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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Reflections on Easter

ONCE again we have passed through "the holiest of seasons": the period which commemorates the death and resurrection of "Our Lord Jesus Christ." Yet once more the whole modern paraphernalia of science has been utilised to spread abroad "the glad tidings": the refinements of wireless and the eloquence of the written and spoken word combine to put over the ancient agrarian myths of the Middle East which formed the ultimate starting-point of the imposing fabric of the later Christian creeds.

How did it all begin? On this fundamental question it must be conceded that modern research has, so far at least, really shed very little real light. Indeed, the present writer is of the opinion that even to-day, after a century-and-a-half of an intensive study of Christian origins and of the New Testament we actually *know* nothing of how Christianity really started. Of course there have been and are many surmises, some more, some less probable. However, one should not confuse surmises with facts; not even the most probable surmises. Hitherto, the task accomplished, and brilliantly accomplished by New Testament criticism, has been, of necessity, mainly negative. It has had to demolish, to clear away the highly organised traditional system of explanations which 19 centuries of Christianity have evolved and elaborated as an adequate explanation for its own origins; an explanation which Christianity has been able to enforce in Europe by its control of education, absolute and unchallenged for a millenium, by incessant propaganda and, last but by no means least, by the sword and stake of the persecutor in the past and by the verbal and social ostracism of its opponents in the present.

Except, to some extent, in the universities of (pre-Nazi) Germany, official education and professional historians have usually either steered clear of Christian origins or have paid at least lip-service to the traditional explanations. Academic history throughout "Christian civilisation" has shied off from any objective discussion of Christian origins. Unorthodoxy, at least if and when pressed to the point of absolute unbelief, is still not fashionable in academic circles, whilst the Church is a powerful vested interest even in the sphere of higher education where its active hostility was long fatal to any prospect of academic success, and where even to-day its ill-will, particularly in our "older—and more socially respectable universities" like Oxford and Cambridge, is a powerful deterrent to academic promotion.

Consequently, the only people who are interested, not in defending traditional Christian apologetics, but in finding out what really happened, are historical free-lances who have no university position to inculcate caution and who, in most cases, have no academic background at all. For example, had the greatest of English, indeed, perhaps of all modern historians, Edward Gibbon, stayed up at Oxford and become a professor instead of being pre-

maturely "sent down" on account of his temporary conversion to Roman Catholicism, would he have ever written his famous chapter on Christian Origins in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*? In view of our historian's notoriously cautious temperament it is very doubtful! Gibbon, indeed, has stormed his way into the academic citadel; the University of Oxford, which rejected her two greatest alumni, Gibbon and Shelley, has been compelled by their world-wide posthumous fame to recognise her mistakes. But in the sphere, at least, of Christian origins, the door of academic recognition is still locked, bolted and barred against the non-academic free-lance.

At least two of Gibbon's English successors in the annals of the historical investigation of Christian origins, Walter Cassels and John M. Robertson, have been Gibbon's equals in scholarship even if not in literary power, neither has ever received the least academic recognition and such masterpieces as *Pagan Christs* and *Supernatural Religion* are studiously ignored in "our old universities." Neither of their distinguished authors was a Doctor of Divinity nor, had they enunciated their revolutionary theses in the Divinity Schools of these universities, would they have ever stood much chance of becoming one!

Thus, it may be pronounced with, we think, approximate accuracy, that we are still completely in the dark as to how Christianity actually began. After about the middle of the second century, when the growth of "heresy" compelled the Church to publish our *New Testament* and to give its official blessing to the accounts of Christian origins contained in our canonical Gospels, we are able to form a tolerably clear picture of the subsequent growth and evolution of the Christian Church. But the first century and a-half of our Era is a *tabula rasa* or, to vary the metaphor, a dark tunnel into whose murky depths the light of History can only penetrate dimly and fitfully.

If the above statement appears a trifle strong in view of the vast critical literature compiled upon the subject of Christian origins during the past century and a-half since the end of active religious persecution made the appearance of New Testament criticism possible, we must point out that the very fact that both Rationalists in general and critical historians of Christian origins in particular are still at odds over the elementary fact of the historicity, or otherwise, of the titular Founder of Christianity Himself, in itself goes far to prove it. Are the Gospels themselves authentic biographies or religiously, edifying romances? Until we can answer *that* question definitely to the satisfaction of *all* serious students we cannot even say that the fundamental question as to how Christianity really began, has even begun to find an answer. The further fact that academic New Testament criticism has not even got as far as admitting the existence of this primary problem, in itself adds fresh force to the contentions that we have indicated above.

How did it begin? In which connection even the

ascertainment that Jesus was or was not historical is only the first step in the solution to our problem. If He did exist, as seems to be still the orthodox—that is, majority!—view even in critical circles, how was the circle squared?

How, almost before the Galilean carpenter was consigned to his ignominious grave, came it that his traditionally monotheistic contemporaries were referring to him as, in unmistakable terms, a supernatural Being and as the equal of their tribal god? If "Jesus" was merely a myth derived ultimately from Pagan Nature-worship, why was it that Christianity originated and spread at that precise historical moment? We repeat that we are still completely in the dark with regard to these questions and further, that we need expect no help from the academic learning of "Christian civilisation" in solving them: there are too many vested interests at stake for Christianity, even now, to be studied impartially.

For the scientific study of Christian origins we shall have to wait until the battle for the secular state and for secular education has been fought and won. Then, and not until then, secular learning, at long last freed from the dead hand of the Church, may seriously address itself to the problem as to why a certain, at present unknown date in an obscure frontier district of the Roman Empire, is still commemorated, not only in Palestine but throughout the world, as "The First Easter morning."

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE RHYTHM OF THE COSMOS

[We propose to publish serially in several issues of *The Freethinker* the following lecture, *The Rhythm of the Cosmos*, by M. N. Roy. Mr. Roy, the Founder of the *Indian Humanist Movement*, is one of the outstanding critical thinkers of our time.—EDITOR.]

THE origin of modern rationalism is to be traced in Christian theology and scholastic learning, as represented by Thomas Aquinas, Albertus Magnus, Duns Scotus, Ockham, and others, who conceived and developed the pregnant idea of a law-governed Universe, which inspired the pioneers like Giordano Bruno, Cusa, Copernicus and Galileo to lay down the foundation of modern science. Theology is the application of reason to religious beliefs and the attempt to state them in a systematic manner. Without the idea of a law-governed Universe as its point of departure, no science would be possible. The germs of modern science thus grew in the womb of the dark Middle-Ages, which was dominated by the mysticism of a so-called revealed religion. Ultimately reason triumphed over faith in a struggle which lasted for a whole millennium.

Even during the first thousand years of the Christian era, reason was not altogether overwhelmed by faith. The breakdown of the antique social order created a spiritual chaos. That was a time when Freudian "paranoiacs" sought "to set the world right by means of a fantasy which they proceeded to translate into reality." A mass fantasy was created by an increasingly large number of "paranoiacs" uniting to bring about a state of happiness by reforming painful and depressing realities in conformity with a delusion. Yet, the rational essence of human nature successfully weathered all those vicissitudes, to reassert itself ultimately as the revolt of man against the Almighty God and his more powerful agents on earth. As a matter of fact, even the mysticism of a revealed religion is but a perverted form of rationalism inherent in human nature. Mysticism does not deny order in nature, but only ascribes it to the inscrutable will of

God: it is too grand a scheme to be comprehended by human intelligence.

"The technique of religion consists in lowering the values of life and distorting the image of the real world in a fantastic way; and this presupposes the intimidation of the intelligence. By the forceful fixation of a psychic infantilism and its incorporation into a mass fantasy, religions succeed in saving many people from an individual neurosis," says Freud. So, mystic religious belief is only a consolation for the tormented soul tossing in the stormy sea of uncertainty. That is a temporary predicament. The origin and history of religion are psychological problems; they are inherent in the evolution of the human mind. All attempts to solve these problems must begin not with gratuitous assumptions, such as "it is human nature to believe," but with obvious and rudimentary questions.

"Why did human beings ever come to hold these opinions at all, and how did they arrive at them? What was there in the condition of early man which made him to frame to himself such abstract notions of one or more great supernatural agents of whose objective existence he had certainly in nature no clear and obvious evidence? What first suggested to the mind of man the notion of deity in the abstract? And how from the early multiplicity of deities did the conception of a single great and unlimited deity first take its rise? Why did men ever believe there were gods at all, and why from many gods did they arrive at one?"

Answers to these pertinent questions are to be found in a philosophical examination of the intellectual development of the human race. The inquiry leads to the conclusion that religion was the refuge of the frustrated rationalism of the savage. In the absence of positive knowledge, and owing to the impossibility of gaining it under the circumstances of the age, the attempts of the great ancient thinkers—those forerunners of science and philosophy—to explain nature rationally, were bound to be speculative. Only a few could rise to the dizzy heights of speculative thought, as distinct from "the fantasy of paranoiacs." But natural religion could not permanently satisfy the curiosity of mankind at the dawn of civilisation. Adolescent human intelligence, generally, required something less infantile and more convincing. Religion is the outcome of an effort to explain all things—physical, metaphysical and moral—by analogies drawn from human society, imaginatively and symbolically considered. In short, it is a universal sociological hypothesis, mystic only in form.

More correctly, it is an intellectual hypothesis. Instinctively believing that everything is caused, man must imagine causes of the objects of his experience, if he cannot discover them; and the imaginary causes of the diverse phenomena must eventually be traced to a final cause. Summarising the findings of the modern science of the history of religion, a dissenting author of great competence writes: "The ideas of God and the soul are the result of early fallacious reasonings about misunderstood experience." (Andrew Lang.)

M. N. ROY.

(To be continued)

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FREETHOUGHT VETERANS IN AUSTRALIA

A LINK with early London freethought days was severed by the death during a visit to England early in March of the Australian theatrical magnate, Sir Benjamin Fuller, at the age of 75.

Like his father, John Fuller, Sir Benjamin was born in London. The father, a compositor by trade, had a remarkably sweet tenor voice, and Sir Benjamin was a child musical prodigy. At a very early age, the son was taken by the father to hear Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant. Soon the boy was enlisted for piano selections. In later years, Sir Benjamin used to recall with pleasure how, perched on a high stool, he performed at these gatherings.

As he grew up, Sir Benjamin became as firm as his father in his freethought beliefs. While unwavering in these, he did not—in deference, it is understood, to some members of his family—publicly espouse them. Still, he quietly took an active interest in freethought. For example, many years ago he provided the funds for the defence of a writer or speaker charged with blasphemy. This was known only to his intimate friends. The case was dismissed. Sir Benjamin's belief was that this charge—heard in Melbourne, I believe—was the only one of the kind ever brought in Australia.

At the age of 23, the father, John Fuller, sought to turn his voice to commercial account. The engagements he got in London were of a very modest character. Eventually he was booked as a tenor with what was known as the London Pavilion Company for a tour of Australia. The venture was not successful, and £25 was owing to John when the company disbanded—a sorely needed sum which he never got. Casual singing engagements were followed by John starting a little concert company of his own. This was the foundation of what, under the direction of Sir Benjamin, became the huge theatrical enterprises of the Fullers in Australia and New Zealand.

Sir Benjamin himself worked his passage to Australia, partly as a waiter, and partly as a double-bass player in the ship's orchestra. Contributions to educational and other publicly beneficial ends by Sir Benjamin must have totalled well over £50,000. He was the first person in this part of the world associated with the theatrical profession to be favoured with a knighthood.

The attractions presented by the Fullers ranged from waxworks to grand opera. Sir Benjamin dealt in things in a big way. By no means did all his ventures show a profit. A 20-weeks' grand-opera season in 1933 let him down for £30,000. "Still," he cheerily remarked to the writer, "I personally enjoyed the great musical treat—everything, in fact, except the loss."

At a banquet tendered him in Sydney in 1945 by the entire stage and picture interests of Australia, in recognition of his 50-years' association with the theatrical business, he was good-humouredly pressed to disclose something of the Fullers' financial fluctuations. "All I care to say," he remarked, "is that the Fuller's bank overdraft stood at one time at £900,000—a sufficient indication that we must have had at least some assets."

A story Sir Benjamin rather relished telling was that of a priest patronisingly remarking to him at a wedding ceremony, "You know, Sir Benjamin, I've met some decent people in your profession." Promptly, Sir Benjamin retorted, "Is that so, father? Well, to be quite frank, I'd like to return the compliment by assuring you that I've even met some decent people in your profession."

Long before his death in 1923, the father retired from any active part in the Fuller business. Even more so did Sir Benjamin then become the guiding, directing spirit of

the organisation. Such were the humanitarian views of the father that he left over £100,000 to the children's orphanages in New Zealand—the territory in which the Fullers first got their footing. Commenting on this, a leading New Zealand paper said that so munificent a bequest should still for ever be the voice of those raised in slanderous denunciation of the stage—that is, the churches and pietists generally.

Australia.

FRANK HILL.

REVIEW

The Wisdom of C. G. L. Du Cann

A MAXIM is an intensity of experience expressed in a sentence: a profound truth requiring no context for its amplification. It is the literature of the single thought. The writing of maxims is therefore one of the most difficult of accomplishment, and the most intellectually satisfying form of literary art. A maxim takes a few seconds to set down; it takes a lifetime to invent.

Any man, if driven to it, could write a book; only one man in ten thousand can write a maxim. Mr. Du Cann comes into the light as our exceptional man. In his little book ("Maxims and Paradoxes," W. H. Allen, 2s. 6d.) there are four hundred proofs of a provocative mind revealed in the simplest, and therefore the most perfect, form. The maxim is of necessity pitiless, for its theme is man stripped of pretence, and its consistent purpose is to look behind masks. Living as we do in a world of masks, which makes for comfort, not all of us have the courage to look behind them. Mr. Du Cann has. He not only looks behind them but he is able to express what he finds there. And what he finds there is *us*. But soft! We are observed.

And what observation! To read Mr. Du Cann is like facing oneself in a barber's glass after a night of dissipation: the glimpse of reality at first shocks, then stimulates to sober reflection. True, sober reflection may not last long, but it leaves its impression on the mind, and impressions on the mind are a man's real education even as impressions on his flesh and blood are but common experience. Mr. Du Cann is an uncommon experience. Here is a man who has wandered in many strange places in the human arcanum and brought back a true report of his discoveries. His report does not coincide with popular belief. Nor does Freethought.

If there are echoes of La Rochefoucauld in some of Mr. Du Cann's pages, this is not a fault (to find echoes of Shakespeare, and not the Great McGonigal, in a poet is to praise the poet), for perhaps no writer in this most difficult genre can escape completely from the shade of the great French master. A real work of the mind is a rare event in any age, but especially so in this when mindlessness appears to be the main requisite for securing publication. Readers of this paper are already happily acquainted with Mr. Du Cann's incisiveness of thought. They would be wise to obtain for themselves his concentrated wisdom.

JOHN O'HARE.

RETORT

A Parson met with mild rebuke, for "Teaching Heresy," And told, unless he "Toe'd the line," that he, dismissed, would be.

He said: "Instead of blaming me, and threatening 'The Sack,'

I think you ought to thank the Lord, for what I'm keeping back."

C. E. RATCLIFFE.

ACID DROPS

What a heavenly opportunity Easter gives the Churches to get over the Christian message! Not even Christmas gives our parsons and priests such a glorious riot in sermons, hymns, and broadcast talks, punctuated with superb references to "our Lord" or the "suffering Messiah" or "Christ Jesus" as if every word of the Gospel myth was literally true. It was only to be expected that religion took over the B.B.C., and poured over the air a flood of supernatural nonsense, and especially that conglomeration of naive "reconstruction" which is now a B.B.C. "regular" entitled the "Man Born to be King." Whether the public want it or not they have to have it. Fortunately one can switch off.

But our national newspapers are mostly not a bit behind the B.B.C. in their kow-towing to Oriental myths. The *Daily Express*, for example, actually believes that the story of Esther is *historical!* The *Daily Mail*, of course, insists this is the "time for belief." But belief in what? Belief that "Nature surely bears witness to the eternal truths of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection." Not a word here about "Christ Jesus." The "Resurrection," it appears, is really "the miraculous cycle of birth, life, fruition, death leading again to birth and life." This looks suspiciously as if it came from the pages of *The Freethinker*.

By the way, the *Daily Express* wants to know if you went to church at Easter how much money you put in the collection plate? Shame on you if you didn't put as much as you can afford. "Or," it scornfully asks, "did you give less to God than you spent in one week on football pools?" This is the first time—at least, as far as we remember—that we have been told that God was definitely hard up. Why doesn't he go in for football pools? After all, with the aid of a miracle or two, he would *always* win!

Our Spiritualistic contemporary, "Psychic News," asks, "Why was Jesus crucified?" and proceeds to answer the query in the usual Christian manner. Jesus failed to come up to scratch in "the Jews' material conception of King-Messiahship"; he "aroused hatred and opposition in the minds of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees"; and because he told Caiaphas that he was going to sit "at the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven." Could balderdash go much further? Still it appears that "whatever theory is held regarding the crucifixion, all Spiritualists accept the glorious fact of the resurrection." Why, of course, the Resurrection must be true because all Spiritualists believe it!

Another "Holy Trinity" has been discovered by Prof. H. H. Price who is, we understand, a thorough believer in Christianity and spooks. He thinks that the idea that man should be regarded as merely two parts, body and mind, is out of date. Man consists of three parts—body, mind, and spirit, though frankly we don't think this much of an improvement. But what about the "aura"? Surely this makes man a "quartette"? Or does it?

A "lesson" from the Voice of Prophecy Bible School—it sets out to prove that every word in the Bible comes straight from God and is infallibly true—deals with the "Second Coming," that marvellous event which some of our Rationalist friends are so fond of. The School tries its best to answer the question as to when it will take place and points out that Jesus Christ "foretold certain events that will happen just prior to his return." As soon as the "events" do happen, we will all see "our Lord" come wafting down from heaven, a cloud, no doubt, acting as a

parachute. However, all Bible students know that the end is drawing nigh—though we often wonder what the faithful will do with their TV sets before proceeding to Heaven with Jesus. Perhaps Paradise has already got a few million sets wired up.

A FREETHINKER REPLIES

THE cheap jibes and sarcasm which Mr. McKeown feels so keenly should be contrasted against the rack and the stake which Christians dealt out to Freethinkers when the former wielded power. And if they could regain that power there is little room for doubt that such methods of coercion would be reintroduced.

Your correspondent claims humility—Christian humility, of course.

The Christian humble and meek, aspire to inherit the Earth—some humility! Some meekness!

Mr. McKeown believes the Bible to be the inspired word of God. If it be so, what a Monster of Iniquity God must be! There is hardly a crime of which He is not guilty.

My own experience is the reverse of Mr. McKeown's. I find that they who profess and call themselves Christians usually know far less about the religion than non-believers. They who know the religion do not usually stay within the fold—unless, of course, they reap pecuniary reward for so doing.

The Freethinker is composed almost wholly of destructive statements. Agreed. Its object is to combat and destroy the falsehoods uttered by the pious and the faithful. It is necessary to destroy the ruins of old buildings before foundations of new and grander edifices can be laid.

Freethought has no message for the child since he is not capable of comprehending it. All that Freethinkers seek to do is to protect the child from the false teachings of religionists. Freethought does not threaten eternal damnation to all who disbelieve certain dogmas, and strives to protect the child from any such assertions.

Freethought's message to the invalid and the mourner is that there is no need to fear a wrathful god, or an eternity of torture in His hell. A very comforting message indeed.

Drunkards, harlots and others who abuse and misuse their bodies are never deluded. They are not led to believe that their excesses will not take their toll. But they are told that medical science can do much for them if they will submit to treatment. There is very little the priest can do without the physician's aid.

And since schools, colleges, hospitals, and medicine have been taken over by the (secular) State they have improved out of all recognition.

The Freethinker's space is very limited and it is not altogether surprising that a person indoctrinated by religion from his youth up, should find nothing to influence his thinking. If he would undertake a course of reading which perhaps our Editor would suggest to him he would, no doubt, gain a more extensive knowledge of the subject.

W. E. HUXLEY.

WAY OUT

The Roman Catholic hates the Jew
Because his Christ was one;
Their Jesus makes the Catholic spew:
What then is to be done?
Why, turn their hate upon a living man.
The Jew denounce as not an Aryan.

B. S.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

E. SMEDLEY.—Congratulations on your 59th wedding anniversary. May there be many more to follow. We note that you have read *The Freethinker* for 63 years; can any other of our readers beat this record? Thanks for cutting.

P. G. ROY.—There was nothing "pompous" about the title we attached to your last article. It stated accurately what your article tried to do.

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, £1 4s.; half-year, 12s.; three months, 6s.

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.

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.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS

Two members of the N.S.S. Parent Branch have asked us to print invitations to readers in their localities to communicate with them. They are: Mr. James R. Howes, 7, Higher Thomas Street, Heaton Norris, Stockport, Cheshire; and Mr. James Gibson, Verosa Cottage, Low Road Hightae, Lockerbie, Dumfriesshire. Out of such contacts can arise effective joint activities of groups of Freethinkers and Secularists, so we hope there will be a response to this paragraph. Mr. Gibson recently sent a pointed letter to the *Annandale Herald* criticising a local minister who had publicly complained of his life on £10 a week and a free-lance as "a hell of penury." This attracted the notice of the *Glasgow Sunday Mail*, attaining in consequence a very much wider publicity, over all Scotland, in fact.

Our readers may find the following of interest:—

DEAR MR. EDITOR,

A friend of us has handed over to us a copy of your periodical *The Freethinker*. As we have an interest in your kind of paper we would be very glad to exchange with ours, *The Faith*. Will you kindly oblige? A copy of *The Faith* is being sent under separate cover.

With thanks in advance.

Yours,

FR. G. M. PARIS, O.P. (Dominican)

Editor, *The Faith*.

(Notabile Malta, G.C.)

The Faith is, of course, a very religious R.C. paper and we are glad to find that our journal has impressed its Editor. It may even convert him!

A WORD TO CRITICS

IF the replies made to my articles on Dialectical Materialism by Messrs. Roy and Kennedy are the best they can produce, I can bluntly declare that we Scientific Materialists have nothing to fear. In fact, I read them with considerable amusement.

As most readers will have noticed, Mr. Roy was not particularly interested in replying to me at all. He took

"THE FREETHINKER" FUND

Donations for two weeks ended Saturday, April 12, 1952:—

J. G. Burdon, 6s.; A. Hancock, 2s.; S.V.G., 2s. 6d.; John McManus, 10s.; Henry A. Lupton, 10s.; Bradford Branch members, £1; Mrs. W. S., £5.

Total for week: £7 10s. 6d.

Total received to date: £490 15s. 2d.

this fine opportunity to get into these columns a *political* article in which he could air his political views. By hook or by crook he had to tell us that "the Russians are genuinely against war," but "internally" their "henchmen abroad are reactionaries," jettisoning "everything Marx, Engels, and Lenin stood for." Needless to add, their Socialism is a "phoney Socialism," and so on—the kind of thing which to me is just political bilge or bias and has no more to do with what I wrote than the flowers which bloom in the spring.

Of course, like all good Dialectical Materialists, Mr. Roy had to indulge in personal abuse of me—though it will be, I know, quite useless to tell him I have no Freudian "inhibitions" as I am not a Freudian. And it is a pity that he finds the meaning of plain English words so difficult to master. He actually confuses an "ideal" or an "ideology" (that is, a model or something to be imitated) with "idealism," the well known philosophy. Needless to add also, that he gives us the hopelessly oft-quoted retort by Lenin—"What book did Marx or Engels write that was NOT on Dialectical Materialism?"—a retort that I have had hurled at me to date 458 times. It will be found—of course—in the pamphlet I quoted by L. Rudas. I hope Mr. Roy will not faint at my lese-majesty when I say that, in this instance, Lenin was just stupid.

Nor do I care two hoots that "many Conservatives are materialists in essence but don the religious armour as a safeguard against Socialism"—a remark which is nonsense; and I am just a little tired of being told the profoundly original "one man's meat is another man's poison," as proving that Dialectical Materialism must be right and everything else wrong.

Moreover, I fail to see what Mr. Roy's views on monarchy have to do with me or what I think. Supposing it is true—and it isn't—that "the form of monarchist government is mainly the expression of the predominance of aristocracy, etc.," it seems rather strange that Mr. Roy prefers it to the terrestrial Paradise he fights so valiantly for in Russia. Surely he would find the Dialectical Materialistic atmosphere of the Soviet much more congenial to his totalitarian soul than the horrid monarchy here which he loathes so much?

How little Mr. Roy, however, knows of Materialism is shown by his statement that "for the pure materialist dead matter is one thing, thought is another." Anybody who, in a serious scientific discussion can talk of "dead" matter puts himself out of court altogether. I advise Mr. Roy to stick to his politics where, no doubt, he shines with all "revolutionaries"—particularly with totalitarians. He will be all the more applauded when he tells them that "colour photography is based on the 'complementary colours'." For the rest, I have no intention of following Mr. Roy's attack on "the Labour Front benchers" whose real crime, it seems to me, is that they haven't swallowed the revolutionary teachings so favoured by him, including the slave camps and other "corrective" reforms behind the Iron Curtain. If I wanted to debate politics, I can assure Mr. Roy that I should have little difficulty in meeting his views—even though they have all come from the Holy Trinity, Marx, Engels, and Lenin.

As for Mr. Kennedy, the first sentence that caught my eye was, "Dialectics is a progression towards ultimate

knowledge by evolution." As the late Tommy Handley would say, "Now, isn't that nice of him!" Until we had "Dialectics," there was, of course, no "progression towards knowledge by evolution." In fact, I half expected that Mr. Kennedy would point out that without Dialectics nobody could possibly understand Evolution. I believe that Russians are now taught that Evolution was not "discovered" or taught by Darwin, but by a Russian in the eighteenth century, a C. P. Konolovitchsky, whose work was pinched by Darwin. (But perhaps I am confusing every other scientific discovery which were all first discovered by Russians and pinched by the Capitalists in the Western world.)

Mr. Kennedy solemnly assures us that Dialectical Materialism teaches that "the unit organism goes through its cycle of birth, life, decay, and death." I should have thought that even one of Macaulay's schoolboys knew that, without knowing anything whatever about Dialectical Materialism; but there, one lives and learns. He also tells us that "history is a record of social evolution." He knows this only because he is a Dialectical Materialist. A poor boob of a Scientific Materialist like myself is too silly to know it—hence the tremendous superiority of a Dialectical Materialist in brains. How can I ever hope to compete with such profound knowledge? Mr. Kennedy even tells us that Capitalism is sowing the seeds of its own destruction—a moving aphorism now first broadcast. The fact that I never mentioned Capitalism, that it has no more to do with my argument than green cheese, is of no moment, of course. Like Mr. Roy, here was a heavenly opportunity to get in a smack at Capitalism, but Mr. Kennedy should take care. He drags in Thomas Paine as a great but unknown Dialectical Materialist—is he not aware that if any names have to be mentioned they should always be Marx, Engels and Lenin? And God help him if he mentions Trotsky.

Mr. Kennedy thinks that I have sought "an explanation" of Dialectical Materialism from the wrong people—that is, from people who are interested in "the rise of Communism." So what? I don't know, and neither does Mr. Kennedy. In any case, I was not concerned, as he is, with the Roman Catholic Church. It never was my King Charles' head.

May I add that I oppose Dialectical Materialism because it is the declared enemy of Mechanistic or Scientific Materialism. The reasons it gives for this enmity are, in my opinion, so much rubbish and both Mr. Roy and Mr. Kennedy confirm me.

H. CUTNER.

ORGANISATION FOR ACTION

MR. HENRY A. LUPTON, of Greenford, Middlesex, in sending his annual subscription to the N.S.S., with a donation to "The Freethinker Fund," wrote to the Secretary as follows:—

"I joined the N.S.S. about seventy years ago, but the Branch was dissolved a few years later, since when I have transferred to the Parent Society. I used to call at the office to pay until recently, and saw the late Mr. Rosetti, but as I am now over ninety years old, I do not travel far. I saw about your appointment in *The Freethinker*, but have forgotten the name. I think it should be mentioned in the paper every week."

Owing to the destruction in the 1940 "blitz" of many of the Society's papers, there is no evidence at the office to show whether Mr. Lupton is the oldest member. Can any other reader claim to have been in the movement continuously since 1882?

Such sustained loyalty, of which many examples have occurred during the history of the N.S.S., serves to show that, while branches may rise and fall, and officials come and go, Secularism commands the permanent enthusiasm of those who enrol under its banner. It embraces all the social aspirations of progressive men and women once they have learned the value of freedom of thought and speech. It provides a means of fellowship between all who have emancipated their minds from the shackles of authority and superstition. Moreover, it can be their instrument of united action for translating their aspirations into realities. How powerful the instrument proves to be depends largely, of course, on the support it receives from those who agree with its principles. *There* lies the crux of the present and future problems of our movement.

Can it be that Freethinkers until now have concentrated too exclusively on the necessary task of making more Freethinkers, to the neglect of the equally necessary one of combining them for the defence of rights won and the conquest of rights still denied? Since quite three out of four of the readers of this journal, which co-operates with National Secular Society, are not members of the Society, the answer to this question can hardly be in doubt, and the position is one that should be speedily remedied.

Every non-member reader of *The Freethinker* should think this thing out, and search his heart about it, too. Is propaganda everything, and organisation nothing? Is the philosophy of Freethought enough, without the practical aims of Secularism? Should one be satisfied with a mental state of freedom, and remain outside the movement for achieving the ends that mental freedom reveals as desirable? If Secularism is approved, does lip service alone meet one's obligations to its principles? To answer these questions in the negative, as the great majority of the readers of this journal cannot fail to do, is to establish membership of the N.S.S. as the logical consequence of sincerely held Freethought views. To be logical, therefore, some of you who read these words may like to write to the Secretary of the N.S.S. for a membership application form.

There is much more satisfaction to be found inside the N.S.S. than merely as an approving looker-on. Think for a moment of some of the leaders whose work and writings have helped *you*—Charles Bradlaugh, G. W. Foote, Chapman Cohen, R. H. Rosetti. They were all Presidents of the N.S.S. in turn. At this moment the Editor of this journal is the Acting-President and is nominated for election as President at the forthcoming Annual Conference. So, if you have any bouquets to offer, they could not take a better form than a record influx of N.S.S. enrolments. Above all, the success of the cause you have at heart requires it.

P.V.M.

LATE AGAIN

The Lord's Prayer is not my delight,
The Assembly which droned it, seemed bored;
For the first time I heard it, last night—
But then, you see, I'm just The Lord.

ARTHUR E. CARPENTER.

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE. By Chapman Cohen. A Criticism of Professors Huxley, Eddington, Jeans and Einstein. Price, cloth 4s. 3d.; postage 3d.; paper 2s. 6d.; postage 2d.

A GRAMMER OF FREETHOUGHT. By Chapman Cohen. An outline of the philosophy of Freethinking. Price 4s. 3d.; postage 4d.

GOD AND EVOLUTION. By Chapman Cohen. Price 6d.; postage 1½d.

THEATRE

"The Young Elizabeth." By Jennette Dowling and Francis Letton. New Theatre.

HISTORY is most difficult to dramatise, for though it is full of drama most historical events take place over many years. In this case two American authors have succeeded in making a play from seven years of Elizabeth Tudor's life preceding her accession to the throne. They have dealt with the subject in such a manner that the passage of time seems unimportant. Moreover, they have not attempted to show us Elizabeth at the summit of her power, but have had the good sense to show her development of character at an early age.

We see the young Elizabeth developing mentally from girlhood into womanhood, and watch her acquire a strength of mind and calculative discernment that so marked one of our greatest queens.

This difficult rôle is superbly interpreted to us by Mary Morris who—despite her small stature—is able to rise to the great moments of the play. One with such a fine performance to her credit need never look back. Others outstanding in the cast are Peggy Thorpe-Bates as Bloody Mary, an unsavoury part admirably interpreted, Margaretta Scott who is placid, dignified and charming as Katherine Parr, and Joseph O'Connor as Lord Thomas Seymour.

Elizabeth Agombar has given us attractive settings in correct style and Charles Hickman's production has been handled with care.

If this is what can be made from history, then let us have more of it.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

CORRESPONDENCE

A WITHDRAWAL

SIR,—In his letter (*The Freethinker*, March 3) Mr. Rowland intimates his intention to withdraw from the controversy between us on the ground that "there is little, if any, likelihood of either of us convincing the other, or even converting believers in either side of the argument." This is a sudden change of attitude on his part. Since his "conversion" most of his contributions to *The Freethinker* have been written with the obvious purpose of convincing his readers of the truth of his contention that there is no contradiction between science and religion. Of their provocative character he leaves us in no doubt, for he admits that they were intended "to sting some orthodox Freethinker into a reply." After thus trailing his "convert's" coat till a Freethinker has trodden on it, all he can do is to slip away without even stopping to knock the dust off it.

If he did not believe in his ability to convince others, what object had he in writing on the subject? The truth is, his withdrawal from the discussion is the result of a still later "conviction," i.e., of his hopeless failure to support his contention by anything in the shape of argument.—Yours, etc.,
A. YATES.

RATIONALISM IN INDIA

SIR,—I have pleasure in informing you that the Indian Rationalist Association has decided to publish a monthly journal to be called *The Indian Rationalist*. The recent political changes involving the withdrawal of British rule and the introduction of democracy in the vast sub-continent of India with a population comprising one-fifth of the human race have affected the course of human history. The question whether the broad masses of India will continue their traditional subservience to priest-craft and religious superstition or whether they will adopt a rational attitude and cooperate with the progressive world forces will be, I trust, of vital interest to you. The Indian Rationalist Association founded two years ago is a humble beginning in the attempt to spread the light of science and reason among the people of India. I request you to cooperate with our endeavour and give us substantial help by sending us your literature, especially copies of your journals. May I also beg of you to send us short articles for publication in the journal? A message of good wishes from you for insertion in the first issue will be greatly appreciated.—Yours, etc.,
S. RAMANATHAN, Editor.

[We gladly associate ourselves with the splendid work of Indian Rationalists, and have sent a message of good will.—EDITOR.]

CHRISTIANITY

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. McKeown, is reminiscent of the priest who said that if his belief in God were taken from him he would go mad. Mr. McKeown also believes only that which he *wants* to believe, thus proving once again that Rationalism is based on reason and religion on emotion. He clings desperately to the God of the Bible, a highly overrated deity, with erring human characteristics. Religion's message for the afflicted and the mourning is, unfortunately, one of self-delusion and wishful thinking—two stubborn human failings. As to reformed drunkards and purified harlots, one must establish both the genuineness and the staying-power of their "conversion" before believing such a unique phenomenon.

It is not disputed that great and good works were performed by those "on fire" with religion. But what of that other fire, the devilish fire of the Spanish Inquisition? What of all the cruelty and slaughter inflicted in the name of Holy Religion? The truth is, of course, that religion has no monopoly of goodness, and Free-thought no monopoly of wickedness, despite the passionate assertions of religious dogmatists.

Mr. McKeown calls freethought "destructive." But destruction must come before construction. Only by shattering the ancient tottering structure of superstition can we build the new and lasting architecture of reason.

Finally, there is that complacent-sounding quotation: "God is my shepherd, therefore I shall not want."

Would this be echoed by the hungry millions of the world's undeveloped areas who, indeed, are suffering the most cruel want?—Yours, etc.,
FREDA PECKMAN (age 19).

[We hope that this will not be the last time we shall hear from our youngest contributor.—EDITOR.]

OBITUARY

J. BRYAN

The death of Mr. J. Bryan, of Stockport, took place on Saturday, April 12, 1952, after a long and trying illness. He was an old and loyal member of the Manchester Branch, and will long be remembered for his keen secular outlook and cheerful manner. At his request a Secular Service was conducted by the undersigned on Wednesday, April 16, at the Stockport Crematorium. Sympathy in their loss is extended to his widow and family.
MARGARET A. MCCALL.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

- Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: JACK CLAYTON, A Lecture.
- Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday evening, 7 p.m.: HAROLD DAY and others.
- 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. Speaker: G. WOODCOCK.
- North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: L. EBURY and G. STEED.
- Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

INDOOR

- Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (Satis Cafe, 40, Cannon Street).—Sunday, April 27, 7 p.m., Dr. JOHN LEWIS, Ph.D., "Does the Soul Exist?"
- Nuneaton Branch R.P.A. (Bull Hotel, Market Place).—Sunday, April 27, 7-30 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY (N.S.S.), "The Challenge of Rationalism."
- South Place Ethical Society, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.—Sunday, 11 a.m.: JOSEPH MCCABE, "History and its Pessimists."
- South London and Lewisham Branch (London and Brighton Hotel, Queen's Road, Peckham).—Sunday, April 27, 7-30 p.m.: Debate: "Conservatism v. Communism," Mr. JOSIAH WEDGWOOD and Mr. GEORGE JACKSON.
- West Ham Branch N.S.S. (Wanstead House, E.11).—Thursday, April 24, 8 p.m.: A Meeting.

AGE OF REASON. By Thomas Paine. With 40 page introduction by Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 3s. 9d., paper 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

SECOND CONVENTION OF INDIAN RATIONALISTS

Reception Committee Address

WELCOMING the delegates to the Second Conference of the All India Rationalists Association, Mr. A. Gopalakrishnamurthy, M.A., LL.B., Chairman, Reception Committee, said that the Indian Rationalist Association, being an affiliated body of the World Rationalist movement, has been working for some time past to develop an organised movement on rationalistic lines. Rationalism is just an attitude of the mind and incorporates in itself the scientific approach freed from the technicalities attendant thereto. There seems to be in some quarters a feeling that the rationalist movement is an isolated and theoretical movement and therefore the due importance for such movement is not given to this, here in our country. That attitude is primarily responsible for the slow growth of the movement. Besides, certain other quarters seem to be feeling that the lack of an urgency in the programme and plan of action of the Rationalist Association is standing in the way of its proper and effective development. This conference must attend to these and allied problems confronting the systematic growth of our associational activities.

Apart from the manifesto our attitude in regard to the pressing problems like population, land reform, nationalisation of industries, workers' legislation, inter-communal marriages and the very existence of the system of political parties in a-hunt-for-power politics must be clearly stated and consistently propagated so that the special approach of rationalism may be understood by the lay man in the street, who may be persuaded to take a more live interest in the matter.

This brings us to the other problem of getting into touch and taking an active interest in the day-to-day activities of the people. Rationalism must be brought home to every person and he should be made to feel that it is part of his existence to support a rationalist endeavour. Unless this is done the rationalist movement is bound to remain a purely intellectual movement. However desirable an intellectual movement may be, unless it established its root in the social order it ceases to command mass confidence or spread into the people.

This conference will also have to consider the question of paying more attention to regional and linguistic rationalist conferences than an All India mass conference of the pattern of a political party. The All India Conference may not hereafter be more than a meeting of the Executive of the various linguistic and associate rationalist units. This will necessitate a functioning centre office and an organ for the Rationalist Association towards which we should concentrate our efforts in the immediate future. The absence of a journal is largely responsible for the kind of atomised activities of the association. An integral approach to the organisational problems will be greatly handicapped by the absence of a journal.

RESOLUTIONS

1. This convention expresses its deep sense of sorrow at the death of Mr. M. C. Samaddar, Editor of *Behar Herald*, and extends its sympathies to the members of the bereaved family.

2. This convention demands that not only in the constitution and laws of the country but in the day-to-day life and practice of the people there should be the recognition of the right of every citizen to inquire, to investigate and to come to independent conclusions instead of being obliged to accept codes of conduct based on authority of

either a scripture or a person or a tradition, as an act of faith. This convention further demands that the above freedom must be supported by the right to express opinion and the right of association.

3. This convention demands that the New Republic of India should be a SECULAR STATE not merely within the narrow meaning imported into the constitution but also in the sense of the definition accepted by world opinion as implying the complete divorce between the State and Religion. While guaranteeing the freedom of the individual to profess, to practise and to propagate any religion, there should be a similar guarantee to the individuals holding anti-religion should be carried on under the cover of social service like education, medical relief and famine relief, etc. This convention demands that religious instruction should not form part of the education imparted in any educational institutions.

3a. This convention views with alarm the violation of the spirit of the constitution of the Secular State of India by the President and other Ministers who participated in the ceremonials conducted for the rebuilding of the Somnath temple.

While it may be open to individuals to practise religion in their private capacity, it is highly detrimental to the national interest that persons who are high officers in the State should play prominent parts in public functions as at Somnath where a retrograde step was taken to revive religious antagonism and conflicts buried beneath a thousand years of India's history.

4. This convention is of opinion that unrestricted growth of population is a grave menace to the future progress of the country. It therefore demands that free medical aid and advice in the matter of contraception and limitation of family be made available at all Government hospitals and dispensaries and that sterilisation of persons suffering from heritable diseases and defects be undertaken by the State and that sex education be imparted at all educational institutions from the adolescent stage upwards.

4a. This convention is of opinion that the Rhythmic method of contraception recently advocated by the W.H.O. expert influenced by the opinion of the Government of India is neither a sure nor a simple method of contraception but is a retrograde step misleading the public.

5. This convention is of opinion that the institution of caste is the curse of India and therefore demands that every possible step be taken by the people and the Government to eradicate the caste system by encouraging inter-caste marriages in every possible way. In particular the Government should encourage inter-caste marriages by giving preferences in recruitment to services people who contract such marriages and to the progeny.

6. While lending its support to the Hindu Code Bill as a step towards progressive social structure this convention demands the enactment of an Indian civil code applicable to all Indian citizens irrespective of their religious belief.

COMMON LANGUAGE

7. This convention holds that English should be taught as a compulsory second language at schools and be retained as State language for inter-state transactions and be used as the medium of instruction with international terminologies which should be used as far as possible in the elementary and the secondary school stages.

8. This convention is of opinion that a modified Roman script be adapted to write all the Indian languages as it would unify the languages in India and link us with other nations of the world.