

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: F. A. RIDLEY

Vol. LXXII—No. 25

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Fourpence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Infallibility of the Church

IN an editorial written some months back, we dealt with some little-known aspects of Catholic dogma and showed how, far from being the fixed unyielding system that old-fashioned critics imagined, it has, actually, been a highly opportunistic affair in which, as we then observed, "orthodoxy and heterodoxy have frequently changed places." We proceeded to quote a number of actual historical instances of this process.

The Freethinker, if its circulation is not exactly on a level with that of the Sunday Press—more's the pity!—at least circulates widely. It is apparently read in Maltese monasteries, perhaps, who knows, in the Vatican itself? (In the 19th century, the Russian anarchist, Alexander Herzen, used to publish a revolutionary paper in London called *The Bell*, one of the regular readers of which was the then Tsar!) For we find in the Maltese religious paper, *The Faith*, a journal devoted primarily to Catholic "apologetics," an article by the Reverend Fr. J. Mizzi in reply to the afore-mentioned editorial of the present writer.

Fr. Mizzi entitles his article: "Are we a shifty lot?"—a title which seems to imply an accusation on our part of deliberate deception on the part of the Roman Catholic Church and clergy. If that is so, we hasten to assure him that he is quite wrong. Very few even of professional divines, we suspect, know enough of the intricacies of theological evolution to know how the identity of verbal expression has often come to conceal an entire change in the content and meaning of the dogmas which it conceals. Theology is, after all, a purely verbal science, a matter of words only. For, even assuming the actual existence of some ulterior reality behind the words which define it, no one has ever seen it or will ever do so. Accordingly in theology words can be made to mean anything, and they do!

Fr. Mizzi's opening paragraphs reveal his ignorance of his own Church and of its actual current teaching. The enemies of the Church, he tells us, have now changed their line. Formerly, the Protestants, now the Rationalists, the present Editor of *The Freethinker*, et al., accused the Church of Rome of being a stick-in-the-mud institution irrevocably wedded to the vanished past. Now, however, their line of attack has changed: the Church of Rome is an organisation of unprincipled opportunists; in the Reverend Father's own words, "A shifty lot."

However, if the critics have changed their line, that is only because the Catholic Church has now changed its own. For, prior to the mid-19th century, Rome defined the infallibility of the Church, the cardinal dogma of Catholicism in practice at least, in the same way as did, and as still do, the non-Roman Catholics, such as the Eastern—"Orthodox"—Church and the High Anglicans. The Church as such, and not any individual in it, collectively defined its own dogmas in the General Councils of the first four centuries. Since which now distant date, no addition nor, of course, subtraction, can be made from its dogmatic system, infallibly enunciated by the General Councils of

long ago. The interested reader can still find this traditional view, still orthodox in non-Roman Catholic circles, exhaustively set out with immense learning—and, incidentally, not a little wit—in one of the most famous works of Anglican theology, recently re-issued in a new edition: *The Infallibility of the Church*, by Dr. George Salmon (1888).

The view expressed above, and summarised so ably in Dr. Salmon's aforementioned work, was, also, the view of Rome prior to the mid-19th century. It was, for example, expressed with splendid eloquence and colossal assurance by the famous French bishop, Bossuet (17th century) in his famous controversial work against Protestantism, *The Variations of Protestantism* (1688), in which the eloquent bishop dramatically contrasted the immovable "Rock of Peter," which maintained the unchanging Faith unaltered throughout the centuries, in contrast with the innovations introduced by the Protestant Reformers. In reply, the Protestant theologian, Jurieu, justified the Protestant innovations by an evolutionary view of religion; the Church "develops" dogma as it goes along, in order to meet new problems in new ages (c.f. Salmon, as above).

The Church of Rome to-day, follows the Protestant Jurieu, and not the Catholic, Bossuet, as Dr. Salmon has lucidly demonstrated. The effective agents in this theological revolution were, Dr. (the later Cardinal) Newman's famous work on *The Development of Christian Doctrine* (1845) and the official promulgation of the Dogma of Papal Infallibility (July 18th, 1870). For Newman taught that the Church can develop and proclaim dogmas unknown to the ancient Church and to even the most celebrated Councils and Fathers of the Church. Whilst the Dogma of the Papal Infallibility not only afforded an apt illustration of this principle—since the Papacy had never been recognised as such—but the Dogma itself put the power of making dogmas into the hands of an individual, entirely outside the collective control of the Church. It was, in fact, a theological revolution, *pure Protestantism*, as, indeed, the most learned theologians in the Church of Rome did not fail to point out at the time.

Fr. Mizzi, writing presumably in the recesses of his Maltese monastery without a copy of Adam Möhler's book, *Symbolism*, before him, rashly accuses the present writer of misquoting that writer and even of confusing him with another Catholic opponent of Papal Infallibility, the celebrated Dollinger. To refresh both our Reverend critic's memory and his logic, we will give him not only the exact reference but also the relevant passage in full. Adam Möhler wrote:—

"To no individual considered as such, doth Infallibility belong, for the Catholic, as is clear from the preceding observations, regards the individual as a member of the whole, as living and breathing in the Church. When his feelings, thought and will are conformable to her spirit, then only can his spirit conform to inerrability. Were the Church to conceive the relation of the individual to the whole in an opposite sense, and consider him as personally infallible, then she would destroy the very notion of com-

munity, for communion can only be conceived as necessary, when the true faith and pure and solid Christian life cannot be conceived as individualisation" (c.f. A. Möhler, *Symbolism*, Vol. 2, page 10; published in Munich in 1832; English translation by J. B. Robertson in 1843).

In less technical language, Protestantism differs essentially from Catholicism in regarding the individual as primary and the Church as secondary. *So, also, does the dogma of the Infallibility of the Pope which, accordingly, is essentially a Protestant and, accordingly, heretical doctrine.* Granting the Catholic premises, we consider Möhler's logic to be unanswerable and we shall be interested to learn how Fr. Mizzi and his colleagues react to it.

However, despite its defiance of logic, Papal Infallibility eventually succeeded. It triumphed because Rome is primarily a *political*, a sociological institution whose needs are decided by practical considerations and not by academic debating-points in theology. Confronted with our fast-moving age, Rome requires, so to speak, a final authority capable of making final decisions on the spur of the moment. For such a purpose, the unwieldy machinery of the General Councils, called only at intervals of centuries, is no longer adequate. The entire machinery of the Church, including the making of Dogma, must be in the hands of a single infallible individual the decisions of whom are unchallengeable. Properly speaking in its sociological context, the Declaration of Papal Infallibility represented the initial proclamation of *The Leader-Principle* in modern European history: Papal Infallibility, ecclesiastical Fascism, represented the prototype of its secular counterpart and imitator in our own day.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE FOREST AT LEICESTER

LEICESTERSHIRE has for so long been known as a centre for the parasitic and cruel sport of fox-hunting, that once the serious business of the Conference had been dealt with, we hastened to offer the delegates a brief view of a natural feature so charming that we locals have for the last thirty years been unable to keep its secret.

Charnwood Forest is the holiday venue for large numbers from the neighbouring cities of Leicester, Nottingham and Derby, and even acts as a magnet on Coventry and Birmingham, overcoming the attractions of the Shakespeare Country and the Cotswolds.

The Forest occupies a rough triangle bounded by Leicester, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, and Loughborough, an area of about 50 square miles, and within its confines presents a wonderful variety of scene. The high points bristle with outcrops of igneous rocks amazingly distorted by past volcanic action, and fine views are seen from Bardon, The Beacon, and Old John. Looking west from Bardon, we see over the Watling Street into Warwickshire and South Staffs., including the nearer scene of the downfall of Richard III at Bosworth Field; while eastward from the Beacon and Old John we are conscious that no higher ground intervenes between us and the Urals in Central Russia.

There are few villages in the forest—evidence of its past seclusion. Those near its edge have musical names like Swithland, Newtown Linford, Nanpantan, and Woodhouse Eaves.

There is plenty to interest the geologist in Charnwood. The rock formations are, in fact, among the oldest in Europe, and the present high points are but the weather-worn stumps of what must have been formidable peaks ages ago. Granite and syenite abound, and are worked at

numerous places in the forest; while at Swithland, deep in the woods, lie water-filled pits as relics of a slate industry.

Seams of coal penetrate under the area, overlaid with a fine clay; and this accounts for the presence of roof-tile and pipe works at nearly all Leicestershire collieries. Whitwick and Ibstock bricks are used by discriminating builders all over the country, and the housewife is indeed fortunate who can acquire for her kitchen specimens of the blue-ringed Gresley ware from just over the Derbyshire border.

The coach party left Leicester by the Gresley Road, passing through this old village; once the home of Elizabeth Woodville, and now an important granite centre. The road rises to 700 ft. at Markfield, giving fine views; and after Coalville we reached Ashby-de-la-Zouch, where varied opinions were aired of the castle ruins and the Queen's Arms.

The next call was on the monks at St. Bernards Abbey, near Whitwick, in a very fine setting overlooking the Black Brook Valley and reservoir. This is the only one of three important religious houses in the forest still to be occupied. The others at Gracedieu and Ulverscroft have fallen into ruin.

The community is mainly a farming venture, but those parts open to the public are greatly commercialised; the abbey "shop" provides opportunity for its monkish attendants to exercise a sales technique worthy of a Petticoat Lane stallholder.

Leaving this inspiring spectacle, the party traversed some of those long, straight lanes driven across the forest after the passing of the Enclosure Acts, and by way of Charley Chapel and Bawdon Castle reached Newtown Linford, one of the most picturesque villages about here. A stop was made to visit part of Bradgate Park, where in the now ruined Tudor manor, Jane Grey spent a quiet girlhood before she was ill-advised to enter the political maelstrom which brought about her early death on Tower Hill. The legend here is that when the rangers had the news of Jane's execution, they polled all the young oaks on the estate. Sure enough, to-day most of the oaks give the appearance of having been thus mutilated.

A public-spirited Leicester citizen, Charles Bennion, some years ago, purchased the estate and presented it to the people of Leicester.

The stream in this end of the Park forms the main feed to Cropston Reservoir, the most valuable of the three local water supplies of Leicester. Old John, the high point in the Park, is the vantage point on fine days for thousands of visitors to enjoy extensive views of eastern Leicestershire and the reservoir.

After this brief look at Bradgate, the compelling need to seek trains home, made it necessary to bring this visit to Charnwood to a close. But so much more remains to be seen that the Leicester Secular Society will look forward to another opportunity to entertain National Secular Society members.

J. G. CARTWRIGHT
(Vice President, Leicester Secular Society).

SOME RELIGIOUS ARGUMENTS EXAMINED

(3) God Without Thunder

JEHOVAH goes. The dynasty of Heaven changes. His successor is the amiable God of the twentieth century apologist, a God shorn of His wrathful countenance, deprived of His hell and with all the terrifying thunderbolts of His armament scrapped; a God who won't hurt us, whose policy is disarmament and appeasement, the embodiment of social benevolence and goodwill.

He has been proposed by certain men of science, seconded by the religious modernists, approved by the cheap newspapers and elected by popular apathy with few votes against.

The usurping God is, of course, careful to keep up most of the court ceremonial. And so the diehards in the religious party are asked to participate in the optical illusion that no change has been made, in the quite justifiable hope that they won't make a scene. And on the other side, the more tender-minded among heretics are asked to reassemble their vestiges of religion under a new type of Deity, with the promise that they are still free to think of Him as they please.

The old God sent earthquakes for a purpose. The new one doesn't like them but can't stop them. The old God was an Ally in the Sky answering petitionary prayer. The new one is a diffused Thought, offering to prayer no more than a pleasant matey contact. The old God was a busy God, liable at all times to intervene in natural processes. He ruled the planets, cured disease, helped in war, fought the devil, sent good harvests, meted out punishment and reward, decided quarrels by trials of endurance, created the animal kingdom, endowed man with a soul, made him a present of languages, inspired holy books and impregnated a virgin. The new one is unemployed. He is, in fact, a retired Clockwinder.

He wound up the universe and then proceeded to bask happily in the contemplation of His handiwork and the adoration of His creatures. Some of the latter are unfortunately atheists who keep asking awkward questions: for instance, if God wound the universe up who wound God up?

It was formerly believed by some physicists that the universe might be running down. This, of course, proved to the religionists the need for a God to wind it up again.

Latterly it has been found that the universe is not, as a whole, running down; and even in the localities where this tends to occur it has the means of self-winding. This now proves the wisdom of a God whose universe doesn't run down.

Various other proposals have been made as to the nature of this new harmless type of Deity. There is the disembodied Thinker, whose Thought is the universe itself. History is thus fossilised thought. We shall have to suppose that the Thinker has been immeasurably entertained by cancer and other forms of purposeless suffering. Fortunately this Thinker has been sentenced to death by His own advocates, who, following Jeans, believed in a decaying universe.

It is, however, the American theists who write with the most unprincipled determination to save the term God. Prof. R. H. Dotterer, for example, reaches his belief in God in this way: "Instead of fixing on some hard and fast definition of deity and then raising the question, Does God exist?—a procedure which would lead us to a negative conclusion, we prefer to ask, in what kind of God is it reasonable for us to believe? In other words, we try to frame our definition of God in such a way as to make belief possible. If now we define God as the good will of the cosmos... there can be no doubt of God's existence" (*Philosophy by way of the Sciences*). Prof. R. A. Millikan sees the "God of science" as "the spirit of rational order and orderly development" and speaks of "nature, or a God, whichever term you prefer" (*Science and the New Civilisation*). With Prof. Durant Drake "God as transcendent is an essence, the Ideal Good... God as immanent is the power which is visible in the world making for righteousness" (*Contemporary American Philosophy*). Among miscellaneous other new American conceptions of

deity are those of R. S. Woods, for whom God is "the personified social spirit"; Dr. Ellwood, whose God is "a spirit immanent in nature and humanity" Dr. Conklin, who sees God "in all truth and beauty and love, in the order and constitution of the universe"; and various other followers of Pupin and Millikan. They give the general impression of a sort of Cosmic Uncle Sam. In this country God will in time no doubt be discovered to have inspired the Welfare State. Prof. John Macmurray's God is "the ultimate synthesis of matter and spirit, nature and man" (*Christianity and the Social Revolution*), while that of John Langdon-Davies is "the sum total of the universe in all its aspects" (*Science and Common Sense*).

Now by the same logic that the newer theists decide to change the meaning of God the orthodox believers may presumably change it back again. As Prof. Loewenberg aptly remarks, "It is easy enough to grant God's being if God is but another name for substance or self-existence, but what save a verbal definition assures me of his nature?" (*Contemporary American Philosophy*).

If the meaning is changed in deference to a particular philosophical system, as with Whitehead or Drake, then the validity of the belief in God will stand or fall with that of the system in question, and if the system is not compatible with the known facts of science it is more than doubtful whether religion has gained by sharing her *protege* with system-building philosophers. If the change or modification aims at clarifying the traditional conception of God we are left with a maze of conflicting deities and semi-deities which, if we accept all their perversions and subtractions from the attributes of deity, might well result in the loss of *all* attributes and yield a non-existent. The process of lopping off God's inconvenient characteristics and undesirable propensities has been going on for some time. "The advancement of modern thought," says one writer, "has compelled us to modify our faith either in God's character or in his omnipotence. We believe it is far more reasonable to deny the omnipotence of the Power than to deny its goodness." (Brightman, *The Problem of God*).

And so God appears as the dying invalid on whom the philosophical doctors are called in to operate. And by the time they have finished the patient has lost his omnipotence at the hands of one, his omniscience to another, his transcendence, his immanence and finally his personality, in becoming no more than a name for the universe. When at last the atheist doctor arrives there is little to do but sign the death certificate.

The new school of theists has tried to save God by making Him nicer to know. Their attempt to bring Him "closer to our hearts" has only resulted in making Him even more remote from our affairs. The Christian God was cradled in Egypt, matured in Palestine, emigrated to Rome, and is now an effete Anglo-American philanthropist.

G. H. TAYLOR.

ETHICS AND POWER

Kings were right against Pope and Emperor; Barons and Priests were right against Kings; the middle-class were right against Barons and Priests; the proletarians were right against the middle-class. The weaker are morally right. The powerful are always morally wrong. Primarily, power and wrong are co-extensive. All power wielded by man over man is an aggression. All power results in injustice, because power corrupts moral judgment. Primarily and essentially, morality is nothing else than protest and resistance against power.—ROBERT BRIFFAULT.

LIFT UP YOUR HEADS, An Anthology for Freethinkers.

By William Kent. Price, cloth 6s., paper 4s. 3d.; postage 3d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. Fourth edition. By Chapman Cohen. Price 5s. 3d.; postage 3d.

ACID DROPS

One of Leicester's Methodist parsons, the Rev. H. W. Langham, has been asking the question: "Is Christianity dying?" and appears to have a poor opinion, or at least doubts, of the future of the existing Churches. He thinks "some will decay and revive; some will die and stay dead; and some will rise from the dead, and new Churches will be born." This prophecy business has never been very successful, but that there will have to be drastic changes if the Churches are to survive is obvious. We hate prophesying, but it may be that even the Methodist Church will one day be swallowed by the Roman Church—for, whichever of the many may die first, it won't be that of Rome.

For Mr. Langham, there is always a trump card—it is "following" Jesus of Nazareth. So long as you follow Jesus of Nazareth—and really, really you must—so long will Christianity survive. Churches may come and Churches may go, but Jesus of Nazareth will hang on for ever. If you don't follow him—"whom are you following?" pathetically cries Mr. Langham. "God forbid," he fervently adds, "that you follow him as a favour." Alas, we have no wish to follow him as a favour or anything else. We have done quite well without him. In fact, we look upon most of his "teaching" as utterly valueless for modern times. We have, in fact, outworn his Devils, Miracles, Angels, Hell, and Heaven. And we are almost sure that Mr. Langham has done likewise.

Hats off to a courageous parson! For, indeed, it requires courage for a mere parson to tell the Archbishops where they get off. The Rev. C. W. Younge actually asks the Archbishops, "Do they know what they are talking about?" He does not challenge them, it is true, on a question of high dogma, but he ridicules the call to prayer by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York "for an increase in the sacred Ministry." Scornfully he points out that his Grace of Canterbury has six sons and not one has been ordained, while he of York is actually a batchelor. And they want *other* people's sons to take up the Church as a "vocation."

No doubt but many would at their Graces' salary, but to expect the modern young man with brains to be content with some of the paltry stipends awarded to curates is expecting just too much. Besides, most young men have had some training in history and anthropology—are they expected to swallow the incredible nonsense called the "miracles" of Jesus, to say nothing of those of the Old Testament? Even the fool of the family, for whom the Church always meant some kind of a living, can no longer be induced to give up his worldly pleasures for a "call" from God. All this and much more is, we are sure, causing a little more than a headache to our bishops and archbishops.

A story told by Dr. Donald Soper, who is considered by some people (and himself) as a thorough infidel slayer, and who is now a convinced Spiritualist, is worth repeating. It appears that he was blackguarded by a Hyde Park heckler who accused him "of being mad and talking a lot of bunk," and then asked the reverend gentleman: "Can you prove that you're not mad?" Dr. Soper admitted that he could not, but retorted: "But can you prove *you* are not mad?" "Yes," the man answered, and immediately "produced a discharge certificate from a lunatic asylum!" Readers can sort out the moral for themselves.

Dr. Soper is now just as sure of Spiritualism as he is of Christianity—which is not surprising. Anybody who can swallow the Oriental myths which form the basis of his religion should have no difficulty in swallowing whole the marvels said to emanate from "Summerland." It was, he declared, very stupid to ignore the evidence—yet only recently one of the Presidents of the Society for Psychical Research, Prof. Broad, declared, in effect, that all the mediums they had investigated were frauds. It is up to Spiritualists now to produce a medium who has not been caught out—and not mere excuses why they have resorted to "a little deception."

We are simply astounded at the way God Almighty lets the Faithful down so thoroughly. The Rev. J. J. Ivie, of Cherryville, Missouri, bluntly declared that he would fast until the Lord told him why "signs do not follow his ministry as Jesus said they would." Not a particle of food passed his lips for 50 days and God Almighty allowed Mr. Ivie to die! Here was a man who devoted his life to loving the Lord, and this is how he was thanked! Is God merciful, just, loving? Or does God do anything whatever? We again give it up.

THEATRE

Ralph Slater—The World Famous Hypnotist. Saville Theatre (recently).

It is difficult to say which is more outstanding—Mr. Slater's powers of showmanship or his ability to hypnotise. He gives us a demonstration of both, so that should we be disappointed in one we can perhaps find consolation in the other.

The evening is divided into two parts, and it was no doubt unfortunate that, when I was present, tittering among the audience and a draught from off-stage tended to create tension where not wanted, during the first part. However, after the interval, Mr. Slater was at the top of his form, and his post-hypnotic suggestions were certainly effective.

The last time I wrote about Ralph Slater, a reader called me to account for favouring what he seemed to believe belonged purely to the occult. Let it be understood this is a science which, if properly understood and used, can be of great help to the community.

Since I last saw Ralph Slater, he has been sued by a young woman who claimed that she suffered ill-effects as a result of being hypnotised by him. She won her case, and there are many interested parties who would make public demonstrations of hypnotism illegal. Among them I would put the medical profession first, for they have most to fear, having lost a continuous battle against psychology in the last half-century.

I regard these public demonstrations of a valuable science as of great use in allaying the superstitious awe that surrounds hypnotism, quite apart from its educational value.

Look out for Ralph Slater, he will be on tour.

RAYMOND DOUGLAS.

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED!

Why do I not write of my method of remaining under water the length of time one can remain without food? I do not make this public, because of the evil nature of men, who would use this ability to commit murders at the bottom of the sea, by making holes in the bottoms of ships and sinking them, together with the people on board.—LEONARDO DA VINCI (1452-1519).

"THE FREETHINKER"

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

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

"THE FREETHINKER" FUND

As mentioned in our last issue, the above fund will be closed on the last day of this month. The total received to date is in the region of £570, and it is anticipated that by the end of the month we shall reach the target of £600 at which we aimed in our issue of May 11 last.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

P. G. ROY.—Sorry we had to omit your notes. We note that the name Janus was inadvertently omitted from your article, the fifth paragraph from the end. As far as possible we always include corrections from the author's proofs, but sometimes this is impossible, owing to excessive length. In some of these cases it would mean re-setting half a column.

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.

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.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS

The B.B.C. has often been the subject of criticism in the columns of this journal, on account of its undemocratic attitude to religious broadcasts. We note with pleasure that a letter appeared recently in *The Times* demanding the right of unorthodox minority opinions to "air" their views. The letter in question was signed by Mr. J. Reeves, M.P., the new chairman of the board of directors of the R.P.A., and by several other leading members. Subsequently another letter appeared under the signature of Mr. Phillips Price which made the same claim on behalf of Unitarians. *The Freethinker* and the *National Secular Society* associate themselves with both demands. We have frequently drawn attention to the injustice involved in the present system. We hope that, in his new capacity as editor of *The Times*, Sir William Haley will continue to publish criticisms of the religious monopoly which he endorsed at the B.B.C.!

The Freethinker, the oldest British Rationalist journal, dating from the days of Charles Bradlaugh, known in his day as "the Member for India," extends its warmest welcome to the first issue of *The Indian Rationalist*, the most recent Rationalist journal. We wish every possible good fortune to this courageous venture in India, often described as "the most religious country in the world," where religion exercises a totalitarian sway over society. Messages from Bertrand Russell, Professor Haldane, Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner and many other distinguished men were received and printed in the initial issue. The Editor of *The Freethinker* also sent a fraternal message which duly appeared. *The Indian Rationalist* is edited by G. Ramanathan, is published at 9, Broadway, Madras 1, India, and is the monthly organ of the *Indian Rationalist Association*.

[At the N.S.S. Freethought Demonstration following the Annual Conference at Leicester, the author of the following verses recited them from the platform. We now publish them in response to a number of requests made since the meeting.—EDITOR.]

7.50 a.m.

The world is at breakfast; ten minutes to eight.
A day's work's ahead, and we mustn't be late.
We'll have the Home Service (it's all we can choose)
And just listen in to the Weather and News.
So on goes the wireless, and out it comes pat:
"God is like this, and Jesus like that;
Most loving and gentle and patient and kind
To you sinful people, so stubborn and blind."
And thus for five minutes the rigmarole goes;
The low-down from Heaven, by someone who knows;
Who says that the world's in a terrible plight,
And only religion can make it come right.
"So lift up your hearts, and believe, pray and hope."
And we are expected to swallow such dope!

They must think us stupid, since, clearly enough,
These breakfast-time sermons are nothing but bluff;
And, if this religion were all its friends say,
It wouldn't need boosting and plugging all day.
We read every week how its priests and its preachers,
Its earnest church-workers and Sunday-school teachers
Get into such scrapes that their hair comes uncurled
And their names are all over *The News of the World*;
And yet, every morning, we're told not to doubt
Their creed, which I reckon we're better without.

At last comes the Weather Report, but (how odd!)
It doesn't contain the least reference to God,
Who, in ages gone by, at the top of his form,
Would hurl down the thunderbolt, raise up the storm,
Or send mild conditions to suit men's affairs,
If duly appealed to and flattered with prayers.
To-day (what a contrast!) announcing the weather,
The B.B.C. leaves out the Lord altogether.
The sun's going to shine or the rain's going to fall,
And praying or not makes no difference at all.

Still, broadcasting's autocrats make it their task
To prop up religion, which prompts me to ask:
What hope of success has their miserable plan,
When, after the parsons have said all they can,
The Weather Reports, without any apology,
Dethrone God Almighty for Meteorology?

Though Broadcasting House is so spineless and weak;
Though honest Freethought gets no chances to speak,
And neither on "Home" nor on "Light" can be heard,
Nor on the much-vaunted, *intelligent* "Third";
Though, scattering bribes of enjoyable hours,
The B.B.C. daily misuses its powers:
The army of wideawake listeners grows.
They will not accept what the bigots impose,
But will bring them to book, and compel them, forsooth,
To give us our dues, in fairplay and the truth!

P.V.M.

THE MOTHER OF GOD. By G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; postage 1½d.

PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT. By Chapman Cohen. Price 3s. 9d.; postage 3d.

PSYCHO-ANALYSIS—A MODERN DELUSION. By Frank Kenyon. Price 6s.; postage 3d.

REVIEW

I THINK this book* is honest, but mighty queer. But as to that, later.

All regular readers of *The Freethinker* know John Rowland by his contributions to it and other anti-religious journals covering a period of a score of years. Many, including the present writer, have known him personally at some time or other, in my case since he first came to work for the R.P.A., and to reside in London in the middle-Thirties. An able, modest, and pleasant person, who has become a first-class writer. He is a novelist, a criminologist, a purveyor of "popular" science. Like the late H. G. Wells—whom Mr. Rowland so much admired, and in certain respects resembles—he prefers to be known as a journalist rather than a novelist. Now he has written this *Autobiographical Record*, which we may, out of courtesy, call his first theological work. A clever Cornishman of 45 years of age, called, as he tells us, by one editor "a very odd fish."

Let me, to round off this personal summary, quote from his publishers' dust-cover "blurb": "From Rationalism, at one time seemingly the only reasonable standpoint, John Rowland comes by various stages to a belief in the Fatherhood of God. He realises now that faith in God does not demand a denial of scientific truth, nor a stifling of honest doubt. Many others besides John Rowland have made this journey, but few have given such a revealing account of it."

Thus much for the author, now for his publishers, the S.C.M. Press. The initials stand for Student Christian Movement, which is, one would say—I don't know—a Christian propagandist body peddling its wares among studious adolescents. One must suppose that this body knows best its own business, but this little book of slightly over one hundred pages (seven chapters) seems to me, so far as the first five chapters are concerned, more likely to win recruits to the National Secular Society and the R.P.A. These five chapters must be of considerable interest to his late colleagues and friends in the Secularist and Rationalist Movements, covering as they do two eventful decades in British history. These witnessed the rise of the totalitarian powers, the Second World War, and Labour's rise to full power in Britain's post-war Government. Also, that much over-rated phenomenon, the Cold War between the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. I will return to these phenomena presently, but the thing to note here, and to keep in mind, is that all four of these Movements are aspects of a politico-economic whole, associated, it may be, with the decline of an era in world history. But I wish at the moment to keep to the book.

The first 93 pages are, as said, well written and instructive, even to some minds "intriguing." It is an account of the mental Odyssey of a young "intellectual," with a cause, in London, in stirring and rapidly moving times. But the sixth chapter! Oh, what a falling-off is there! He has led us, not wholly unsympathetically, to the verge of a crystallising-out of growing tendencies. Through five chapters he has built up for us great expectations: the Conversion; the drawing aside of the Veil of the Temple; the revealing of the god in all his glory. But the god simply isn't there. To be quite fair to Mr. Rowland he has warned us (on p. 88): "Some people have written of a sudden blinding glare of illumination—something in the nature of the illumination that once came to St. Paul. Nothing of that sort came to me." There was only our old friend and colleague

mumbling about the brotherhood of man, the inadequacy in emotional appeal of Rationalism, the delinquencies of Totalitarians, and the hide-bound, old-fashioned character of Secularism, and of Marxism.

Would you believe it, readers, he only mentions the name of Jesus *once* in this book; the double-name Jesus Christ, *once*, and the name Christ not at all. What sort of a religion is this? Where are the Fall, Salvation through the Divine Blood, the Remission of Sins, leading to Life Eternal? At the best he is now only a Tom Paine Deist. A Christian? Bah! The S.C.M. have been sold a pup.

Since there was no sudden illumination on the Road to Damascus, or of the Buddha under the Bo-Tree, what, then, the curious reader will inquire, is the cause of what Mr. Rowland would, modestly, call "my change of mind and heart." Well, I take it, in most cases of "conversion" (Mr. Rowland seems to be shy of this word) there are alleged or ostensible reasons, but one must look behind these for the real reason (note the singular number). That real reason is always FEAR, with its usual corollary FLIGHT. Let me make emphatically clear that fear is not synonymous with cowardice. John Rowland is no coward, but he is, like so many others in these days of the break-up of an era, stiff with fear. It is the old flight to Salvation, the old cry: What must I do to be saved?

I think I can dismiss Mr. Rowland's ostensible reasons in a few words; they fall under two heads:—

(1) The mathematical physicists' and astronomers' theories of "The Uncertainty Principle" (Heisenberg, Schroedinger, etc.) and Entropy, or Randomness (Eddington, Jeans, etc.). These theories have given a dusty answer to one hot for certitude. Determinism has gone by the board, and Chaos has come again—for John Rowland.

(2) He found himself unhappy in his Hertfordshire village, in spite of (or because of) the monthly article he wrote for the Vicar's parish magazine. He was "out of tune" with these yokels and, therefore, lonely. But God was beginning to take a hand. He directed him to a great industrial city in the North of England. There Mr. Rowland started attending "with genuine satisfaction" a church whose "theological outlook" seemed to be "rational and yet with that touch of emotion which any satisfactory religious service must contain." Also, he tells us, the city's good schools would give his boy a better chance than he would have had in rural Hertfordshire. And in this safe harbour there were theatres and cinemas. He joined a film society, and became a member of the Rugby League Club, with a seat in the grandstand for all matches. All matches. Think of it: God was good! In a word, as Mr. Rowland says, "I found that my life was suddenly and almost surprisingly broadening." God was in His Heaven and all was right with J.R.'s world. We must now leave this astonishing theologian happily teaching at the Sunday School which his son attends and where the lucky kid "met some pleasant boys and girls."

We return to what I deem the real reason for Mr. Rowland's departure from the stormy seas on which the rationalist and freethinker, agnostic and atheist, are tossing. For his safe harbour of religion. And the most astonishing thing we find is that John Rowland has, apparently, taken to religion for secular reasons: secular in all senses of the word. "For long I had been coming round to the opinion that, whether the religious interpretation of life were true or false [my italics] the destruction of religion

* *One Man's Mind*, by John Rowland, S.C.M. Press, London. 7s. 6d.

was dangerous—if only that it allowed a false god to step into the kind of mental and spiritual vacuum thus caused.” He says we had seen this happen in Italy and Germany; and he thought that from all the signs “the same problem had arisen once more.” In other words, the new vacuum-filler was Uncle Joe Stalin. He looks upon the Christian Churches as the strongest bulwark against the totalitarians, and points out the (in his opinion—one man’s mind) strongest opposition to Hitler came from the Church. That is really funny when one remembers the Vatican’s support for those totalitarians Mussolini and Franco. But for John Rowland the Red Peril has now succeeded the Brown Plague. “The world, if the prop of religion were removed, would go one hundred per cent. totalitarian.” And arising out of this the atom and hydrogen bombs will be exploded. “The atom bomb, the discovery of which horrified me, was a factor in changing my beliefs, too.” And the bombs would mean “complete and final disaster for this country” if the U.S.S.R. attacked it. Well, Mr. Rowland, others of no religious faith are not blind to facts of this kind, but we don’t run bleating to the Saviour, but try ourselves to remove from our governance the fools that Christians everywhere elect.

The reader will now see that Mr. Rowland’s fear (not of “sin” or “hell-fire”) of napalm and atomic warfare is responsible for that rare thing, a religious conversion for a secular reason. Henri Quatre thought Paris was worth a mass. We can certainly expect many more conversions of this kind as the crisis deepens. But we will not seek Mr. Rowland’s “way out.”

To close on a friendly note. As an old friend of John Rowland—if he still holds me so after this—may I thank him, on behalf of staff and readers, for his kind references to our dear journal, *The Freethinker* (p. 85). We note, John, that in your last chapter you state that you have not given “a final report on my development.” We shall hope that this will be as entertaining as is your interim report, which I heartily recommend to all Freethinkers as a cautionary tale. Go in peace, and whatever you do don’t miss your Saturday afternoon on the grandstand.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

CORRESPONDENCE

BOREDOM AND WAR

SIR,—Mr. Renton is fond of making assertions: one imagines it must be for his own emotional relief. His first letter was based on a statement I never made. I pointed this out; but his second letter offers no apology, but simply makes another assertion. His implication is that because I corrected his misquotation, I also retract my own original statement. In fact I do not deviate from my original article; and I hope that sometime Mr. Renton will take the trouble to read it.

I still maintain that people are led into wars because they are bored. I know of many offices where the workers are eagerly looking forward to the next war to break the monotony of their lives. Of course, individual soldiers, when faced with the reality, are frequently appalled by the things they have to do. I suggest that would-be soldiers and soldiers would have the courage and desire to break the endless pattern of violence leading to violence, of war leading to war, if they could see that lives in peace-time were fulfilled promises and not frustrated existences. I suggest that it is the duty of Freethinkers to help people to live fulfilled lives (see my original article).

I suggest, too, that we should start with ourselves. I sincerely believe that if we could set an example of a fulfilled and happy nation, the moral force would penetrate any curtain. I believe the rest of the world would demand the same fulfilment. It is easy to laugh at faith, for we need self-honesty to find the truth; and laughter is the quick evasion of obligation. We can, anyway, begin with the thought that the way of violence has been proved a disastrous failure, and that it is our duty to do some free re-thinking, however painful.

The crux of the matter is—is Mr. Renton happy, or does he really feel as he writes? The task begins with oneself. One cannot help others, in any part of the world, until one has solved one’s own problems.—Yours, etc.,

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

THE SURPLUS POPULATION

SIR,—Mr. C. N. Airey (*The Freethinker*, May 18, 1952) has a notion that “now and again wars have to be staged to kill off the surplus population.” The struggles for control and ownership of material resources, trade routes and areas of strategic value, with their sordid accompaniment of politico-economic pressure, backed by threats of the use of force, have no significance for Mr. C. N. Airey, being mere shadow play if we are to take him seriously.

The suggestion that present society is organised on the basis of equality is sheer stupidity. The owning class, having delegated all the tasks of production and distribution to the wage-earners, contribute nothing to society, becoming mentally and physically atrophied by a life of ease and indulgence. The most expensive State scheme of all is the perpetuation of such a parasitic system, but I hardly think Mr. Airey had that in mind.

In complaining of the “defeat of natural selection and the elimination of the less fit,” I can only say Mr. Airey has made an original discovery of something which has been going on since the beginnings of human society. The survival of the fittest as a biological law of the jungle just does not apply to human society, where in considerable measure co-operation supplants competition; reaching, I would suggest, its fullest expression when society is organised on the basis of the social ownership of the means of wealth production and distribution.

Regarding the impact of birth control on society, the significant fact is that due to present conditions of life the natural desire to reproduce is suppressed. There is a conscious restriction of fertility, which if it were not facilitated by the availability of contraceptives, other and less desirable methods would be used.

Fertility rates will be no more affected by the utterances of popes and prelates than the disciples of Malthus, and certainly least of all by Mr. Airey.—Yours, etc.,

R. BOTT.

OBITUARY

MARY LOUISA HIGH

We regret to announce the death at Dagenham on Tuesday, June 10, at the age of 76, of Mrs. Mary Louisa High, who had been in failing health for several months. The High family has been well known in Freethought circles in East London for many years. Mrs. High’s husband, who predeceased her by 20 years, and his father before him having been members of the West Ham Branch, N.S.S. The undersigned conducted a Secular Service at the graveside at Ripple Road Cemetery, Barking, on Saturday, June 14, at which Mrs. High’s surviving daughters, other members of the family and friends were present.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S.—J. CLAYTON, Friday, June 20, 7-30 p.m., Worsthorne; Sunday, June 22, 7 p.m., Burnley Market; Tuesday, June 24, 7-30 p.m., Chatburn; Thursday, June 26, 7-30 p.m., Clitheroe.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Broadway Car Park).—Every Sunday evening, 7 p.m.: H. DAY.

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. A lecture.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead Heath).—Sunday, 12 noon: J. M. ALEXANDER. (Highbury Corner).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: L. EBURY.

Nottingham Branch N.S.S. (Old Market Square).—Saturday, June 22, 7 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park, Marble Arch).—Sunday, 4 p.m.: Messrs. WOOD, O’NEILL and RIDLEY.

South London and Lewisham Branch N.S.S. (Brockwell Park).—7 p.m.: J. M. ALEXANDER.

INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, June 22, 11 a.m.: S. K. RATCLIFFE, “The Changing Mind of England.”

BOREDOM

A Dialogue

LEONARDO: Schopenhauer said that need and boredom are the two poles of human life.*

Arnasso: That could be. I've been so tired of my life that I've wished a thousand times I were dead; and, after you've lived a while, you see that many another man besides yourself has wished the same thing. Whether need and boredom are the two poles of life or not, there's nothing right in this world.

Leonardo: It seems to me that, if men grubbed the ground more and lived closer to natural, living things rather than passed their days in sedentary and unhealthy work and pursuits, and particularly mental work, they would suffer less from boredom and stagnation of mind. Boredom is primarily an ill of the mind caused by having nothing to do; and we're bored when we have nothing to do that we want to do; and we're almost as badly, and sometimes worse, afflicted by this mental pain at being idle when we're children as when we're men, which shows that boredom is an ill inherent in our nature and is only partly, acquired through education. When we're fully occupied with the present moment, we can't be bored; or, if we're completely absorbed in what is absent in the past or future and are occupied with memory or expectation, we can scarcely be bored; it is, when through inactivity or through too much of the same activity we lose interest in our lives or in what we do, that we're exposed to the common boredom which afflicts men. Boredom increases with the increase of intelligence and doesn't seem to afflict the lower animals who have but small intelligence consisting of a dim consciousness of the present without a memory of the past or an idea of the future. Men are conscious not only of the present but also of the past and the future; and no doubt boredom afflicts them as a natural condition of mental stagnancy because they're too conscious; their minds cause them to live in imagination in other than the present moment and to live in other than a real world; and boredom is perhaps often caused by a feeling of the difference between the ideal, or the imagined, and the real. Intellectual boredom with existence itself because of the acquisition of a knowledge of existence and of the consequent disenchantment is not common to all men but rather afflicts only those of exceptional intelligence. Byron has described this boredom with life in some verses I recall from *Childe Harold*:—

"It is not love, it is not hate," etc.†

Arnasso: Intellectual work, uninterrupted by other activities, produces an intolerable sense of boredom; and it's probably a common experience with intelligent men that in childhood, when we are all imagination and can lose ourselves in fictional reading, intensive reading for several hours leaves us bored with life and melancholy when we stop reading and return from a world of the imagination to the real world. As men we suffer from boredom, from which the brutes and from which small children are nearly free, because our greater consciousness causes us to feel more intensely the necessity of having something interesting to do and also because this consciousness causes us to see in imagination the past, the present, and the future and to see the world as an ideal

* *Parerga und Paralipomena*, Nachträge zur Lehre vom Leiden der Welt, section 154.

† Canto I, Song to Inez, 3 and 4.

inspired by desire, all of which makes more of a world and more of a life in our minds than exist in the real world; and a period of boredom suffered even when we're engaged in some activity may be the result of ceasing to think of an ideal world and of returning to an uninteresting and perhaps painful present in which there's nothing to hope for but which merely contains the necessity of doing what we're tired of doing. In reasonable and intelligent men long periods of boredom with life are the results of losing interest in the present moment and of finding that life is worth very little. However, while I suppose men of high intelligence are more apt than men of low intelligence to become bored with the whole world, men of high intelligence have more inner resources and can find more of interest in their lives; and common men are sometimes downright vicious when they're thrown back on themselves for two hours with nothing to do; and much of the quarrelling of men is caused simply by the fact that they get bored and seek excitement and an outlet for their ill-humour by quarrelling with others. Men of dull intellect and of passionate, cross-grained natures are easily bored and for that reason become petulant and ill-tempered when they're left idle for a short time. The character of the individual, thus, in addition to his intellect, has much to do with how susceptible he is to boredom: passionate and ill-natured men, even though they have mediocre or poor intellects, are the most easily bored; even-natured men may be bored but rarely show that they are. Also, we should distinguish clearly between the simple boredom resulting from having nothing to do and the weariness of life which results from misfortune, illness, and disenchantment with life as a pleasant and successful experience.

Leonardo: However, your common men are usually of lighter spirit than intelligent men, whose intelligence is reflective rather than visual. At any rate, here is no more common thing than the resistance to intellectual work; and this resistance can be observed in young students as well as in older people and is produced by the inertia to work and by the boredom consequent to continual intellectual labour.

Arnasso: Intellectual work is boring and increases the intelligence which is responsible for the ill of boredom in men; but grubbing the ground, which you have suggested as a remedy, is killing; but, then, men who by their nature can't endure extremes are subjected only to extremes. If you lived in the primitive state, you would be under the perpetual necessity of running five miles and of doing laborious work in order to eat an animal less fortunate than you and to wear its skin; and you would be in constant danger from wild animals and from members of your own species. The only course to follow is one of not too much intellectual work and not too much physical activity and pursuit of amusements; for, if the intellectual man is miserable and knows he is miserable, the barbarian is also miserable in his way, although he's probably seldom bored; but he knows nothing about his misery and is none the better for his ignorance because it makes him subject to other ills such as superstition and excessive labour to maintain life. Even if intelligence increases the boredom of man, intelligence is a kind of preservation from some of the ills of existence in that it shows him how to overcome them and gives his life a meaning it could not otherwise have.

Leonardo: Agreed.

W. RITTENOUR.