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Views and Opinions

A Parson in a Fog

My recent notes dealt with an article which appeared in a religious journal depicting the late Rev. Pat McCormick as an extremely good-natured man, with a very attractive personality. The matter would not have interested me at all, as I knew nothing about Mr. McCormick, and the spectacle of a good natured kindly disposed parson did not surprise me, although many religious people appear to think the phenomenon deserves emphasizing. I became interested only at the point when the exhibition of a decent human character was, in the somewhat muddled mind of the editor of the *Church Times*, converted by insinuation into an argument for accepting Christian doctrines.

Since writing my notes I have come across an article written by Mr. McCormick, and reprinted in one of the Sunday papers, and that helps to estimate the preacher's character from an intellectual point of view. I admit that is a very severe test to apply to the modern preacher. But after all, every preacher does put forward something that looks like intellectual stuff, and therefore every Christian who does not ask to be led by the nose ought to consider now and again whether the preacher does understand what he is saying to his congregation. One does not normally accept statements made by a man merely because he is kindly natured and a quite charming individual. Thieves are not of necessity hard-hearted individuals, and many of them have been notorious for their charitable disposition. In fact the success of many a rogue depends entirely upon many of the features that are prized in Mr. McCormick. So we had better, all of us, break ourselves of the habit, if we have it, of assuming that because a man is quite delightful in one direction he is equally delightful in all directions. A fool may be very attractive, and a philosopher may resemble one of those people who is described as being like a bear with a sore head.

The Confidence Trick

Mr. McCormick's reprinted article is entitled *The Future Life*, and it is one on which the whole position of a clergyman depends, for no one even pretends that on any other subject his opinion must have a special weight. To him, so he informs his listeners, a future existence is an unquestionable fact. He should, therefore, have something like reasonable proof to place before those who look to him for guidance. He begins with "A man may ask what evidence we have for survival?" That is plain, but the answer is not quite so good. He evidently has no evidence to offer. Not even a reasonable hypothesis to put forward. His reply to the question admits this, for he says, "The

answer, surely, is that if you believe in Christianity at all you must believe in a future life." Now, is there anyone, outside of an asylum, who would accept this statement as containing anything that may be called evidence? Evidence is testimony to a fact or to the truthfulness of a statement. If I say that I have evidence that John Smith is honest it will certainly not do before any tribunal to say that my evidence consists in my belief that he is honest, and any judge alive would tell me that I was trifling with the court. I am merely repeating a statement, which proves that I have no proper understanding of the words used. I ask for evidence of an expressed belief and am told that it must be true if I believe in Jesus. If I believe that fifteen or seventeen ounces go to the pound I shall continue to serve customers accordingly. But if I am challenged to give evidence in support of that belief, I must surely find something stronger than "If you believe in me I must be right."

Proceeding, Parson Pat goes on to increase his evidence—in length, but with no improvement in quality. Jesus said (to his disciples," says Mr. McCormick, but actually to the thieves on the cross who were *not* his disciples) "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." To have cited that passage truthfully in its application might have roused uncomfortable thoughts nowadays. But this is positively the main thing this "great" preacher has to offer in the shape of evidence. Believe in Jesus and everything is quite clear. Of course, to use the oft-cited sarcasm of Voltaire, to believe that a decapitated saint once walked one hundred paces with his head under his arm is easy, *after one believes in the first step*. I think a man with moderate intelligence might have done better than does Mr. McCormick. If he had consulted us we are vain enough to think we could have made out a stronger case—but we should have insisted on being permitted to indict ourself afterwards.

By the way, we do not issue challenges, but here is one. We undertake, before a public audience, to restate any prominent parson's case for a future life in an admittedly stronger form than he has done, on condition that we are afterwards allowed to show to the same audience, that the "stronger" case is worthless.

In the New Life

What shall we be like after death? Answers the parson: St. Paul says, "There is a natural body and a spiritual body." Good, but St. Paul believed because he followed Jesus, thus applying the logic of Mr. McCormick. (The reader is advised to turn back to the saint who had his head cut off). And he says "The natural body we know, the spiritual we cannot describe." That is really not very helpful, because we know the natural body without the help of Jesus or Paul. How much better informed are we if we are told that there is a spiritual body, but no one knows what it is like, and therefore shall not recognize it if ever we come across one. Mr. McCormick again wanders away from the truth when he tells us, as a help to understand, something of which we know nothing and cannot describe, merely that Jesus appeared after the resurrection with a spiritual body and that makes one believe that the spiritual body has "a form similar to the present body." That is mis-

leading on two counts. First, if Jesus had appeared in any other guise than the one he bore before the resurrection (say, as a negro, or as a hunchback, or with a different type of face or body) his own disciples would never have recognized him. Not even the most infatuated husband would in the next world accept as his wife a woman different in form or disposition from the wife he had on earth. Any man, any woman, any baby, any parent, any friend that existed in this world must be the same in any other world if relationships are to be renewed. Of course, if we are all different then anyone allotted to anyone may do, but in that case it is downright stupidity to talk of reunion in the next world. There can be no reunion in such circumstances; there can only be another kind of a crowd.

Our preacher drops back on what he calls a personal experience. He had twin sisters. One died a year after the other, and then Mr. McCormick felt "an overwhelming desire to ask the dying woman to give his love to the twin." And he adds that his sister's "personality is as real to-day as it was when she was here." Well, I expect that we all have that feeling with regard to our families, our friends, and our pets. I have as keen a perception of the personality of a favourite dog that died some twenty-odd years ago as I had when he was alive. But that does not warrant me in saying that I expect to find his spiritual body barking and jumping at me when he meets my spiritual body, which may be quite different than it is to-day. Perhaps he will just growl at me as an impertinent intruder. But Mr. McCormick is quite reasonable for one who begins by believing in Jesus. (The reader will please turn back to the beheaded saint).

* * *

More Muddle

Mr. McCormick hopes that people have got over the conception of a future life filled with harps and songs, etc., etc. Well, thanks to unbelievers a very large number of professed Christians have given this up, and among these we may evidently count Saint McCormick, who was not generous enough to thank sceptics for what they have done to debrutalize the Christian faith. He says "Christianity implied that there must be growth in our characters in the life beyond, and we shall pass over just as we are . . . I cannot see that death is going to make any difference in our personalities." This will not do. It is decidedly poor. He had previously told his readers that our bodies will disappear, but "our personalities will enter into a new life." But our personalities are shaped by our bodily organs and their functions, in fact, in a whole set of physico-psychological relations. And the unbroken experience of mankind is that any change in these physico-psychological relations involves changes in personality. Somehow St. McCormick works it out that while things will be radically altered they will yet remain the same. The husband will greet his wife, the wife her husband, the parents their children; friends will meet friends, but they will recognize each other as the same personalities even though they are minus the physical, moral and mental features by which they used to recognize each other. We shall all be the same, but we shall all undergo a fundamental change. I must once again refer readers to return to the saint who walked a hundred paces with his head off. Mr. McCormick was doing his best in the article, but he had a most attractive personality, and that served instead of logic.

"Christianity," says the preacher, "teaches us this life is a preparation for the next." But only so far as it determines our entrance to heaven or hell. And if it were otherwise, how can preparation in this world be a training ground for a career that is fundamentally different? Does any of our airmen prepare for flights by rowing, or soldiers practise with

guns, in order to learn how to knit socks? Surely a preparation in this life implies that the next life will be identical with this one. There will be falling in love and falling out again. There will be marriage and giving in marriage—in spite of the statement of Jesus to the contrary. There will exist wrong there in order that right may also exist. There will be liars and truth-tellers. There will be preachers and people who are foolish enough to follow them. If we are training for another life, that life must be identical with this one, and we must be identical with ourselves or this talk of training for another existence is pure nonsense.

* * *

Criminal Ethics

Just one more point in Mr. McCormick's article. He says, "If there were no future life in which men would come face to face, perhaps for the first time, with the knowledge of the despicable cruelty, inhumanity and utter fiendishness of their treatment of God's children, love itself would not be true to its nature, and there would be no possibility either of reformation or redemption, and, some would say, retribution." Now we are at last coming within sight of historic Christianity. There is another life in which the very bad are punished and the very good are rewarded. But retribution to one and compensation to the other is not what sensible persons desire. There will be thousands whom we hope will get compensation for ruined homes when the war is over; others are hoping that the Germans will be punished for their brutalities, and so far as it can be done some recognition will be made for the rupture in family and other human relations. But suppose our Government could have prevented a single bomb falling on this country, suppose they could have prevented any family being broken up, or prevented a single person being killed. Would it have been enough defence had the Government said, "Yes we knew all this would happen, and we could have prevented it had we cared to do so, but this life is an education, and each one must learn for himself or herself, and when the war is over we intend to deal with everyone according to the way in which they have acted. And as to the dead and the suffering, well that is all part of our training for living more decently."

In that case I take it that a Government of that kind would be booted out of existence, and the lamp-posts that have been for so long unused would be put to a very suitable use in dealing with our secular pastors and masters. Does it make the least difference whether we are dealing with a Government or a God? A Government might at least plead that it did its best, and had to deal with the world as it is. But God—? I will let the matter end here. I have been trying to display the intellectual side of a man who was lauded in the religious and secular press as a really great preacher and a remarkable personage. So he may have been, he may also have been a good man; that only made his influence the more dangerous. Mr. Pat McCormick could say the ridiculous things he did say, could come to the ridiculous conclusions at which he arrived, all because he began believing in Jesus.

But to get back to the beheaded saint that walked a hundred paces with his head under his arm. I have taken several columns to say what Voltaire said in a few lines. Perhaps it serves the writer or the reader right.

CHAPMAN COHEN

There are many men who appear to be struggling against adversity, and yet are happy; but yet more, who, although abounding in wealth, are miserable.—*Tacitus*.

Francis Thompson

That creature of transcendent vision who made a strange pretence of wearing the blinkers of the Roman Catholic Church.—William Archer.

AMID thousands of obscure graves at Kensal Green Cemetery is one with the arresting inscription, "Look for me in the nurseries of heaven." This is the last resting place of the unfortunate Francis Thompson, who was buried there three decades ago. He was then almost unknown, and during his lifetime he had suffered the hardships of lonely poverty to a degree not surpassed by any of the most unfortunate writers of the world. He had sounded the whole gamut of misery and privation. Many nights he slept upon the Thames Embankment, and under carts in Covent Garden Market. He hawked matches in the Strand, and was a bookseller's porter, staggering through London streets with a heavy sack upon his back. When he was carried to his grave only a few intimate friends, who had looked after him for the last sad months of his life, were present to mourn. Now Thompson is placed by good judges of literature in the ranks of poets of genius, and the proud garland of laurel decorates his tomb which was denied to the living man.

It is possible to overrate and to underestimate Thompson's merits, but no one would contend that he was other than a genuine and unmistakable poet. A very unequal writer, he sometimes soared to the ether of the great singers, and at other times fell to the lower slopes of Parnassus. He had, indeed, his faults; but against them must be placed his unbalanced, imaginative, reckless nature. There can hardly be a sadder story than his in the whole history of literature, though Chatterton, Villon, Poe, James Thomson, and Paul Verlaine have claims. To be at once a genius and a drudge, to live in dire poverty, and to die of a lingering disease, is as melancholy a lot as can be imagined. Nor would he deserve less pity if we denied his genius. His faults injured himself alone; but genius he most certainly had.

Thompson is a poet's poet, like Blake, Keats, Rossetti and Shelley. His kinship to those poets is far nearer than to Crashaw and the ecclesiastical mystics. Assuredly, he calls for a meed of praise equal to that accorded to Maeterlinck, D'Annunzio, Rostand, Gorki, and other continental writers for whom so many British altars have flamed in worship. Thompson's genius was Oriental, exuberant in colour; woven with rich and strange textures. His poetry was mainly a splendid rhetoric, imaginative and passionate, as if the moods went by robed in imperial purple in a great procession.

One of his masterpieces, his *Anthem of Earth* is molten white with passion. Listen to these magnificent lines in which the alchemy of the poet's genius transmutes a threadbare subject into the fine gold of poetry:—

Ay, Mother! Mother!

What is this Man, thy darling kissed and cuffed,
Thou lustingly engender'st,
To sweat, and make his brag, and rot,
Crowned with all honour and all shamefulness?
From nightly towers
He dogs the secret footsteps of the heavens,
Sifts in his hands the stars, weighs them as gold-dust
And yet is he successive unto nothing
But patrimony of a little mould,
And entail of four planks. Thou hast made his mouth
Avid of all dominion and all mightiness,
All sorrow, all delight all topless graundeurs,
All beauty and all starry majesties,
And dim trans-stellar things; even that it may,
Filled in the ending with a puff of dust,
Confess—"It is enough!" The world left empty
What that poor mouthful crams. His heart is builded
For pride, for potency, infinity,
All heights, all deeps, and all immensities,

Arras'd with purple like the house of Kings—
To stall the grey rat, and the carrion worm
Statelily lodge. Mother of mysteries!
Sayer of dark sayings in a thousand tongues,
Who bringest forth no saying yet so dark
As we ourselves, thy darkest!

The closing stanza of *Daisy* is dangerously near perfection:—

She went her unremembering way;
She went and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone,
And partings yet to be.

There used to be a tradition in common literary circles that poets cannot write good prose. It was a ridiculous theory. To read the prose of Byron, Coleridge, Meredith, Shelley, and Wordsworth, is to perceive its absurdity. Shakespeare wrote wonderful prose, as in *Hamlet*. The critics who affect to look down upon Thompson's prose are scribblers who are hardly entitled to look down upon anything. Francis Thompson was a Catholic, and Shelley was an Atheist. Hundreds of men, including those of rare talent, have written on Shelley, but Thompson's essay is, far and away, the finest ever written. This is what Thompson says of the *Prometheus Unbound*:—

It is unquestionably the greatest and most prodigal exhibition of Shelley's powers, this amazing lyric world, where immortal clarities sigh past in the perfumes of the blossoms, populate the breathings of the breeze, throng and twinkle in the leaves that twirl upon the bough; where the very grass is all a-rustle with lovely spirit-things; and a weeping mist of music fills the air. The final scenes especially are such a Bacchic reel and rout and revelry of beauty as leaves one staggered and giddy; poetry is spilt like wine, music runs to drunken waste. The choruses sweep down the wind, tirelessly, flight after flight, till the breathless soul almost cries for respite from the unrolling splendors.

A really wonderful and true passage on Shelley's potent imagination is the following:—

For astounding figurative opulence he yields only to Shakespeare, and even to Shakespeare not in absolute fecundity but in range of images. The sources of his figurative wealth are specialized, while the sources of Shakespeare's are universal. It would have been as conscious an effort for him to speak without figure as it is for most men to speak with figure. Suspended in the dripping well of his imagination the commonest object becomes encrusted with imagery.

MIMNERMUS

Nazi "Education"

A WEEK or two ago there were B.B.C. reports of the type of education decreed for Poland's children by Germany's Herr Greisser. The young Poles were to be inculcated with love and respect for Germany, and hatred for every other foreigner. No Polish youth was to be "put in a position ever to attack Germany, again." Greisser also said that the true German must harden himself even more, so as to draw the full profit from victories.

Long before the war started attempts were made from Germany to bring British children into contact with Nazi influences. Correspondence was then being encouraged between the children of different nations. German efforts were rather enlightening.

"Dear Mary,—Have you seen the pictures of our Leader? Don't you think he is a wonderful man?"

"Dear Joan,—Have you seen the pictures of our Leader? Don't you think he is a wonderful man?"

And so on—passages obviously dictated to them, probably by the teachers, who in their turn would no doubt be dictated to from some common source.

The following will not be a perfect verbatim report, but as near to it as is allowed by a tenacious memory recalling an outstanding occurrence four years ago.

Enter the German visitor with a good deal of the military aspect and some heel clicking. The boys are waiting for him. Introductions are brief. He is terse and humourless. He will address the class.

"Vot is the lesson? Geography? That is good. Open your atlases at the map of Germany. There now, gif me chalk. I will draw it on the blackboard."

He does so, and prods it with a finger near the Czech border.

"That is vere I live. But I must not go there" the finger hops over into Czechoslovakia) "I dare not go there. That country is Czechoslovakia. They intend to attack us. They are an enemy."

And a little later: "I see no pictures of your Edward VIII. on your walls. Have you also not a picture of Herr Hitler? I will get for you a picture of Herr Hitler if you wish. . . . All the boys who have seen a picture of Herr Hitler will put up their hands. . . . Is there any boy who has not seen his picture in the papers?"

The ensuing silence proclaimed that no boy was in that happy state.

And finally: "Any questions?"

No. No questions. The average British youth's head was apparently so filled up with gangster films that he thought gangsters only existed on the screen. He was concerned with many other pleasant democratic activities, and had no thought of politics and war, while at the same time his German *confrère* was being physically and psychologically prepared for war. Happy, happy democracy, fed with what Bertrand Russell calls "Western Europe's nightly dope from Hollywood," simply refused to take dictators seriously. Its apathy and popular contentment provided the soil in which Fascism was nurtured. Fascism begins to look like a great disease that attacks outworn Democracy.

No questions, then. And so it is left for a teacher to inquire:

"Why do German boys wear a dagger with a blood-thirsty inscription" (*Blut und Ehre*) (Blood and honour).

"The dagger is the weapon which signifies freedom."

"In this country it would signify a readiness for the mad-house. Were you in the front line in the war?"

"I am in the front line now."

"How can that be, if there is no war?"

"I am in the front line of the Nazi Party."

"Why do you ill-treat the Jews?"

"But if you see a serpent in the grass you do not stroke him. No! You stamp him out."

It may be a coincidence, but the name of the visitor was Herr Greisser.

I have said that the German youth was being prepared for war. In this connexion, there was issued in Germany in 1933, right at the beginning of Nazi power, a text book for German schools which negated everything that was being attempted in civilized countries to train children to hate the idea of war. It was widely noticed in this country and drew from the *Times* the description, "a child's guide to war." But those statesmen responsible for the patchwork policy of appeasement either did not see this and other similar German literary products, or else perhaps thought it was all too bad to be true.

The author was the noted Dr. Banse, then of Brunswick Technical High School. He was in the same year appointed to teach military science in universities, and to prepare material for school instruction. He

also prepared the famous Banse Map for the invasion of England. (See *What Hitler Wants*, by E. O. Lorimer).

Geography teaching was almost revolutionized. A mountain was no longer a mountain, with certain human meanings and interests involved in it. It became a military obstacle or protection, or something to be considered in a strategic disposition of troops. The weather, too, was treated as a military consideration: a grey-blue morning mist obscures advancing troops, especially those in blue-grey uniform.

History teaching, as might be expected, figured largely in the new approach. Germans were shown in the events of 1918, an undefeated German army stabled in the back by Jews at home. Music, physical training lessons and games took on a military form, and even innocent-looking Arithmetic had its share:

"What is the average speed of a German tank going from such a place to such a place, a distance of so many miles, in such and such a time?"

"What is the total cost of equipping this regiment at so much for this, that and the other?"

"Calculate the tonnage of merchant shipping sunk by a U-boat with these successes . . ."

I have not seen a translation of the Banse book, but according to the *Times* its basic idea is that the young German must be impregnated with the idea of war. "Nobody should be in doubt that war stands between our prevailing need and our coming fortune. But war is to-day no more a fresh and frolicsome campaign . . . it is a bloody battle; it is gas and plague, it is tank and aircraft horror, hunger and poverty; it is baseness and falsehood. . . . We are convinced it will come; and that the way to freedom can only lead through it." And only a nation can endure it whose every member is convinced "in his deepest soul" that his life belongs to the State.

Banse advocated one to two hours' class-room instruction and two hours of practice weekly, in field work, war games, small calibre musketry, etc., so that "the feeling of youth for the heroic and for robber and soldier games can be applied to the service of the Fatherland." "Everybody must understand that there is nothing criminal about war; it is not a sin against humanity. The aims of the new science are to create an unshakeable belief in the high ethical value of war."

To further these ends, the State must espouse the Holy Church and seek its blessing; for "the dying warrior dies more easily when he knows that his blood is ebbing for his national God."

Next, this guide to the instruction of young children describes the benefits of warfare by disease microbes. Typhus, Banse reminds the reader, can be spread by infecting water, and fleas will be mass-produced to carry it. Artificially infested rats will carry the plague. Such methods, he explains, are "undoubtedly the given weapon for a nation disarmed."

We must realize that these ideas are not confined to the pages of a book, but are now part of the mental make-up of millions of German men, women and children. Long before the war Mr. Cohen wrote that conditions in Germany were tending towards a state in which the only Germans to be respected were dead ones—those who had courted death rather than comply with the new order of things. In that there is much truth; we are too prone to lay all blame with the Nazi leaders, as though individual Germans had never had any mind of their own.

The old phrase, "The Germans are all right individually, but a bad lot as a nation," is rather empty. There is as much sense in the following counterblast from one of our wisest periodicals, *Punch*, "The Germans are all right as a people, but I just detest them individually."

Geography and Life

GEOGRAPHY long remained a merely descriptive science. It is true that the natural causation of our planet's configuration, and diverse races was not beyond the province of the enlightened student or investigator, but apart from T. H. Huxley's pioneer *Physiography*, it was practically with the opening of the present century that it was completely realized that definite causes were mainly responsible for what had been regarded as unrelated phenomena. That able exponent of the improved method, Dr. Dudley Stamp, contends that: "Geography is the study of the world as the home of man—of the physical environment of the human species. No other science is concerned with that human environment as such: the geologist may study the rocks of the earth's crust; the meteorologist may concern himself with the climate and the weather; the botanist with the plant life, and the zoologist with animal life. The geographer requires just so much of each of these sciences as may enable him to appreciate . . . the stage whereon man is required to live and play his part."

That the details of our lives are powerfully influenced by our immediate surroundings is obvious. In Britain the Welsh mountains, the moister climate of the Western counties of England and the more arid conditions prevalent in East Anglia all help to determine the nature of agricultural pursuits. Mountainous regions are always thinly populated, while in thickly inhabited countries such as India and China the regions of the river valleys form the centres of vast human congregations. Also, the presence or absence of natural boundaries have exercised a pronounced influence in national life. The irregular frontiers of the former Polish State afforded no protection against possible encroachments of Germany or Russia. But on the other hand, the Pyrenees provide a substantial boundary between France and Spain, and in some measure separate the Iberian Peninsula from the European Continent.

Peoples who dwell on each bank of a stream are usually subjected to similar influences, such as those exerted by commerce or culture. Those divided by mountain chains, however, are apt to differ extensively in intellectual outlook and modes of life. For instance, it has been noted that the Burmese who dwell in the fertile lowlands of the Irawaddy differ little from the tribes that inhabit the adjoining hills, while there is little or no resemblance, culturally or racially, to the communities occupying the territory on the other side of the mountains which divide Burma from India itself.

Still, while mankind may be modified by his surroundings, he may also mould them in his own interest. For instance, in our native land the draining of the fenlands in Cambridge and Lincoln has converted them into the highly fertile soil it now is. Irrigation in India and elsewhere has vastly increased agricultural productivity. Then there is the Dutch scheme for reclaiming the greater area of the shallow Zuyder Zee to increase the acreage of crops.

Climate exercises far-reaching consequences on every form of life. Man shields himself from inclement conditions with his habitations provided with artificial heating, and by protecting his body with clothes. The geographical distribution of cultivated plants, apart from the nurseryman's special products, is the outcome of soil and climate. Cotton is largely confined to the Southern States of the American Union. Figs, dates and other excellent fruits are restricted to certain regions. Even in our own small islands marked variations in husbandry are evident. The successful cultivation of wheat in Northern Scotland is negated by its low temperature, while the ripening and harvesting of this crop in Ireland is made difficult by the incessant rainfall. Even in England

her south-western pasture lands with their usually abundant rainfall present a marked contrast to the splendid cereal crops garnered in our drier Eastern Counties.

The introduction of vegetation into regions where it has never grown before has frequently proved a pronounced success, save in instances where Nature's balance has been disturbed. Watercress grew so luxuriantly that it choked Australian river courses, while the importation of the prickly pear for the purpose of providing fodder in arid areas of the Island Continent has led to its destructive spread over previously productive soil. Thus it has become a serious pest. Again, the water hyacinth originally introduced as an ornament to Indian lakes and streams has entered navigable rivers which it greatly obstructs.

Of major moment is the influence of geographical factors on economic life. All the world's leading States require the products of the several climatic regions of our globe. All international commerce is an interchange of commodities between one region and another. The British Empire stands alone among the nations in its capacity to produce nearly all its normal requirements. But although remarkably rich in coal and other minerals, Britain's oil supplies are limited.

Curiously enough, the United States with more than half of her three million square miles of territory enjoying excellent climatal conditions, is nevertheless completely dependent upon foreign sources for her imports of equatorial and tropical commodities. Thus America, the world's greatest rubber consumer, "must purchase from British or Dutch sources, or develop plantations with American money on alien soil." Indeed, it is said that the States' needs for tropical products have shapen her policy in many directions. "Cuba, the greatest cane sugar exporter in the world, though nominally a Republic, is in a definitely subordinate alliance with the United States, which likewise dominates the other tropical West Indian Islands of Haiti and Porto Rico.

Russian resources are so stupendous that they have been compared with those of Canada and the States combined. For her enormous forests like those of Canada contain immense reserves of timber, while her powers of grain production are colossal. Yet, despite Russia's vast area of 8 million square miles, and her 180 million inhabitants, her frigid climate forbids the growth of various indispensable commodities including cotton. In the irrigated region of Russian Turkestan alone can she rely on the raising of food-stuffs produced in temperate climes.

In 1931 Dr. Dudley Stamp expressed the opinion that the pressure of population in Japan had neared a critical stage. Korea was incapable of supporting an immigrant population, and Japan's other possession, Formosa, was similarly circumstanced. Also, Japanese farmers displayed little desire to emigrate to Manchuria. The Japanese are unwelcome in the States, and are excluded from Australia, thus occasioning a marked flow of Japanese emigrants to South America. Meanwhile the land of the Rising Sun grew more and more industrialized and the World War enabled her to secure the lion's share of the cotton industry, supplying the Far Eastern markets with their ever increasing requirements. Dr. Stamp therefore concluded that Japan's "deficiency in coal and iron makes a hold on Manchuria and Manchuria's reserve of these two commodities essential. With very considerable justification Japan is loath to rely upon the doubtful quality of her friendship with China for the maintenance of these supplies. . . . To cut off the Manchurian supplies of coal and iron or the Chinese raw cotton, would be to cut off the life blood of a progressive and virile nation, with consequences that may well be imagined."

This passage may appear repellent, but that it con-

tains much truth cannot be gainsaid. An overpopulated country is a constant menace to a reposeful world. In any case, this illustration reveals the complex character of contemporary life, as well as the scientific value of geographical studies.

T. F. PALMER

Acid Drops

Many of our readers will recall the story of the Angels of Mons. It was at a critical moment for the British Army that someone saw angels in the sky fighting against the Germans—and the German Army was forced back and the British Army was saved. That is as it should be. The legions of the Lord acted as a rearguard, and at the last moment—the angels knew how to “time” things—amid and above the roar of battle the faithful saw things, and man’s faith in God was justified. The ungodly might have whispered “rum rations,” but the scoff of the goddess was treated with contempt. At home the story was seized on by many of the clergy who produced the usual number of witnesses in support of the miracle. Eventually the story was killed, and we flatter ourselves that we had something to do with its death. But it had a sporting chance of passing into established (Church) history.

We recur to it now because a similar vision has been seen in Sussex. The tale appears in the *News-Chronicle* for November 7. A Mr. Fowler, of Lewes, saw in the sky the figure of Christ crucified on the Cross. There was also a retinue of six angels. Villagers working on the land also saw it, and an evacuee and her sister said they could see “the nail in the crossed feet of Christ, and one of the angels with arms upstretched appeared to be praying.” Seven other people also saw the vision. Nothing could be better testified, but the Rector of Lewes, who was interviewed by the *News-Chronicle* said, with that caution which is exhibited by the clergy on such occasions, “I only wish I could believe it, but it seems to me that if such a thing really occurred more people would have seen it.”

Ohi, ye of little faith! What more does the vicar require? How many saw Jesus ascend into Heaven? How many saw him after the resurrection? What does this sceptical Vicar require in order to breed conviction? Does he not believe that God is helping us? Will he not thank God for a victory of the British Army? Must God show his messengers to everyone before their message is accepted? The Vicar must be aware that miracles are vouchsafed to the eye of faith only. Christianity does not say: Get evidence and then you will have faith; it says: Have faith and you will get evidence. The Vicar ought to apologize to those of the good people of Lewes to whom this vision of the divine was given. It is such that fill the ranks of the saints. Presently we will retell the story of the Mons Angels. It is worth the telling.

Here is a case of a man whose faith stopped short at a critical point, and who, if he gets to heaven will be awarded an ill-fitting crown and a second-hand harp. A Lt. Colonel of the Salvation Army describes how pleased he was to listen to a body of approaching soldiers singing, as he thought, the hymn, “Count your blessings, name them one by one.” But to his surprise when the soldiers got near he found the men had altered the words as follows: “Count your rations one by one, and it will surprise you how often you’ve been done.” But real faith would have read the true words through the ones actually used. In other words they would have seen the spiritual through the material, and have recognized the soldier’s version as a testimony to the value of religion. That is why we can only award the Lieut-Colonel a back place in a heavenly regiment with second-hand equipment.

In many of the American States members of the armed forces are not allowed to vote. The prohibition reads, “Idiots, insane felons, U.S. soldiers, sailors and marines are excluded from suffrage.” But in this country the aged, the insane and criminals, and men in holy orders, are excluded from conscription. It may be that the

Government believes that fighting devils and believing in angels is enough of an accomplishment for any man nowadays.

The *Church Times*, like very many of the clergy, is sure of two things. First, that the world will never be right without Christian values, and Christian values will not avail without Christian doctrines. In other words, you may believe as hard as you like, you may have divine visions, such as those described by the shepherd of Lewes, but you *must* have Christian doctrines. And Christian doctrines involve going to Church, sitting “under” this or that parson, etc. You cannot be properly saved alone. And if it be said that some of the ancients did get saved while living in solitude the reply is that even in solitude the faithful were fed by the laity. In any case these are not days when one can live on a few grains of food and a little honey, and go about in a single coarse robe, or live minus the convenience of a bath. Therefore Christian values are not enough. One must have doctrines, and the clergy, etc., etc. We agree with the *Church Times*, that Christians must have doctrines as well as values, and the clergy to say what these doctrines are.

The Jesuit Father Gannon informed the Catholic Young Men’s Society that the cause of the defeat of France was that France had banished religion from the schools. Father Gannon knows full well that the anti-Government men in France were mainly strong Catholics. But it is something to learn that God, the Roman Catholic God, helped the Germans to overrun France. We may note in this connexion that the Pope has recently received a number of Italian officers and said to them, “We bless all you who serve the Fatherland with fealty and love.” There it is. In England the Pope’s mouthpiece, Cardinal Hinsley, blesses the British soldiers and wishes them success. In Rome the Pope obeys orders and wishes Italian soldiers success in beating the British and crushing the Greeks. God appears to be sitting on the fence, and will help the side that does without his assistance. And Father Gannon says the only thing that will save the country is to give the children a good strong dose of Roman Catholic religion.

The Superintendent of the Barnsley Methodist Church writes to the *Barnsley Chronicle* expressing the opinion that the cause for which we fight “amounts almost to a religious crusade and worthy of Royal requests for national days of prayer.” We like the measured judgment that is here given. The Royal prayers is as one monarch to another, but up to date something so unpleasant has happened after each Royal request for a nation’s prayer, that it looks as though George VI. is not much in favour with the other monarch to whom he directs the nation’s attention. Perhaps we had better not bother about these exchanges between the two monarchs, but just trust our people to go “hell for leather” for what they desire.

The Superintendent defines our war-aims thus. We are, he says, fighting for the Christian home, the Christian Church and the Christian Sunday.” That will be news for many people. The Christian home is an ambiguous phrase, but if it means the early Victorian home, such as is depicted in, say “The Barretts of Wimpole Street,” that stands very little chance of reinstatement. As to the Christian Church, one wonders how many of the army would serve to restore that to the power it had, say in in the eighteenth century? And the Christian Sunday stands about as much chance of coming out of the war period with anything like its old power for humbug, moral humbug and denial of civic rights as Hitler does of bringing the world under his control.

That very Christian body, the National Society, is very much concerned. It has discovered that when the opening of a school is delayed by an air-raid the religious lesson is omitted, and the school begins at whatever is down on the schedule for that time. So it suggests that whatever is left out the religious lesson should be given in full. We are not surprised at this impudent proposal—which is published in the *Church Times* under the heading of “An inexcusable omission”—for the National Society is not really interested in education, as such, but in seeing that children get as much religion as can be pumped into them.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- H. HUMPHREY.—Cuttings received will be useful.
- C. MORTON.—We do not expect Christians are better than others. We merely protest against the assumption that they are better.
- "OLD SUBSCRIBER."—We must expect delay in postal delivery during the war. If your copy is not to hand within a reasonable time another will be sent on receipt of a post-card.
- C. McCOLL wishes to acquire a copy of Foote and Wheeler's *Crimes of Christianity*. Perhaps one of our readers has a copy for disposal.
- H. BEDFORD.—Thanks for your letter and keen interest; literature sent as instructed.
- A. ROBERTSON.—Thanks. Will appear as soon as possible.
- T. A. ROSTON.—Next week.
- L. MORRIS.—There does not seem much in the article that calls for special notice.
- G. WOODWARD.—Obliged for cuttings. Speaking generally each group—parsons and cinema proprietors—are struggling for more and better business. But cinema proprietors have not the impudence to ask, as do the clergy, for other business houses to be closed when theirs are open.
- FOR Advertising and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—H. THOMSON, 5s.
- S. H. THOMSON.—We do not know what you have in mind when you speak of "Christian civilization." None such has ever existed, but Christianity has contributed elements that have gone to the complete make-up of European civilization. There is, for example, the intensifying of belief in evil spirits, witchcraft, the idea of a chosen people, the crime of disbelief in a god, the belief that the greatest blackguard could be saved by an eleventh hour repentance, etc. And above all the capacity for moralizing some of the meanest qualities of man by camouflaging them as acts of loyalty to God. Like most sincere Christians you are counting everything that is admittedly good Christian, and everything that is bad as non-Christian or un-Christian.
- R. COLEMAN.—There is no doubt that the Russian Government has a bias against religion. But the real ground of your criticism is that it has not a prejudice in its favour. Perhaps you will try to discover the difference between the Russian Government favouring religion, and the conduct of our own Government, which legislation, and monetary help show to be not a mere prejudice but an open determination to assist religion and to obstruct the growth of Freethought. And after all one should not expect the Russian Government to throw off the influence of religion in a single generation.
- 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.
- The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.
- 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. Roselli, 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

A number of towns and cities have recently decided to open Cinemas on Sunday. The immediate cause is the necessity of providing places of entertainment on Sunday for members of the armed forces. Military officers, the police, and the more enlightened, and less self-interested section of the public stress the demoralizing effect of men wandering about the streets with no chance of spending their leisure in a reasonable manner. We agree with this, for we have always stressed the same point. Not that it is new, for the same criticism has been offered by foreign visitors and the more enlightened men of intelligence. But once again we ask, if the "Christian Sunday" is demoralizing for soldiers, why is it not equally demoralizing for other sections of the public? And we beg to point out that it has taken a world war to force a sense of social and moral obligation on the minds of many Christians.

The Glasgow Secular Society announce the resumption of indoor lectures. The Dixon Hall, Cathcart Road, has been engaged, and a syllabus of Sunday afternoon lectures commencing at 3 o'clock arranged. In the present circumstances the opportunity of attending lectures and discussions on subjects of social interest should have a wide appeal among the better type of mind in Glasgow, and the local saints are sure to take full advantage of it. Mr. Cohen has promised to visit Glasgow on December 15.

The *Rationalist* (Melbourne), for August has just reached us, and we are pleased to see it is as lively and as interesting as ever. And there is great need for a good fighting Freethought movement "down under," now more than ever. Official Freethought is not likely to have a recognized voice in the cleaning up when the war is over, but it may and would be there just the same. There is indeed hardly a forward movement for the past three centuries that has not been largely influenced by Freethought. And this extends to what are called religious reforms. What are the views of present-day advanced Christians but watered-down versions of what Freethinkers have taught. The worst of it is that by the time Christians have admitted these views they have already become old-fashioned. But pioneers should not grumble that others adopt their views, leaving them to push forward to new ideas and higher ideals. It is a very old maxim that the heresy of to-day is the orthodoxy of to-morrow. We wish the *Rationalist* a long and continued success.

Michael de la Bedoyere shrieks in a leading article in the *Catholic Herald*, that only the "victory of Christianity" can supply sufficient reason for the sacrifice of our men, our women and our children." But by Christianity Mr. de la Bedoyere means the Roman Catholic Church, for to him that is the only Christianity worth preserving. So we know where we are with this crowd. They are fighting for the supremacy of the Roman Church, but lack the courage to say that openly and honestly.

The *Tablet* publishes the information that a survey conducted by Professor Watson, Columbia University, concerning "economic radicalism" furnished the following results. Catholics provided 7 per cent, Protestants 13 per cent, Jews 25 per cent, non-religious 47 per cent. We are not surprised at these figures, although it is quite possible that the *Tablet* would consider this some evidence that Catholic and Protestant figures offer a recommendation of the Christian position. But "radical" means no more than one that goes to the root of a subject, and so is to be commended, whether we agree with the conclusion or not. And one would expect the readiness to go fully into a subject, and to place arriving at truth as of the first and last importance to all, to be more common with non-Christians than Christians. And if one takes our own history for the past century and a half it is always the non-Christian, or the luke-warm Christian who has been the hardest worker for social reform. The figures given show that the statement is as true to-day as ever it was.

During the black-out the West London Branch of the N.S.S., are going to continue social activities. On Sunday, November 17, from 3.5 p.m., they are holding a Social for their members at the house of Miss Woolstone, 57 Warrington Crescent, W.9. This is quite near Warwick Avenue Tube Station and the house can also be reached by Nos. 6 and 16 buses.

South Shields has decided to have Cinemas open on Sunday—with the result of arousing the anger of the proprietors of religious performances. The President of the Free Church Council complains that if cinemas are open for soldiers the "general public" will go also. Well, why not? If Sunday shows are demoralizing we see no justification for ruining the character of the armed forces. If they are beneficial we are equally at a loss to know why civilians should not share in the benefits. Only custom can deaden the sense of the public to the attitude of the clergy asking the Government to keep other "shows" closed while their performances are running.

The Fallacies of Conscientious Objection

"WHY are you a Conscientious Objector?" a young man was asked the other day. He replied: "Because I don't wish to kill a man even if he is an enemy of my country." Had that young man been perfectly frank it is probable he would have admitted that what he really disliked was running the risk of being killed himself. Only recently a Conscientious Objector who had made this excuse calmly purchased a long-bladed knife, and with it stabbed in the back the judge who had tried his case. In one of his virile speeches Mr. Bevin said that fifth-columnists came mostly from the well-to-do, not from the working-classes; he might well have included the greater number of Conscientious Objectors among the former class. Certain it is that the ideas influencing these erratic members of the community have often been implanted by the teachings of professors and doctrinaires who, afflicted with a jaundiced outlook upon all things British, view everything foreign through roseate spectacles. These leaders of the young, reaping all the advantages of dwelling in a land whose laws, customs and institutions they affect to despise are not the ones who pay the penalty for putting their insidious teachings into practice; that is the lot of the unfortunate dupes they have influenced. The whole line of reasoning of Conscientious Objectors, even of the few that honestly follow conscience, is based on a principle that is antagonistic to progressive evolution, is false ethically, dysgenic biologically, and dangerous socially.

The principle in question is the subordination in any co-ordinated system whether of stars, ants or human beings, of a majority of its units to a minority. In all progressive evolution the tendency is towards a condition wherein corporate action overcomes antagonistic minority actions. We find, in consequence, that the principle alluded to tends to a maximum in primal stages of evolution when chaos prevails over orderliness, as in a gas or a mob, and to a minimum in later stages of evolution when orderliness is paramount, as in a crystal or a regiment. In its present state, our solar system is an almost perfect model of law and order. The planets and their satellites lie in practically the same plane, and this is one that coincides with that of the sun's equator; and the direction in which they spin about their own axes, as well as that in which they move around the central orb, coincides with the direction of the latter's rotation. Yet in the vast cloud of gases and minute particles out of which the solar system eventually took form all was confusion, every unit was in conflict with its neighbours. Gradually, gravitation segregated the separate particles into coherent masses represented by the sun and all his retinue, each mass possessing, as we have seen, motions conformable to those of the others and each having, further, a weight and—in the case of the planets—a distance from the sun that obey the well-known "harmonic law." There still remain, as glaring anachronisms, a few renegades that oppose the team-work of the system as a whole, but there is plenty of evidence to show that these truants are being surely rounded up by the gravitational whip. Chief among them are comets, asteroids and meteors, whose orbits are, so to speak, all over the shop. Mention must be made, too, of Neptune's satellite which, in an orbit tilted 40 degrees to that of its parent, is actually moving backwards. The four satellites of Uranus, again, behave in an extremely disorderly way, the plane of their orbits is at 98 degrees to that of the planet and in that plane they too are revolving retrograde fashion. The very elongated orbits of Mercury and Pluto necessitates placing them also in the anti-social class.

One example must suffice to illustrate the way in which, among lower animals, the individual may be disciplined to the service of the community. It occasionally happens that a breach occurs in the hard mud wall of a termite city, thus exposing the inhabitants to danger of enemy invasion. When this does take place soldier-ants are rushed to the spot where they line up shoulder to shoulder, all with their formidable scimitar-like mandibles directed threateningly outwards. Meanwhile, behind them working-parties feverishly repair the break, with the result that the brave defenders are left on the outside of the city to die of slow starvation or to be slain by outnumbering foes. Self-sacrifice of individual cells for the sake of the well-being of the cell-community is constantly

going on in our own bodies. We die of blood-poisoning when the phagocytes or police-cells fail to slay, but are slain by, enemy invaders. When certain cartilage cells of our joints mutiny, and refuse to sacrifice their lives, as is their normal function, in forming part of the joint-oil, we suffer the pangs of rheumatoid arthritis. Should any of our cells suddenly run amok and take to robbing the other cells of their quota of food, ever crying out to them like the daughters of the horse-leech, "Give! Give!" but themselves giving nothing in return, then we are afflicted with that dread disease, cancer, and, if wise, we at once call in a surgeon to exterminate the anarchist cells.

Conceptions of human values, of right and wrong, are not rigidly fixed but vary with environment, individual and racial age, nationality, education, heredity, brain structure, gland-hormones, etc. Shakespeare recognized this when he said, "My conscience hath a thousand several tongues." The Conscientious Objector claiming that his conscience is sacred, and that he alone has the right to say what he shall or shall not do for the State is acting like the runagate satellite of Neptune, as though he were a law unto himself; he is emulating the conceit of Louis XIV., when he shouted "*L'état, c'est moi!*" Conscience, like all else in the universe, is in perpetual flux, its dictates are ever changing and evolving. Most grown-ups spurn the conscience of their youth just as a civilized race decries its ancestral conscience. What in the remote past was good and of benefit to the tribe is now barbaric. When our Stone-Age forbears ran short of wives or cattle, they just hit weaker neighbours possessing these commodities over the head with a flint-hammer, and took them in the most approved Hitlerian fashion. Doubtless those days held their Conscientious Objectors, men who remained at home jibbering their disapproval of the marauders in the gloomy recesses of their caves. Had such pre-historic Objectors been rewarded for holding their pacifist opinions by the equivalents of honours and fortunes, it is not the Mammoth and Giant Sloth that would have become extinct, but Man; fortunately for us, however, these Old Stone Age braves clubbed their Conchies on the cranium.

One fact which militates especially against the inviolability of conscience is its almost complete dependency on the kind of upbringing to which its owner has been subjected. Bring up a Bishop's son among Thugs and he will in all probability develop into a blood-thirsty brute, whose one ambition is to secure a human head. Cardinal Newman used to say "Give me the education of its children and I will make England Roman Catholic." It is the unscrupulous exploitation of the elementary physiological fact that a child's mind is a *tabula rasa* upon which educationists can write what they will that has given the Nazi leaders such a stranglehold on the rising generation of Germans. Upon this blank tablet they have written orders to worship Hitlerism, and all the abominations for which it stands. The extent to which up-bringing moulds the human mind is well exemplified by a case recorded by Professor Dart of Johannesburg University. Two Cape Mounted Police came suddenly upon a herd of baboons playing in the open. In the general stampede that followed one member of the herd failed to keep up with the rest and was caught by the police. To their amazement they found it was a little native boy about 13 years of age. For a long time after capture the child exhibited the actions and behaviour of apes, he was dirty in his habits, preferred maize and fruit to ordinary human diet, was fond of squatting and running about on all fours, possessed no human speech but grimaced and gesticulated like a baboon. He was brought up on a farm and eventually turned into a fairly reliable worker.

Such facts go to show that the individual conscience is not something to be placed on a pedestal and revered as sacred and inviolable. The most we can legitimately say of it is that *on the average* it is a safe guide to conduct; and the only justification for yielding even this point is that civilized nations see to it that the education of their young citizens, and the example set them by their parents and elders, is of a type that brings forth individual consciences more or less conformable with the national group conscience. A truly civilized race tolerates a wide latitude in the exercise of its unit consciences, but obviously it cannot afford to let this run to an extent detrimental to its own safety.

No logical sanction can be given to the acquisition by

an individual of the full benefits of the State in the piping times of peace if that same individual refuses on his part to fulfil what the majority consider to be his obligations when that State is in danger. But the Conscientious Objector apparently is entirely unashamed of refusing to comply with his State's demand made in an hour of grave peril. Were he consistent and honest he would justify his action by declining to avail himself of the numerous benefits conferred upon him by the State. Examined dispassionately, the much-vaunted "sacred conscience" reveals itself as being strongly flavoured with egoistic attributes, especially self-preservation and self-laudation. Strength lies in self-suppression rather than in self-glorification; it is the savage who does what is best for himself, and the cultured man what is best for the community. But the ethics of the Conscientious Objector puts in place of mutual aid the aid of self, in place of service to humanity a shameless Ego-worship. Does the Conscientious Objector ever seriously ask himself whether the conscience of his neighbour may not be as trustworthy as his own, and whether the integrated consciences of the overwhelming majority of his fellow men are not vastly more so? Admittedly progressive advances made by civilizations are frequently to be traced to the successful pitting against the corporate conscience of the single conscience of some outstanding genius, some daring pioneer in a minority movement. The abolition of the geocentric theory, of the slave trade or of the Inquisition are cases in point. But this is only to say that nothing succeeds like success. The heresy of one age is often the religion of the next; men of deep insight, looking far ahead of their time, succeed only because they win over to their way of thinking the majority; this achieved, the State follows suit. "Even if a man is great," writes Professor Levy, "particularly if he is a great scientist, he must belong to his own times. . . . His work has to draw nourishment and inspiration from the intellectual and social needs of his day; and it has also to point the way to further developments."

One question in conclusion. Can Conscientious Objectors, or those who sympathize with and uphold their attitude justly declare that, were Conscientious Objection to be claimed as a right, and to be put into practice, at this present hour of our trial by all the peoples of the British Empire, it would not give the death-blow to civilization as we know it; that it would not place tyranny, intolerance, bestiality, and all that our people loathe, in the saddle with free rein to ride rough-shod over the subjugated nations of the globe?

CHARLES M. BEADNELL.
(Surgeon Rear-Admiral).

The Third Person. Singular

A CHRISTIAN enjoys one substantial advantage denied to the non-Christian. He has had a religion revealed to him in unmistakable terms, for God has written a Book and what the Book says, so the Christian repeats—or should. The non-Christian therefore in discussion with him is always at a disadvantage. The correct word sometimes eludes the un-assisted unbeliever, and even the correct words have meanings attributed to them by the listener which makes the business of proselytism difficult. These difficulties are non-existent in the case of the Christian. Happy, Christian! He has God on his side. God has not only written a Book, but if ever (and it does occasionally happen) the reader has a difficulty in understanding it, he can call in a holy man whom God has blessed with special gifts, and the Holy Man can inform him of the correct significance of any term or expression. Or he can, if he thinks it wrong to "put another man between himself and his maker," pray for guidance and then God will lighten his darkness. Consequently the Christian is never in difficulty. His revelation, or his church, or his inner light, gives him an advantage which the unbeliever is without. It has always happened therefore that the Christian in polemic confounds the shallow by his out-

standing clarity. Carnal, unaided reason has always put up a poor show against the theologian with God on his side. You can read all the theologians as much as you please, and they all agree upon this point. Even amateur theologians who feel confident that they have God with them, and who wander up the garden path and wander down the garden path, wandering all the way, they too plainly see the truth as God has vouchsafed it to them. So clearly do they feel that God is on "their side" that they feel justified in being very impolite to those who reject the truth that is in Christ Jesus. The truth is so important to them that it transcends etiquette.

It is paying God no compliment to say he cannot express himself intelligibly, so one is surely justified in saying that the maker of Heaven and Earth when he gives to his creatures the beliefs necessary to their salvation takes some pains in making himself clear. Clarity in such circumstances must be God's leading characteristic. God gives the humble believer a message which it is his privilege to pass on to others. If the poor unassisted fool still persists in pitting his dull wits against the divinely illuminated, who can say, with his hand on his heart, that such a creature does not deserve the everlasting bonfire. So sun-clear has God made his Gospel that no honest man can fail to be immediately convinced of Christian Truth. Christian Truths are practically self-evident.

The doctrine of the Trinity is then one of the Christian Truths that is self-evident, for our Prayer Book tells us that unless we believe in it, without doubt we shall perish everlastingly. In equity therefore it follows that the Trinity is one of the outstanding examples of God's clarity, for one's fate hangs upon the fact.

All the same, Christians seem to have some difficulty in laying down the terms even of their essential beliefs. We think, however, they will all say they believe, if pressed (after consulting their compendium) in one living and true God, and that in unity of this Godhead there are Three Persons of one substance, power and eternity; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. It is true that a Father and Son that are co-eternal raises an initial difficulty, but only to carnal minds; men who know little of Christian Morality, men who on returning from work at nights frown upon their spouses and kick the dog out of their way. To Christian theologians, amateur or professional, this is the kind of "reeling subversion" that they enjoy. Theologians are chosen and blessed by God to deal with reeling subversions. Their's is the job of making light that which appears dark, and to do them justice they make light of the operation.

The function of the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Trinity, is to them simplicity itself. Father and Son need a make-weight to form a Trinity, so the Holy Ghost is chosen to occupy the vacant niche in the pantheon. As for his function, who bothers about functions? It is necessary for salvation to believe in the Trinity, function or no function, and in the Trinity the Holy Ghost is the Third Person, a person extremely singular. It is necessary to believe in the Holy Ghost; whatever that may mean.

True, the Holy Ghost is written down as incomprehensible in the Athanasian Creed in our Prayer Book, just as "God the Father" is written down as incomprehensible, and God the Son is written down as incomprehensible. It is precisely this business of accepting the incomprehensible that marks the Pukka Christians as belonging to a race apart. Thriving on "reeling subversions" is their privilege, marking them out from ordinary dullards.

The Holy Ghost "proceeds" from the Father and the Son, and has always so "proceeded." It is of one substance with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God, that is, it shares the peculiarity of God in being without body, parts, and passions. With re-

gard to the substance remaining, it is co-equal with God; in power it is co-equal; in duration it is co-eternal. When Jehovah was carried about in the Ark by the ancient Israelites, in that box reclined not only Jehovah, the Father, but Jesus, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who according to one set of theologians had "proceeded" from both. Before Creation was, they were.

In this Church of England Catechism, which has to be read and accepted by every person before he can be admitted to Communion, certain points are attributed to "the Three Persons." For instance, the Father is described as the maker of heaven and earth. This at any rate gives the father a function.

The Second Person, the Son, is defined with comparative liberality. He it is who was Conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and buried. He descended into Hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; He ascended into Heaven, And sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

The Third Person, the Holy Ghost, obtains niggardly treatment. He is lumped together in a kind of auctioneer's catalogue of beliefs essential to Salvation: "I believe in the Holy Ghost; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of Sins; the Resurrection of the body; And the Life everlasting."

The Holy Ghost would appear therefore to be only a makeweight, a phrase having neither substance nor meaning, if it were not for the mention made of him when dealing with the Son. The Son we have been told was conceived by the Holy Ghost. So now we know a significant fact. God the father, who made the greenfly reproduce without the aid of a male, drew the line at adopting that method with the Virgin Mary. Parthenogenesis was not for her. He drew the line at falling in line with other gods who had made woman so fair that they couldn't resist trying in their own persons to bring something godlike into the human strain. Both of these methods he rejected. He was not that kind of Father. He arranged an emanation, the Holy Ghost, and it was the Ghost to whom was entrusted the delicate business of fecundation. What Person III. thought of it is not recorded. Being without body, parts, or passions, he was probably quite indifferent.

But Christians having stipulated that the Ghost was co-equal and co-eternal with the Father have felt that the continuing of the Third Person's activities to such a humble function (occupying a few instants of time and rounded by two inactive eternities) was a belittling of his Divinity, and have also added an ethereal, spiritual duty to his philoprogenitiveness. It was the Ghost, for instance, who, at Pentecost, came down from Heaven with a sound "as of a rushing mighty wind," (a noise at the moment unpleasantly familiar) and, disguised as eleven tongues of fire, settled on the early disciples who straightway commenced to speak with other tongues. This task the disciples of Christ have always found congenial.

Previously, the Ghost had appeared when Jesus was being baptized by John the Baptist. This time this protean personality (No. Three) was in the guise of a Dove. It lit upon Jesus (Person No. Two) and a voice was heard saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

Serious schisms have occurred over the point as to whether Jesus (Person II.) proceeded from the Father (Person I.) or from the Father, plus the Holy Ghost (Person I. plus Person III). This is a matter of great moment to those who speak with other tongues. It certainly seems to concern ordinary men, even as you and me. For our eternal welfare appears to depend not only upon considering this theme, but on coming to a correct conclusion.

As to whether the Holy Ghost belongs to the pon-

derables or imponderables, there was only one person who could answer that question, and that was the Virgin Mary. But this is one of the matters she did not speak of; she pondered it in her heart.

T. H. ELSTON

Deities on the Scrap Dump

It is greatly to be feared that those who imagine in their self-imposed intellectual blindness that there is anything particularly original about the dogmas of Christianity are confusing novelty with second-hand goods, for most of the doctrines of Christianity are derived from the ancient pagan mythologies. It is found, for example, that by substituting other names for "Jesus Christ," and "Pontius Pilate," the chief creed of Christianity, called "The Apostles' Creed," would become an ancient pagan credo. If parsons happen to know this (and they don't learn it in "theological" colleges), they keep it to themselves, for a parson is a man who is paid say £10 of the nation's money a week to prevent the nation from finding out the truth about religions by telling it something that more educated people know to be a cluster of pre-scientific superstition. And, as the ordinary "believer" is intensely ignorant of the origins of his own faith, the gross adaptation of an oriental superstition that was rejected in the land of its birth; "everything in the garden is lovely," for the parsons, as the saying is. So the spook-mongers, who teach something that the whole of modern knowledge shows to be untrue, "pull down" anything from £3 to £300 a week, and get a nice house to live in into the bargain. Exactly what good they are doing has never been explained to me, but they use up about £13,000,000 of the people's money every year.

The common or garden Christian knows nothing whatever about his religion. Engage him in conversation, and although he calls himself a Christian, he oftentimes doesn't even know what it is that he is supposed to believe! He might almost as well say that he is a Hindoo. I know this for an absolute fact. Some Christians entirely reject the supernatural portion of Christianity, and still stoutly maintain that they are Christians! As Chapman Cohen says, their minds are only partially liberated from the God-superstition, and they are still going around burdened with God's ghost. Those who don't know a great deal of what can be said against religion are not qualified to give any opinion whatsoever on the value of it. And as all our archbishops, bishops, deans, parsons, etc., apart from millions of believing souls, have never studied Science and what it has to say about belief in "Gawd Almighty," their opinions on this subject are not worth considering, and they should be cleared out without pay until they have done two or three years' hard work studying Freethought. The "windy stupidities" of leading "thinkers" in the Holy Church are foisted on the long-suffering population by the B.B.C. and the lower and gutter press, and most of the stuff that these medieval-minded clergy churn out is not worth the very inferior paper on which poor devils are forced to print it to get some sort of a living. These clerical professors, fouling the sacred word "Philosopher," a lover of Wisdom or Knowledge, are a set of uneducated ignoramuses, who have never grasped the "idea of scientific thinking," and therefore they might as well pack up in the interests of Truth, though not of money-grubbing of a personal nature, and get themselves re-educated from the very beginning.

Most of the pagan religions had their "Incarnate Gods," "Creators," "Saviours," (who save the world from God knows what), "Christs," "Virgin Mothers,"

(queer birds these), "Holy Ghosts," alias holy "winds in motion" (known in America as Blessed Burps), "Trinities," "Judges of the Dead," and what-have-you? Christians do not know this. They do not know that the ancient Egyptian priests had their heads shaved like monks, and wore white linen garments like Christian surplices. The picture of the Virgin Mary ascending upon the crescent moon is the modern adaptation of the ancient Egyptian goddess Isis rising heavenwards in defiance of Newton's Christless law of Gravitation; but Roman Catholics are not allowed to find that out. The worship of the virgin goddess Neith or Nit, an ancient spook of the Egyptians, was attended with the burning of many candles, and is believed to be the origin of the Christian feast of the "Purification." This piece of unclean nonsense, as if there were any need of "purification" after a "virgin" had had a child, which is impossible, with a ghost for a father (again impossible), is a feast observed in the Roman Catholic Church on February 2, in commemoration of the purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, according to the Jewish ceremonial in Leviticus, forty days after the birth of Christ. But why modern English people really find it necessary to go through this obsolete and insulting savage farce, has never been explained to me. One can only suppose that it is "the people who are fooled: it cannot be the clergy, for they are the operators." It brings in some hard cash to dear old Mother Church.

The Zoroastrians of Persia, whose religion is the same as that of the Parsees of India (and when worshipping, were presented with a small round cake and a cup of water, from which it is easy to see an earlier edition of the Christian eucharist of bread and wine. This becomes almost as nourishing as steak and chips, according to the papists to whom it becomes human flesh and blood after their priests have mumbled over it. Fortunately it does not taste like it, or most of them would "spew it out of their mouth," as we read in "Holy Writ" on a different occasion. Ill-informed Christians think that Christ first started this "King of the Cannibal Islands" service, but he was only copying something which had been done for hundreds of years before his time. One often wonders what would happen to the papists if they were suddenly to learn the truth about religion in general and their low form of it in particular. Atheism is a philosophy: nobody has ever insulted science by calling Christianity a philosophy, for Christianity is a "supernaturally revealed" religion, whatever that may mean. There is, of course, a thing called "Christian Philosophy," but nobody really knows exactly what that is, any more than the terms "Baptist Botany" or "Methodist Mathematics" can be understood.

I have before me, as I write, two ancient Egyptian bronzes. One is that of Osiris, "God and Judge of the Dead," and an ancestor of the Christian "God the Father" (Jehovah), known to my readers as "Old Nodaddy." The other statuette represents Isis and Horus. Isis was the wife and sister of Osiris, and the mother of Horus. She was one of these "virgin mothers," and an ancestor of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Holy Romish Church. Her infant son, Horus, who is sitting on her lap, is an ancestor of the Christian Jesus Christ, "born of the Virgin Mary." The Egyptians had this trinity as long ago as 4,400 B.C., so that any "believers" who read this (by the way, why should they believe the impossible to make a living for those who are taking them in?) will see that their Church was not the first in the field, to put it very mildly. For according to the Bible, the worship of Osiris and Company in Egypt must have taken place 396 years before the "creation" of the world. Many Bibles still tell us that the world was made in 4004 B.C., and this piece of nonsense which was worked out

in the seventeenth century by an Archbishop Ussher, is proved to be sheer drivel by Geology. What a pity God did not "inspire" Ussher with a little geological knowledge instead of letting him make a Christian ass of himself. If God knows everything, he must know that "His Word" is full of many and gross errors. The Persians had their sun-god, as Jah or "God the Father" was originally, and their "Incarnate Word"—Zoroaster. Fasting, scourging, baptism, and branding on the forehead were practised by both ancient Egyptians and Persians, and most of these have a very familiar Christian sound. In Persia, Ormuzd was the "Creator" and good spirit, and Ahriman the outcast and bad spirit, corresponding with the Christian Satan, who started as an important angel in "Heaven," the exact location of which the modern Church does not know, but was kicked out of that shadowy habitation, and "became the devil," as we are informed in that Miltonic Anglo-Saxon poem called by scholars, "Genesis B."

The Asiatics had their God-man and Saviour—Gautama Buddha. The Hindus had their Trinity, Brahma (not Bramah the lock-expert), Vishnu, and the dancing God, Siva, who is represented on some of the Nepalese-like weapons in my collection of oriental arms. The Hindus had their virgin mother, Devaki, and her child was called Krishna or Christna. The old Greeks had their Immaculate Virgin—Athene. These virgin mothers were represented as in my bronze of Isis and Horus, with their infant saviours on their laps or in their arms, in the same way as our Christian primitives represent "Christ and His Mother." To crown all this worn-out stuff, our well-paid parsons still tell everybody that Prayer is a very powerful weapon against the Nazis, yet they are probably glad at heart when they hear that there has been a bigger output in armament production. For they know that bombers are better than prayers for defeating the Jerries, and that a sound A.R.P. shelter is better than a fervent petition to the Lord of Hosts when there are high explosives dropping around. But here is the application of the foregoing. The Christian states dogmatically that all these old and new pagans were, and are wrong, and that all their gods did, and do, not exist. Yet he believes, because he has been primed with it as an infant, that his own trinity, which is obviously derived from those which are older, does exist, and that there is not the slightest doubt of it. The educated Atheist sees that he must add the Christian trinity of gods, plus angels, devils, and so on, to the already large scrap-dump of out-worn and worn-out gods. And by so doing he is only going one step further than the "believer," who denies the existence of all gods, save his own.

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