings' suggestion is much more modest, it is "a minimum stipend of £1,000 a year for every beneficed clergyman and £600 for curates." Then, presumably, the clergy can discuss "spiritual values" like good materialists.

Our American contemporary Life (issue of 28/8/50) had some startling news to tell its readers: the Holy Mother of God has crossed the Atlantic and has appeared in "God's own country," to be precise in Necedah, Wis. (population 838) U.S.A. For, in that delectable spot, the Blessed Virgin appeared no less than five times to Mrs. Fred Van Hoof, a farmer's wife, and finally informed her that she would contact her again upon August 15, the Feast of the Assumption, upon which date six special trains, one hundred and two buses, seventeen thousand automobiles, and eighty thousand American citizens turned up. Unfortunately, however, the Heavenly visitor failed to keep her appointment; at least only Mrs. Van Hoof "saw" her again. Is another "Fatima" on the way in America? Anyway, wherever the Blessed Virgin does eventually put in an appearance in the U.S.A., it is pounds to dollars that she will mention Russia in her "revelation." Heaven is quit au fait with current terrestrial politics.

Hats off to a free-speaking Canon! He is Canon M. Darling, of Coventry Cathedral, and he insists that "there can be no hope of a religious revival in Britain unless it begins with those inside the Church." It is good to know that those inside the Church ought also to have religion thrust upon them—though some of us, in our innocence, thought they knew all about it. But we wish Canon Darling would answer one question—supposing everybody in the Church had religion as abundantly as he has, what evidence can he bring that any revival would

forthwith succeed? He and his friends believe that religion is true but what will he do with those who say it is not?

Although the problem of secular education was almost solved in France 50 years ago—or so it was thought—religious pressure has never been relaxed, and the battle for the schools, that is, who is going to pay for them, is as acute as ever. So far, as Catholic teachers were not paid by the State, the equipment and general efficiency of Catholic schools were becoming worse and worse, and this has been one of the reasons why such difficulty is experienced in France in forming a Government. Yet all this religious squabbling could cease both in France and in England if only Secular Education became the law. And it must be in the end.

Although one of the claims made for Christianity is that it is so simple that the veriest child can understand it, every now and then our priests and parsons have to apologise because it is not so simple. Lots of people have been complaining to Canon Bryan Green, for example, that they cannot understand the average sermon, and he retorts by pointing out that "most people are not expert in it"—they are "not used to the terms and the symbols of the New Testament." If this means anything at all, it means that if one does understand them, then belief in the Virgin Birth, in the miracles of Jesus such as his Ascension and Resurrection, and his encounter with the Devil, would be as easy to understand as the multiplication table.

If the Canon really believes this then it is useless to argue with him. The reason why those of us, who are proud to be Freethinkers, dismiss Christianity with or without a sneer is that it is packed with "supernatural" stories all of which could be designated as sheer twaddle; and not all the glib articles written by Canon Green, or his sermons, can make them anything else. We go further. We do not believe for a moment that he really believes in a Devil or in Angels and, if he does not, nearly all his "defence" of Christianity is just words, words, words.

If we did not know it before, we ought to now. Mgr. A. Beck, speaking in Westminster Cathedral Hall recently, told his audience that the Catholic religion "was not a matter of sentiment or emotion but of truth, fact, and reasoned argument." How any religion based on truth, fact, and reasoned argument can fail to rope in every intelligent man and woman in the world is a problem which so far the Vatican has failed to solve, but there it is. Will any Catholic tell us—if he can? This challenge is made specially to converts.

All Catholic parents who have the temerity to send their children to a non-Catholic school are being warned that they cannot receive Holy Communion and are committing the gravest sin—and, no doubt, if they have been guilty are now shivering with fright lest they should be thrown into a Lake of Burning Fire for Eternity. And no child under 13 must be sent to a technical school either. This Totalitarian humbug, based on threats and fear, is naturally considered to be the sublime teachings of "our Lord," and Catholics grovel before it. The real point of it all must not however be missed. It is that the Government is implored to pay for all this Catholic teaching. We hope our Protestant friends like it.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 19s. 2d.; half-year, 9s. 7d.; three months, 4s. 11d.

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.

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.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, giving as long notice as possible.

Correspondents are requested to write on one side of the paper only and to make their letters as brief as possible.

Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning.

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

SUGAR PLUMS

A debate, arranged by the North London Branch N.S.S., between Mr. Robbins, a Church of England lay reader, and Mr. L. Ebury, chairman of the North London Branch N.S.S., will take place at White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath on Sunday, September 30, at 12 noon. The subject is "Christianity—For and Against." If Mr. Robbins is as able an exponent of Christianity as Mr. Ebury is of Freethought, the debate should provide an interesting clash of ideas and teachings.

The South London and Lewisham Branch N.S.S. aim at variety in its syllabus of indoor lectures, and on Sunday evening, September 30 at 7-30, Mr. Josiah Wedgwood, leader of the Conservative Party on the Battersea Council, will lecture in The London & Brighton Hotel, Peckham, on "The Pathetic Fallacy of Doctrinaire Socialism, and that Freedom is not compatible with Socialism." There will be the usual opportunity for questions and discussion. Admission is free.

Here are two very sweet plums—for the Churches.
(1) According to reports the Nottingham City Council decided to sell building land to the Churches at about one-quarter of the nominal value. Not only did the Church of England and the Methodist Church buy at the special price, but the Roman Catholic Church, which paid £2,400 for a site two years ago, may have £2,000 refunded.

(2) The War Damage Act of 1941 obtained less than 20 per cent. of the enormous sum already paid out to meet demands. The balance has been met from taxes. 8½ million pounds has been spent on repairing churches, but as the Act relieved the churches from contributions, the public have had to pay it all. War damaged churches can be seen everywhere and the public will have to keep on finding money until they all have been restored. The British taxpayers and electors are paying very dearly for their apathy in the spending of public money by public servants.

The Freethinker Fund

Cheques and Postal Orders should be addressed to

THE FREETHINKER
41 Gray's Inn Rd., London, W.C.1.

To find space for the numerous articles awaiting publication we shall acknowledge all contributions by post instead of printing lists.

is now open

ONE THOUSAND FREETHOUGHT MISSIONARIES WANTED

A CORRESPONDENT quite recently wrote, "I am a comparatively new reader of *The Freethinker* and am constantly amazed at the great wealth of detail and knowledge that are contained in the articles." Yes, and there are thousands more who would be equally appreciative of our message and its quality if they knew it existed. We must contact those thousands. It can be done easily at a very little cost in money, time, and energy. From the present readers of *The Freethinker* it should not be difficult to get one thousand voluntary missionaries for Freethought. Each one would undertake to purchase an extra copy of the paper each week and place it to the best advantage for a possible new reader to get it, remember possible new readers are everywhere. There is no risk, no danger, nor the likelihood of a rough house, but it works out this way, a thousand Freethought missionaries placing an extra copy per week means one thousand copies distributed over the country each week, and fifty-two thousand copies in the course of a year. Even if no new regular subscribers resulted there would be an infiltration of our message into the world of religion, it would add to the publicity of our movement, and help to defeat the boycott of Freethought in the Press. Very few realise how widespread that boycott is to-day. We ask for one thousand voluntary missionaries to help spread our message by the plan outlined. No names and addresses need be sent to the office, there are no forms to be filled in, you just begin to do your weekly good deed for the movement right away, and it will only cost you threepence per week, and you can cover that quite easily by smoking one and a-half cigarettes less per week and that will improve your health, strengthen your Freethought conscience and, perhaps, rescue a poor Christian from the murky, mental atmosphere of his religion and restore him as an intelligent citizen. So start to-day by placing an order for an extra copy of *The Freethinker* with your newsagent and when it arrives make sure you use it to the best advantage.

R. H. ROSETTI.

BERLIN, AUGUST, 1951

LIKE most people, freethinkers dislike war, but probably understand its origins better than those who see it as an act of "God." Readers of this journal will realise, however, that a mere passive objection to war is useless.

Stalin has correctly explained that "peace will be preserved and strengthened if the peoples take into their own hands the cause of peace and defend it to the end."

A positive step along this peaceful road was taken by the 2¼ million young people at the Third World Festival of Youth and Students recently. Held in war-destroyed Berlin, it symbolised the desire of peaceful millions to overcome the legacy of the last war, and defeat those plotters of a new one.

I was fortunate enough to attend this demonstration and travelled there through Poland.

Everywhere British delegates were met by enthusiastic youngsters and adults shouting the Festival password, "Freundschaft" (friendship). It was no incantation, but a heartfelt demand by people who had suffered the full impact of warfare.

Polish youths greeted us at Gydinia with bands, flowers, songs and happiness. They threw messages to the ship and tied badges and scarfs to our Union Jacks hung especially over the side.

As we disembarked the Poles surrounded us to clasp hands, shouted pokoj (peace) and let tears of deep feeling trickle over healthy cheeks. This was the Iron Curtain country of repressed and hungry people!

We could speak to anyone. One delegate asked to be taken around a clothing factory and was immediately given an opportunity to visit one.

Every station on the way to Berlin was decorated and crowded with reception committees and spectators.

As our train drew in, they sang, shook our hands, kissed us and when we dismounted, danced with us on the stations. Peasants in fields waved to us, people in lonely cottages called greetings, the police smiled and were courteous; the entire population were as obviously determined for peace as we were.

In Berlin we experienced the enthusiasm of millions of free Germans. We spoke freely and heard agreement as well as criticism of the popularly supported United Front Government.

The Germans laughed at our stories of a police state. They asked which of our delegates had been denied admission to the Festival like delegates had been denied admission to England for the Sheffield Peace Congress.

Basic food supplies were plentiful and cheap. Luxury goods could be purchased in the State Trading Organisation. This illuminates the black market, and stabilises prices.

The Festival enabled us to meet and exchange views with people from 104 countries. Pen-friends were made and every day further proof was discovered revealing the progressive nature of new Germany.

Cultural shows enabled English youth to see the achievements of other nations; a necessary step when some are inclined to dub foreigners "limeys" or "gooks" and equate a thousand year-old tradition with the culture of the coco-cola.

Young people in Germany are deeply aware of their important role in rebuilding the country. They work hard to clear bomb sites, educate themselves and prepare for their new way of life.

A number of delegates returned home via Prague. An informative day was spent in what is one of Europe's most enchanting capitals. Its people are better fed and better dressed than in England. Their city is more cared for than London and all the children were tidy.

The visit to Berlin has convinced delegates of the passionate desire peoples in the New Democracies have for peace. Their efforts to end the threat of war and rebuild their countries is something we should be proud to emulate.

J. C.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Matchbox labels, once banned in Peru because of their religious theme, will be on view in London in October in an exhibition organised by the British Matchbox, Label, and Booklet Society.

The Peruvian labels—there are 61, all now obsolete—depict the birth, life and crucifixion of Christ, and are part of the collection of Mr. John Ford, a porter at Grove Park railway station.

CHRISTIANITY AND WITCHCRAFT

BELIEF in witchcraft is ancient: evidence of this fact is found in the Babylonian Hammurabi Code, variously dated from ca. 2000 to 1700 B.C. Christians inherited this, and their other beliefs, from Paganism. The Bible makes frequent mention of witches, foul spirits, evil spirits, dumb spirits, unclean spirits, familiar spirits, devils, demons, wizards, etc. The Gentiles sacrifice to devils (1 Cor. X, 20). All the gods of the nations are devils (or idols) (Psalm XCVI, 5). "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live" (Ex. XXII, 18); Such are to be stoned to death (Lev. XX, 27, etc.). Satan, real in Job I and II, is prince of the devils (Matt. IX, 34; XII, 24), and the prince of the power of the air (Eph. XVIII, 2); an iron axe arose and floated by throwing in a stick (2 Kings VI, 5, 6); Nebuchadnezzar "did eat grass as oxen" (Dan. IV, 33); Lot's wife became a pillar of salt (Gen. XIX, 26); Jesus is described as casting devils into the Gadarene swine (Matt. VIII, 28-33); the devil transported Jesus through the air (Luke IV, 5, 9).

Such Biblical pronouncements endorse the ancient beliefs in sorcery, magic, demons, and devils, and warrant, in Christians, their belief in Satan, his powers, and his acts; and "prove" to them the reality of witchcraft, witches having a pact with the devil. St. Thomas Aquinas, following mainly St. Augustine, teaches that the author of Holy Writ is God; and, therefore, the Holy Scriptures can never contain an untruth in their literal sense. "To St. Bernard, Abelard's presumption in applying reason to theology was intolerable" (Dr. G. G. Coulton, *Medieval Scene*, 1930). "No believer in the Scriptures can deny the existence of a personal devil" (*Catholic Question Box*, New York, 1910, p. 570). "It was argued that, as the devil afflicted Job, so he and his minions continue to cause disease; that, as Satan is the Prince of the power of the air, he and his minions cause tempests; that the cases of Nebuchadnezzar and Lot's wife prove that sorcerers can transform human beings into animals or even lifeless matter; that, as the devils of Gadara were cast into swine, all animals could be afflicted in the same manner; and that, as Christ himself had been transported through the air by the power of Satan, so any human being might be thus transported." (White, *Warfare of Science*, I, p. 384.)

The Catholic Encyclopædia says: "Sorcery is coupled by St. Paul with idolatry, and it was the habitual ally . . . throughout the pagan world" (VI, 337). Its article on "Witchcraft" approves, cautiously, of "a saner and more critical clerical spirit" as shown by Burchard, ca. 1020. regarding the belief in witchcraft; mentions that Pope Gregory VII, in 1080, told King Harold of Denmark that witches should not be put to death for causing storms, pestilences or crop failures; claims that the charge that Pope Innocent VIII's Bull of 1484 was responsible for the witch mania of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is illusory; that the Pope does not wish to bind anyone to believe more about the reality of witchcraft than is involved in the utterances of Holy Scripture; and concludes: To the question "of the reality of witchcraft it is not easy to pass a definite judgment. In the face of Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Fathers and theologians the abstract possibility of a pact with the Devil and of a diabolical interference in human affairs can hardly be denied. . . . In 99 cases out of 100 the allegations rest upon nothing better than pure delusion." (C.E., XV, 677.)

J. M. Robertson states: "Thus [from scientific and critical ignorance] the belief in the reality of witchcraft, sometimes discarded by churchmen, is sometimes maintained by heretics. Rejected by John of Salisbury in the

twelfth century, and by the freethinking Pietro of Abano in 1303, it was affirmed and established by Thomas Aquinas, asserted by Gregory IX, and made a motive for uncounted slaughters by the Inquisition." (*History of Freethought, I*, p. 413.) The *Catholic Encyclopædia* says: "Under the Empire in the third century, witches were burned by State enactment. . . . The ecclesiastical legislation followed a similar but milder course." (p. 675.) "Certain papal constitutions by John XXII (1316-34) and Benedict XII (1334-42) stimulated the persecution by the inquisitors of witches and magic practitioners." (XV, 676.) A. D. White says: "Down to the Christian era the fear of magic rarely led to any persecution very systematic or very cruel. . . . But with the development of Christian theology came a change. The idea of the active interference of Satan in magic . . . had passed from the Hebrew scriptures into Christianity and had been made still stronger by various statements in the New Testament." (*Warfare of Science With Theology, I*, 382-3.) As E. Clodd says: "Jesus believed in an archfiend, who was permitted by Omnipotence, the Omnipotence against which he had rebelled, to set loose countless numbers of evil spirits to work havoc on men and animals." (*Pioneers of Evolution*, p. 54.)

GEORGE ROSS.

(To be concluded)

CORRESPONDENCE

GIBBON ON RELIGION

SIR,—As you have seen fit, under the heading "Gibbon on Religion," to write such a lengthy reply to my short note, I ask your indulgence for a further contribution from myself.

Gibbon dealt with Roman Persecutions, but with regard to your quotation, Gibbon, I repeat, was not dealing with the whole "field of Roman history," and your criticism is therefore irrelevant. Of the period to which he does refer, I submit a reference (one of many) from a modern Christian historian, T. R. Glover, as follows: "The second century A.D. was perhaps the period when a greater proportion of the civilised world had a better government than at any other time."

Voltaire and Gibbon did not hold the atheistic view, that all religion is false. They were both Deists. It was the creeds they refuted, if you reject their dictum in this respect, you even lag behind. Jessup and I and everyone else know that Gibbon could not have said "the last word."

As for your statement that my last paragraph is "a tissue of absurdities," I am unrepentant. In your article of August 5 you make a comparison of the Book of Job, and the teachings of Swedenborg with the beliefs of a cannibal Aztec, and say, the latter is more false. You are confusing what you consider more ethical with what is true, and you do not help matters by now dragging in Bishop Barnes. I know not what logical yardstick you are attempting to use; for Barnes only becomes rational in so far as he rejects the supernatural, i.e., the religious. His belief in the divinity of Christ is as false as the Phoenix.—Yours, etc.,

LEN EBURY.

Our correspondent's second letter leaves me also unrepentant. Even if Mr. Ebury is correct in confining Gibbon's reference to the Antonine era—96 A.D.—180 A.D.—this does not help his case, since the prohibition of such illegal cults as Druidism, etc., remained in force during this era. Gibbon's statement was rhetoric, not historical fact, and cannot be taken literally. As for religions being "equally true," perhaps Mr. Ebury will write us an article explaining how a religion which accepts evolution or the reality of matter can be equally false with creeds which accept special creation and/or solipsism.—F. A. R.]

PSYCHO ANALYSIS

SIR,—Among the many things which are not at all clear in Mr. Dudley's article on Psycho Analysis, I can only select a few. Would he be good enough to give us his authority that "up to 1900, people believed that sexuality made its appearance only at puberty"? Who are "the people"? Where does Freud demonstrate that the "most important phase" of sexuality occurs before the age of five? What exactly is meant by "the myth of the innocence of childhood has been exploded"? What does Mr. Dudley mean by "sexuality" and by "innocence" and by "childhood"? Who is Mr. Samuel J. Beck, and is he quoted as an authority only because he agrees

with Freud, or agrees with Mr. Dudley, or what? Supposing I consider that Mr. Beck was writing twaddle, why am I wrong?—Yours, etc.,

H. CUTNER.

SECULAR EDUCATION IN FRANCE

SIR,—I must thank you for your leading article in *The Freethinker*, September 2, about the school question which has been arousing so much bitter controversy in France for the last 70 years. I am a Frenchman belonging to a schoolteacher's family and brought up "laïque" and freethinking atmosphere, and thankful for it. I went, of course, to State schools, the work of which has made our country a great intellectual and humanitarian country. I have followed closely since my early childhood the fight of the Church against our schools, especially on the primary level. I may translate your article and send it to France for publication, as it would show there that in England the fight against superstition is on, too.

Since I came to England to get married 3 years ago, I have been shocked to see what influence the Church is allowed to keep in the country, where it has an official support—even from a Labour Government—and where religion is imposed in public ceremonies and State schools in more or less diluted forms, on people, the majority of whom are not concerned at all with it in their everyday life.

I am now more than ever interested, as I have a little boy who, will be going to school in a few years and I want him to be brought up in the best secular traditions. In France, of course, there would be no trouble, as in State schools subjective subjects like religion and politics have no place in the teaching of children.

It is only a few weeks ago that I first saw your paper, although I had been looking for something similar all the time. I buy it now, regularly, and read it with great interest, especially the "technical" articles and the Acid Drops—I shall look for any contribution I can make to them.

I send you my best wishes for an ever-increasing success, and I shall try and help to it.—Yours, etc.,

JEAN TOUDIC.

"WHY ACID DROPS?"

SIR,—It is not often that I disagree with Mr. H. Cutner—not violently, anyway. But in his article under the above heading in your issue of September 2, 1951, he went off the rails badly. His fulsome and extravagant praise of Dickens in general, and of the *Pickwick Papers* in particular, was certainly undeserved.

I have read the *Pickwick Papers* twice, and I was bored stiff each time. As for Dickens as a novelist may I say this—I know it is rank heresy, but here goes: Most of Dickens' characters are either snivellers, or they are "on the booze"; and I have no use for either type. In fact, if the English men and women described by Dickens in his novels are true to life I am tempted to turn Christian for a few seconds and exclaim "God Save England!"—Yours, etc.,

THOMAS OWEN.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Market Place.—Every Sunday, 3 and 7 p.m.: J. SHARPLES.
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park, Bradford).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A Lecture.
- J. CLAYTON'S Lecture Engagements: Worstholme, Friday, September 21, 7 p.m.; Great Harwood, Saturday, September 22, 6 p.m.; Preston (Town Hall Square), Sunday, September 23, 7-15 p.m.
- Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: J. W. BARKER.
- Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m., Platt Fields, Sunday, 3 p.m. Speakers: C. MCCALL, G. WOODCOCK and R. BILLING.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: L. EBURY and W. G. FRASER. Sunday Evening, 7-30 p.m. (Highbury Corner): L. EBURY and J. CALVERLEY.
- Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, September 22, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY and A. ELSMERE.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool)—Sunday, 7 p.m.: A. SAMMS.
- West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: C. E. WOOD.

INDOOR

- South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, September 23, 11 a.m.: JOSEPH McCABE, "Communism."

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS AND SHOVE-HA'PENNY

MY genial and clever friend, Mr. Frank Kenyon, having clashed with Mr. Geoffrey Dudley, a psycho-analytic critic, has, after a relatively "Brief Encounter," announced that "enough has now been written to prove that psycho-analysis is a delusion." Well, he should know, for he has written an excellent, well-reasoned book* to prove just that. Mr. Kenyon goes on to affirm that an admission "without reserve" by Mr. Dudley "that psycho-analysis is founded on the postulate of an immaterial entity—a mythical mind," is significant, and he regards this "as no small triumph." I, too, feel that Mr. Kenyon has made his point—one point, albeit important—and I should be the last to grudge him his expressed satisfaction. But as the dust of battle settles, I cannot refrain from asking, "So What?"

As a Secularist and a freethinker, I am always on the look-out for attempts by alleged scientists, and others, to bolster the idea of God, and for abstract concepts being treated as if they were concrete. Looking up the word *Entity* in Murray's "New English Dictionary" (Oxford), I encountered this significant note: "The original sense was abstract, but (my italics) *in accordance with the usual tendency with such words*, it early acquired a concrete sense." Clear thinkers must be ever on guard against this particular confusion of thought, and we are beholden to Mr. Kenyon for his emphasis on this particular point. Mind is an entity, a concept, which has no reality apart from the human brain, with which it co-exists, and the mind is almost certainly produced by the brain. Here, with not a quarter of Mr. Kenyon's application to this subject, I am in entire agreement with him. But we must avoid being a little too scornful of those who ignorantly misuse words.

All our movement knows about the one problem that, as the saying is, "sticks out a mile." "What is mind? No matter. What is matter? Never mind." Thus a witty undergrad, who at any rate knew his mind. I am not a metaphysician, nor (as Mr. Vernon Carter knows) a logician, but I try to keep clearly in mind the difference between a noun and a verb, in other words, between substance and action, between matter and force. I strive to hold fast to what I conceive to be the truth, that there can be no verb without a noun. (Another word for noun is *substantive*.) Yet this is not always an easy matter. Man is limited by his own invention—language. Hence the modern scientist's flight from words to figures. I do not know whether he will encounter similar human limitations in that sphere, but I am sure of the difficulties we all encounter in trying to reach precision, i.e., approximate truth, in our imprecise instrument of speech. Take as example, our two protagonists, Mr. Kenyon and Mr. Dudley. Mr. Kenyon uses in his last article "conscious material" when he means *thought*, and Mr. Dudley is quoted as referring to "unconscious material" when he means unconscious thought. Both these gentlemen must use the common mode of speech, even if they are arguing whether mind is matter. Even so sturdy a freethinker as W. K. Clifford was, nearly three-quarters of a century ago, using a term "mind-stuff" for thought. Suggested by Shakespeare no doubt, "Such stuff as dreams are made on."

They are, of course, in no worse a predicament than the "applied-scientist," the electrician. He does not know what electricity is, but he handles electrical phenome-

non every day. At one time this electricity was conceived of as a fluid, and even to this day is referred to as "juice" by the man who mends your electric-light, in the same colloquial way as in America petrol is referred to as gas. This is of course the language of practical men, or of pragmatists. Now I would ask my friend, Mr. Kenyon, are the practising psycho-analysts to be debarred from using the concept, mind, in the same pragmatic manner? Are they to take a leaf out of Einstein and speak of, say, a "brain-mind continuum" when dealing with their neurotics? Surely not! It would be enough to turn a "schizo" into a "maniacal depressive!"

Let us be more modest and admit that we do not know everything, not being gods. In spite of all that has been written, we do not know, or, at any rate, I don't know, what matter, mind, force, and suchlike terms *mean*. What is gravitation? I guess that the present Astronomer Royal knows no more on this, intrinsically, than Isaac Newton. He may well know more on *how* it works, but that is another thing. And to close this rambling discourse, let me ask you, my readers, to try with me a little experiment. Get a smoothly planed board, such as a "shove-ha-penny" board, or the kitchen board on which the cook cuts the onions. See that it is clear, and see that you return it—or there will be trouble! On the board, which you have placed on the edge of the table, put a row of ten (preferably new) ha-pennies, each touching each in a perfectly straight line. Now take another (the eleventh) coin and put it on the edge of your board, in line with the other coins, placed so that about not more than a sixth of this eleventh coin projects a little over the edge of the board. Now, as in shove-ha-penny, strike the eleventh coin with a smart horizontal sweep of the right hand, so that the striking coin hits the right-most coin at about its horizontal diameter. You see? The left-most ha-penny has left its fellows and is, say, from a quarter to one inch away from the line. How come? Force, of course. What kind of force? Ask Prof. Einstein. How did that force travel through the coins, which, with the exception of number eleven and the left-most coin, did not move. Perhaps they did move a little, but it was not perceptible to my eye.

Now, why this little parable? To bring home again in the most simple manner—that of seeing and believing—that force is but a concept, an entity, and has no substance of itself. Whatever that force may be, it had to make use of the substance of the metal of the coins. So, I take it, it is with mind—a force—which has to make use of the substance of the brain. Force of every kind is only matter of every kind in activity. No activity of matter, no force. You get me? Mr. Kenyon wins this particular round with our P.A. friends. I, personally, think he is too scornful of these gentlemen, but that, naturally, is another matter, that I cannot deal with at the tail-end of this little homily.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

DETERMINISM OR FREEWILL? By Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 3s.; postage 2d.

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING. By Chapman Cohen. First and second series. Price 3s. each; postage 3d.

THE FAULTS AND FAILINGS OF JESUS CHRIST. By C. G. L. Du Cann. (Second Edition.) Price 6d.; postage 1½d.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION. By Chapman Cohen. New Edition. Price 9d.; postage 1½d.

* Psycho-Analysis: A Modern Delusion. (Pioneer Press.)