

family, but the Pembrokeshire branch, came Dr William Dolben, rector of Stanwick in Northamptonshire. His wife was sister to the famous Archbishop Williams; and their son, Dr John Dolben, became bishop of Rochester in 1666 and Archbishop of York in 1685. Again, on page 70 one wonders whether Laud should not be attached to the fringe of the next group. The ten children of Mr Laud could look round on a reassuring background of bourgeois standing. Their father had held every office in Reading except the mayoralty. Their uncle had risen to be Sir William Webbe and Lord Mayor of London in 1591. Mrs Laud's son by her first husband, John Robinson, was Dr William Robinson, prebendary of Westminster and Archdeacon of Nottingham. The foreground was financially less reassuring, and Laud, it is said, owed his Oxford education to the liberality of a Mrs Burnegham. One wonders whether the description 'worked his way without assistance' might not be reworded. Lastly, in section 6 one might have expected some reference to the influence of Martin Holbeach of Felstead. To those who like to suppose that schoolmasters can influence the course of history his memory is encouraging.

T. CHARLES EDWARDS

THE FREE SOCIETY. By John Middleton Murry. (Andrew Dakers; 12s. 6d.)

This is the sort of book on which it is very difficult to pass a fair and objective judgment. It is patently honest and sincere. In some places it is deeply moving, written by a man who realises the terrible future which faces the western world. There are moments of deep insight and intuition. And yet it is a provocative, tantalising and muddle-headed book in which sentiment has outrun reason, and, one fears, prejudice has outweighed judgment.

Mr Middleton Murry sees the fundamental problem of social life as the securing of right balance between individual freedom and ordered society, between the claims of the one and of the many. He is driven by his argument and, perhaps more, by the stern logic of events, to abandon absolute pacifism, and to accept the fact that such a society must be intolerant at least of intolerance and may consequently be obliged to have recourse to force in order to preserve its freedom. For to Mr Middleton Murry the just society is a society in which the self-affirmation of each is compatible with the self-affirmation of every other member.

This adjustment of claims is of course the great problem of society, and to the individualist or to the contractualist, there is really no solution. He is unable to give to society a greater authority than that of the individuals who compose it; and so at best he has a sort of mathematical criterion by which what is called the General Will is measured by the crude process of counting heads and establishing majorities. Mr Middleton Murry avoids this excess of false demo-

cracy: but he falls into an even more profound difficulty. He asserts as an axiom (p. 140) that 'it is self-evidently good that there should be the maximum of freedom within a society', and repeats a little further on, without clarifying the issue, that the good which the free society must seek is 'the continued existence of the free society—nothing more, nothing less' (p. 141).

There are other questions which Mr Middleton Murry raises in this book and which he solves in a way which is scarcely satisfactory. He touches on justice and injustice with no definition of terms, on the moral and the immoral with no standard of criticism, on conscience and 'the organic body of conscience at the level of social existence', whatever that may mean. But fundamentally his problem is one of freedom; and nowhere in this book does he come to grips with the problem.

The whole of modern political thought and most modern teaching on morals is vitiated on this point. Most men consider liberty in relation to others, influenced as they are by the Declaration of the Rights of Man that 'liberty consists in the right to do anything that does no injury to anybody else'. They fail to see that liberty consists above all in dominion over ourselves and our activities. We are given free will in order to be human persons, in order to realise ourselves. And that is impossible unless there is some conception of purpose, some understanding of the end for which man exists. The purpose of human freedom is that man should make a final choice, which means that his understanding of himself, and of all men, must be teleological. He must ask himself why he exists; and must ask the purpose for which man is made. This is the beginning of maturity, of mature reflection and mature judgment both in morals and politics. For St Thomas and the whole Catholic tradition insist that a man has not reached maturity, is not really grown-up, until he has thoughtfully considered his last end and what he is going to do about it. Mr Middleton Murry might have learnt so much on this matter had he but a nodding acquaintance with the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, or had he even read the C.T.S. translation of Pope Leo XIII's great document *Libertas Praestantissimum*.

One other point calls for comment. It concerns a more difficult matter, though it has, if Mr Middleton Murry cares to look for it, a solution in history. The approach of man to God may possibly be referred to as the Kingdom of God. But in fact at the present time that approach can be brought about only by the raising of man to the supernatural order. Mr Middleton Murry has no conception of this, nor any understanding of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ. He has in fact only the most vague idea of the purpose of the Church, or apparently of the history of the Church. And he seems to push his vagueness so far that one wonders to what extent his God is only a projection of himself. God, he seems to suggest, depends on the free society, and in suggesting that he really reverses all values. He

might find food for thought in St Thomas's remark in Book I of the *De Regimine Principum*: 'Homo non ordinatur ad communitatem politicam secundum se totum, et secundum omnia sua. . . . Sed totum quod homo est, et quod potest et habet, ordinandum est ad Deum'.

ANDREW BECK, A.A.

ARTHUR RIMBAUD. By Enid Starkie. (Hamish Hamilton; 15s.)

Dr Starkie is acknowledged as the leading authority on Rimbaud's life and work. But the study that she has recently brought out is by no means for the specialist or the French scholar alone. Rimbaud is one of the fascinating figures of all time. This book is more than a compelling biography: it is a minute and vivid chronicle of an immense tragedy.

He was a creature of astounding contradictions: the priggish, innocent and precocious schoolboy who went carefully along the path of vice that was a torture to him; the boy who goaded himself on that he might live all life, reach all experience in order to write the perfect poetry; the youth who considered himself almost the equal of God and hoped to attain him by a way that he was hewing out for himself. Dr Starkie presents this paradox of debauch and mysticism as a balanced whole, with sympathy and with insight.

At sixteen his sensitiveness had been wounded by an ugly world: he revolted from it, to find relief only in the accentuation of complete disgust. Yet all the time truth was his aim. With the mystics he agreed that the subordination of the personality is the first essential. But prayer he rejected, for the Church stood in his way—he wanted to make his own code of morality. So he went to the other extreme and chose to believe that he could break the chains that bound the spirit to the world by a systematic abuse of the self in debauch. He sacrificed himself to the one ideal in a way that was to him as hard as that of virtue. The writer, he said, should be a mere voice for the eternal, and the poet *se fait voyant par un long, immense et raisonné dérèglement de tous les sens*. And this was his martyrdom. Debauch was for him a religious doctrine and the price for his knowledge was suffering. With his fatal thoroughness he drained the lees of degradation. He wandered the streets of Paris thin, filthy and verminous, tried every kind of drug, lived with Verlaine, and all the time wrote the poetry that was to have such an influence on his successors. But by the time that he had reached the age of twenty he had come to find like Baudelaire:

*Après une débauche on se sent toujours plus seul, plus abandonné.*

It was now that he wrote the *Saison en Enfer*: he considered his life had been false till then and that truly he had been living in Hell. There was a more optimistic conclusion to this last of his writings: life must be lived in an entirely new way and all ideas must be 'modern'.