

THE FREETHINKER

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Views and Opinions

The Ways of God

GOD is, God was, God always has been. We are all dependent upon him and without him nothing would be. If things are awry, in God's good time they will come right again, for in the long run God's plan for the salvation of the world will work itself out.

This, I think, is good, sound Christian doctrine. We must believe in the existence of God and, as we ought never to think of God coming into existence like a new fashion in hats, or going out of existence like an exploded squib, the first three statements must be taken for granted by all good Christians. And if we accept the Christian theory that there is a divine plan running through nature, then the last proposition follows. God will triumph in the end. God's plan will work itself out. We must have faith in God. And yet—? There seems some flaw in the theory.

To the carnal mind Christianity itself looks like the registration of God's first failure. For Christianity came into existence as a consequence of man's first act of disobedience to God, and he could not have intended *that*. That led to certain important modifications in the original scheme. Otherwise we must regard the whole process of the history of man as being designed as a kind of spectacular performance staged for the amusement of the heavenly hosts. Thus. Act one: Creation of the human race with prospects of a happy existence of complete purity and innocence. Act two: Revolt of the human family from the ways of God and the development of all kinds of wickedness. Act three: A new plan devised involving the sacrifice of God's own son, and the first manifestation of the policy of appeasement. Act four is still in process of performance, and does not appear to have brought much profit to the producers. The copyright not being properly secured the play has been performed by a number of travelling companies, each one claiming to have the original script, but never producing it for examination. Meanwhile the author of the play says nothing that can be verified as his. Short of some such theory as this I do not see any convincing explanation of the "ways of God." It is true there is no lack of explanations, but they agree on nothing of importance, and the longer we listen to these assumed authoritative explanations of the ways of God the more uncertain everyone becomes.

* * *

God and Parson Jones

For example. There is in Manchester a certain vicar who is regarded by some, and particularly by himself, as a regular devil-may-care parson, who will speak the truth at all costs. A sample of this theo-

logical Don Quixote is to be found in a recent issue of the *Sunday Post*. The editor of the paper, with that passion for screaming headlines characteristic of the modern press, says that "This Parson will make you sit up." Strangely enough it did not make me sit up—I just sat back and smiled. Mr. Jones leads off with a protest against another Day of National Prayer. This, he explains, is not because he disbelieves in prayer, or even because "previous days of national prayer have immediately been followed by hard blows against our cause," but because "I think they are shams." On this point I differ, for it appears to me that while praying in a semi-civilized country is about ninety-per-cent sham, yet in times of distress it is likely to be more genuine. This has always been recognized by the Christian Church, and its mouth-pieces have always counted on seasons of distress, individual and national, being likely to send their stock higher in the market. Recall the old cry of "Wait until you are dying," or the hymn, "Oh God, our help in times of need." (I hope I have the words correctly). Consider how the B.B.C. has enlarged its religious programme since the war began, the currency of the lie that the war is being waged to protect Christianity, and so forth. It was in fear that religion was born, and in fear that Christianity was fashioned. It is only under compulsion that Christianity takes a brighter tone. Laughter forms no part of Christianity. We do read in the Bible of God laughing. But never that Jesus did so.

Nevertheless I agree with Mr. Jones that there is a deal of sham about ordered prayer. The King is "advised" to order a Day of Prayer because the clergy think it will retrieve their position in the public mind. To pray is their trade; to *prey* is their habit. A large number of the ruling class are also convinced that praying keeps the "common" people in order. And a very large number of people believe in prayer for precisely the same reasons that they carry mascots, believe in lucky days and charms and astrology and fortune telling and the rest of the hang-over from the "wild."

Mr. Jones does not believe in these ordered prayers because people do not pray when things are going smoothly. He says, "If you can get along nicely without God when the sun is shining, then, literally, for God's sake, keep away from him when storms come." That sounds very human, but it is not redolent of the higher humanity. It shows much sympathy for God, because every God lives on and by prayer. Cut down a god's prayer ration and he begins to shrivel. And if the ration, by steady shrinkage, disappears, the god disappears also. Take any of the thousands of gods that have existed, and the chief cause of their disappearance is prayer shortage. So long as they had a liberal ration of prayer they flourished; when a blockade of prayer was made effective, starvation and death followed. "Died of prayer starvation," might be written as an epitaph for every God that *has* been; "Sinking for want of prayer nutrition," might with equal truth be written of the gods of the present.

Mr. Jones asks what should we think of a lad who had ignored his father's home, but when in difficulties went back crying, "I am in trouble, father. Help

me." I prefer to put the problem in another way. What should we think of a father whose son had seriously misbehaved himself, but came home with an appeal for help from the father he had neglected, and was met with "When things were right with you I was neglected. Now that you are in trouble you come back to me for help. Get out!" Should we think of him as a desirable type of parent? Or would the general verdict be "Your conduct to your son, now that he is in trouble, suggests that his treatment of you was not altogether unmerited." Mr. Jones might remember that the reaction between parent and child cannot properly be conducted on the principle of "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." I think that most parents in such a situation would say, and properly say, "Well, son, I wish for your own sake you had behaved better, but, after all, you are my son, and if you had had different parents you might have been a different son. At any rate let us see what can be done, and let us hope that your future will be an improvement on your past."

Now I wonder why this heavenly father, about whom the clergy talk so glibly, cannot act with the forbearance and decency of an earthly parent? After all, the treatment of the average parent with regard to his children is not determined by the praise he gets. To give praise, or thanks, is not an act of affection; it is an investment, and the man who gives for the sake of a dividend does not really know what giving is. The God of Mr. Jones, apparently because he desires praise and obedience, says to his children, "You are a bad investment, and the sooner you are written off my books the better." It is fortunate that, on the whole, man is better than his god; more considerate, less avid for praise, and so kindly disposed that no small part of his energies is spent in offering apologies for the conduct of his deity.

* * *

Man and God

Mr. Jones would say, he does say in effect, that the state of the world is due to the wickedness of man. Certainly the present state of the world is a direct consequence of previous states. This includes the good as well as the bad. Mr. Jones' policy is to give to God the credit for all the good there is in the world, and to blame man for what is bad. On this one may say that the world—on the Jones' theory of the cosmos—was God's world long before man had anything to do with it. How then does God escape responsibility? He cannot blame man, for he made man. Clearly he might have made man better than he is, with better judgment than he possesses, and so have escaped many of the pitfalls of existence. It is also part of Mr. Jones' creed that God can still make man better than he is—provided he will go to Church regularly and do more grovelling than he does. Of course, Mr. Jones does not put it thus bluntly—if he did he might be struck with its common sense. What he says is, it is a shame to ask God to put the world right until man himself has altered his conduct. But this is nonsense. For if man has to be better before he approaches God, then he has taken the first step "on his own" and so may be trusted to go ahead by his own power of propulsion. If prayers are a sham until man alters his conduct, what is the use of praying to be made better? Mr. Jones reduces his God to a kind of register and heaven to a huge but obviously useless registry office.

Mr. Jones says that on the day of prayer ordered by the King people came "swarming" to the churches. "On the next Sunday the churches were neglected again. That is a denial of prayer." We do not see it. Surely all of those who went to Church on that particular Sunday were not such insufferable snobs as to go merely because there was a royal request that they should. Some must have gone quite sincerely believing that God would do as they wished. Does Mr. Jones mean that God did nothing because he was waiting to see how many would go to Church on an ordinary Sunday? Or is Mr. Jones one of those parsons who, like any tradesman, says "I do not want casuals; I want regular customers. No man can build up a business unless he can count on a uniformity of custom"? I can quite appreciate that point of view. But I still cannot understand if God can help to establish righteousness after prayer, why he cannot do it beforehand. Does God demand "spiritual" backsheesh before he will exercise his power? As maker and ruler of the universe he ought to be aware of the plain fact that evil once done cannot be undone. A nose

once pulled cannot be unpulled. It remains for ever pulled.

* * *

The Power of Prayer

I rather fancy that Mr. Jones, if pressed, would argue that prayer has the power of moving people in this or that direction. Granting the belief I would not seriously dispute the statement, so long as the theory were kept within reasonable limits. I would agree that many people feel stronger and better after prayer, and many will feel depressed if they do not pray. To anyone with the most elementary knowledge of psychology, such statements carry their own commendation. But Mr. Jones would add that these people feel better and stronger because God has answered their prayer, and that—if he will excuse strong language—is just rubbish, ignorant rubbish if said honestly, but ecclesiastical humbug usually.

For there is not one of the alleged consequences of prayer that cannot be achieved without it. Whole multitudes of men and women have been roused to do more, and have felt better in the doing, they have been roused by the magnetic influence of speech, by an appeal to a consciousness of social obligation, or pure humanity, motivated by a feeling of a common duty and common need. God has had nothing to do with the result. The man of personality who has exhorted his fellow worker to "put your bloody back into it," has been as successful as any bishop beseeching a congregation to grovel before God to secure for them something that can be gained only by human energy and intelligence. Men will be moved by what they believe, they will fight for what they believe, and "god" has no more to do with it than has the power of a selected number, or a penny mascot, or the burning of incense. The mechanism of prayer is well-known to the Atheist. It is the Christian preacher who airs his want of understanding, or exhibits the fact that the medicine-man, whether in the forest clearing or the modern cathedral, runs true to form.

So I am afraid that the wonderful parson of the *Sunday Post* is not so remarkable as he is presented. Perhaps, in charity, one ought not to assert dogmatically that the *Sunday Post* headline writer really does not think Mr. Jones is very remarkable. It may be that he only wishes his readers to think that he thinks that way. And one must live whether one be parson or newspaper man. Did anyone ask "Why?"

CHAPMAN COHEN

Watson's Wonderland

Master who graced our immelodious days
with flowers of perfect speech.—Watson.

AUSTERITY was the keynote of Sir William Watson's verse. We think of him, not as we regard so many minstrels, as men singing passionately in the guest-hall, but as a white-robed ministrant at the altars of Liberty, burning with a haughty grace the incense and the precious gums.

Collected works make or mar men's reputations, for so often they are warehouses rather than treasuries. Beside the masterpiece comes the best-seller and the half-success; beside the permanent, the temporary, and the frankly fugitive. But nothing is more gratifying in these days of exaggerated and bubble reputations than to note the steady path along which Watson's fame advanced. He owed his good fortune to the sterling merit of his work, for no one did less to advertise it. Those who look back to the best reviews of those past years will be surprised to perceive how noiselessly Watson crept into his own special place in our literature.

On matters of high importance, indeed, he always sang with a dignity all his own. It is not too much to say that *Wordsworth's Grave*, *The Tomb of Burns*, *Shelley's Centenary*, and that lovely elegy on Matthew Arnold. In *Laleham Churchyard*, will be linked always and indissolubly with the memory of those great writers they celebrate, so penetrating is the insight into the genius of each poet. Maybe, Watson's finest effort in this direction was his *Lachrymæ Musarum* (The Tears of the

Muses), which made so notable a stir when Tennyson died. It still ranks as one of the noblest poems we have had for a generation, for Watson handled that great theme of august death right worthily.

No one can read his poetry from *The Prince's Quest* to his last volume without being struck with the amount of work in the grand classical tradition, of which there can be no question. To begin with, they are a golden treasury of jewelled aphorisms. Take, for example, the following felicities of expression:—

The mystery we make darker with a name.
Not in vague dreams of man, forgetting men,
Nor in vast morrows losing the to-day.
Now touching goal, now backward hurled,
Toils the indomitable world.
Song is not Truth, not Wisdom, but the rose
Upon Truth's lips, the light in Wisdom's eyes.
And set his heart upon the goal,
Not on the prize.

In nothing, perhaps, is Watson's genius so bright and so dazzling as in his treatment of Nature. When we remember what Catullus, what Lucretius, what Wordsworth, what Swinburne, Meredith and Tennyson, and innumerable poets, have sung in praise of Nature, we might well despair of hearing a new note. Yet Watson has a personal charm, power, and individuality, of his own. Listen! Here is a couplet in *The First Skylark of Spring*:—

O high above this home of tears
Eternal joy sing on.

He could make a picture of a commonplace scene:—

Where, on the tattered fringes of the land,
The uncounted flowers of the penurious sand
Are pale against the blue lips of the sea.

Watson's love of humanity was ever beyond question. In *The Purple East* and *A Year of Shame*, he voiced his denunciation of the Armenian massacres, and impeached Abdul, Sultan of Turkey. Not since Swinburne attacked the Czar of Russia, had a monarch been indicted in such grand and sonorous lines, sounding declamation, sinewy rhetoric, and pictorial richness. These sonnets, written for the purposes of the moment, echo in the heart and remain in the memory of the men who read them.

For Watson always possessed a quiet and persistent courage, witness his Freethought opinions, "four square to all the winds that blow." It is cynical in *The Eloping Angels*, a satire in the true Byronic vein, and it is serious in *The Unknown God*:—

O god whose ghost in arch and aisle
Yet haunts his temple—and his tomb.
But follows in a little while
Odin and Zeus to equal doom,
A god of kindred seed and line,
Man's giant shadow, hailed divine.

In a fine sonnet addressed to Aubrey de Vere, the Roman Catholic poet, he expressly voices negation:—

Not mine your mystic creed; not mine in prayer
And worship, at the ensanguined cross to kneel.
But when I mark your path how pure and fair,
How based on love, on passion for man's weal
My mind, half enjoying what it cannot share,
Reveres the reverence which it cannot feel.

In one of his latest volumes Watson wrote of America's entry into the world-war 1914-18, and his words are as applicable to-day as when he wrote them:—

Thy place is with the great who know not how
To falter, though their night be without star,
And their vast agony without anodyne.

His poems on Germany are also worth reprinting, for they are white-hot with a scornful fury, intensified by the skill with which the poet makes every word add its share to the full effect. Yet he can get away from these war-like moods, and return to Nature, as in the truly beautiful lyric, *The Yellow Pansy*:—

Winter has swooped, a lean and hungry hawk
It seemed an age since summer was entombed
Yet in our garden, on its frozen stalk,
A yellow pansy bloomed.
'Twas Nature, saying by trope and metaphor
Behold, when empire against empire strives
Though all else perish; ground neath iron war,
The golden thought survives.

Watson's best verse will not die, for it is of the higher things of poetry. He was one of the select few of the English race who held his ear close to the movements of the modern world, and brought away with him some sounding echoes of its music. He blew everything to melody through the golden trumpet of his genius. At its best and free-est, that musical voice had within it the deepest message known to the sons of men. For, in the last analysis, noble thinking means noble writing. All else is as ephemeral as ocean foam.

MIMNERMUS

A Quaint Confession of Mystical Faith

IN his *On to Orthodoxy* (Hodder, 1939, 6s.), Mr. D. R. Davies entertains his readers with a remarkable autobiographical study in religious experience. After a long association with liberal Christians and romantic and realist Socialists, who were all convinced that an ultimate, if not almost immediate, millenium was approaching, Davies became completely disillusioned by the repellent days in which we live. He has now concluded that the whole human race is essentially evil, and that sin is woven into the very texture of its being. Man, he moans, is still so shadowed by original sin that all his efforts, however praiseworthy, are foredoomed to failure because every amelioration is accompanied by some discovery or invention which nullifies its advantages. Humanity, therefore, is doomed to disaster. Yet, the omnipotent deity imagined by our author, constantly supervises historical events and man, despite his blunderings and wickedness, remains an instrument for furthering the design of God to secure man's future felicity in the abodes of bliss. This heavenly result is to be realized through Christ's intervention. But divine forgiveness must be purely personal, for the pardon of a community is clearly ruled out.

Human affairs, good, bad, and indifferent, are all under the superintendence of a Providence which apparently entered into history by means of Christ, whose crucifixion and resurrection "initiates the coming of the Kingdom in the hearts of men." This initiation is to be consummated with the second coming of Christ, when Judgment Day will terminate the existence of sublunary life.

Also, despite the evident shortcomings of the Christian Churches, these are, nevertheless, God's instruments for securing human amelioration. Christian social efforts are relatively unimportant, and all clerical efforts must be devoted to the task of bringing sinful man to the stool of repentance. These assertions are certainly destitute of any evidential support, and are the products of faith alone. Yet they not only appeal to Mr. Davies as certitudes, but encourage him to continue the battle of life in expectation of eternal happiness in the world to come.

Although once firmly convinced of the inevitability of human progress, and an enthusiastic worker in the ranks of the reformers, the disconcerting times in which we dwell have shattered Davies' belief in man's capacity for permanent improvement. He pours scorn on the optimistic forecasts of Spencer, Herschel, Condorcet and other humanists. Nor do the Marxists escape his censure. "Marxists," he assures us, "betray a most naïve and Utopian belief in human nature. In the face of all history and psychology they continue to believe that 'the State will wither away,' that men will voluntarily yield their power. History, says the Marxist, affords no instance of a class yielding power voluntarily; therefore the capitalist class must be 'liquidated.' But the working class, the last class in history, will give up power without any compulsion! When it is pointed out that in Russia to-day, twenty years after the Revolution . . . the State is more powerful than it ever was under the Tsars or under Lenin, there is always some good or sufficient reason—sabotage, Trotskyist conspirators, capitalist encirclement, etc. The dogma is still sacrosanct.

Marxism, of course, like the Liberalism it despises, is a victim of its fundamental assumptions about the social capacities of man."

Modernists, Davies declares, have blundered badly in disregarding the dogma of original sin. He accuses them of having secularized Christ's gospel of an after-life in the interest of social salvation in this. Harnack, the German Biblical critics' social pronouncements, are actually assailed as unconscious accessories of Hitler's shameless autocracy. In anticipation of adverse criticism Davies inquires if "it is not a striking fact that Hitler should appear in the country where the adaptation of Christianity to a secularist philosophy has gone furthest of all." Yet, when we recall the many complex factors which contributed to the rise and triumph of Nazism, this very facile conclusion appears lame and impotent indeed!

In reality, had German scepticism prepared the path for Hitlerism there would have been no need whatever for the pitiless policy adopted to ensure its supremacy. A prominent Government official, Dr. Ley, informs us in his *Education in Nazi Germany*, that the authorities "begin with the child when he is three years old. As soon as he begins to think he has a little flag put in his hand; then follows the school, the Hitler youth, the S.A. and military training. We don't let him go; and when adolescence is past, then comes the Labour Front, which takes him again and does not let him go till he dies, whether he likes it or not." Now, obviously Secularism, which has constantly advocated complete liberty of thought and expression is the very antithesis of such teaching as this.

Mr. Davies is a prophet of lamentation and woe. Doubtless the glaring evils and inconsistencies that disgrace our time compel the thoughtful to reconsider long-cherished convictions. Still, there is no adequate reason for forsaking reason and descending into blind, irrational faith. Earnest and sincere, however, is our author's conviction that human nature can never be redeemed on this earthly plane. The entire theory of ethical progress is to him irrevocably discredited. So he seeks refuge from despair in the dogma of original sin, apart from which, the doctrine of Christ's atonement is illogical and meaningless. Referring to his melancholy experiences, he confesses that "he was compelled to acknowledge the Fall of Man. And that opened the door to the return to orthodoxy. But before I saw that open door I passed through the valley of despair."

Davies thus renounced his former faith in the earthly paradise promised by William Morris and similar "sentimentalists." The high hopes based on female enfranchisement and the activities of Keir Hardie's Independent Labour Party were shattered, and Davies despairingly concluded that the "world is riding to perdition and doom." Never truly emancipated from conventional religiosity, this earnest, if much mistaken man, craved shelter in the haven of faith. Certainly, social reform is essential as a preliminary to heavenly bliss, but human perfection can never be realized on this sub-lunary sphere.

That our world has degenerated into a universal madhouse Davies illustrates in various ways. One disgraceful instance is afforded by the Spanish tragedy. In this "Franco, who was supported by the Catholic hierarchy (which has always aided reaction), did not acknowledge that he was waging war in defence of the very concrete material interests of landlords, industrialists and Church. In the lurid pages of the *Universe* and the *Tablet*, and other Catholic journals, the English apologists of Franco never referred to these material interests. General Franco was fighting for God and Christianity. . . . It is quite useless to point out that it is a strange way of defending Christianity by using Mahomedan troops, by killing priests who happened to support the Republic, by using churches as arsenals."

Turning to his former comrades Davies deplors their unfairness and inconsistency. He alleges that while they passionately denounce Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco they excuse and even applaud the misdeeds of other dictators. Difficult as it still is to ascertain the truth concerning the policy, foreign or domestic, of the Soviet State, our author expresses very decided opinions regarding it. He opines that: "The people who are indignant at the outrage of selfish capitalism in Spain. . . . see no inconsistency whatever in the Russian trials, in the terrible star-

vation of millions of peasants as an item of political policy, in the Russian repression of truth and democracy: they will justify the most cruel actions of a government they happen to support by some plea of historical necessity."

Having abandoned the view that the Church might serve as an instrument for society's reconstruction, Davies no longer considered the social Gospel as a credible doctrine. With Institutions of any kind the genuine Gospel has no connexion whatever, for its appeal is of a purely personal character. All human philosophies culminate in insoluble enigmas and "must be supplemented by myth and ritual."

Social reformers, he complains, ignored heavenly rewards, while promising secular salvation. But in place of this we are getting guns instead of butter. The modernist evangel having proved a failure we must turn our attention to eschatology—the doctrine of last things—to save our souls alive. This teaching, Davies asserts, necessarily embraces Christ's Second Coming, with a Day of Judgment to follow.

To the mere Rationalist, the conclusions of our pilgrim are amazing. Scientific axioms, to him, have no validity in the "spiritual" realm. "Science," he surmises, "is limited to the world of time. It is inapplicable to spirit. Hence, while there is no evidence of any beginning to matter, to conclude that it is eternal is incorrect. All that scientific evidence establishes applies only to the world of time. . . . But the origins of matter are not in time. The fact that science cannot trace its beginnings is no proof that it is eternal."

God, it is argued, created matter out of nothing, and although the bodily framework of man may be the product of evolution, man's immortal spirit is a special creation brought forth by the divinity. Also, whatever horrors encompass us to-day, the final issue is in God's good keeping, when all will be well.

Fantastic as these concepts appear to minds liberated from the thralldom of supernaturalism, they nevertheless retain very considerable sway in pious circles. Karl Barth has a large and obedient following, and many devout people venerate Kierkegaard, whose dark and doubtful sayings are treasured as gems of profound wisdom.

T. F. PALMER

Einstein on Religious Superstition

(Concluded from page 689)

EINSTEIN himself has said of his new theory that it would be a waste of time for him to try to elucidate it for the public because of the tremendous technicalities it involved.

"Memorable" is a light word to apply to the day—May 29, 1919.

For this was the day that the eclipse of the sun was watched by two expeditions of scientists—by one at Sobral (Brazil), and by the other at Principe (Gulf of Guinea).

"With the return of these two expeditions," proceeds Garbedian, "the world saw the end of one epoch, and the beginning of another. Plates of the solar eclipse confirmed all the revolutionary theories that Einstein had advanced about relativity, curved space, and gravitation. Previously he was almost unknown outside the domain of science. Thereafter his name was on everyone's lips, and he belonged to the world. His own native land, shorn of its greatness by the Versailles Treaty, the details of which became public almost simultaneously with the reports of the eclipse expeditions, turned to him as to a Messiah who was to lead it out of the wilderness of defeat and degradation."

His grateful and admiring native land—that is to say, Germany—the land from which, because of his humanitarian activities and his Jewish descent, Einstein had later to escape to save his life!

For some years now Einstein has been a naturalized American.

Even to the average reader, a degree of interest—with

a hint of information—attaches to a photographic plate reproduced by Garbedian in his life of Einstein. This shows the sun in a state of total eclipse, surrounded by four stars (1) in the positions calculated by Einstein, and (2) the same stars in the positions they were hitherto believed to be—incredible distances further out from the sun.

"Aren't you glad," a friend asked Einstein, "that now it's all over, and your major theory is proved?"

"Proof?" he retorted. "As if there had ever been any doubt!"

"In the decade that followed the world fame of Einstein," remarks Garbedian, "nearly 5,000 books and pamphlets were published seeking to explain his theories for the benefit of the layman. Academic honours from the four corners of the globe—prizes and gold medals and university degrees from the world's most distinguished institutions of learning—were placed at his feet."

But, of course, this truly great man—variously spoken of in scientific circles as "A monarch among savants," "A lion of the mental realm," and "The Olympian interpreter of cosmic mysteries"—had his religious detractors.

For example, "a Catholic leader, Cardinal O'Connell of Boston, hastened to proclaim to the world that there was nothing saintly about the Einstein theory—that it was false, atheistic, and immoral!"

Finally, I would like to give a few further words by Einstein regarding religion.

"When one views the matter historically," he says, "one is inclined to look upon science and religion as irreconcilable antagonists; and for a very obvious reason. The man who is thoroughly convinced of the universal operation of the law of causation cannot, for a moment, entertain the idea of a being who interferes in the course of events—provided, of course, that he takes the hypothesis of causality really seriously.

"He has no use for the religion of fear, and equally little for social or moral religion.

"A God who rewards and punishes is inconceivable to him, for the simple reason that a man's actions are determined by necessity, external and internal, so that in God's eyes he cannot be responsible, any more than an inanimate object is responsible for the motions it undergoes. Hence science has been charged with undermining morality. But the charge is unjust. A man's ethical behaviour should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties. No religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way, if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death.

"It is therefore easy to see why the churches have always fought science and persecuted its devotees."

FRANK HILL

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Christians and Freethinkers: Their Everyday Morals

'Tis the habit of many religious folk to strut around our chaotic World, claiming to be the pets of their God, and the monopolists of Morals.

They fill the pulpits and press with bewailings of the decadence of morals in "the rest of us."

We won't go to church! We won't say our prayers! Or sing our hymns! And generally speaking, we are dancing our way adown the primrose path to the Devil.

Even the children won't go to Sunday School!

Dearie Me! How dolefully dreadful! Well did grim old Carlyle say: "Nay the Lord preserve us from cant!" For all this pulpit talk of the absence of morals in the lives of Freethinkers—is just churchy cant.

The average man and woman who have found more truth in honest doubt, and who have lost faith in Oriental Theology—will compare in morals more than favourably with the average Bible Banger.

Because Freethinkers do not go to church, it does not mean that they have lessened in their love for the Truth and Beauty that Life holds for those who seek.

Never was there so much zeal or sacrifice for the social and economic betterment of Humanity, and in the van of those brave men and women who are searchlighting the new paths—Freethinkers supply more than their quota of pioneers.

The real test of morals is not in shouting pulpit platitudes or in posing stained-glass attitudes—the home is the true test of morals—and to Freethinkers mother, wife and children are just as dear as they are to churchgoers.

Christians sin like other folk, break laws! find their way to divorce courts, despite all the frantic prayers that ascend to the skies.

After all! "the proof of the pudding is in the eating"—and the records of our police courts and jails are sufficient evidence that the "pets of God" and other Christians, contribute their full share to crime, despite all their preaching and prayers. Listen! to the U.S.A. Medical Board of Prisons.

In a recent report of this Board which has the wide survey of prison life concerning a population of 130 millions, it states that "Comparative to the rest of the population, ministers of religion contribute more than their quota to crime and prison life," and further stated that "they were worse behaved than the average prisoner."

These are professional Christians in the continuous environment of daily prayer and religious exercise, who preach and proclaim the alleged virtues of their faith, and claim too, Divine inspiration.

Then turning from the shepherds to the sheep:

The Roman Catholic chaplain of the Sing Sing Jail—one of the largest criminal prisons in the world—in writing recently to the U.S.A. *Weekly Commonwealth*, stated: "Of the total of 1581 prisoners now in the Sing Sing Jail, 855 were Roman Catholics, only 8 were of no religion." He continues: "There was no special advantage in choosing the Roman Catholic ticket."

So of 1581 criminals, over half were alleged Christians of one faith only, there were 718 who professed other religions, and only 8 unbelievers.

So much for the comparative morals of Believers and Unbelievers.

Let us look up from the pits of criminal despair to the great thinkers of Humanity, to the moral leaders who are endeavouring to pioneer Mankind to better social conditions of life.

Here in the van of progress and truth—Freethinkers lead.

Does not Professor Einstein know as much of the Heavens as the Pope of Rome?

Is not H. G. Wells as true a prophet as the Archbishop of Canterbury?

And does not Sir Arthur Keith as President of the British Association of Science shed as much light as the President of the Methodist Conference?

Has not the People's Jester—George Bernard Shaw—contributed as much wisdom and enlightenment as the gloomy Dean Inge, or even merry Aimee McPherson, the gospel actress?

And did not lovely Marie Curie, who made life richer for ever with Radium, contribute as much to save suffering as a whole calendar of Christian Saints?

Wherever one looks—whether in Science, Art, Literature, and the highest form of Morals—the great Freethinkers of yesterday and to-day have blazed the paths.

Humanity's hope and progress lies in Freethought.

The Freethought Mind has thrown aside the blinkers of Dogma—it is not shut up in the gloomy prison of a static creed, where the very walls of its dungeon are the limits of its victims' mentality, and the reach of its own chain the full stop of its intelligence—where every thought or action must be patterned to fit the narrow cell of Creed, or be rejected as impious.

Whether in Religion, Economics, or rabid Nationalism, the rusty chains of orthodoxy must be broken—our hope is in Freethinking, to adventure, search, find and bring to our tangled world a better system of life.

So many Gods, so many creeds,
So many ways that wind and wind;
Whilst all this old world needs
Is just the art of being kind.

HENRY J. HAYWARD

New Zealand.

Acid Drops

Were he not a clergyman and senior Chaplain to a Scottish regiment one might disbelieve the story told by Mr. J. G. Grant Fleming. He claims to have a copy of the Bible that saved his life—not by its teaching, but because it stopped a bullet in the war of 1914. One would have expected that the bullet would have been warded off in such a manner as to kill another soldier who did not have a Bible. But in this case, so runs the story in the Glasgow *Sunday Mail* for November 17, the bullet knocked the chaplain into a ditch and bruised his chest. The story is badly told. If we had to tell such a tale we would have arranged the finale better. After all as Mr. Fleming tells the tale any book would have done, or even a pack of cards, or a copy of our *Bible Handbook*. And there were many men in the same battle who didn't carry a Bible. Many of these also escaped without either a bruised chest or being knocked into a ditch. This ought not to have happened. We suggest that either that story should be dropped or more artistic liars employed to relate it.

Ireland (Eire) also has its Sunday problem—quite a self-made and gratuitous one. Clonmel—or a great many in Clonmel—wants to have cinemas open on Sunday. The nearest cinemas available are at some distance from the town, with the result that those who go to them get home very, very late and as was explained at a Council meeting parents are disturbed at the time their boys and girls get home after attending the shows. The Council would have agreed to Sunday Cinemas but for a letter against them received from the Bishop (R.C.) of Clonmel. He based his objection on a decision given by the Bishop of Waterford just over a hundred years ago on Sunday observance. One of the Councillors asked were they going to pit their opinions against the Bishop of the diocese. And the Council agreed they must not—all except eight. This wise councillor was afraid that Sunday cinemas would be “a wedge towards Communism.” So Ireland remains Ireland, with the Roman Church ruling the roost.

Addressing a message to the Sixth Annual national Convention of Christian Doctrine at Los Angeles the Pope says “it is pitiable to see the great number of labouring men who do not practise any religion.” He also complains this is true even among Catholics. “The principles of Christianity are observed to such an extent that we have before us a world which, in great measure, has returned to paganism.” Now that is a very cheerful kind of a report to send to heaven! After the talk of the conquering power of Christianity, the position it has occupied, the money spent upon it, and the energy squandered in securing converts and with God Almighty behind the Church, the Pope reports to “father, son and holy ghost” that the game is up. The world is going back to Paganism! “All hail the power of Jesus' name!”

A very pathetic appeal is made to “all Catholics of the Westminster Archdiocese” to “support,” that is, send money for the training of young men for the Priesthood. It is pointed out that “priests will be needed more than ever after Victory,” and unless money, and plenty of it, is sent, “the Cardinal will have to reduce the number of his students.” The only point not made very clear is why so many priests will be needed when the war is over, or indeed whether many young men then will want to be priests. During 1939 the amount collected was £7,855—not a bad amount to be spent on such utterly useless training as for the Church. We have an idea that the appeal has been made because the sum collected so far is falling very short of that amount.

Another piece of news which English Roman Catholics are very angry about. It appears that Germany is doing her best to persuade Catholic Spain, Portugal, and the Catholics in North and South America that the Nazis are and always have been the true champions of Christianity. They partly prove this by showing how Catholicism is

always being attacked in England—“What is the Pope doing, etc.”—and if there is one thing English Catholics are very bewildered about, it is to learn exactly where they stand with respect to those loyal Germans to Hitler, and to those loyal Italians to Mussolini, who are also loyal to the Pope. They have not yet solved their very unpleasant dilemma.

The *Church Times* says that from the Christian point of view there is very much to be said for the policy of appeasement, but this “applied to Japan, to Spain and to Italy, proved, alas, a very grim failure.” Which being interpreted means that Christianity is quite good so long as it is not applied to anything important or critical. If it is so applied it is likely to be a “grim failure.” This reminds us of the celebrated saying of an Archbishop (Magee) that a nation that set itself to be guided by the sermon on the mount would soon cease to exist.

Louis Raemakers, the noted Dutch cartoonist, who achieved a world-wide reputation during the last war, when he so scathingly attacked the Kaiser and his blood-lust gang, was recently referred to in the American press as a devout Roman Catholic. His reply will not be relished by other devout Catholics:—

The Statement is not correct. Was brought up as a Catholic, but don't practise since fifty years, though my feelings remain sympathetic.

Fifty years is a long time not to practise a religion.

A naval chaplain writes to one of the religious journals his experience afloat. Needless to say, many of our sailors are thorough Christians who love their church parades and enjoy in common, whatever their creed, Bible reading and prayers. He admits, however, that quite a number at first admit that, while they have nothing against the Church, they simply don't want to be bothered about it; and though some of these are eventually gained for Christ, others prefer to remain without the fold. The naval chaplains, of course, get most help from the officers—it is astonishing how many of these, both in the Army and the Navy, are so primitively pious. Reading between the lines one senses that the naval chaplains—they admit many heartaches—would have very little to do if the men were not pestered with religion. At least 50 per cent of our fighting forces are without religion, and don't want it.

The current number of *Lilliput* contains a devastating monologue by William Connor, who is angry because of “the five minutes of excruciating moralizing before the morning news. That Voice, so smooth, so soft, so suave!” He follows up with “Give me Moody! Give me Sankey! Bring out your Gipsy Smiths.” An excusable reaction! But the *excruciating moralizing* is adjudged to be typically British, so we suppose it will continue. And so will the aches and pains of Mr. Connor and the not inconsiderable number of those in this country who have not been “broken in” to what passes for eloquence in the pulpit.

These are times of coalition and alliances, and this has had a curious illustration in China. According to the *Catholic Herald*, there was great need for rain in a certain part of China. The Roman Catholics prayed and the non-Christians also prayed. Then the Chinese leaders, who, as one would expect, showed more common sense than the Christians where religion was concerned, went to the Christians and proposed that they joined forces. And they all said prayers before pictures of the “Blessed Virgin and the Sacred Heart.” Then the rain came. We are deeply impressed, but something suggests that if the two bodies had prayed before a sanctified tin of pressed beef rain might have followed. In this country we often get rain without any prayers being offered. But perhaps we are a favoured people.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- E. PAYNE.—Next week; unable to find room in this issue.
- T. MOSLEY.—Pleased to get your letter. It is not for us to estimate the quality and value of our books, or to give accounts of our debates with Christian champions. That must be left for others who were present at the discussions, or who have read our works. Pleased you liked the *Autobiography*, and wish for more. Perhaps—? If you come to London let us know.
- F. GRIMAUD.—Mr. Cohen is writing you.
- C. ANDREW.—Pleased you found the literature sent you useful and interesting. We hope they will do their work with those who read them. We send out many parcels to the forces.
- To Advertising and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—J. Rose 12s.
- S. J. PARSONS.—We meant exactly what we said. The whole significance of evolution (Evolution, by the way, is not the most accurate of words) is that the present is an outcome of the past. Every phase of "being" is what it is because of what has preceded it. Grasp that firmly and the study of any phenomenon is a study of the conditions of which it is the product, and of the consequences of its appearance. W. E. Gladstone, saw this quite plainly when he said that evolution involved the expulsion of God from his own universe. In this matter it is the more ignorant of religionists who are the most logical in their conclusions.
- J.N.—Thanks for copy. It is a regular practice of the Roman Church to encourage "masses" for the souls of the departed. We fancy there is no official scale of charges, but in practice the frequency and quality of the mass depends upon the amount donated to the Church.
- "NIPPER."—Sorry unable to use your letter. You will see the ground is covered by others, and space is important.
- F. B. LAWES.—Thanks for addresses. Copies are being sent to addresses given.
- H. J. SEYMOUR.—Very pleased to hear that the *Freethinker* is proving so interesting among your comrades. Other literature has been sent.
- H. MERTON.—Received, but while your opinions are good enough, we do not care for the form of expression adopted.

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. 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

Mr. Cohen has arranged to visit Glasgow on December 15. The hall in which he usually lectures is not available at present, and the meeting, an afternoon one, at 3 o'clock, will be held in the Dixon Hall, Cathcart Road. Admission will be free, but there will be a limited number of reserved seats. We hope that Freethinkers will, on this occasion, do their best to advertise the meeting and, if possible, bring a Christian friend with them.

We are not surprised to learn from actual cases that the tribunals set up to decide whether a man is a genuine conscientious objector is in many cases working very badly. A strong feature of these tribunals appears to be to rest the whole question on whether the objector is religious or not. If he does not belong to some church, or does not rest his objection on a religious basis the appeal is dismissed. That is both ridiculous and contrary to the law. The law on the subject has no reference whatever to religion, and a profession of religion is never a clear indication of honesty. There are quite as many rogues and even more, proportionately, inside the churches as there are outside. And it is monstrous that a few religious bigots should deny a man what is his legal right. They ought never to have been appointed.

Cannot some member of the House of Commons call attention to the fact, and get a ruling that an enquiry into a man's religious or irreligious opinions should not be made? In this war for freedom it is just as well to retain some of it for home consumption.

We have received a number of letters criticizing Rear-Admiral Beadnell's recent article on the Conscientious Objector, some of which are too lengthy for insertion, and others duplicated—so far as the points raised are concerned. We have done our best to get every argument presented, but our space is limited, and we cannot print essays in the form of letters. But we have tried to see that both sides are represented. We may print more next week; and shall publish an article replying to the Rear-Admiral.

In only one case have we had a complaint that the article should not have appeared in the *Freethinker*. The reason this writer has for objecting to it being in the *Freethinker* is the justification for it being there—because some readers will not agree with it. Where the question of freedom of expression is concerned we have always done our best to see that both sides are represented, when both sides write with relevance and decency.

Our own position with regard to conscientious objectors is well known. It is the attitude we took up during the last war and we have seen no reason for altering it in this. We regard the present position as being both unjust and nonsensical. In the first place to accuse Conscientious Objectors—during a state of war—of being shirkers or cowards, is a ridiculous falsehood. Some may use "conscientious objection" as a cover, but there is nothing in the world that cannot be used as a cover for mean and discreditable ends. And where a conscientious objection to war exists there is far stronger evidence of the existence of real courage than there is in falling into line with the majority. The history of every movement, religious, freethinking, political, and social proves this. We may assume the courage of a crowd, knowing that in every crowd there is always a number that is just carried along. But where there is a genuine stand by individuals against a popular movement the presence of courage is undeniable.

For the rest we have only to add that in our opinion the law on this matter is really "an ass." There should be either conscription for all, or the voluntary system for all. To say that everyone must hold themselves ready to be called up for military service, but those who object to it will be excused, is about as foolish a compromise one could make. Imagine that principle being adopted with regard to taxes, or the speed of motor driving, or almost anything for which general laws exist. Conscientious objectors would still exist, and they would defy the law on this matter as the law has been defied—often with great profit to the community—on many other issues. But if we have any respect for freedom of opinion and expression it should find utterance in a time of war as well as in a time of peace. The existing situation is a consequence of not having the courage of logical action, and of the existence of tribunals, the members of which have no sense of justice where religion is concerned.

We are pleased to be able to record the fact that from letters received the policy of sending copies of the *Freethinker* and other literature to men serving in the forces is bearing fruit in securing new readers and likely "converts." It should be said that these parcels are not sent out indiscriminately, but only in response to applications from Freethinkers already in the Army, Navy, or Air-Force. We take this opportunity of pointing out that although, owing to paper restrictions, the number of pages of the *Freethinker* are less than they were, those who care to examine their copy will find that, owing to rearrangement, the printed matter is much the same as before the change was made. The quality has certainly not altered. We are prouder of the paper than ever.

This is not exactly a "Sugar Plum," but there is no other column of the paper in which it will fit. Many of the older generation of London workers will remember the name of George Warren. He was for many years a very ardent worker for the movement, and for some years has been on the "retired" list. Those who remember him will regret that he has had the experience of being bombed, and in the confusion, while escaping, suffered serious bodily injury. He was badly bruised and, as one might expect in the case of one who is in the middle seventies, has experienced a shock. We hope that he will soon recover from his injuries, and those of his old friends who are still with us will join in that wish.

We referred last week to the revival by the *Tablet* concerning the famous "watch story." This reminds us that lies die hard, and religious lies come as near to achieving immortality as anything we know. We all know the Christian lie of the Atheist who challenged God to prove his existence by striking him dead in a few minutes. It was the kind of lie that only a convinced Christian would manufacture. The Atheist was quite safe for he knew that the idea of a God was just moonshine, otherwise he would not have been an Atheist. And, being an Atheist, he knew that to challenge something he did not believe existed to do anything at all was the wildest kind of nonsense. It would be like challenging a what-you-may-call-it to kill a whats-its-name. But absurdity never appealed to a true believer as a disqualifying factor. In fact Christian faith, in practice, is largely a matter of believing in the impossible. We are not the first one to say that. It was in fact said by that great Christian, Tertullian: "I believe because it is impossible."

Another Job of Work for the Holy Ghost

THE Holy Ghost is the odd job man of the Christian Trinity. When God decided to write his Book he spent a little while considering ways and means. He considered first of all whether he should do the actual writing himself. He reflected that the Ten Commandments which he had written with his own hand had taken forty days hard going. Whilst he had been doing so he had not even been able to attend to the creature comforts of poor old Moses, who for that entire period had neither bite nor sup. Besides he had now so much more to say, his readers were becoming more critical, and he wasn't so young as he was. No, he simply wouldn't do it. Those snoozes in the afternoon were ever so much more enjoyable now, and even (he glanced at a B.M.A. report) necessary. Then he thought of the Ghost. "Yes, I should say so," he thought. "The Third Person in the Trinity, co-equal, co-eternal. And what does he do for it? I ask you. Light work, indeed. True, I gave him one little job some time ago, and I suppose he managed that all right. And he tells me he is perpetually engaged in filling the saints up with divine afflatus. That is a thing I cannot check and well he knows it. But he *can* manage this book for me. I'll give him the job of *Inspiration*."

And so it came to pass that the Holy Bible was written by the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Lots of little pamphlets were written by different persons, and the Holy Ghost stood by and put ideas into their heads. It wasn't necessary for the men chosen to have any ideas of their own. Inspiration could supply them. It wasn't even necessary that they should understand what they had committed to paper; the Ghost could guide their fingers and that was all that was wanted. Still they might as well be called Holy Men.

So the Holy Men got busy and scribbled their pieces. Many of them got credited with the authorship of their

automatic writing; some of them didn't. Their reactions are unknown. The writings that the Holy Ghost inspired got knocked about a bit by the vagaries of circumstance. Printers, translators and transcribers are Kittle Kattle. But the Ghost guided them. The Holy Ghost had to attend also the Councils which decided whether this or that book had been inspired, and, when it came to the vote, he had to inspire the correct attitude amongst the majority of those present. This occasioned years afterwards the sage remark of John Seldon that, although the Holy Ghost was supposed to be President of the Church Councils, the truth was that it was the odd man that was the Holy Ghost.

The Holy Ghost is therefore responsible for the Bible, and the authors ascribed to the various pamphlets are only courtesy authors. One of the books is called Genesis, another is Ecclesiastes, another is Abdias. Then there is Joel and Sophonias and Osee. There is the Song of Solomon, Judith, Aggeus, Nahum, Numbers, Daniel, Tobias, Paralipomenon, Joel, Machabees. These were some of the works included in Part I of the Holy Bible. The Holy Bible that you may pick up may or may not include any of the above-mentioned pamphlets; it all depends upon what edition of the Holy Bible you may chance to lay your hands on. For there is little doubt that Person's I.'s distrust of Person III. had some justification in fact. For Person III. disliked work, and although he had stuck in well (so it was for a long time believed) at the job of inspiring his penmen and had contrived that the correct vote was given at the Councils whenever the authenticity of a piece of writing was being settled, yet he had then given the job of inspiration (or himself) a rest. In fact he allowed just ordinary men to consider this question of authenticity, men quite pious, and often scholarly and worthy, but plainly unassisted by the Ghost, and thus they not only themselves came to wrong conclusions, but became the unwitting cause of damnation of millions of others. But Person I., as has already been pointed out, was far from vigilant owing to his growing infirmities, and the much needed rebuke, and much more needed rectification of the canon of Holy Scriptures remained unattended to. So that it is plain that even unto this day people are streaming along the primrose path to perdition owing to the sleepiness of Person III.

It came about one day that the Son (Person II.) could be observed remonstrating with Father (Person I.), and was seen to be brandishing a brochure before him in some agitation. It appeared that a Christian Bishop had written a reply to a work of a common unordained man, and had broken out after a few scores of pages of heat into the unspiritual expression. NINCOMPOOP!

Person Number II. conducted the conversation on these lines. "Well, father, I remembered that the writer of this booklet was a Bishop. So I looked up his history and there was no question about his credentials. He had been well and truly ordained with due ceremony; he had been properly touched on the head by another properly ordained Bishop. And so on. Yet here I found him calling his brother a fool, or an expression that signifies the same thing. And then I turned to an examination of the cause of his outburst. It was a book by a man of the name of Thomas Paine, and all I can say, old man—fair's fair—that the book was an eye-opener to me. I have always understood that your Book was kept free from inaccuracy by the Ghost. Am I right?" "You certainly are, young man." "Well then, all I can say is that the Ghost has been up to his tricks again." "Tricks! What tricks?" To put it plainly, papa, I should say he had been having some infernally long after-dinner snoozes, and whilst he was having his nap the most astounding statements have been let into your Holy Word." Person I. spluttered furiously: "One case, one case only, I beg you." "Here, father, is your volume. I can pick you the most absurd howlers anywhere you care to name." "Show me ONE," repeated the old man. Part I. or Part II.? enquired Jesus. "Anywhere," was the response. Jesus handed him the first Chapter of Matthew. "How's that for a flying start," he said, calmly.

Omnipotence took in the chapter at a glance. He sat back in his chair, calm but white, for fully five minutes. He then touched a bell and immediately Person III. appeared.

"Read that chapter," said One abruptly. "Dry stuff,

that," was Three's comment. "Still, here goes."

"And now," enquired One, "Would you be good enough to tell me plainly whether it was you or Joseph that was the father of Jesus?" "Well, Jah," replied Three, "this is a thoroughly spiritual matter and can be only settled by a spiritual approach." "Cut all that young man, when you're in the presence. As man to man I ask you: Had Joseph anything at all to do with the birth of Jesus." "Jah, as man to man (I appreciate the "equality" touch very much) Joseph wasn't in the picture."

"Well then tell us this. How can you make out that Jesus was descended from David, because *Joseph* was descended from David? NINCOMP—"

"Father, father," murmured Gentle Jesus.

Person III. took a side look at Person I. Trouble, he saw, was brewing. He also noticed that the window was fortunately open at the top for the hygienic two inches. He turned quickly to Person II. "Do your best for me, Joshua," he cooed. Then was heard a faint flutter of wings and the place whereon he had stood knew him no more.

T. H. ELSTOR

The Foundations of Voluntary Co-operation

MR. THEODORE SCHROEDER said much in his recent article, "A New Philosophy of Life," which I would like to dispute or at least ask questions about, but there was one phrase which particularly caught my attention and approbation. He spoke of "the goal of a complete universal voluntary co-operation." I propose to outline the setting in which I happen to see this conception in the hope that some criticisms which might be made of some of his statements may emerge as corollaries.

It seems to me that the nearer we get to this goal then the nearer we will be to the only mental attitude on the part of the people of the world which is likely to bring the conditions which will obviate the possibility of such international conflicts as we are presently enduring. "Voluntary Co-operation." Just think of these words alone. See how they find the dynamic centre in man and how they point to positive group action. Men who believe in voluntary co-operation as the only possible source of world-order are not likely to be found praying to God to give them victory or whatever it happens they want at any time, neither will they be likely to encourage others in such a barren pursuit. Such men will be at pains to discover and fulfil the natural conditions which seem likely to produce the things they desire. They will not sing "God is our refuge, etc.," when faced with a catastrophe. They will try rather to ask sensible questions about the cause and cure of the catastrophes which overtake them and then get busy applying remedies as well as they can. Such men as these will shape the world of the future—there is nothing to stop them but other men.

Now let us apply this attitude to our desire to see a growing tendency towards "universal voluntary co-operation" taking place. We must ask ourselves, "What are the conditions under which voluntary co-operation appears?" and then afterwards, "How are we to satisfy the conditions necessary for the appearance of 'universal voluntary co-operation'?" For reasons of space I will confine myself in this article to an outline of the answer to the first question.

The first thing we must recognize about voluntary co-operation is that it cannot take place in what might be called a state of mental vacuum. For instance it is no use telling a group of men to go away and co-operate. Co-operation cannot take place unless some sort of mental picture of the objective is placed in the minds of the co-operators. For instance the members of one football team may be considered as being animated by the desire to reach the common mental objective of getting the ball past the opposing goal-keeper as often as possible. In the same way the necessity of being provided

with an objective for thought may be recognized from the fact that a person cannot take part in any co-operative activity without first asking, "What is the big idea?"

Now I would not mention this rather obvious matter only Mr. Schroeder talks at one point rather derisively about "the mystic's belief in the relative omnipotence of thought and his delusional slogan that 'thoughts are things.'" He appears to be questioning the necessity of the presence of doctrinal professions. The latter appear to me to have been designed originally with the intention of playing the same part in action generally as the footballer's "idea of the game" plays in his action as a footballer. Of course we may criticize many doctrinal professions for their ambiguity or apparent lack of logical application to human action generally. Indeed it is likely that it is here the cause of their present "relative unimportance" is to be found. But at the same time I cannot see how universal co-operation can possibly take place in the absence of a universally accepted guiding idea from which men can take their bearings by thought. Mr. Schroeder may not be aware of it, he actually tries to supply such a "general idea" as we are speaking of in his article. He says in effect to the individual, "Seek ye first psychological maturity and all will be well with humanity." To all men he says, "We must aim at accelerating the democratization of work and welfare so that the psychological maturity of all men may be realized and the most refined form of human happiness be thus gained." Now I do not propose to examine the limitations of this particular answer to the question, "What is the big idea?" All I am concerned about at the moment is to show that it is a form of doctrinal profession.

But let us look more closely at the conditions attending smooth-working voluntary co-operation. Let us consider a concrete example with a view to discovering the difficulties that have to be overcome if voluntary co-operation is to continue to exist as such rather than degenerate into the chaos of anarchy.

A close analogy of the general human situation may be seen in the position of a group of aeroplane designers who are trying to work together on the plans of a new plane without first having arrived at common conception of the work the plane is being designed to do. Those of my readers who have had experience of the really creative part of work of this kind will quickly realize the muddle they would be likely to get into. One designer might have the private idea that the plane was for mails, another that it was for passengers, a third that it was for racing, and so on. Such a situation would be more likely to produce pandemonium than the smooth-working voluntary co-operation which we desire to see. This pandemonium would, moreover, be likely to continue until somebody with sufficient intelligence to recognize the source of the differences of opinion and the courage to point it out got up and explained why differences of opinion were so rife and how they might be reduced. The point the bringer of concord would have to make is this. Our ideas of the shape the details of the plane should take are mainly determined by our conception of the work the plane is supposed to do. He might illustrate his contention by pointing out that the operative cause of a certain designer's contention that the safety factor of the plane should be kept down was that he was reasoning from the idea that the plane was for racing, whilst the operative cause of another's contention that the safety factor should be kept high was derived from his peculiar belief that the plane was for carrying passengers. He would then point out that were the designers of the plane to reach agreement about the work the plane was being designed to do, then they would be more likely to agree about the details of its shape.

But smooth-working co-operation would not necessarily now be assured. The designers might have reached unanimity about the general purpose of the plane, but it does not follow that they would necessarily agree exactly about the best type of engine, for instance, for the job. Some might favour one type of engine, others another. Thus some method would have to be agreed upon by which group decisions about the particular form of details might be reached. There are two chief methods available. They can either appoint one of their number as an "authority" to fix final decisions, or they can rely on a majority vote.

We can now summarize the chief requirements of the existence of smooth-working co-operation. The first thing on the part of all individuals concerned is the will to action. In the sphere of "universal co-operation" this will most probably be derived from the conviction that direct human action on the natural processes is the only thing which will bring order into the affairs of men. The next important requirement is that all members of the co-operative body should have a clear mental conception of the common objective of the group. In the sphere of "universal co-operation" this involves acceptance of some conception of the purpose of living at all. Lastly the groups must have some agreed method of reaching decisions concerning the best policy to be adopted for reaching the expected end. In the sphere of "universal co-operation" this will either take the form of a world dictator or a world parliament of some kind, I assert that all these conditions will have to be satisfied if the ideal of a "complete universal voluntary co-operation" is to become a reality, although what particular form the "agreed conception of the purpose of social effort" will take is another story.

E. G. MACFARLANE

Correspondence

THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I cannot understand anybody, other than a religious fanatic, refusing to deal with Hitler and Co., in the only way they understand, but Mr. Beadnell's article "The Fallacies of Conscientious Objection," somehow strikes a jarring note. He seems to think the "group" is infallibly right in its demands on the individual. Such an idea is unwarranted as history will show. So far as the present struggle is concerned, I think the case against Germany is perfectly clear, but I arrive at that conclusion by the use of conscience (which I prefer to call judgment), as I am sure most people have done. I do not merely shrug my shoulders and follow the crowd. Therefore, if another man adopts the same measures and arrives at the conclusion that he must be a C.O., I cannot call his position fallacious, especially as his standpoint is legally provided for in this country.

Mr. Beadnell's analogies of the ants and the phagocytes are not good, because such phenomena are, as far as we know, pure reflexes and do not involve thinking on the part of those agents. On the other hand, human affairs are not so simple because of the political and diplomatic wranglings and frauds which are constant companions in the international arena. One must use one's judgment in all these things, otherwise the world will have nothing but a collection of semi-deified gangsters who have managed to obtain the following of a group backed-up by non-thinking robots. In fact there is great danger of the world so becoming. Furthermore, suspension of individual judgment when opposed to the mass, means the end of all progressive movements, and would certainly call a halt to progress. Mr. Beadnell admits that individuals have been responsible for progressive advances, but suppose these individuals had said their strength lay in self-suppression, where would we be today? It rather seems as though he tried to gild the pill with his recognition of individual ideas, but in so doing has only made his article more contradictory. I can quite understand Mr. Beadnell's annoyance with the regrettable position of the C.O., but I in turn am annoyed that he should attack objectors by torpedoing all that Freethought stands for.

The position of the C.O. is very delicate when feelings run high and the group tries to force unwilling subjects to do its bidding. I will not attempt to give a solution to what is a very complex situation, but suggest Mr. Beadnell notes the very small percentage of men who even attempt to dodge military service as C.O.'s.

J. F. PRICE

SIR,—May I be permitted to reply to Rear-Admiral Charles Beadnell's article on the subject of Conscientious Objectors and Pacifism.

What grounds has the writer for supposing that the

real reason of conscientious objection is fear of personal injury and death? Admittedly that objection is strong, but it is also present in the armed forces; no one supposes that fear is banished when a man is given some lethal weapon and instructions how to use it.

We have only to examine the charges brought against the authorities during the last war to learn of the intimidation and cruelty to Conscientious Objectors, to see that courage is not the sole prerogative of the soldier or his brothers in arms.

Regarding the subjection of a minority to the majority in all matters affecting the well-being of the State, if this were true, there would be no Freethought.

A reference is made to the present condition of the solar-system, pointing out the fact that the majority of planets and their satellites revolve in one direction and in the plane of the solar equator. The connexion between this and a human being trying to resolve his loyalties to his conscience and his State is difficult to perceive except to those professional astrologers who write so plausibly in the Sunday papers.

When reference is made to warfare going on constantly in our bodies, he is on a different ground for this is not a battle between the same species of life. To say that any cell refuses to carry out its functions is stretching a simile to breaking point.

A C.O. does not claim his conscience to be sacred to anyone but himself. "To thine own self be true, thou canst not then be false to any man."

To hold the right of might to be just and equable is to play into Hitler's hands; to agree that force of numbers and strength is right, is to give the lie to the great Freethinkers of the past who fought and died for the right of minorities to enjoy the life and freedom which nature, not the State, bestows.

I quite agree to distort the mind of a child in the direction that Hitler is doing is a crime before which all the crimes of the Borgias sink into insignificance, but is it not also as great a crime to teach a British child to hate Germans, as it is to teach the German child to hate the British?

Does the Admiral believe that every C.O. is selfish, and every man in the Forces is unselfish? and that every C.O. places aid for self before aid for others? This is indeed the crux of the problem, the C.O. wishes to live himself, he also desires that others should live and enjoy those things which nature has placed at our disposal. The loss of a million or more lives, and the distress and suffering which follow would seem an exorbitant price to pay to preserve the present lopsided social and economic system.

To query whether the C.O. ever asks himself which is the most trustworthy, his own or his neighbour's conscience, has a touch of the absurd about it. How many of the men and women of to-day would be Atheists, Agnostics or Freethinkers if the pioneers had not scorned the conscience of their neighbours and the powers that be as a guide to their actions. Does Admiral Beadnell consider whether men like Paine, Carlile, Ingersoll or Bradlaugh, or a woman like Mrs. Besant asked the majority whether their conscience was right or wrong? Time has proved them to be right; it may also prove Gandhi and his followers the world over to be in the right.

The last question puts the most difficult position of all; Can C.O.'s put into operation their ideals at the present juncture when things look as though the lamp of liberty is about to be quenched in Europe? I say yes, they can. For if people even now, follow their conscience, and I mean the people of the world, not one nation, and refuse to kill another human being, war will cease, and another stumbling block will have been removed from the road to the freedom for which we are all striving.

A. W. BIRKS

JEW BAITING IN ENGLAND

SIR,—The Home Secretary was recently asked "whether he was aware that the management of certain hotels, as for instance the Anglo-Swiss Hotel, Bournemouth, had issued advertisements announcing that they did not cater for members of the Semitic race; and whether he would take steps to prevent this discrimination among British subjects." In reply, Mr. Herbert Morrison said, "if any hotel proprietor in this country is guilty of copying Nazi methods in this way, there

will, I am sure, be general public reprobation of such action." He then added, "I am advised that an innkeeper is not entitled to discriminate between one person and another if he has accommodation available, and that a traveller who is refused accommodation except when no accommodation is available, has a right of action for damages against the innkeeper."

It occurs to one that this reply is disingenuous in the last degree. A Jew "who is refused accommodation . . . has a right of action for damages against the innkeeper" forsooth! What chance would he have if he took action? How could he *prove* that he had been lied to as he most certainly would be by the type of hotel-keeper in question? Further, in what way could "general public reprobation be expressed?" And, what would the proprietors of the Anglo-Swiss Hotel with their anti-Jewish clientele care if it were, which is more than doubtful? Nothing. No Sir, there is only one way to deal with Jew-baiters of the kind in question. Mr. Morrison *should* have summarily revoked the licence of the Anglo-Swiss Hotel on the grounds that its holders had wilfully disobeyed one of the vital conditions under which it was issued. But, Mr. Morrison didn't. I wonder why?

EDWARD PAYNE

RUSSIA AND COTTON

SIR,—In your issue of November 17, Mr. Palmer discussed a work by Dr. Dudley Stamp. It is not mentioned when Dr. Stamp wrote ". . . her (Russia's) frigid climate forbids the growth of various indispensable commodities, including cotton." This statement is certainly incorrect as regards cotton, an article which Russia was, I know personally, exporting to this country as early as about 1925, and the production of which in recent years, as I showed in a letter to the *Freethinker* about six months ago, is increasing at a rapid rate.

C. A. MORRISON

Obituary

W. A. ROGERSON

WE regret to record the death of Mr. W. A. Rogerson, of Vancouver, B.C. Mr. Rogerson will be well remembered by the older generation of Freethinkers in Manchester, where he lived during the larger part of his life. Always a very ardent Freethinker his was a familiar face at the meetings held in the old Secular Hall, in Rusholme Road. A man of wide reading, steadfastness of character and opinion, he radiated an influence that many must have felt, and who were the better for his acquaintance. For some years he has lived in Vancouver, and the friend who, at Mr. Rogerson's request, acquaints us of his death bears an expected testimony to his character and sterling intelligence.

For some years he had been in ill-health, and in a recent letter that lies before us, says that he feels the end cannot be far off, and that his only fear is that "certain of the most essential organs are so healthy in me that I fear I shall have to endure an extensive elongation of suffering." He adds, "as far as activity is concerned I move about among my books and receive unqualified pleasure from them. I am quite as happy and as contented as it is possible to be. There is nothing to be sorry about, nothing to regret."

A brave fine character, in the hope of benefiting others and in view of the nature of complaint, arranged that his body was to be handed over to the proper quarters for purposes of scientific research.

W. A. Rogerson has left us with the memory of a brave man, far above the average in intellectual equipment and moral strength. He takes a worthy place in that mausoleum of memories which is the perquisite of us older men. These memories become the more valuable with the increase of our own years.—C.C.

JOHN TALWARN JONES

WE regret to record the death of Mr. J. T. Jones of Pontypridd. Mr. Jones was a Freethinker of long standing, and one who stood high in the opinion of all who knew him. He was President of the Porth Hospital, and held

many public offices, and was well-known as an unbeliever. He was on terms of personal friendship with G. W. Foote, J. T. Lloyd, and the present editor of the *Freethinker*. All received his hospitality when in the neighbourhood of Pontypridd, and carried away with them pleasant memories of an interesting man. We present our sympathy to his son and daughter who survive him.

J. H. DANNATT

WE regret to announce the death of a veteran Birkenhead Freethinker, J. H. Dannatt, which took place on November 16, in his 85th year. A strong feature in his character was his loyalty to the movement, his principles, and his humanitarian outlook. As a member of the National Secular Society for many years, he was always keenly interested in his work. His wish for Secular Service was duly honoured by his family, and Mr. G. Whitehead officiated at the interment which took place in Bebington Cemetery, Cheshire, on November 19.—R.H.R.

CHARLES PORTER

WE have to record the death of another member of the older Tyneside band of Freethinkers in the person of Charles Porter. Mr. Porter was keenly interested in scientific questions, particularly in astronomy, and his models demonstrating the movements of the solar system have been, and we presume are, in use in a number of colleges and universities in this country. He was a man who held to his heretical opinions with quiet firmness and was associated with the old Newcastle Branch. Many of the older Tynesiders, resident in different parts of the country, will recall his personality with respect and affection. He died at the age of 77. At his request there was a secular funeral at which an address was delivered by Mr. J. T. Brighton.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD NOVEMBER 24, 1940

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Bryant, Seibert, Ebury, Perry, Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented.

New members were admitted to North London, Glasgow, and the Parent Society.

Lecture arrangements were discussed and speakers appointed.

The President gave a summary of the damage done by enemy action in the Pioneer Press premises. Various items of a minor nature were dealt with and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street): 7.15, A Lecture.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Clarion Rooms, Wellington Street): 7.0, Muriel Whitefield—"Some Undiscussed Aspects of War."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 3.0, Miss Edith Moore.

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