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Views and Opinions

Einstein the Atheist

EINSTEIN has paid the United States of America the compliment of becoming one of its legalized citizens. In this he has followed the example of Thomas Paine, although Paine was and Einstein is too big for any one country. They both deserve to be classified as citizens of the world, and that not because either lacked local sentiment and attachments, but because their survey of life was too comprehensive to exhaust itself within the boundaries of any one country. The United States has given Einstein hospitality where his native country offered him the concentration camp, safety where the gangsters of Berlin would have robbed him of all he possessed, save self-respect. Einstein's action is an appreciation of American liberty. It is also one more item in the world indictment of Fascism.

The American press paid many compliments to the greatness of Einstein when first the news of his application for United States citizenship was made. Now it looks as though he may have to recognize that there are limits to toleration even in the United States. For the U.S.A., although it is without God in its constitution, is yet what is called a Christian country. The Churches of America exert considerable power, and their rule of practice with regard to those who stand in the public eye is simple in theory and damnable in operation. First it asks for belief in Christianity. If that expressed belief is not forthcoming, some profession of belief in God, accompanied by compliments to Christianity may be accepted. If neither position is taken up, then there must be, at least silence concerning a number of religious beliefs that would disgrace a society of Hottentots. If the Atheist, Agnostic, Rationalist and Ethicist will follow none of these rules, and will not fill the air with mental slush concerning the "lofty ethic of Jesus Christ," "True Religion," etc., then he may look out for trouble.

Einstein and God

We referred in recent "Acid Drops" to the stir that has been made in religious circles in the United States by the delivery of an address by Einstein before a Conference of "Science, Philosophy and Religion." At the time of writing those "Acid Drops" we had nothing to go upon save a few odd paragraphs. Now the arrival of papers from Canada and the United States give us fuller accounts, and some portions of the speech will be of interest to *Freethinker* readers.

We have not even now a full report of the speech, but there is enough to give a substantial indication of its character. One Canadian paper remarks that Einstein disagrees with the "Christian conception of God." That is true, but the deeper truth is that he

wipes out belief in any kind of God. His advice to religious teachers is to give up the "concept of a personal God," and he says, not with absolute accuracy, "that this is the main source of the conflict between religion and science." A personal God, says Einstein, is "just a sublimation of the gods in man's image created by human fantasy during the youthful period of mankind's spiritual evolution, who by the operations of their will, were supposed to determine, or at any rate to influence, the phenomenal world, and whose disposition in his own favour man sought to help by means of magic and prayer."

Good enough so far as it goes, but if one dismisses the god who is a person, what kind of god is there left? Gods have never meant some *thing*, but always some *one*. The human period that created the gods who were prayed to and worshipped have always been persons. However foolish was the mental attitude that created gods, and Professor Einstein appears to have no doubt of this, man was never such a fool as to ask favours of a non-personal god. When a savage prostrates himself before a shaped stone, or a fetish of any kind he does not appeal to the stone or the wood, but to the "spiritual" *Mana* animating the object before him. It is a great pity that when Einstein dismissed the personal god he did not realize that the continued use of the term means fathering insincerity and hypocrisy. And when Einstein goes on to say "The idea of God in the religions taught at present is a sublimation of the old conception of God," if his words really indicate his thought, he is following Freud in saying that the belief in God is one of the world's greatest illusions.

At this point I am reminded that some years ago Einstein was asked by an American Jewish Rabbi, "Do you believe in God?" To that he replied, "I believe in Spinoza's God, who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists; not in a God who concerns himself with the fate and acts of human beings." Spinoza lived nearly three hundred years ago, when the use of religious phrases was more excusable than it is to-day. But Spinoza did make it quite clear that his God was a pure abstraction, without personality, without mind or will, aiming at nothing and doing nothing—except exist, and even that was purely imaginary. Spinoza was promptly and properly labelled by the religious world as Atheist, and if words mean anything, he was decidedly that. Spinoza had as an excuse for talking about "God," the fact that he lived at a time when a scientific anthropology was yet unborn, and no matter how clear it was that the idea of God was permeated by self-contradictions and downright absurdities, thought had not yet cleared itself of the crude anthropomorphisms on which all religions rest. There is no such excuse to-day for anyone who has the mental capacity for recognizing the nature of the idea of a God, retaining religious phrases—save hesitancy in expressing what is still a very unpopular opinion.

The Blight of Religion

The hesitancy of prominent men who are obviously Atheistic in thought, plainly calling themselves Atheists has for its cause social reasons. There are simply no intellectual ones. The ill-odour that religious intolerance has created round "Atheism" is still very

powerful. For a very long period it was associated with all kinds of anti-social and even criminal tendencies. That has now gone, save in extreme evangelistic circles, and the dislike to the word seems to be degenerating into a matter of mere social caste. And yet between Atheism and some form of theism there is no middle course. One either has a belief in a god or is without it. There is simply no middle position. And Einstein's description of the gods that have come down to us as "sublimated" forms of those that were brought into existence by mankind in the infancy of the human race fits the situation well enough. But if we admit that the gods of to-day are sublimations of the primitive forms of gods, what right have we to claim reality for them? You do not convert an illusion into a reality by sublimating it. If I create "spiritual" activity out of what I afterwards discover is actually the moaning of the wind in an attic, or the flapping of a curtain in an adjacent room, by what right do I "sublimate" the flapping curtain or the windy attic into a "spiritual" existence? Why not say at once that I made a mistake and have done with it, instead of hanging on to my exposed "spiritual" activity with a "there are a great many things we do not understand"? Of course there are, but where understanding does not exist the proper course is silence. When the assumed spiritual force has actually been traced to flapping curtain or draughty attic, what possible ground have we for a solemn shake of the head and a "One never knows"? Einstein says there are "decisive weaknesses attached to this idea (of God) in itself which have been painfully felt since the beginning of history." That method of putting it is so painfully weak that it becomes inaccurate. It is not weaknesses that is affecting the idea of God, but an exposure of its nature, as made up of wrong conclusions drawn from known facts, and which may be, and are to-day explained in a different manner. One may reject the explanation and still cling to the older theory. But one cannot honestly and logically talk of existing gods as mere sublimations of primitive blunders, and accurately describe the change as a "disclosure" of possible deities. Science has dismissed "gods" as hypotheses that are wholly untrue. The gods have not been weakened; they have been, scientifically annihilated.

Einstein is reported as saying that "The idea of the existence of an omnipotent, just and omnibenevolent personal God is able to accord man solace, help and guidance." That looks to me to be just clotted nonsense. "Omnipotent," "Omnibenevolent" carry no scientific meaning or value. They belong to the same region as that powerful word "Abracadabra." They certainly have no being in the world of science. I do not deny for a moment that there are certain types of character that will find comfort in using these words, but so will an ignorant Roman Catholic peasant find much comfort in listening to a priest intoning a service in Latin, and one recalls the lacerated feelings of the Irish applewoman when she was called an isosceles triangle. The use of loud-sounding words has been part of the technique of the priest, the wizard and the swindler from the earliest ages. But there is no greater justification for treating them with respect when used by a priesthood than when they are used by the eighteenpenny fortune-teller.

With something of the same sly humour with which Einstein met the enquiry of the Rabbi, "I believe in Spinoza's God," we are told that, "The doctrine of a personal God interfering with natural events could never be refuted, in the real sense, by science for this doctrine can always take refuge in those domains in which scientific knowledge has not yet been able to set foot." This is excellent, as a "get-out" and as a parting dig at religion. For being interpreted it means that so long as religion can function in an unknown world, one in which science does not func-

tion, the belief in God will continue. But if science once enters that area religion must clear out. Capital! But here, Herbert Spencer was before Einstein in poking fun at religion in this way. For he gave us three divisions of human activity. First, everything that was known. Second, everything that could be known. Both of these spheres belong to science. But there is, he said, a third region of which nothing can be known and containing all which never will be known. This belongs to religion. That was a great joke, and it took, for quite a number of theologians jumped at it as providing a ground on which to build an enduring religion having for its domain the region of absolute, irremovable ignorance. I fancy that had I been present when Einstein was delivering his address I should have detected a twinkle in those eyes which, unless looks are deceptive, indicate the existence of a very sly humour.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Kipling's Kink

SINCE Byron awoke one morning to find himself famous, few writers took the field with so instant and signal success as Rudyard Kipling. Emphatic, impetuous and audacious, he voiced contemporary passion and sentiment with no uncertain sound. Its possibilities and dangers were both mirrored in his shining talents. First came the rumour of a new genius from the Orient, after the manner of creeds from time immemorial. Then *Plain Tales from the Hills* put many in an uncritical stage of admiration. *Soldiers Three* and *In Black and White*, completed the conquest, and subsequent works in prose and verse caused the great reading public, like Oliver Twist, to ask for more. During his later years the production of an edition-de-luxe of his writings, a rare compliment to a living author, met with so ready an appreciation that it augured well for the continuance of his fame.

Like some of the Old Masters, Kipling always succeeded best on a small canvas. *The Light that Failed*, *Stalky and Co.*, *Captain's Courageous*, even *Badalia Herodsfoot*, were magnificent failures, but his short stories, at their best, were admirable works-of-art. Like Maupassant and Bret Harte, he presented infinite riches in a little room. Indeed, the best of Kipling's work would hardly bulk more largely than one of the interminable novels of old Samuel Richardson, which used to draw tears from the eyes of our great-grandmothers. Modern readers are less leisurely than their predecessors, and like their sensations, brief and pungent. Had Kipling's stories been told in the manner of the "penny-dreadful," devoid of all grace and all grammar, they had been read with pleasure, so vital are they in essentials.

Kipling's verbal fireworks dazzled his Victorian readers, as well they might. He dubbed the old queen, "the Widow at Windsor." He told the Colonel Blimps of his day that "Kitty O'Grady and the Colonel's lady are sisters under their skins," and he reminded Victorian polite society that "the female of the species is deadlier than the male." One of his most ambitious novels, *Badalia Herodsfoot*, was concerned with the doings of a Whitechapel prostitute. Above all, he made himself the "Bobby Burns to sing the song of steam" he had called for. The most curious thing is that his audacity paid. In India he never earned more than £300 yearly, but later he earned far more money than any of his rivals, more even than Dickens and Thackeray, far more than Tennyson. That Victorian Goddess Grundy, was tottering to her fall, but Kipling gave her a final push into oblivion.

As a poet Kipling has long been underrated. He was uneven, but he was entirely fresh. "Romance brings up the 9.15," he chanted to people who re-

garded poetry as something fit only for girls and children. Take, for example, that magnificent exhortation "If—" which inspires to courage as you read:—

If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them
"Hold on!"

Another gem is that Cockney poem from *Barrack-Room Ballads*—Gunga Din, hailed with such joy at smoking concerts, and other resorts of "men who are really men."

How could anyone resist the concluding lines:—

Though I've belted you and flayed you,
By the living Gawd that made you.
You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din.

Kipling was a master of the sonorous phrase. Two lines from "Recessional" have travelled the globe:—

The tumult and the shouting dies,
The captains and the Kings depart.

If you want to beat that you have got to go to old Sir Thomas Browne's *Urn Burial*. But my own favourite poem is "Sussex." Remember the ending:—

God gives all men all earth to love
But since man's heart is small
Ordains for each one spot shall prove
Beloved over all.
Each to his choice, and I rejoice
The lot has fallen to me
In a fair ground—in a fair ground
Yea, Sussex by the Sea!

A widely-travelled man, Kipling loved the sea-green freshness of Sussex. He would not desert it even when the curiosity of tourists drove him from Rottingdean. He bought a three-centuries-old house near Burwash, and there he lived and rejoiced in a seclusion of his own making. Listen to the opening of another poem, *The Flowers*:—

Buy my English posies!
Kent and Sussex may—
Violets of the undercliff
Wet with Channel spray;
Cowslips from a Devon combe—
Midland furze afire—
Buy my English posies
And I'll sell your heart's desire!

Indeed, there is no hysteria when he is at his best:—

If I were hanged on the highest hill,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose love would follow me still,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine.

It was not his fault that the public took its Kipling in too heavy draughts; mafficking was foreign to the man himself, and he rebukes it in *Recessional*.

The most astonishing thing about Kipling was his piety, which was of the cave-man variety, and was constantly peeping out in his writings in prose and verse. The Tory press used to proudly acclaim him as the most religious writer since John Dryden, and the Liberal journalists shook their heads and retorted, more in sorrow than in anger, that he had no "soul." This was, however, but the merest political partisanship. Kipling had a kink for god-making. Of all the gods created by man in his own likeness, this particular Anglo-Indian deity, so like our old friend, Colonel Blimp, was the most astonishing. For the piety was saturated with Tory politics, and the hymns were too often hymns of hate. Yet, now and again, Kipling had his serene moments. He wrote in very different fashion of the amazement of the Hindoo brought face to face with the extraordinary dognas of the Christian Religion:—

Look, you have cast out love! What gods are these
You bid me please.
The Three-in-One, the One in Three? Not so!
To my own gods I go
It may be they shall give me greater ease
Than your cold Christ and tangled Trinities.

Fortunately, people read Kipling for his fun and fancy, and not for his theology. He was a perfect master of story-telling, the oldest of the arts, and he helped to make India a reality to dwellers in the United Kingdom, which are no mean achievements. He discovered, too, an entirely new subject matter and awakened readers to the wonder and romance of the modern world. Instead of the hackneyed old subjects in the literary lumber-room, he sang of steam-engines, tramp-steamers, and creations of steel, "Singing like the morning stars for joy that they are made." For children he wrote, *Puck of Pook's Hall*, two *Jungle Books*, and *Just-So Stories*. The best of his life-work helped to widen out horizons.

Kipling's faults are obvious; his genius incontestable. In his make-up there was a large amount of Blimp, a touch of Sunday-school teacher, but the residue was pure genius. Hazlitt said that seeing Edmund Kean act was like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning. Kipling was surrounded by fireworks, but the rockets come from the magic East, and scattered jewels. It was a melodramatic finish to the nineteenth century literature, which had opened to the quiet music of Wordsworth's singing of

The silence that is in the starry sky,
The peace that is among the lonely hills.

MIMNERMUS

An Evacuated Message

THE sealed message left by the late Sir Oliver Lodge, renowned Spiritualist, has been evacuated to safer keeping. It is the hope of his fellow believers that he will repeat the message from the "other world," and that a comparison with the original will thus demonstrate the existence of an after life, since no medium will have had access to the sealed message.

This kind of thing is not new: it was tried, it may be remembered, by the late Sir A. Conan Doyle, who, we must presume, has not yet had time to attend to the appointment, or has not found the right medium.

Let us, however, suppose the almost incredible. Let us imagine that without any question of cheating some mediums were able to repeat the message correctly. What would this prove? To the bulk of Spiritualists, glutted with the will to believe, it would mean incontrovertible evidence of survival. Such believers are fond of complaining that sceptics will not make proper investigation. This complaint is singularly ill-directed. The way to study Spiritualism is not just to go to seances. Psychologists, illusionists and conjurers would be more in place there. Nor is it to read Spiritualist organs or attend Spiritualist Churches. It is to make a study of the psychology of deception, to consult the authorities on both sides, to weigh the verdict of science on the nature of mind, and therefore on its chances of survival, and, not least, to learn something of the elements of logic. For instance, the conclusion, "There is an after-life" does not logically follow from the correct reading of a sealed message after the author's death.

I have now obviously bound myself to provide an alternative explanation for the correct reading of a sealed message. It will be a grotesque one, but not as grotesque as the supposition that people live after they are dead, and of two theories we should choose the one that accords best with known facts, and eschew

the one that runs counter to them. The theory that Sir Oliver Lodge's mental functioning continues after the disorganization of his cerebral resources runs counter to a huge mass of evidence from several branches of science.

Where, then, shall we look for an alternative theory for the fantastic case we have posited? Reviewing the evidence for thought transference (telepathy) J. B. S. Haldane has remarked that if the mind is a system of electro-magnetic energy associated with the brain we should expect telepathic phenomena to occur on the analogy of electromagnetic induction.

Now only a few people have claimed to receive or transmit thoughts. In Haldane's view this is to be expected; we should expect the phenomena to be unusual, being eliminated by natural selection, making our comparative mental insulation a special adaptation.

This latter idea of Haldane's, once telepathy is granted, may have something to support it if we consider the case of a flock of birds changing course as if a single mind directed them. Other creatures lower than man, such as ants and bees, might then also be credited with a kind of pervasive telepathy, which, we must presume, became a nuisance to the individual at a certain stage of evolution.

Haldane carries his suggestions, for they are nothing more, a step further in his book, *Possible Worlds*. He there offers the possibility that messages from the dead, if and where genuine, might point to telepathy *operating over time as well as space*, being actually messages emitted from the person *when alive*.

What our case boils down to, then, is bluntly this. In composing his message, Sir Oliver also thinks it in his mind, and gets it so impressed in his "unconscious" that it constantly emits the same pattern of waves, and the pattern "hangs about" in space-time long enough to be picked up by some person who has not yet achieved mental insulation. It is then more or less accurately gathered up, and Spiritualists proceed to jump out of their skin at the delightful prospect of a Summerland.

Now although the above theory is admittedly far-fetched, yet the rough idea is sponsored by a scientist of Haldane's eminence, and I have posited it claiming that it is less absurd than the theory of immortality. And whereas the former cannot yet be disproved satisfactorily, the evidence against the latter is quite damning. In fact the stock of scientific evidence about mind makes the question, Do the dead live? sound as sensible as, Does an extinguished fire give a burning flame?

It may be added that the newly found "Berger Rhythm" shows that our thinking processes probably do make some kind of ripple on the ether. Berger's experiments make it possible to observe physical phenomena in the brain concurrent with mental processes. Various sections of the cerebral cortex gives rhythmical electric discharges involving electrical activity in their cells. This rhythm, says Haldane,* occurs in the occipital cortex and is concerned with vision. . . . we find that the rhythm is disturbed if we tell the person observed to look at something. It is altered if he shuts his eyes. It is changed if he undertakes any process involving visual thinking. Again, abnormal rhythms are found in epileptic and during sleep in normal people."

Who knows, then, but that these "brain waves" may under certain conditions find a receiving set in another brain? What is certain is that it is unscientific to jump to the conclusions most cherished, and in the face of well-attested facts. Far better is the attitude of Prof. Dotterer (*Philosophy by way of the Sciences*), who, confessing to a desire for survival, acknowledges that the evidence is all, against it, and, describing Lodge's *Raymond* as "a pathetic

quest," says of psychic researchers that "eminent though many of them have been . . . they have not for the most part been trained in the refinements of psychological investigation . . . while fraud, conscious or unconscious, has admittedly played a disconcerting part in the proceedings and some of the most convincing manifestations have been reduplicated by a few expert magicians. Finally, there is reason to think that those who have been convinced . . . have been so much under the influence of the will to believe as to render their opinions scientifically worthless."

Another writer, opining that Psychic Research has disclosed some supernatural, not supernatural phenomena, regrets that it "has brought comfort to the credulous, notoriety to the vulgar and a considerable degree of self-esteem to the ignorant. Moreover it has greatly assisted in the sale of our penny papers." (Vulliamy, *Immortal Man*.)

Nor have the alleged glimpses into the promised land been very inspiring. Why cannot the spirits do something useful for us, such as detect a crime, or write some good music? Why should the late F. W. Myers, in bodily form a capable writer, descend to the writing of trash when he becomes a ghost?

The critical work of Frank Podmore (e.g., *The Naturalization of the Supernatural*) on Spiritualism has in some measure been brought up to date by Tyrrell's *Science and Psychological Phenomena* (1938), though the author is not as sceptical as Podmore, and upholds extra-sensory perception. He has been well-criticized by Prof. C. W. Broad, who has recently undertaken a careful investigation. His verdict, coming from one of the most brilliant critics in the world, is most valuable. It is contained in an article in *Philosophy* (April, 1939), in which he writes. "All that biology teaches of the detailed affinity of ourselves with the animals, and all that physiology and anatomy tell us of the connexion between lessons of the brain and nervous system and alterations or obliterations of consciousness, produce an overwhelming impression of the one-sided dependence of mental life on certain very specialized and delicate material structures and processes. . . . In my opinion there is literally nothing but a few pinches of philosophical fluff to be put on the opposite scale to this vast coherent mass of ascertained facts, unless empirical evidence from psychical research should be available. . . . My conclusion is that for this essential doctrine of religion psychical research is the only gift-horse in the field of the sciences, and that even it is quite likely to prove to be a Trojan horse."

His omission of J. W. Dunne's theory† of serialism from the category of a gift-horse to religion is noteworthy. Prof. E. T. Bell, of California, can easily be placed against Dunne as a mathematician, and he calls Dunne's theory "a hopeless muddle of woolly thinking by means of metaphors and far-fetched analogies." (*The Nature of Truth*).

However, as Dunne offers his theory as something to be tested by each reader for himself, I will not further prejudice the issue, merely adding that on the principle of a readiness to try anything once, I subjected the theory to a most careful test, observing all his rules and enduring his prescribed period, and found it completely inapplicable. I have not heard of any successes subsequent to his published suggestions, but doubtless there will always be a number of well-meaning folk who will find what they are determinedly seeking.

Many names could be added to Broad's illustrating that the scientific mind has been much less disposed to place a Spiritualist meaning to certain phenomena than protagonists of that cult would have us believe, while those eminent scientists who have accepted spiritualist

† *An Experiment with Time; The Serial Universe and The New Immortality.*

* *The Marxist Philosophy and the Sciences.*

interpretation could be counted on one hand. A rough analysis might work out somewhat as follows.

(1) Eminent inquirers who have found the contentions of Spiritualism to be without proof include Flournoy, Flammarion, Foa, Sir E. R. Lankester, Sir B. Donkin, Comstock, Shaler, Ochorowicz, MacAlister, Bottazi, Morselli, de Vesme, G. H. Darwin, Mercier, Baron v. Schrenck-Notzing, Sir F. Galton and, during the period of his mental strength, Lombroso. The condemnation of famous illusionists like Houdini and the Maskelynes must also be reckoned.

(2) Though treated to some apparently remarkable phenomena, Wm. James, Sir W. Higgins, Carrington, Richet, Sir D. Brewster, De Morgan, McDougall, Geley, Crawford, F. D'Albe and Sir W. Crookes have not finally endorsed the Spiritualists' interpretation.

(3) Lodge, Sir W. Barrett, A. R. Wallace, Hyslop and Hodgson accepted Spiritualism, but against this is the fact that some, like Lodge, have accepted the results of mediums afterwards found out in fraud.

Fraud, of course, may sometimes be unintentional, and it is conceivable that some mediums, honestly believing themselves genuine, have resorted to fraud when disappointed with the results. Whether there exists any medium with a clean record is hardly relevant, since only the interesting invite study, and we are only concerned with those who have been deemed worthy of adequate and sustained test. Of those, it may be said that there is none whose reputation remains unscathed.

G. H. TAYLOR

Welfare and Warfare

The advocates of Federal Union have lately been allotted plenty of space in the Press, and between the covers of innumerable books; the reasoned opponents of Federal Union have not been so fortunate. Mr. Clarence Streit in his *Union Now*, which proposed a union of states under the (naturally benevolent) guidance of the U.S.A., started the ball really rolling. Mr. W. B. Curry in *The Case for Federal Union*, which to some extent supported Mr. Streit, but to an almost equal extent proposed the possibility of a union of States under the (naturally benevolent) guidance of Great Britain and France followed. Of course, Mr. Streit is an American and Mr. Curry is English, but they have not, we are told, allowed their national prejudices to affect them in their proposed schemes.

What, however, has actually happened to the world? These somewhat meek and mild plans for Federal Union have gained a good deal of support among the comfortable. Deans and Deacons, Politicians and Prophets, Barons and Baronets have agreed. But the actual Federal Union that has emerged, somewhat surprisingly, is the Federal Union of slave States under the jackboot of the Nazi! The very surprise of this would, one would have thought, have made the Federal Unionists pause. And what should make them pause even more is the appearance of Mr. John Strachey's *Federalism or Socialism?* (Gollancz; 7s. 6d.), which is the first truly informed left wing criticism of Federal Union and all that it stands for.

Mr. Strachey does not attempt to hide his opinion that the world is in a sorry state. He admits that the one essential at the present moment is to hold off the Nazi attack and so ensure the continued existence of an independent Britain. But, that once done, the necessity of formulating a national and international policy which will not permit the gangsterism of recent years to raise its head again, will become abundantly obvious. Federal Union, of the sort envisaged by all the propagandists for this fashionable ideal, will really amount to a Federal Union of capitalist

States, organized, each in its own way, to expand, investing abroad and so trespassing inevitably on what other countries regard as their preserves. The seeds of future wars, in other words, will be inevitably laid in the ground if Federal Union ever becomes accepted as the policy for all progressives.

Now, all this is very controversial, I know, and I would not force it on the attention of readers of the *Freethinker* were I not aware of the intellectual alertness of Freethinkers in general. Yet it has another, more direct, application to the propagandists of Free-thought. It will not have escaped attention that our clerical friends are crowding into the ranks of Federal Unionists, just as twenty years ago they crowded into the ranks of the League of Nations Union, and for the same reason—because it seems likely to be the fashionable movement of the future. If Federal Union is genuinely a prospective policy which will lead to welfare instead of warfare, then Freethinkers should also take their place in the movement, ensuring that it shall not become merely part of the social work of which the Churches so often boast; if Federal Union is a hollow mockery and a snare, leading nowhere because its leading propagandists have not learned the first steps in economics, then it is the job of Freethinkers, as clear-headed people, to say so. And Mr. Strachey's book will go a long way towards enabling them to make up their minds. The Marxist criticism of Federal Union may seem to some people an absurd and irrelevant side-line in time of war. Yet we have, here and now, to make up our minds what sort of world we want to see when the war is over. Now that most of the "Munichers" have been cleared out of the Government, there is a good chance of persuading that Government to make up its mind what our war aims are. But the war aims of Britain must be clear, succinct, and unmistakable. Only if there are a sufficient number of level-headed people can they be so. Therefore I have no hesitation in saying that Mr. Strachey's book is one of the most important volumes of the year. It may annoy the orthodox Federal Unionist; it may even annoy the orthodox Communist; but truly informed readers of Engels, and Lenin will agree that Strachey is in the succession of economic writers who have expressed most clearly the wisest policies for the working class.

S.H.

Acid Drops

The *Catholic Herald* (October 18) is concerned about the effect of the war on Missions. It says that "if the Totalitarian Powers win we may expect a political and probably an economic exploitation of native peoples." We are, to use one of the idiotic phrases in vogue, intrigued by this. What one would like to know is when and where have "native peoples" not been the subjects of "economic exploitation"? Some benefits from contact with civilization have, of course, often followed the control of native peoples, but everywhere the natives have had to pay a price for it. In some cases it has meant the disappearance, or near disappearance, of them, in others there have been benefits, often accidental, but these benefits have been heavily paid for. And what of the trading missions? Government papers could tell a sad story of these. We went into this subject very thoroughly some years ago, and the constant cry of many of these missions from home, subsidized in their commencement from commercial sources was for harder labour and bigger profits. Missionary adventure has been mainly a thin cover for imperial aggrandisement and economic exploitation.

The *Catholic Herald* is also concerned with the danger fronting Christian missions from another point of view. It says, "We shall have to be on the watch for the propaganda of liberal

secularist ideals." We willingly admit that—as regards the less mentally developed peoples—the Catholic Church has an advantage in this fight—at least in the earlier stages of the conflict. The pure mumbo-jumboism of the uncivilized native is very much akin to the slightly more developed mumbo-jumboism of the Roman Church, and the change over would therefore be easier than the change to the watered-down superstition of many forms of Protestantism. But the demand from home, which ought to grow stronger, for a square deal for native peoples, should be reckoned with. And in very many cases native peoples are not intellectually less capable than the white man; they are simply less informed. The Zulu would be much what the Englishman is if from babyhood he had been brought up in our environment. It is the stupidity of the average white man which makes him regard colour as a sign of inferiority.

And it should be noted that this colour bar is a product of Christian times. It was unknown to Greeks, Romans or Egyptians—the three direct sources from which we derive our civilization. There were degrees of culture, and differences of habit, and these might mark a people as high or low in the scale of civilization. But the religion current with these peoples gave no encouragement to the theory of *natural* inequality, or of quality being determined by "race" or colour. Under Christianity not merely was there a development of a crude nationality but, with a Christian people a religious justification was found for it. There was the idea of a "chosen" people, a vicious teaching which runs right through the Bible, and finds its social product in the nations of to-day. Not so strong as when we were young, but still strong, is the theory that Britons move through the world, either guided by God, or to carry out the purposes of God. Lately we have had a very strong dose of this nonsense from some of the highest-placed people on the religious side, from the Archbishops downward, and in political circles from that religious bigot Lord Halifax, and others. When history comes to be written in a truly scientific vein, it is from the book which Canterbury declared to be the very oracles of God, and from the Christian Church that historians will derive much of the evil thinking of to-day.

The *Catholic Herald*, by the way, says it is of first importance for the African native to know the truth about God. We think it is of still greater importance for the native to know the truth about the Roman Catholic Church. Nothing more impudent has occurred of recent years than that the Church which connived at the massacres in Spain and Abyssinia, and which has said not one clear word against Mussolini, which sold itself to him, now standing forward as the only reliable champion of human liberty.

Honesty is not so frequent an accompaniment to sectarianism that it does not deserve recognition when one comes across it. The more readily do we recognize the confession of Mr. A. S. Langley, Secretary of the West Midland Federation of Free Churches (*Birmingham Post*, October 16) that by the opening of cinemas on Sunday afternoon "Sunday Schools will greatly suffer." But the opening of cinemas will not be accompanied by an order that children must attend them, or that parents must see that so many attendances are made per year. If the parents wish their children to go to Sunday schools they can send them there. If the children do not wish to go to the Sunday schools, it proves, to us, that they have better judgment and a healthier taste than their parents, and they should be allowed to exercise it. It is interesting to note how many children actually do try to educate their parents, but rather distressing to see the small amount of success that crowns their efforts. What Mr. Langley is asking is that the law shall, so far as it can, force children to a sectarian Sunday school, or, alternatively, prevent their having any kind of pleasant entertainment if they will not go.

In an address at Canterbury the Archbishop said (*Kentish Gazette*, October 12), it would seem that "our people must know at least what the Christian faith really is. Experience and evidence show that whoever is to blame, multitudes of them do not." We have said the same thing hundreds of times, but we hardly expected it to be so cordially backed up by the Archbishop of Canterbury. But we would urge on behalf of those whom the Archbishop attacks that Christians are not saved by knowing but by feeling, not by understanding

but by belief. It would really seem as though he of Canterbury also does not know what Christianity is. No one has ever been turned out of a Christian Church for not *knowing*. Many have been thrown out because they knew too much.

From the *Evening Standard* of October 18:—

Mr. Duff Cooper, Minister of Information, in a written Parliamentary reply, says that the names, salaries and previous occupations of the Ministry's Religious Division staff are:

The Rev. H. Martin, £600-£800, managing director and editor, Student Movement Press; R. Hope, £600-£800, Schoolmaster; W. D. Newton, £600-£800, editorial board of *Universe*; and the Rev. R. R. Williams, £550, clerk in Holy Orders.

In addition there is a minor administrative, clerical and typing staff.

Cardinal Hinsley, who has unlimited faith in the power of God—except where bombs are concerned—has ordered the evacuation of the nuns from Tyburn Convent, and to take with them the relics of Roman Catholic martyrs. But why not place the relics publicly in the care of God and leave them where they are? It is surely the interest of the Hinsley deity to do so. We have ourself spread a large number of our books round among friends so that we cannot have all of them destroyed by bombs. But then we have no confidence whatever in God, and in the case of incendiary bombs would place much more reliance upon the most amateur fireman than upon God's action. But Hinsley goes out of his way to advertise the fact that so far as he goes he places no more reliance in God's help than we do.

It is interesting to note the persistency of Christian writers in giving wrong reasons for existing religious belief. Here, for example, is the Rev. L. B. Ashby—the *Daily Telegraph* stock religious writer, stating as something that is self-evident, "The longing for some sort of assurance about a future life is a very deeply-rooted one." A century or so ago such a statement might have been excusable, and, it is explainable only on lines of Dr. Johnson's well known reason for giving a faulty definition in his dictionary, "Ignorance, sheer ignorance." It is a statement of fact, not of theory, that the belief in a future life is not rooted in any "longing" at all, but in the simple acceptance of an apparently unquestionable fact. Primitive humanity does not believe in the continuation of the dead because of any longing for it, but simply because of the inability to think otherwise. If anyone will try to think of himself as not being, he will, unless he has developed a power of abstraction not common even to-day, find himself thinking of himself as not existing, and yet watching his feelings in conditions where the possibility of feeling no longer exists. On that weakness of the human intellect rests the only "longing" one can really detect.

But primitive man's capacity for abstract thinking is almost nil. And as a consequence of this, with a complete ignorance of the nature of life and death, he does not think of a *future* life, in the modern sense of the term. He is simply incapable of thinking of himself as non-existing. There is only one life, and man goes on existing in a never-never land. One can no more reasonably speak of primitive mankind "longing" for news of a future life than one can think of him as longing for the ability to breathe. It is upon this initial mental weakness that the belief in continued existence after death exists. All modern anthropologists are agreed upon this. To this primitive weakness religion adds the factor of fear. Strip the Christian religion of its verbiage, and what we have left as a basis for the belief in future life is ignorance and fear.

The Rev. Dr. Heenan is a typical example of the infantile mind which, so long as it has a "religious" message, is allowed to broadcast by our pious B.B.C. Faced with the questions which all believers in a God hate to face but are obliged to—"Why does God allow this war? What have we done?"—he answers, "Practically nothing. Nothing to deserve God's blessing and protection." And he adds, "Men have the impertinence to leave God out of everything until everything goes wrong, and then to raise shrill cries of complaint against the providence of God, which has allowed such misery to fall upon mankind." It looks as though we should have been better off without God—and the B.B.C. religious service.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

THE General Secretary N.S.S. acknowledges the following donations to the Benevolent Fund of the Society. Blackburn Branch N.S.S., 5s.; C. Townsend, 5s.

W. CURRIE.—Thanks for letter. We note its contents, but we never had any doubt of the readiness of *Freethinker* readers to help when help was necessary. We shall be making a statement presently.

G. H. TURNER.—Very pleased to hear from you. The poem you enclose has appeared several times in public prints, but it is not written by Burns. We may, however, reprint it again one day. Archbishop Downey's statement that it was better for Roman Catholic children to risk being bombed in Liverpool than to be sent to North Wales to live in Protestant homes was made in the Catholic papers and public press some months back, but we did not note the date.

D. W. HARDNER.—Your suggestion of a leaflet appealing to teachers is a good one. One to "Teachers and Parents" might be done as soon as it is convenient.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Sugar Plums

We receive many letters, not all of them congratulatory. Thus, Mr. H. Bluthing writes from Birmingham, "I have been reading the *Freethinker* again, after a lapse of many years, but I do not like it any more now than when I dropped it." Does that mean we are no different from what we were, or that our correspondent has not yet developed sufficiently to appreciate it? We cannot decide, but if the latter is the correct interpretation, perhaps if persistence is practised it may end in enlightenment.

Colonel Alastor McKay must have caught the *Daily Telegraph* off its guard when he got the following letter inserted in the issue for October 26:—

Sir,—Apropos the letters you have published on "Prayer for Victory," may I add a little contribution? When the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon was questioned on the subject of prayer in a certain emergency his reply was:

"Pray certainly, but send the best men to the pumps."

It would seem to most people who have a real job to do that the "wording" of prayer is of no importance, and that Spurgeon's advice was of the greatest.

We like that quiet dig that it does not matter so much about prayer provided that the work is done. It reminds one of Voltaire's remark that prayer is quite useful in cases of sickness—provided the proper kind of medicine is taken. But the religious world still fights shy of putting the influence of prayer to a definite test. Our law shows its opinion by compelling those in charge of children to have a doctor in attendance, no matter how powerful are the prayers that are offered.

We remember that some years ago there was a lively discussion in the *Daily Telegraph* on the value of prayer. One of the Christian Bishops wrote a letter poking fun at the use of the praying-wheel by the Chinese. Whereupon the Chinese Ambassador wrote a letter offering to produce as good results by the praying-wheel as the Bishop could by a prayer in Church. That was a very polite challenge, but the Bishop was not having any. He felt it safer to trust to people's belief in prayer.

Then there was the challenge of Professor Tyndal. He offered the test of two wards in a hospital. In one ward there should be the usual scientific attention. In the other there

should be at work an accredited body of Christian priests praying night and day. The cases selected were to be as nearly alike as could be determined. That challenge was also denied. Priests have always preferred to trust to faith—plus medical attention. The medicines are mixed, and the priests take credit for whatever cures follow.

We have, of course, no objection whatever to the men of the "forces" being made as comfortable as possible. On the contrary, we would do anything we could to promote their comfort. But is there any reason why privileges that are provided for the forces should not be available for those who are just civilians? It is anything but a compliment to the country as a whole for us to pay special attention chiefly to the comfort of soldiers, airmen, sailors, etc., and not see that concern in the direction of the men mentioned should be shown to the rest of the population. Or are we to take it that it is only of the fighting forces with which we need be intimately concerned? That attitude would have been ridiculous at any time, but it is grotesque at a time when we are told on every hand that we (all civilians) are in this war as much as the Forces.

We write the above having specially in mind the number of towns that have agreed to have cinemas open on Sunday, with the proviso that it is for the "duration" only. This is the specific ground on which quite a number of the clergy and a larger number of the Christian laity have agreed to this desecration of the "Lord's Day." We hope that this promise will be broken, and the people do not submit to that day being again handed over to a clergy (as "class-minded" as any other body in the country) and a section of the laity that stand for one of the most primitive of superstitions. At the side of that superstition the advice of our Foreign Secretary that we might materially help to win the war by forming praying circles sounds quite modern.

But what we do ask very seriously is, What justification from even the point of view of Thomas Inskip, now disguised as Lord Caldecote, is there for permitting soldiers, sailors, etc., to be given a privilege that Sabbatarians would not give to civilians? Is it with safety that civilians cannot be trusted with a freedom that can be given to fighting men? If Sunday entertainment invites the wrath of the Lord, as Inskip and numbers of the clergy say it does, will Almighty God not be angry when it is reported that cinemas are being opened on Sunday, the main purpose being that soldiers shall be entertained, for in their absence they will deteriorate in character? If, on the other hand, this desecration of the Sabbath makes for a better character in the Forces, why will it not make for better character in the case of civilians? Personally we deny that the men of the forces are any different from the rest of the population. They are just the same as others, and will be the better for spending their Sunday as they please with regard to entertainments. The war ought to kill this primitive taboo. The question is, will it? If it does not the outlook for improvement after the war is not very bright.

For downright impertinence it is not easy to beat a bunch of Christian preachers. No other profession would have the impudence to approach a public body and suggest that they should supervise its work. This happened recently at Chesterfield. The "clergy and ministers" of the borough asked for the appointment of an Inspector—he would probably be a parson—to report on the religious instruction being given in the schools. The request was, properly, refused. But there is only one way to finally stop this kind of thing, with the trickery and dishonesty and hypocrisy that is nurtured by the present system. And that is to clear religion out of State schools, and let those who want it get in their own way and at their own expense. This parsonic policy of kid-napping ought to be wiped out.

"The Return Press" (this is the first time we have heard of its existence), is issuing books of stamps for use on the backs of letters. The stamps bear a cross, and behind it the swastika with hammer and sickle. It also bears the following: "The ultimate issue of the war is God or anti-God." The *Catholic Herald* asks, "What is going to be done if the hammer and the sickle joins up with the cross?" That looks as though the Roman Church is ready for a deal?

The Dictatorial Epidemic

THE establishment of dictatorial forms of Government in so many States presents an appalling spectacle. Humanitarian and international aspirations, once so widespread, have withered in the blast of the anti-democratic outburst. Whether the prevailing despotisms prove permanent or transitory remains to be seen. But the menace to democratic institutions—so far as they ever really existed or even exist—has perhaps never been greater than it is to-day.

In his stimulating and instructive *Story of the Dictatorship* (Ivor Nicholson), Mr. E. E. Kellett has included both ancient and modern tyrannies, and his historical studies have led him to conclude that certain epochs in human annals favour the rise and temporary triumph of autocratic rulers. Innumerable factors contribute to ensure the transient supremacy of a Cromwell, a Napoleon or Kemal.

It is significant that the methods adopted by present-day dictators are much the same as those of ancient and medieval tyrants. Indeed, there is nothing original in their procedure. As our author urges: "Allowance being made for mechanical and social changes, their methods of gaining and keeping power are practically the same as those employed by their Sicilian and Italian prototypes. They may have been financiers, professing to put right a monetary crisis. . . . They may have been demagogues, protectors of the poor against the rich." Again, "the use of modern machinery tends to conceal from us the essential likeness between the tyrants of to-day and those of old. Hitler and Mussolini, by borrowing the latest devices of advertisers, or by availing themselves of the achievements of applied science, have been able to gain for themselves a popularity which it would be ridiculous to deny. Every possible form of propaganda has been skilfully utilized, the wireless has been pressed into the service; the newspapers, which had been supposed to be the safety-valves of discontent, and the chief defenders of freedom are controlled and compelled to speak with one voice; the schools are regimented and the schoolmaster thoroughly disciplined in his task of teaching; . . . and the people have gradually been trained to think nothing but what the Government wishes them to think."

Nearly all the dictatorships of antiquity were short-lived, for the successful usurper rarely left a leader capable of the maintenance of his authority. Perhaps this will prove true of contemporary autocracies. Yet, one must remember that the machinery for their prolonged establishment is now so elaborate that, even in the absence of a powerful personality as an autocrat's successor, these despotic systems may prove persistent.

Moreover, modern tyrannies are usually the expression of a political doctrine. The leading dictators all strove to apply certain political principles to practical purposes, but were constrained to adapt their preconceptions to unexpected conditions. Kellett truly states that "Lenin found himself compelled, in some degree, to modify his extreme Marxism. Under Trotzky the process went a little further; but Trotzky could not renounce the doctrine that Bolshevism must propagate itself, by fair means or foul, throughout the world. Here he found himself in opposition to a man of more practical mind, a Georgian named Stalin, who . . . wished to leave other countries alone, and make Russia rather an example than a menace."

The poverty and distress that prevailed in Italy as the aftermath of the World War led to a state of anarchy. The Government proved incapable of coping with the chaos, and in despair the people prayed for a political Messiah to remedy their wrongs. Those who aspired to erect a Soviet system or to forms of Socialist administration were all at daggers drawn

among themselves. Strikes paralyzed industry and commerce, and when a General Strike was proclaimed in 1922, the renegade Socialist, Mussolini, ignored the existing Government, and plainly stated that the perilous condition of Italy called for direct action. Some have suggested that the danger to the community was negligible, and that Mussolini engineered the strike himself in order to gain the credit of suppressing it. In any case, the Fascist leader secured at least the neutrality of the Roman Church, while the Communists played into his hands when they expelled all the moderate members of their party. The priest-ridden South succumbed to Mussolini's blandishments and he declared at Naples that "The South of Italy is ours already. The Government of the whole country must be surrendered to us, or we shall march on Rome and take it."

Even in the face of this insolent challenge, the Facta Administration remained passive, and the King of Italy's inclinations were unknown. But a few days later the Blackshirts took possession of the public buildings in Cremona. The time had become critical. Mussolini refused every suggested compromise, and demanded permission to form his own personal administration. To this demand the King consented in a telephonic message, later confirmed by telegraph at Mussolini's request. Through dark and devious measures all opposition to the Duce faded away. The sequel is notorious. The Totalitarian State is everywhere supreme, and the once brilliantly progressive Italian intellectuals have been driven into exile or languish in silence or imprisonment in their native land.

The Abyssinian adventure was almost universally condemned by humanists in every cultured community. Yet, it received the blessing of the Catholic Church. Kellett's comments on this scandal are pointed and pertinent. "One of the most painful features in the whole transaction," he writes, "is the favour shown to it by the Church, the higher dignitaries of which, at least, can hardly have been ignorant of its real character. The Pope himself, who in the early days of the Fascist movement spoke of Mussolini as (like Dr. Francia) a man sent from God, gave his blessing to the enterprise and lent his Papal troops to the invading army. Cardinals, Archbishops and Bishops followed suit, and the Papal Secretary of State praised the 'holy conquest.' The Virgin herself was declared to be pleased with the victories."

Mr. Kellett's chapter, *A Hebrew Tyrant*, is an interesting and suggestive Scriptural study while those pages dealing with Hitler's Germany, the Renaissance Italy, as well as those of other autocracies, will repay perusal.

T. F. PALMER

Papa

THE Christian God is Three in One. The Christian God is One in Three. There is Papa, Son and an emanation therefrom called the Holy Ghost. Whether the Ghost come from the father, or from the father plus the son, has been a question so serious that it led to the split between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Greek Church. The *filioque* issue has unfortunately led to the damnation of many people, and no one knows which of the sects it is that is damned and which it is that is saved. We are assured that it is not sufficient unto salvation to believe in God, one must believe in a definite God. The Church with the proper *authority*, will put you on to the correct God. Unfortunately, if you are sufficiently interested to follow up the search for authority, there are still serious chances—be you ever so virtuous, ever so intelligent, ever so feeble-minded—of your picking the

wrong Church. This is unfortunate—for the damned. But even among learned theologians, there is a difference of opinion as to what "damnation" means. The climate of Hell during the last two generations has become almost as salubrious as Blackpool. It has suffered a sea-change. There are theological authorities who tell us that damnation simply means an inability to enjoy the Beatific Vision. The Beatific Vision is an experience which will in a flash show us why God has done what he has done. All will become plain that is now seen in a glass darkly; truly a first-class entertainment!

Authoritative theological pronouncements are at the moment inclined to put the first person of the Trinity, the Father, into the background. The best that is to be said about him, nowadays, is that he was responsible for the co-eternal and yet begotten Son. The Son is considered to be altogether a more attractive God than Papa ever was. God the Father, the Father of all the Earth who ever does right, has unfortunately for his reputation been "written up" rather profusely. The unchangeable God we know quite a lot about. The father of the comparatively amiable Jesus is described in unmistakable terms in what Christians call the *Old Testament*, and to use the language considered permissible in the Metropolitan Bench of Magistrates, he is indeed a "nasty piece of work."

But that was the old dispensation, say the Lords Spiritual. The Son was an improvement on the Father, we are told; a biological possibility with men, and apparently with unchangeable Gods. The *New Dispensation* put the Old Man in his place. It dispensed with the Ancient of Days in a wholesale manner which would have been the envy of any struggling Dispensing Chemist. It dispensed with the Infamous Thing of *Kings, Chronicles, Joshua and Judges*. It found it convenient so to do; changing the unchangeable is only a light exercise for a theologian, should the occasion call for it. Theologians are God-assisted, they are not ordinary men. They have special gifts. They have been "called" to the ministry. God sits up aloft, scrutinises the males, and finally chooses those he judges will redound most to his "honour and his glory." True, his choice is more than occasionally mysterious. He chose, for instance (in the last century), "Soapy Sam" to be Bishop of Oxford, and sees to it that he makes a fool of himself in his bout with Huxley at a meeting of the British Association. He chooses in a moment of forgetfulness Colenso to be Bishop of Natal, but he corrects his mistake (Colenso being brave, outspoken and human), by inducing all the Bishops of England save one to sign a Round Robin asking him (Colenso) for the love of God to clear out of the Christian Church.

Colenso badly wanted to clean-up God the Father. He was one of the earlier clerics who saw the necessity of making the Church relatively decent by sacking Papa. If the modern Lords Spiritual are correct in their modern dispensing proclivities then they should consider Colenso to be a Christian pioneer and be energetically endeavouring to keep his memory green.

What they do instead is to see that the memory of Colenso is obliterated as far as they can manage it. They are willing, and anxious, to dispense with Papa, for Papa is a decided liability. But they want to do it quietly and unostentatiously. And those unctuous ones who audibly sniffed at God the Father they cannot forgive for their lack of amenability to advice and discipline, and their intolerable impatience in "rushing into print."

But if Papa goes, Son goes too, and so does the Holy Ghost. For these three are one, co-eternal and indivisible. If "Full fathoms five our father lies," in the same place also lie the other two persons of the Trinity, the Amative Ghost, and Gentle Jesus!

T. H. ELSTON

Phantasmagoria

HAVING demonstrated (in *A Critical Analysis of the Four Chief Pauline Epistles*) that the earliest strata of the Christian documents are of a Gnostic character, L. Gordon Rylands now traces the pre-Christian development in *The Beginnings of Gnostic Christianity* (Watts). Having shown also that the syncretion can be traced in the Christian documents, this work chiefly consists in tracing the fundamental Gnostic conceptions and modes of thought.

He recognizes earlier influences such as the Babylonian and Persian, "but for the purposes of the present inquiry, it is unnecessary to go back further than the Wisdom literature." This literature has a very great deal to say in praise of Wisdom, but very little indeed about the Law. The Word of God is not prominent: like Wisdom it is personified, but it seems that originally the personification is little more than poetic metaphor. Wisdom covered the earth as a mist, she pervadeth all things, she is a breath of the power of God, a clear effluence of the Glory of the Almighty, an effulgence from the everlasting Light. "Because of her I shall have immortality," but the wicked, "they shall become a dishonoured carcase." To be virtuous man must get Wisdom. This is Gnostic doctrine in embryo.

The psalm book of one of the early Gnostic communities has been discovered, *The Odes of Solomon*: these people were Hellenistic Jews nurtured principally upon the Psalms and Wisdom literature. The writer hardly ever quotes, although his mind is saturated with knowledge of certain books of the Old Testament. While there is frequent reminiscence of the original phraseology, the context is different. To a greater extent than the writers of Wisdom, he is endeavouring to express metaphysical conceptions in the language of metaphor. "Unless we can bring our minds into tune with his mysticism and the language of the Ancient world in general, we shall never understand him."

On the whole, the Word has replaced Wisdom, each is the Spirit of the Lord, the name Wisdom is not used: "A perfect virgin enters into the sons and daughters of men to make them wise, that they perish not." There is no clear separation of conceptions: "the Word of the Lord and his Will is a holy Thought, and the Thought is everlasting life." The being or beings whom the writer worshipped, are spiritual substances, since for the ancient mind spirit was attenuated matter. Synonymous terms and metaphorical expressions are continually used. The Word is the dew of the Lord, the living fountain of the Lord. Gnosis is the water of life; it is truth and it is light.

"There is no oriental dualism in the earliest discoverable cosmogony" of these Gnostics. The antithesis of light and darkness is that of truth and error. Death and the Abysses, like darkness and synonymous of error and folly. Those who are quickened by the Spirit of the Lord (Breath of God) have already risen; the resurrection is a spiritual and metaphorical one. This conception is characteristic of the Gnostics. The initiation ceremony was conceived as a birth; entry into the congregation as becoming alive. The Messiah, Christ, is the Word of God, personified in thought, but conceived as an emanation from God. "The Most High shall be known in his saints." "In the congregation of the Most High shall she (Wisdom) open her mouth." The Christ who comes to found the Kingdom of God—is already here—invisibly incarnate in the elect. And, there is a visible Christ, God's Anointed, the community itself; which is God's agent—and in another aspect—the Kingdom in embryo.

The phraseology is highly metaphorical and often obscure, but in spite of such expressions as the mouth of the Lord, and the arms of immortal life, the writer eschews anthropomorphism by never allowing God to

act or speak in person, and even the Word does not speak *to*, he speaks *in* the believer.

In other communities the ideas appear to be more highly developed. The God of the Naassenes was not a person though he was called the Father. He was said to be without shape, incomprehensible, ineffable; everything good proceeds from him, but he himself is inactive. The Naassenes appear not to have used the name Wisdom, they substituted for it, Nous, the Mind of God, whose penetrating aspect was Psyche (Soul). Even stones, they said, possess soul. It is Psyche who differentiates the primordial Chaos. Nous as inventive; and Psyche as operative, complete the creative Wisdom of God. The Father was named Adamas and Anthropos (Man). The necessary link between the immobile divine spirit and the material world was the Word, who as the son of Anthropos, was termed Son Man. This Logos was also formless and extra spatial, but as Christ, incarnate in man, has to that extent spatial limitation. "This is the Christ, the Son of Man, who is fashioned from the formless Logos in all who are born." The language all through is highly figurative, with such peculiar expressions as male-female. In the doctrine of the Peratai, we have the motionless inactive Father, the Unborn and absolute Good: uncreated hyle, primordial matter, and the Son, the Logos, the Self Born. Everyone is potentially redeemable through the seed sown by the Logos. It is not said that the Peratai named their Logos Christ. The system of the Sethians is so phantastic a mixture of allegory and metaphysical philosophy, that it is not easily intelligible. Between the "Light" and the "dark and terrible water" extended Pneuma, which is more tenuous than breath or air; is more like odour. The spiritual part of man is Nous, which longs to re-ascend to the Light and the Pneuma from whence it came, but the darkness strives to restrain it. The Logos descends for its liberation.

Not only is there continuity in the development of the doctrine, but also an expansion of metaphor into allegory. After the manner of Gnostics generally, they extracted from the books they used, hidden meanings by symbolic interpretation: named the body Egypt, and took the Exodus to be a symbol of the delivery of spiritual man from carnal nature. The birth of Cain was the creation of the world through the action of Nous (Adam) upon matter (Eve). There is also an indication of the process of assimilation. "Men of this attitude of mind could take over any myth which they were able to adapt to their own ideas." The writings of the Greek poets and the Pagan myths were also believed to have hidden meanings. In the Naassene book it is said that the Assyrians in worshipping Oannes, were ignorantly worshipping Anthropos: when the Phrygians called upon Attis, they were calling upon Adamas without knowing it. As Attis is recalled by the mother goddess to the heavenly world, so does the Logos oppressed by matter, revive and re-ascend.

Parallel with this development was another which our author calls individualization. In the Wisdom of Solomon "she pervadeth all things," then in the Odes, the Word, personified, named Christ, is manifested in the congregation of the elect. Gradually the personification was more definitely and more literally conceived: the Christ had manifested himself at different times in certain men of exceptional piety. The Peratai had advanced to the conception of a special incarnation in definite quasi-historical persons; Cain, Esau, Joseph and probably Moses. Some of the Ebionites, with the Sampsaean, Ossaean, and Nasaræans there were Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph and Moses. The Peratai believed that in the days of Herod, the Logos had descended in the form of the Patriarch Joseph. Among the Ebionites, Adam appears to have been gradually replaced by Jesus.

Symbolic of redemption, Jesus (Saviour) is a sacred

name. It was identified by Origen and Justin, with Joshua, "who brought your fathers out of Egypt." With Origen "Speaking wisdom" was symbolic interpretation. Jerome also interpreted symbolically. These writers, like Paul, speak God's Wisdom in a Mystery. There were Jewish as well as Pagan Mysteries, and these Mysteries were actual as well as doctrinal. The sacred meal of the Therapeutes was a Mystery, the food is described as most holy. The meal was followed by a ceremonial representation of the choir headed by Moses and Miriam: as with the Peratai, this symbolized by means of Gnosis, the liberation from the bondage of carnal impulses, as the Israelites passed from Egypt through the Red Sea. The Gnostics after their manner interpreted the meal as a symbolical union of the participants, one with another, and the union of the community with the dwelling Christ. Jesus as "The true vine," says to his disciples "abide in me, and I in you." The bread from heaven was spiritual bread, and must be spiritually eaten, the symbol is operative and mystically produces the consecrating effect. The Pauline baptism was certainly a Mystery, the initiate is a new creature. Both in the Mystery cults and in Pauline Christianity, eternal life was to be assured through mystical union with the divine Saviour. The union between the mystic and the indwelling Christ is expressed as being in Christ.

Notwithstanding the important differences between the doctrines of Paul and John, as regards the Gnostic fundamentals they are in agreement. The spirit is immortal and its life continues: the spirit is the man "the flesh profiteth nothing." The "appearances" of Christ was mystical, mystical "seeing" is mystical "knowing." In the Mysteries the god vision was supposed to operate as deification to ensure immortality. With the Gnostics "vision of God" was attainable through Gnosis; suitable means induced an ecstatic condition. "The meaning attached by the writer of the Fourth Gospel to the God-vision can be better understood from Philo," who wrote of "men capable of vision (Therapeutic), they strive to loosen the bond of the Psyche and to become incorporeal in thought" and "to look continually upon that which they have learnt of the divine essence, until they see what they long for."

Until we come to a Gospel, we find in the Christian documents no knowledge of a man Jesus, but very much concerning the death and resurrection of a divine Christ. The writers of the Pauline Epistles "preach Christ crucified." We have abundant evidence of the Gnostic fondness for allegory, also of metaphor and allegory in the Gospels. Mark is as little like a record or real events as is the Gospel of John. Was his Jesus Christ not rather an individualization of some such metaphysical conception as can be traced from the Odes of Solomon, just as the Jesus Christ of John is the individualized Word?

For a time the literal view did not supplant the symbolical; it gradually encroached upon it, until at the beginning of the third century the two views were subsisting side by side. Jerome freely allegorized, and not only the miracles. "A Christian of his mentality could use the method without questioning the literal truth."

People of such mentality can have no conception of truth—divine truth is a vastly different thing!

H. PREECE.

Odin was the principal divinity of the Scandinavians. To him they attributed every character that could inspire fear and horror, without any mixture of the amiable or merciful. He is called in the Edda the terrible and severe God, the father of carnage, the avenger, the deity who marks out those who are destined to be slain. This terrible God was held to be the creator and father of the universe.

Tytler, "Universal History."

Prayer—A Dilemma

THAT the principles of Christian theology contain many paradoxes has never been doubted by Freethinkers, and has even been admitted by the late G. K. Chesterton; but although that staunch champion of Romish orthodoxy often went out of his way to discover new and ingenious paradoxes, he certainly would not have admitted that his faith involved any *direct contradictions*. The fact is that the doctrine of Free Will and the practice of prayer are completely contradictory, and anyone who addresses petitional prayers to his deity and yet accepts responsibility for his own actions clearly cannot have examined the principles of his religion very critically.

The doctrine of Free Will, which is subscribed to, in one form or other, by all Christian sects, finds its clearest exposition in the dogmas of Rome; this is not surprising, as the Church of Rome has systematically exploited the credulity of both rich and poor for centuries, so that its professional theologians might live in the comfort and luxury necessary for the formulation and continual repolishing of theories. The orthodox teaching is this: the deity has specially provided human beings alone, out of all creation, with freedom of will, and this freedom is essential to the divine purpose; this carries with it the corollary that the deity holds each individual responsible for his or her own actions. All modern Christian writers who attempt a guess at the nature of the divine purpose are agreed on these points; they are not the exclusive property of the See of Peter.

Similarly, the addressing of petitions to the deity is universally practised by Christians; the prayers vary in style from the admitted well phrased collects of the Church to the spontaneous pleas of street-preachers ("Soften the heart of this miserable sinner, O Lord, and turn his drink to dust and ashes in his mouth.") The practice of prayer indicates a belief that if the prayer is made sincerely, or sufficiently often or loudly, the deity will hear and answer. As it is only natural to remember the occasions on which purely fortuitous circumstances bring about an apparent answer, and to forget the more numerous occasions when the law of probability effects a balance by making it seem as if the Almighty has turned a deaf ear, it is not surprising that the advocates of prayer really do believe in its efficacy.

The question whether we, as Freethinkers, believe either in Free Will or in prayer is irrelevant; for the essence of Freethought is free thinking. But we cannot believe in both these things, for the type of mentality that can cheerfully accept a perfect contradiction in theories is evidently given to thought so free as to be quite wild and useless—in fact, not worthy of the name of thought.

I have deliberately refrained from describing the particular nature of this contradiction, in the hope that the reader might think it out for himself. Any intelligent person must reach this conclusion: the implication of the doctrine of Free Will is that everyone must stand or fall by his own self-willed actions, and so must the race as a whole; the human will reigns (theoretically) supreme in this world, the deity can well afford to wait his turn in the next. The implication of the theory of prayer is that we can, by means of a suitable technique, persuade the deity to upset his own apple-cart and interfere either with the natural laws, which would be unfair to those who spend their lives investigating these laws, or with the temporarily sovereign will of man, which would be disconcerting to those who spend their lives telling us that we are miserable sinners who obstinately *go our own ways* and wilfully shun the path of salvation.

The dilemma which confronts the theologians is, then, this: they can insist on the essential necessity of Free Will, and abandon the completely useless practice

of petitional prayer; or they can insist on the efficacy of prayer and abandon the misguided and theoretically unsound practice of telling the faithful that they are responsible for their own actions. The horns of the dilemma are particularly sharp, and there seems to be little to choose between them, but one must be chosen; the only way of dodging the choice is to abandon both principles, but we cannot expect the professionals to cut off the source of their livelihood in that manner.

I repeat that the object of these remarks is to expose this great contradiction; this is no paradox but a violent antithesis between the two fundamental principles on which the whole structure of theory and practice in the orthodox Christianity in particular is built. Moreover, it is the orthodox Christian, i.e., the Churchman, who is proudest of what he imagines to be the essentially "logical" and "consistent" nature of his faith. If we admit the possibility that the orthodox Christian is a rational being and does actually think, we must assume that amongst the various revelations which are supposed to have been vouchsafed to the Church throughout the ages there have been revelations of a new illogical (Christian) type of logic, and a new inconsistent (Christian) type of consistence.

GORDON CURLE

DOG LOVE

I NEVER come amiss—there's always welcome.
The sparkling eye, the wild excited leap,
Express an unfeigned joy. He has learned much
From human kind, but not pretence of love.
(Ah! What a test of all my human ties!)
I might be outcast, beggared or disgraced
His little heart would still beat true to me.

And how he seems to understand my moods—
Lying serenely by me while I muse,
Dozing, but with one ever waking eye
To keep invaders off. When I am glad,
What comrade could show greater ecstasy?
He leaps to share my mirth, and leads me on
To wild excesses of delirious joy—
Scampering across the meadow, o'er the brook,
And through the village, filling thus our lungs
With nature's tonic. Yes, and when I'm sad,
When life's too heavy burdens press my soul,
His kindly eyes express mute sympathy.
They seem to say, "Do not despair, dear Master,
There's still the earth, the blue sky and there's ME!"

In truth, the faithful friendship of a dog,
Untarnished by all thought of gold or fame
Or questioning of merit, is a pearl
Of greatest value, and begets in me
A love which is as free from calculation.
Could I sell such a friend for L. S. D.?
The thought is treason. He is part of life,
A little pal who—though he knows it not—
Needs me. For men can be most cruel of all,
Thinking themselves immortal and immune
From reciprocal duties to the beasts,
Who oft excel *them* in morality.

So little Friend, you're safe, while my life lasts.

A. H. MILLWARD

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