

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

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Views and Opinions

God and Us

GEORGE JACOB HOLYOAKE once defined Secularism as a religion that gave God no trouble. As a retort that definition will pass, but it has misleading connotations. Certainly the Atheist does not ask for service from God, nor does he slyly slander him with praises that embody censure. The Atheist neither thanks God for the sun shining, nor blames him when it is shrouded by fog. He does not excuse God by saying what a man soweth that shall he reap, because that is flagrantly untrue. What men sow other men reap, but this exhibition of causation has no ethical quality about it. The whole of the people of the world to-day are suffering the consequences of the actions of men who are now dead, or lolling in the comfort of a salaried retirement. The sowing was done by one group of men; the consequences are being reaped by people who had little or nothing to do with the sowing. And a man may sow his seeds in the best of soil and with the greatest skill, only to find his efforts destroyed by what pious insurance people call an "act of God." There is no perfect ethical relation between act and consequence anywhere, and outside the human circle no such consequences exist.

That the Atheist does not trouble himself about God is true, but that is exactly what the gods do not wish. Gods live by being bothered, and the more intensive the barrage of bother the happier they are; the more mankind is concerned with what the gods have done and what they may do the more satisfied they become. Like that great showman, Barnum, who is credited with saying that he didn't care a damn whether the people praised him or blamed him so long as they talked about him, the gods were very early in the field in their recognition of the value of advertising. After all the publicity agents that keep film stars before the public and help to establish the importance of politicians are a very small body compared with the army of those who realize that if the gods are to live they must be kept before people in the morning when they arise and in the evening when they go to bed. Gods can survive revolution, as was shown on the famous occasion when Satan fought against a Totalitarian rule in heaven, lost, and was thrown into hell. Long before "big business" the gods recognized how indispensable was advertising. And the advertising campaign that has been organized by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York proves that they and God agree upon this point.

Puzzled Piety

Mr. Beverley Baxter writes a weekly "column" in the *Sunday Chronicle*. In the issue for March 9, he publishes the following letter:—

My neighbour's child was buried in the ruins of the

Parish Church which I have attended since I was a girl. I shall never enter that church again if they rebuild it, nor any other church. I have lost faith in God. How can he allow such things? Either he is powerless to prevent them, or he does not care. Whichever it may be the utter misery of the world is a poor advertisement for a God of Love, who exists only in the brains of fools.

Now methinks the lady doth protest too late and too strongly. For many, many milleniums the gods have been carrying on in the way about which this lady complains. There really is nothing worse in permitting a church to be smashed than there is in allowing a theatre to be similarly treated. And as to children being killed in this and similar ways, or the innocent suffering through the faults of others, well, well, that has been going on ever since the human race existed. Numbers in such matters do not count. A man is not more of a murderer because instead of killing a single person he wipes out the whole family. Nor is there really more suffering when a hundred people have the toothache that when one has it. You cannot reckon suffering as a miser reckons his pounds sterling. Suffering must be individual in all cases. No one can share it with others. A toothache must be *my* toothache, it can never be *ours*, or dealt with on the co-operative plan. To think otherwise is to become a victim of the clotted bosh now being hawked by preachers and the B.B.C. about Christ sharing our pain. If God is, he is as he was and always has been, treating human beings as boys kill flies in wanton sport. The lady is late in her lament. It, to use a colloquialism, does more credit to her heart than her head.

But Mr. Baxter gallantly rushes in where better equipped men would hesitate to tread, and sets out to clear away the lady's difficulties. And he does it thus. He begins by telling a story of the Bishop of Bradford who, when his son was killed, wrote saying, "He is more alive now than when he was here. He is seeing more, knowing more, and enjoying more." Now I wonder what the Bishop of Bradford would have said if someone had remarked, "What a pity he did not die earlier." After all, most parents want their children to know more, to be happier, etc. One wonders whether anyone really believes in the kind of rubbish marketed by the Bishop. It strikes us that if the Bishop really believes what he says, he ought to send the German who killed his son a letter of appreciation for what he had done. Actually we expect the Bishop acted as would other decent parents—plus the mouthing of familiar verbiage.

Good God!

Having fired off that broadside, intended to prove that we are better dead than we are alive, Mr. Baxter rolls up his sleeves and proceeds to explain things, as he says, "quietly and logically." He begins by remarking that "there are no arsenals in heaven." That fits in with the Bishop's knowledge of heaven. He says we are better off there than here. Mr. Baxter adds that there are no arsenals there. Every little helps. But then Mr. Baxter makes the mistake of leaving heaven and coming back below the stratosphere. He says, "from the skies we receive nothing but sunlight and rain." Any man may dilate on heaven, there are no facts with which to confront him. He is as safe from contradiction as a B.B.C.

preacher. But there are things that come to us from the skies—there is lightning, for example, that has caused destruction to life and property. Even sunshine, in the immoderate quantities with which God—presumably—sends it may do a great deal of harm. It may turn a fruitful stretch of country into an uninhabitable desert. And rain? Well, one need only think of the devastating floods that have been caused by that. The truth is that God when he gets to work is, as *Alf* would have said, "too blooming wholesale," even the Church of England prayer book, when asking God for rain, mildly insinuates that he must not lose his head and act as he did in the days of Noah.

Descending from heaven to earth, and so bringing himself well within rifle shot, Mr. Baxter tells the lady indignantly, "You are accusing God of forcing the war upon us. He did nothing of the sort, we forced it on ourselves." Who forced it on whom? Did the young men of nineteen, who are called up to fight, force war on the world? Is any individual or any group of individuals wholly to blame for the war? And if that is really so, are they the ones who suffer? In any country it is only a handful of people who are immediately responsible for war, but they are certainly not the ones who suffer, or who suffer most. Besides, Mr. Baxter ought, after every few paragraphs, to mobilize his intelligence and make up his mind as to just where he is. One moment he is backing the Bishop, who says we are really better when we are dead, in which case the war-makers are—unintentionally maybe—public benefactors, the next moment he denounces war and tells us that we deserve all the misery that war brings. Really, Mr. Baxter should reflect that even his most ardent admirers may now and again consider that two and two make four.

So discarding the benefits that being killed bring us (see the Bishop of Bradford) Mr. Baxter suddenly plays what he considers a trump card. God does not prevent war because we have "the gift of free will. We are free to hate or make war, to fight or to make friends." No, no, my dear Don Quixote, that is not an exact statement of fact. If one man kills another, while I am standing by and have the power to prevent his doing so, yet remain inactive, our law—not God's law—says that I am an accessory to the fact and may be punished. A plea of "free-will" would not avail; certainly not the kind of "free-will" which Mr. Baxter has in mind.

The date of this issue of the *Freethinker* is March 23. On that date, the King (who became one with our tribal deity at the Westminster Coronation service), and the Archbishops and religious leaders generally, have announced a day of National Prayer. For what? To ask God to do what Mr. Baxter says God cannot do, interfere with things and bring peace. And all our Archbishops, Bishops, and clergymen, and Mr. Baxter, agree that God can do this—provided we get more guns, more aeroplanes, more ships—and full help from the United States. He cannot induce the Germans to give in now, but he will—so say the organizers of the Day of Prayer—help us to give the Germans a thorough licking, which will mean the suffering of German men, women and children who have done nothing whatever to bring about the war. Mr. Baxter had better consult the Bishop of Bradford, and find out just where, and for what, he stands.

But, bless the man's want of understanding, no one has ever denied that man may be free to choose whether he shall make friends or enemies, what he shall eat, drink or wear, or what he shall do in any given set of circumstances. It is not, and never has been, the issue as to whether man was free to choose or not. Choice involves freedom of decision. The real question at issue is the determination, not the fact, of choice. Why does a man choose this rather than that?

In fairness to Mr. Baxter it must be registered that he says in quite plain language, "I am no philosopher." No one has a right to blame him for that. I am no engineer, I am no painter, oh, there are many, many things concerning which I am as a child. But on all these things I refrain from trying to instruct other people. And after all there are many other ways of getting a living than newspaper writing, or if one must serve as a "columnist," it is possible to write on a subject that one does understand. And even the measure and value of one's understanding on any subject may be indicated by how much those we are trying to instruct already know.

Nature and Man * * *

It is through neglecting the simple advice we have given that Mr. Baxter is led to imitate the foolish utterings of a B.B.C. 7.50 preacher and write, "We are a little more important in the scheme of things than the weeds on a rubbish heap." To ourselves, and to one another, certainly. But are we of greater importance to the non-human world? How many times has the drying up of certain areas, or the inundations of seas and rivers made huge tracts of land no longer habitable by man? Malaria has over and over again robbed groups of men of their energy and has even been an active agent in the downfalls of people. Seas now roll where once a people flourished, and volcanic outburst have destroyed prosperous cities. Certainly we are important to one another, more important, I believe, than most people believe. Man rules nature because as Bacon said, there is a way of obeying her that makes us Nature's master. But in nature, apart from the animal and human group a weed or rose bush, a poisonous plant or one beneficially edible stand precisely on the same level.

I just notice one other phrase here, because in a more subtle phrasing it is being used by some of our leading theologians. We are asked, "Who gave pity, who gave you love? You did not put them there yourselves." Now in all kindness I can assure Mr. Baxter that one must not talk of ethical qualities as though they are things that can be "put" into man as feathers are stuck in one's headgear. They are not things that can be handed round, they are qualities that one can see in germ in the lowest forms of associated life. They can be seen developing in newer and "higher" forms as animal life develops, as the human group appears and continues that development. The story of animated life is a story that must be studied as a whole, not taken in bits from religious preachers who have not yet shaken themselves free from the clutches of primitive superstition. I regret that Mr. Baxter is no philosopher, but that is, after all, a relative term, and I feel certain that if he can be induced to throw on one side his religious clichés, he has the capacity for providing his public with better stuff than that contained in the article I have noted.

CHAPMAN COHEN

SURSUM CORDA

"Lift Up Your Hearts!" each morning comes moaning on the air
As B.B.C. uplifters bid us for work prepare.
And as the day goes forward more dope is cast abroad,
Lest we forget our duty to our Almighty Lord.
In many subtle guises we're warned to dread the *rahd*
Which threatens every sinner who fails to trust in *Gahd*.
But day by day Home Service (worries meanwhile try us)
Proclaims that we shall NOT win, unless we turn more pious.
But note the Forces menu—not burdened by such dope,
Or soldier, sailor, airman would lose all vict'ry-hope.
Oh, wad some Power the giftie gie us to set us free
From droning, moaning preachers who CANT for B.B.C.

The Unceasing Conflict

In many respects an excellent work, Professor J. Y. Simpson's *Landmarks in the Struggle between Science and Religion* (Hodder), is perhaps more striking in its title than its presentation. Still, it is bolder than the same writer's *Spiritual Interpretation of Nature and Man and the Attainment of Immortality*, which were eagerly accepted by the religious and conventional Press as crumbs of comfort emanating from a semi-religious man of science. Still, in his preface to his *Landmarks*, Dr. Simpson observes that: "Of previous works dealing with this particular subject, two in particular have held a deserved pre-eminence—J. W. Draper's *The Conflict between Religion and Science*, and the monumental study of A. D. White, entitled *A History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*. The fact that these two works are issued in new editions to this day indicates the stronghold that they have secured on the minds of those who are interested in what has proved to be one of the most living questions that stirred the thoughts of previous generations."

Draper's work was published nearly seventy years ago, and Dr. White's two volume history in 1896, and were it possible to publish the latter in a cheaper form, this would certainly command a very extensive sale. Unlike Dr. Draper's masterpiece, White's work is richly documented, and its bibliographies enhance its value as a standard authority. And after a careful perusal of Simpson's volume in which he avowedly endeavours to soften some of the indictments of his predecessors, there seems extremely little needing qualification in the pronouncements of the two earlier historians. Dr. Simpson is by no means strictly orthodox, and may be regarded as a Theist deeply impressed by what he considers the humanism of Christ. He is completely convinced of the truth of organic evolution, and the Babylonian origin of the Hebrew creation myth is frankly conceded. Less candour, perhaps, is displayed concerning the burning of the Alexandrian Library. For, apart from the passing mention of Hypatia's murder, there is nothing to indicate that the destruction of the Library and Museum was the work of a frenzied rabble instigated by a ferocious and fanatical Christian monk.

This magnificent temple of science resulted from the impetus given to the Greeks by the Asiatic campaigns of Alexander. Simpson presents a pleasing picture of its cultural importance in the Egyptian City. "Built," he states, "for the preservation, the increase and diffusion of knowledge, this world-famous school poured out a steady stream of light, especially on the pathways and structure of the heavens, as from the white-marbled Pharos from the harbour mouth was illumined the course of the coasting vessels. It composed the most famous library in the world (700,000 manuscripts) as also zoological and botanical gardens, astronomical observatory, and chemical and physical laboratories. . . . The names of Euclid (c. 330-275 B.C.), Archimedes (287-212 B.C.), and Apollonius are in a general way synonymous with elementary plane geometry, mechanics, and analytical geometry respectively, while its librarian, Eratosthenes was the first to put geography on a scientific basis, giving incidentally, an amazingly close approximation to the correct circumference of the earth."

In this ancient seat of science the accumulated discoveries of preceding centuries were at the student's disposal and cleared the path for future progress. Heraclides determined the axial rotation of the earth once in 24 hours, Aristarchus propounded the opinion that our globe and the other planetary bodies revolve in circular paths around a central stationary luminary. Again, the striking catalogue of the stars prepared by Hipparchus made possible the discovery of the precession of the equinoxes. But, with the impending

triumph of barbarism and religion, all this was lost for centuries, only to be painfully regained with the weakening of theology and the reawakening of Christian Europe by the Arabian restoration of science, the recovery of Greek letters and the enlargement of outlook necessitated by the geographical discoveries of Columbus and his compeers.

In the early as well as in the later Christian Church, the infallibility of Old Testament teaching concerning genesis, geology, anthropology and history was beyond dispute. "This rigidity of attitude," Simpson notes, "was the main element in provoking the inevitable struggle during the succeeding centuries." This inflexible doctrine was adopted from the synagogue. And Simpson avers that no reader of Draper and White can avoid the feeling that even "a profound knowledge of the theology of the day may be accompanied by an utter lack of what Christianity is in practice, as also of the wantonness with which again and again throughout the ages the cause of Christ has been misrepresented by self-appointed agents." From this, and other passages it is to be inferred that Dr. Simpson's concept of Christianity is not that of the Churches: "For if history has made one thing clear, it is in proportion to the degree in which institutionalism is regarded as primary the spirit of Christianity departs."

That one or two outstanding Christians betrayed a tiny tincture of the scientific spirit Simpson urges in extenuation of the general obscurantism of the clergy. Yet, he admits that: "With the nominal Christianizing of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, a sort of blight settled down for a time on the world of thought." Also, he observes that: "In 529 the Emperor Justinian, who was a patron of learning, closed the schools of Athens because of their Neoplatonic and anti-Christian tendencies, while that of Alexandria had practically come to an end with the murder of Hypatia (A.D. 415). The torch of learning thenceforth passed for a space into the hands of Hindu and Arab; and although it is still difficult to estimate exactly . . . how much of solid contribution to learning was made, particularly during the tenth century which marked the zenith of Moorish culture in Spain, yet it would seem that the Muhammadan civilization of those days was, both on its intellectual and practical sides, superior to that of Europe in the Middle Ages." This seems a very tepid appraisal of Arabian superiority, although our author concedes that Islam was tolerant towards science at a time when the Christian Church was its deadly antagonist.

But much later than the Medieval Period, and during, and long subsequent to the Reformation, the old persecuting spirit prevailed. Simpson admits that it is hard to realize how every advance was impeded, step by step, by a Church strongly entrenched in tradition, while proclaiming its power to send to heaven or to hell. The names of Bruno, Copernicus and Galileo remind us of the agonizing struggle. Even Kepler's *Epitome* was placed on the Index. The Accademia del Cimento, whose members pledged themselves at all costs to strive for truth, soon had their Academy suppressed by Papal command. Indeed, our own Royal Society was accused of attempting "to destroy the established religion, of injuring the universities, and upsetting ancient and modern learning."

That the Protestant protagonists were as inimical to the claims of science as their Papal opponents is notorious. In the eyes of Luther, Copernicus was both knave and fool, while Aristotle is stigmatized as "that Greek buffoon, who like a spectre has befooled the Church." Calvin's vindictiveness towards the physician Servetus disgraces his name. As for Rome, Simpson roundly declares that: "The stain of the Inquisition as a whole is indeed ineradicable, while the idea of prohibition expressed through the Index Ex-

purgatorius is a standing insult to reason itself. Yet even these are but incidents in that century-long, debasing and degrading hold of Latin Christianity upon Europe from the sixth to the sixteenth century when, with many notable exceptions of disinterested piety and self-sacrificing life, the papal system created a deadening atmosphere, both as regards physical well-being and intellectual culture, in which it could maintain itself, primarily in its own sordid interests of temporal power and material estate."

Simpson interestingly surveys the idea of progress, and insists that this concept is essentially modern. The Greeks and other earlier peoples placed the Golden Age in the past. Civilization, it was assumed, ran in cycles. In Christendom, even if its expanding influence appeared progressive, the Church's avowed aim was the preparation of human souls for the after life.

The idea of secular progress found an able advocate in Francis Bacon, who regarded earlier ages as "the youth time of the world," while the Elizabethans were really the ancient ones of our globe. And Bacon assures us that, "if the errors of the past are understood and avoided there is every hope of steady progress in the modern age."

The scientific developments of the seventeenth century strengthened human confidence in the reality of progress. In the eighteenth, faith in the practical perfection of the human species in coming generations inspired the minds and emotions of many eminent men. And in the nineteenth century, the postulate of progress became almost axiomatic. But with the many vexatious problems that have since arisen, the long accepted concept of inevitable improvement has been rudely challenged, and the direst predictions are common. The tragedy of 1914-18 encouraged the sceptics, and the present conflict serves to sustain the view that the concept of progress is a mischievous delusion. Dr. Inge now scorns it as a completely shattered idol. Dr. Simpson, on the other hand, inclines to the opinion that the set-back is temporary. He stresses the fact that, despite retrogressions, the leading trend of organic evolution, from the dawn of life to the present-day has been upward and onward. He urges that the seventy generations which separate us from the mighty Athenians of old are insignificant in comparison with the period covered by men's ascent from primeval savagery. Now, he assures us, "a long series of practical discoveries has raised the standard of life, at any rate on the side of material comfort for humanity, and particularly for those whose opportunities in the past were not so great."

T. F. PALMER

(Continued from next column)

us that it is our duty to perpetuate all our past sins in the Multiplying Mirror of Memory? As if forsooth we were any more the causers of our past selves, as of our fathers' sins."

The consequences of the good and bad deeds our fathers did, or our earlier selves, fall on our heads in showers now refreshing, now scorching—alike undeserved by our present selves.

"Let us remember it is only fools who flatter themselves on their past virtues, and only sadder fools who plague themselves for the faults of Adam, their forefathers, or their past selves."

Here I leave Bellamy, but old Omar Khayyam—a thousand years before summed up, in his undying verse, the self-same thoughts.

Oh Thou, who Man of baser
Earth did'st make,
And who with Eden, did'st
devise the Snake;
For all the Sin, where with
the Face of Man
Is blacken'd, Man's
Forgiveness give—and take.

HENRY J. HAYWARD

"The Multiplying Mirror of Memory"

BELLAMY ON

"Original" and Past Sin

EDWARD BELLAMY wrote *Looking Backward*, which is more than a Book! it is a clarion call to Humanity! to regenerate its social life and bring to Earth peace, plenty, with co-operative brotherhood—yes with play and laughter too. To-day! as far-flung as civilization itself, a thousand societies are pleading for the ideals of *Looking Backward*—to be adopted as a practical solution to adjust the social ills and inequalities which afflict the World.

Edward Bellamy early in life swept from his mind the cobwebs of theological creeds which are a full stop to all adventurous thought—he freed his mentality from the illusions which have prisoned most men's thoughts—and instead, faced the tangled problems of Life with clear creative sanity, from which *Looking Backward* was born.

In a strange little known volume entitled *Dr. Heiderhoff's Process*, which Bellamy also wrote—he unveils his thoughts, on not only the "Original Sin"—with which Christianity has burdened and saddened Humanity for a hundred generations—but Bellamy also pleads that Mankind should not only wipe "off its slate" this "Original Sin" of decadent theology—but also that we ourselves should not brood on our earlier and younger errors—for Bellamy contends our Yesterdays' selves are different entities to our To-days' selves.

But let Bellamy speak for himself:—

THE WATERS OF LETHE

"The ancients had a beautiful fable about the Waters of Lethe, in which the Soul that was bathed straightway, forgot all that was sad and evil in its previous life; the most stained, disgraced and mournful of Souls, came forth from Lethe's Waters—afresh, blithe, and bright as a Laby."

"So different from the absurd cleansing blood of Christ, which but turns sins red, instead of black, and leaves them in record."

"Just think what a blessed thing for men, it would be, if their memories could be cleansed and disinfected at the same time their hearts were purified."

"Then the most disgraced and ashamed, might live good and happy lives again."

"Men would be redeemed from their sins, in fact, not merely in name."

DEAD YESTERDAY'S—WHY FRET ABOUT THEM

"The Law of Moral retribution is precisely as blind, deaf, and meaningless, and entitled to be respected as little as the law of physical retribution.

"Of the two, the much abused law of physical retribution is decidedly more moral, in the sense of obvious fairness, than the so-called Moral Divine Law—for whilst the hardened offenders virtually escape all pangs of conscience, they cannot escape the diseases and accidents which attend vice and violence."

"Some pious foggy-minded people believe in a vague way that the working of moral retribution is somewhat more intelligent, just and equitable than physical retribution."

These religious folk possess a nebulous notion that the Law of Moral Retribution, is in some peculiar way, their God's Law, whilst the law of physical retribution is the law of what they call Nature—somehow not so much their God's Law as the other is—such an absurdity has only to be stated to be exposed.

SAD FOOLS WHO PLAGUE THEMSELVES

"Is there not enough sorrow and wrong in the World, without having Moralists and Parsons to teach

(Continued on preceding column)

What is Freethought?

I.

It must be very disconcerting to anyone to consult the *Encyclopædia Britannica* upon the subject of Freethought. For it is not given so much as a mention. A Freethinker is defined as denoting "anyone who considers problems of religion and religious history in a purely rational manner without regard to the authority of a Church. The term is applied more especially to the Deists of the eighteenth century. (See Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 1876)."

And that is all.

Few subjects indeed are so briefly and inadequately treated in this, the principal modern encyclopædia. Why? Does Freethought deserve no more? Is a Freethinker merely what this book defines as being one? Or is the whole subject so surrounded with prejudice and distaste that the publishers dismiss it as hastily as possible? Is there nothing on the subject except Leslie Stephen's book in 1876? Was that work really the last word?

Of course such treatment is too puerile to laugh at. But so far as Freethought is concerned, it is typical puerility. Freedom of all kinds is at a heavy discount nowadays: thinking (and especially bold, independent personal thinking) never was popular.

Yet rarely, perhaps never, was Freethinking more necessary than it is today, when Authority of all kinds (Church, State and lesser breeds of authoritarianism such as trade or professional associations or unions) are endeavouring to control and standardize thinking by means of books, press, radio, films, and platform.

But what is Freethought?

Most people will tell you that it is a mere synonym for Atheism, or a mere synonym for Atheism and Agnosticism, or for Deism—for any antithesis to Theism. Very likely a free-thinker may be an Atheist; most free-thinkers are. But that is not by any means the whole of the matter. Freethought, as I understand it, is a much wider term than Atheism, for it covers a vaster field than religion, namely the whole of human life and thought. A true Freethinker ought to be a free-thinker in every department of thought: in religion, in morals, in politics, in economics, in science, in literature, art, music, in personal conduct—in short, in everything. No doubt few Freethinkers are. A free-thinker may have an emancipated mind upon one subject, such as religion, and be a timid and hide-bound reactionary in politics, or be narrow-minded in matters of personal conduct, or be a prejudiced classicist in literature, and so forth.

Undoubtedly the term Freethinker has become associated in most people's minds with one type of freedom of thought; namely upon religious and supernatural matters. That I think is a pity. For freethinking is vitally necessary, indeed essential, in all mental spheres.

I should define the absolute pure doctrine of freethinking as the independent use of the human mind untrammelled by any *diktat* of Authority uttered *ex cathedra* upon any subject whatsoever. And I should claim for free-thinking no less than this: that it is the most important thing in the whole world. A Freethinker sees in thought the source of all truth. He believes that the mind of man by its own strength, and without any help from authoritative or supernatural revelation is best fitted to arrive at Truth. Thousands, perhaps millions, of people are true Freethinkers in this sense of the term, and would accept this doctrine if it were made clear to them.

You may object that in divorcing Freethought from

Atheism, what I am expounding is not orthodox Freethought. (In other words, you accuse me of thinking too freely about free-thinking. Orthodoxy has been defined, you know, as "my doxy," and heterodoxy as "your doxy"; and there is something in that.)

But what I am urging after all is only that the word "free-thinking" shall mean what it says, and not what prejudiced authoritarians have made it mean. Atheist was for long, and still is, in many circles, a term of abuse, contempt, and horror; and it was very convenient to use that term to stifle freedom of thought of all descriptions. So a Freethinker became an Atheist. But if those two words mean the same thing, there is no need for one of them. I suggest they do not. Atheism, indeed, may be the result of free-thinking upon religious matters. But surely not necessarily. If a man is an Atheist because his father was an Atheist before him, and because he has given no thought to the matter (as many people are so-called "Christians,") he is certainly, I submit, no thinker of any kind and certainly not a "free-thinker."

By the way, it should be recognized that Atheism is a term of varying application and significance. Its meaning depends upon the Theism to which it is opposed. Even early Christians were termed "Atheists" by their persecutors. And Christians to-day themselves may rightly be called by their detested name of Atheists since they deny all gods but their own, and Atheism literally means god-denial. It is certain, that, in modern usage, Atheism may mean one of many intellectual positions. To name some of these; Atheism may mean: (1) a denial that there is any one Supreme Object of reverence, (2) a denial that any one such supreme Object is also the all-inclusive Reality behind the Universe, (3) a denial that there is any such all-inclusive Reality at all. (Hegel denied that Spinoza was an Atheist and declared that he was an "acosmist" only), (4) a denial that the Reality or Power which rules the world is worthy of man's trust, (5) a denial that this Power is a Being with whom we can hold personal communion.

Indeed, it may be said that we are all Atheists in relation to some forms of Theism, but also (if the profound thought of Feuerbach be accepted) almost no civilized man can be. For Feuerbach in his *Essence of Christianity*, declared: "He alone is the true Atheist to whom the predicates of the Divine Being—for instance love, wisdom, and justice—are nothing, not he to whom the *subject* of these predicates is nothing." In other words, Feuerbach's idea was that no man of ethical principles can be an Atheist whatever his doubt or denial of god or gods.

This brief analysis of Atheism will serve to show that Freethought is the wider term. Deism, which rejects supernatural revelation, might be similarly analysed to show that Freethought is also wider than Deism. Indeed, free-thought, like the ambition of Lord Bacon, takes all knowledge (not merely religion or irreligion) for its province.

Freedom of thought in the fullest and most literal sense of those words, of course, has no existence. The mind can never be completely free. It must always be subject to itself, to its own limitations, to its education or lack of it, to psychological and logical laws, to heredity, to health, and other factors. But it need not be enslaved by other minds in the sense of being cribbed, cabined and confused by their mere "authoritative" pronouncements. It can think for itself on its own lines instead of rigidly keeping to lines laid down for it by others. To use a metaphor, it can move like a bus all over the road and not like a tram-car confined to rails.

(Continued on page 143)

Acid Drops

Now that the action of the B.B.C. in dismissing people to whose opinions those in control—not wholly made up of B.B.C. officials—object, has been before the House of Commons, we hope its members will not rest until a definite stop has been put to this attempt to establish Hitlerism in this country. Mr. Duff Cooper, Minister of Information (quite a misnomer, by the way, for his office is mainly to limit information)—after thinking there was no need for interference, was forced to promise to ask the B.B.C. to reconsider the cases of those who had been, so far as the B.B.C. is concerned, prohibited from earning their livelihood in a perfectly honest way. He explained that some of those discharged did not believe in the policy of "The People's Convention"; they were present at the meeting "in ignorance of the real motives of the gathering."

We sincerely hope that Parliament will not permit the subject to be shelved in this way. Mr. Duff Cooper, as one might expect, only makes the matter worse. Quite definitely, he says, in effect, "If certain people hold opinions with which I and the B.B.C. do not agree, then, so far as we can we will see that they are starved to death or submission." And that is precisely what we are complaining of in our chief enemies of to-day, Hitler and Mussolini. If the opinion expressed by someone is illegal, vile as punishment for opinion is, it is the law that should act, and a Minister of a liberal Government fighting for freedom should be the first to act. If starvation is to be the penalty of holding opinions with which those wielding authority do not agree, what is the use of calling the present war a fight for freedom? Decency of language and behaviour any such body as the B.B.C. is justified in demanding. But to take opinions, whether religious, social or political, and make that the chief test of whether a man should be permitted to earn a living or not, is one of the vilest and most cowardly forms of oppression.

The B.B.C. has played this game for a long while, and we stood almost alone for a long time in protesting against it. Now we hope that as it has been raised, those boycotted will refuse to give way, and Members of the House will continue to agitate for the cleansing of the stables. To tack that much on to our war for liberty, for the rights of man should help to show the world, and particularly the U.S.A. where they have much greater freedom on the Radio than we have, that we are in earnest in our professions of freedom of thought.

One more word on the B.B.C. Mr. J. B. Priestley has now returned to the microphone, but his speeches lack, in our judgment, the independence they once had. Speaking at the National Trade Union Club, on March 12, he said, "I am walking the tight rope every Sunday evening, and I doubt if it will be possible to continue because you people give me no assistance. I have had to fight the whole time to put my point of view. I have had attacks from the Right, but I have not had the slightest assistance from the Left. . . . You are being out-maneuvred all the time." In plain English the B.B.C. have managed, to some extent, to muzzle Mr. Priestley, and no man can give of his best in such circumstances.

The remedy for this lies in Mr. Priestley's own words. Let him and others refuse to speak for the B.B.C. unless they are treated with due respect. And let them publish the reasons why they do refuse. It is monstrous for the people who rule the B.B.C. to prate about our fight for freedom when the degrading control of the Reith-haunted organization refuses them the first right of all free men. It is useless to first of all submit to this dictatorship as to what one may say, and how one may say it, and complain afterwards of being muzzled. If this were done, the B.B.C. would then be known as one of the most dishonest institutions we have, and those who serve it would be known for what they are. When people voluntarily wear a muzzle they have small grounds for complaining of its inconvenience.

The Vicar of All Saints, Knightsbridge, advises all Christians to deliberately boycott theatres as a protest

against their being open on Sunday. It is not clear whether the Vicar wishes the boycott to be confined to Sundays. In that case no Christian is compelled to attend. But if the vicar includes week days, then in turn all theatre-goers should boycott the Churches. And what is to be done about plays and the like being broadcast on Sundays? Will all Christians refrain from listening, or do they already do so?

The Rev. T. G. Jalland is convinced that God did not create us "because he stood to gain by it." Then what the devil did he create us for? No one clamours to be born, or is the worse off for not being born. If this is not true, then it must be true that God punishes unthinkable billions of people who are not here, and no matter how many he does create he cannot be said to reduce the infinite number that have not yet made an appearance on earth. And even those whom God has created have a right to ask why they were not created earlier. Consider the time they have lost!

But, having been born, man—every man—has the right to demand that the job should have been done efficiently. And that it has certainly not. Here and there a good specimen appears, but even the best might be better, the "middlings" would stand obvious improvement, the worst that appear on the scene look like the "throw-outs" in a greengrocer's back garden during a hot summer. We agree that an impartial thinker will not count it to God's credit that he made man, but he really must have done it for gain. Gods must be worshipped or they would wither out of existence. Like fairies and goblins and bugbears generally, it is in the mind they live, and if the mind is once properly cleansed they fade away.

And what a pity it is that these parsons when they say such things as "God did not make us for his own gain," have not the mental alertness to look all round what they say. Whenever a parson is going to say anything about religion he should think twice—and put the first thought in his will. People are often kindest to the dead.

Judge Hargreaves, Chairman of Fulham Conscientious Objectors' Tribunal, has a pretty wit. One of the objectors before the Committee pleaded that he spent his days preaching the Gospel. The Chairman retorted that it was not a sufficient reason why he should not do something useful in life. That is enough to make our Lord Chief Justice keep awake all night, and for several nights.

The *Daily Telegraph's* Special Correspondent tells us something of a "remarkable figure" in the British Military mission engaged in fighting the Italians in Abyssinia. This officer, he tells us, has been a noted amateur boxer and never travels without a copy of the New Testament. "He never refuses a fight if challenged." He gives details of his knocking out an Italian officer in an hotel lounge. Christian morality (and *New Testament* morality be it noted) is an extremely flexible commodity. With no Holy Volume to guide him this officer might have been what is contemptuously known, in army parlance, as a Cissie.

According to the *Daily Mirror*, Sir W. Citrine has refused to broadcast to America because the B.B.C. wanted to delete some of the things he wished to say. Sir Walter seems to be greatly surprised at this censorship, though he is by no means the first to refuse to bow to it. The *Daily Mirror* adds:—

The cutting out of what he wanted to say was not important. What was important and profoundly disturbing was the notion that seemed to prevail that responsible men could be dictated to as to what they felt able to say and that in any conflict of judgment the bureaucrat could muzzle the democrat.

We are glad to note that the B.B.C. is considered "bureaucratic" by other journals—though our own readers will know how often and how strongly we have stressed the point. But we wonder whether Sir Walter will carry the matter any further. Will he just pass over this impudent censorship in a "dignified" sulk?

TO CORRESPONDENTS

"FREETHINKER" WAR DAMAGE FUND.—D. Webb, 5s.; E. Syers, 10s.; H. Dimmock, 2s. 6d.; T. Mosley, 3s.; J. Irving, 20s.; F. Muston, 5s.; A. T. Richell, 5s.; J. C. & A. C. A., 5s.; Mrs. E. A. Chilcott, 10s. 6d. Correction—"E. S. Dea," in last week's issue should have been E. S. Lea.

E. HUGHES.—There is no need for alarm concerning the *Freethinker*. The great difficulty is the paper shortage. The last order is that only one third of the paper supplied in 1939 will be available for use in the future. Some new adaptations may be necessary, but we hope to be able to pull through without any serious diminution in the reading matter.

G. PRISCOR.—MS. to hand. We hope to publish soon, but we are rather overcrowded at the moment.

J. H. HUMPHREY.—Much obliged for cuttings. We shall be in Glasgow on March 23.

S.L.—The men who have been boycotted by the B.B.C. have only themselves to blame. When a man sacrifices his independence for the sake of gaining publicity he has little of which to complain when he reaps the consequences of his duplicity. For years we have been advising that the censorship should not be tolerated. The B.B.C. is about as good an instrument of a disguised tyranny as anything we have

H. C. COMPTON.—We have not yet seen the volume on Christian ethics you name. But from the scores of Christian works we have read on the subject they have impressed us with the feeling that without a good Christian moral sense, immorality would be robbed of three-fourths of its attractiveness.

FOR Advertising and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—W. Perry, £1.

E. KNIGHTON.—Mr. Cohen would have written you, but no address was given. You have his deepest sympathy in your bereavement.

W. A. FAIRCLOUGH.—We do not recall the attitude taken by the person named in relation to the war of 1914.

H. R. THOMAS.—It is a very old story. One ought always to remember that reformers are not hated for the evil they do, but for the good they may accomplish.

T. MOSLEY.—Pleased to hear from you again. We share your appreciation of the work of Mr. T. F. Palmer, and Mr. H. Cutner. The latter will be pleased to know that you found his essays on "Freethought Classics" very interesting. Something in that line in pamphlet form might, as you suggest, be done in the future. Also pleased to know that in our *Determinism and Freewill* we put the argument for our opponents better than they put it themselves. We always try to make the case we are answering as strong as we can. You will be pleased to learn that this work of ours is a steady seller.

W. HAYHURST.—Thanks for what you are doing. Literature is being sent.

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 done very little provincial lecturing this year, but he has his hands full enough without undertaking long journeys, and in many places it was almost impossible to hold the usual meetings. But to-day (March 23) he will speak in the Central Hall, Bath Street, Glasgow, at three o'clock. His subject, "Christianity, the War and After," should prove interesting, and Freethinkers should do what they can to bring a friend with them. By a slip of the pen we last week announced the meeting-place as "Caxton Hall." Readers will note the correction.

On Saturday evening (March 22), the Glasgow Branch is holding its Annual Dinner at the Charing Cross Hotel. There will be the usual number of speeches, and the entertainment part of the programme need only be as good as it has been on previous occasions to make a thoroughly enjoyable evening. Tickets are 6s. 6d. each.

With the supplies of paper shorter than ever, we suggest that readers pass their own copy round to those who are likely to be interested in the paper as a whole or in parts. This should provide a new crop of readers when paper becomes more plentiful, which may not be so far away as some think. We hope to be able to keep the *Freethinker* as it is in size, even though we may be compelled to print on a little lighter paper. But even that may not be necessary. The regrettable thing is that we cannot find paper for the extra copies that were printed for the special purpose of attracting new regular subscribers. But during the war, as before the war, the motto of all interested should be, "There is a possible new reader round the corner," and the movement gains by securing him.

There are three publications we should like to see widely circulated. The first is *The Case for Secular Education*, written by Lord Snell, and published by the Secular Education League. This supplies the historical side of the case. It was published at sixpence, but will be sent post free for fourpence. The other two pamphlets state the case for the secularizing of our schools, and the case for even religious people leaving the minds of their children perfectly capable of forming an independent opinion. These two pamphlets are *The Church's Fight for the Child*, and *Freethought and the Child*. The price of these are one penny each, the two require a penny extra for postage. We press our readers to have a supply of these pamphlets on hand. They will prove useful.

The Churches are working hard to make the most of the war to extend and strengthen their hold over the rising generation by saturating the schools of the country with definite Christian religious teaching. This means so far as religion is concerned, a reversion to the pre-1870 conditions. The Churches and Chapels talk loudly about character building, but it is the Christian Church- and Chapel-going character they have in view, and it is the only thing in which the clergy as a body are interested. The situation is urgent and not merely avowed Freethinkers should do what they can to prevent the Churches establishing a "new order," which really means an old order revived. It is for the reasons given that we once more press on all Freethinkers the need for being active. Everyone can do a little, and the protests they may make must have some effect.

Apropos of the Church campaign to secure dogmatic Christianity in elementary schools, and the quite unsupported statement that the Archbishops have with them "an increasingly large body of teachers," *Time and Tide*, in its issue for February 22, sarcastically remarks, "It is difficult to determine how large this proportion actually is. No doubt it would grow quickly if the authorities were in the habit of asking the applicants for posts to offer Divinity as a serious qualification." Evidently *Time and Tide* has a lively apprehension of the actual value of *Christian Truth*. And it is quite certain that the Archbishops will not complain if they manufacture hypocrisy in the teaching staffs so long as they can secure a proper dose of religion being given to children. If this occurs, with its consequent lowering of the quality of the instruction given, and a depreciation in the quality of teachers, they will have themselves largely to blame. If teachers would only make a bold and decisive stand against this clerical control, even the Archbishop of Canterbury, with all his cunning, would be powerless to secure the sacrifice of our educational system in the interests of the Churches.

Branch Secretaries and Members of the National Secular Society are reminded that the Society's financial year closes on March 31, and that subscriptions not already paid should be forwarded to the General Secretary before that date for inclusion in the Annual Balance Sheet.

The Christian Church Contributes

"HISTORY repeats itself" is a questionable tag. It is at least true that similar events happen more than once. It is certain that the distinctive contribution that the Christian Religion makes in war-time runs on much the same lines whene'er the blast of war blows on its ears. This, it will be said, is what it should be. It is a divine religion and Gods do not alter. We will leave the point at that and confine ourselves to noting the attitude of the Gods.

There was a Great War (1914-8). What happened in England then was much the same as happened in the Christian countries to whom we were opposed. The attitude of the Christian Church in this country, as interpreted by its ordained ministers, is given in unmistakable black and white in George Bedborough's *Arms and the Clergy*. We are told glibly on all sides, to-day, that the Clergy are vile exponents of Christianity. Well, if they do not represent the Christian Church, who do?

We find from that volume that the Great War was due to the fact (in the opinion of many clerics) that "for a very considerable time there had not only been neglect of public worship and service of God, but a regular upraising of human light and human undertaking and human will against the existence of the Providence of God." The greatest bulwark of Non-conformity in England told us that "Our present misery springs out of materialism." Another Free Church stalwart explained that it was "a battle between modern materialistic philosophy and the teachings of the Bible."

In this facile way did Christian Morality disport itself. "Please Sir, it wasn't me," was the proem, then as now, of the Church's message. But their's had been the power and their's could have been the glory. Anyway war had come and war was, they admitted, a hideous thing. How did Christian Morality display its jewels on such an important occasion?

The Bishop of Bristol told us that:—

Nothing is more encouraging than the realization by so many people that this war is spiritual in character. Many of us have prayed for a religious revival. We have longed for it. It is starting, if we have only eyes to see it.

The Bishop of Pretoria said at the Church House in London:—

After all, what we are trying to do is to set free the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The City Temple expert told us to:—

Try and look at it all as from the side of Heaven, and your soul will be at peace.

The Church Army mouthpiece expressed itself:—

The religion of the Prince of Peace bids us withstand by all means in our power, even to the shedding of much blood, those nations that are intent on doing wrong.

The Vicar of the Chapel Royal, Savoy put in a word for the Clergy, and their generous *self-sacrifice*:—

We are a trifle tired of the assertion that the Church is not doing her part, as though she consisted of bricks and mortar and of the clergy, who, as a profession, have given relatively more of their sons than any other in the country.

Westminster Abbey gave us the stereotyped phrase:—

I have not a single doubt as to the righteousness of war under certain conditions.

St. Paul's, too, said its piece:—

Life through death is a principle of Christian life. Not in vain will blood be shed.

The Archbishop of Canterbury preaching in that building said:—

Brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ, tonight, on the first Sunday of the Centenary year of

Waterloo, we are treading—we are kneeling—upon Holy Ground—upon Holy Ground! The Graves of Nelson, of Wellington, of Roberts are beneath our feet.

A Reverend Gentleman wrote in *The Record*:—
We see Europe being rebuilt. We watch the Divine Artificer at work. He is creating a new people.

Canon H. S. Holland, and 24 other Oxford Divines, wrote:—

The Government of Great Britain has determined that some of her Indian troops . . . shall be transferred to Europe, and we cannot pretend to regret its determination. We can only rejoice if Christian principles find an echo in the breast of non-Christian peoples. Our Indian fellow-subjects in especial are the representatives of an ancient civilization, which we hope may the sooner be penetrated by Christian influences, when we and they have marched side by side.

The Dean of Canterbury told us, as did hundreds of accredited ministers, that
the use of the sword of justice has the express support of revelation.

Canons to left of him, canons to right of him, volleyed and thundered.

One of them in Westminster Abbey, reminded us that:—

There is nothing in the Christian religion that renders it impossible for a Christian nation to go to war, or which makes the war the antithesis of Christian teaching. This sanction of the sword by the Christian religion is borne out by the fact that the old Bishops of the Church were warriors.

Another wrote a volume to show that:—

The part that Britain is taking in this hideous Armageddon is a clear example of "being about our Father's business."

A third told us that:—

God has need of England and the British Empire.

Special *morceaux friands* of Christian Morality are repeated, *Lest we forget*. Note the boyish glee of this minister! :—

The Indian Corps! How we welcomed them. Hillsmen who could shoot marvellously, and wield the ruthless kukri with unerring accuracy. They seemed intensely eager to get to grips with the enemy, pointing in his direction, scowling as they muttered the word "Jarmans" and drawing their hands across their throat with a gesture of disgust, to show what the Huns might expect of them.

Another case from Whitefield's Tabernacle:—

Some of you are worrying yourselves unduly about the Kaiser. . . . The timber for his coffin was felled long ago, and the Carpenter is even now "stretching out his rule, He marketh it with a pencil. . . ."

A parson of vision was reported in the *Church Times*. He was a man who worked on a large canvas, and was prepared to give as well as take:—

We are anxious to know whether the Allies can force the Dardanelles, and what our statemen mean to do with the prize that awaits them. The bold and wise plan is to place Constantinople at the disposal of the Tzar, not as the Emperor of Russia, but as the most powerful sovereign of the Orthodox Church. . . . The use or abuse the Tzar would make of his opportunities is no concern of ours.

Thus we find Christian Morality dissected. And it is this primitive pabulum that, we are assured, we need more than anything else at the present day. One piece of information that the pulpits did not find it political (*expedient*, I believe is the Christian word) to speak of was voiced on one occasion—outside the pulpits—by Mr. Lloyd George:—

The last war was made by monarchs and statesmen and warriors who were all Christians. It was not the Atheists, the Infidels, the Agnostics. It was Christian ministers, Christian Kings and Emperors, and Christian Generals—professed Christians.

The Return of Satan

The Devil is coming back into his own again! We have it on the very good authority of a clergyman writing the leading article in a popular daily newspaper that this war is a fight between God and his arch-enemy, Satan. We can safely take it that the reverend gentleman is not alone in his views. It is a regular thing to hear Hitler referred to as a representative of the Devil, while everyone knows that we are fighting God's battle, therefore the real contestants in the struggle are God and Satan.

Freethinkers will not be surprised at this return of Satan. He is almost as necessary a part of the Christian religion as God himself. In fact, when Christianity had control of Europe the Devil was always kept in the forefront as a warning to all. And, in spite of the attempts of *advanced* churchmen to rid their religion once and for all of this notorious figure, he still caries on, sleeping at times, perhaps, but now and again coming to the fore. This is only to be expected because Christians will never be able to explain the problem of evil without him.

In earlier stages of religious evolution, devils or evil spirits greatly outnumbered the benevolent ones, but as man slowly discovered more about nature these evil spirits fell into disuse. It is the old, old story of knowledge banishing supernaturalism, by explaining it. No matter how he progressed, however, man's life was by no means all smooth sailing and, of course, never will be, therefore it is likely that the Devil as representative of dangers will last as long as Christianity itself. Then, after that religion has rightly passed into the realms of mythology Satan will possibly stand out as the most conspicuous personage in it. For he is without doubt a very romantic figure, despite all attempts to degrade him.

Unlike the Christian God, whose precise appearance is unknown, and who is, to say the least, of a very shadowy form, Satan is known to all. Tall, dark and handsome with his long black moustache and pointed beard, his horns, hooves and long tail, he is a character very easily distinguishable, whilst his powers of attraction for the ladies are notorious. Burns wrote of him:—

Great is thy pow'r an' great thy fame,
Far ken'd an' noted is thy name.

Contrast him with the traditional appearance of Jesus on the cross, the pitiful creature with bleeding wounds! The one is essentially picturesque, the other sadistic, one always gay and jocular, the other sad and sorrowful, one sportive and smiling, the other melancholy and dejected. It therefore becomes quite obvious that Satan is alien to Christianity. As G. W. Foote said: "This gentleman is of very ancient descent. His lineage dwarfs that of the proudest nobles and kings . . . and even the Pharaohs of the first dynasty are modern beside him. His origin is lost in the impenetrable obscurity of primitive times."

(Continued from page 140)

Have occupants of low and high ecclesiastical offices, who are so eloquent about this war for Christian Morality, a higher ethical content than their brothers of 25 years ago? Have Twenty-Five Years worked a revolution in their mood and methods? Have they suffered a sea change? Or do they still remain in the category where Brigadier-General Crozier placed them in his *A Brass Hat in No Man's Land*:—

The Christian Churches are the finest blood lust creators we have, and of them we [the British Army] made free use.

It is these same Christian Churches that we are told to-day are in charge of the inherited *Christian Morality* in defence of which this war is being prosecuted.

T. H. RUSTOB

Christianity adopted the Devil and then misrepresented him. He was used—unfortunately with great success—to terrify children and adults alike, until the humanism of Freethought destroyed the horrific illusion.

It is because of the Church's misrepresentation that Hitler has been classified with the Devil. Now I protest vehemently against this popular association, for I consider Satan to be an emblem of freedom. Christians should not be shocked at this announcement, because it is the conclusion reached after reading the account of the creation and fall of man in the early chapters of the Book of Genesis. It is useless for the same Christians to say that this part of the Bible has been discarded, because it is the basis of their whole religion. For if there was no fall there was no need for a redemption. So much then for objections—now to the account. It is claimed by the holy that man was made free, but this is not true, for the Bible states otherwise. Remember the command of God: "of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it." How can freedom exist where there is a "thou shalt not"? This was a dictatorship if ever there was one; and who was it that revolted against the dictatorship of God? Our old friend, Satan, in one of his many disguises. It was a rebellion against a hierarchy, a fight against orthodoxy, a battle for freedom, and he won. For God was proved to be wrong. "Ye shalt *not* surely die," said Satan to Eve and the subsequent events showed him to be right.

Now the evil one has been revived by Christians in order to reconcile this war with the existence of an all-powerful, benevolent deity, which, as I stated before, is merely the old but (for Christians) insoluble problem of evil. They do not seem to realize that in such instances they are disproving the omnipotence of God, and are admitting the Devil to be more powerful than their own demiurge. It is claimed by Christians, however, that prayers saved (or helped to save) the men stranded at Dunkirk. They do not explain how the rescue would have been accomplished without boats and sailors and, furthermore, they forget that Dunkirk was not a success, but a ghastly disaster which was only lessened by the heroic work of men, not God.

The logical thing for Christians to do would be to worship and pacify the Devil, but this is impossible for their's is supposed to be a religion of love. It is likely, therefore, that Satan will remain a sleeping partner during peaceful times, and only appear in periods of trouble and strife.

In one sphere, however, Satan is immortally preserved—in the world of great literature. Great poets like Milton and Byron have presented him resplendently, Goethe and Marlowe, too, have given him prominence in their masterpieces. Then, turn to that magnificent work of Anatole France, *The Revolt of the Angels*, to find in the superb conclusion the words of Satan after his dream of the capture of Heaven:—

God conquered will become Satan; Satan conquering will become God. May the fates spare me this terrible lot. I love the Hell which formed my genius. I love the Earth where I have done some good. . . . Now, thanks to us, the God of old is dispossessed of his terrestrial empire, and every thinking-being on this globe disdains him not . . . we have destroyed Ialdabaoth, our Tyrant, if in ourselves we have destroyed Ignorance and Fear.

There we have the solution to the Christians' enigma. The revival of the Devil does not help Christianity in the slightest degree in its struggle with Freethought. It is doomed, but not dead; it is useless, but still dangerous; failing, but still powerful. Like its devil, Christianity must become a thing of the past and give way to Freethought, the true Philosophy of Humanity.

C. MCCALL

God and the War

[The following was rejected by the *News-Chronicle* in its recent symposium.]

IN a world, the greater part of which, is being threatened with partial or complete "spiritual" extinction, any endeavour to keep aglow the dying embers of civilized life will receive one's highest commendation and heart-felt gratitude. It was in this spirit that I welcomed the projected *News-Chronicle* discussion "God and War." Impatiently my eyes wandered to the list of contributors. My spirits of animated expectancy drooped when I realized that any real value this "free and frank" discussion may have is being vitiated by the absence from the discussion of a contributor who would fearlessly and forthrightly state the *Freethinker's* point of view. The name that leaps immediately to one's mind is that of Mr. Chapman Cohen, Editor of the *Freethinker*, stimulating and thoughtful author of many philosophical works. Far be it from me to presume to don his mantle. I am singularly ill-equipped to do any such thing. I can only hope that the observations that follow do, however inadequately, represent the *Freethinker's* approach to this problem.

If then, after a careful study of the discussion, I suggest that my fears as to its value have been justified, it should occasion little surprise and wonderment. However, it has not been entirely in vain. There emerges from the discussion one very interesting and highly significant fact. There is a clear cut division between the contributions of the Professional Theologians and their supporters and those of the lay contributors. Whereas the latter breathe, however feebly, a warm humanism, the former betray a soullessness, a destitution of this humanism which is too appalling to behold. On the one hand stand shoulder to shoulder the old-guardists desperately resisting the infiltration of any new idea. One had expected of them at least an attempt to state their case in the light of modern knowledge and understanding; instead they make it abundantly clear that they are completely and irrevocably wedded to the conservation of all the time-worn ideas which bear absolutely no relevance to the life of to-day. They provide ample proof that whenever smoke screens are needed to conceal from the common people the true nature of our social degradation, they are there at hand to supply them. Frantically and by devious means they seek to fasten the charge upon anybody and everybody, thereby hoping to secure an alibi for themselves. I cannot escape the conviction that the whole *raison d'être* of established religion is the sanctification with the holy water of Religion of any and every activity of the temporal Power of which it happens at that time to form an integral part. But all is not lost. They can still render a great service to humanity. Let them quit the arena of History which they have done so much to darken and much will yet be forgiven them.

On the other hand stand the lay contributors. Although they have glimpsed the full depth of the fall of Established Religion, they yet shrink from drawing the correct lessons and conclusions. Of them it may truly be said, "You cannot gaze upon my countenance and live." They see the light but divert their gaze. It is to their honour that they have dared to shed a little light upon the dark recesses of our decadent civilization, but in the hour of supreme trial when their vision and leadership is most needed they desert their post and join forces with the enemy. Though they appear to struggle valiantly for a brave new world, on deeper reflection their struggle is but a smoke-screen for the defence of Established Religion and to give God a front. Lest I do them an injustice let me quote. Says Olaf Stapledon:—

The Russian Revolution started with splendid promise and has achieved much. In all countries Com-

munistism has inspired many to live dedicated lives. Yet as a body Communists have not captured the allegiance of ordinary people. Why? Mainly because along with courage and comradeship they have manifested doctrinal passion, ruthlessness and shameless Machiavellianism.

A grotesque distortion of the facts! But even if true, cannot this indictment be applied with greater cogency to Christianity? Let him contrast the actual chaotic state of the Christian World now rending itself to pieces, bringing untold suffering and misery upon the people, with the peaceful development culturally and materially taking place in Russia even at this very moment. I am afraid he will have to dig deeper for his philosophy to carry conviction.

Somehow we have to practise a Communism that is Christian in spirit and Christianity that is Communist in action.

This passage is a good sample of obscurantist intellectualism from which one can extract any meaning or none at all. For Communism in action, on his own showing, manifests a ruthlessness, etc. Such a Christianity, therefore, would manifest these undesirable attributes, and would capture the allegiance of the ordinary people. Again, a Communism that is Christian in spirit would not be Communism but Christianity, and a Christianity that is Communist in action would not be Christianity but Communism. Thus this appeal and lament lead to nowhere. Our learned philosopher merely succeeds in plunging us deeper and ever deeper into his mystical bog.

And what of C. Day Lewis? To quote:—

Do you believe that however admirable an economic system . . . you will still need something more, something we will call religion? If you can honestly answer "Yes," then your religion is the genuine article.

Again, this need for "something more" may fall short of belief in God. Such a belief is not religion in the strict sense of the word, but it often reaches the intensity of religion.

So a belief that reaches the intensity of religion is only an "Ersatz" belief. What exasperating futility! Hugh Redwood says, "C. D. Lewis summed up for me the chief impression left on my mind by the 'GOD and WAR' articles." Further comment from me is superfluous.

Nor is the more robust mysticism of Priestley any more helpful.

The Scientist Huxley presents one with a much tougher problem. With most of what he says one is in substantial agreement. Indeed, his statements are so obviously truthful that one fails to grasp why and how it comes that a scientist of his eminence is drawn to personify natural processes in terms of gods. As Chapman Cohen so succinctly puts it:—

To re-dress primitive superstition in the language of Science and Philosophy is surely a sin against the light—at best it is to exchange one absurdity for another.

With all the moral emphasis at my command I beseech them to cease peddling their mystic platitudes which in essence are as old as civilization itself. With all their scintillating brilliance they only succeed in bemusing and bedeviling the ordinary man. They succeed only in giving God a new uniform, the content remains the same. They know, none better, that we have reached a stage in mental development when belief in God really matters no longer. "ESSAY"

An erudition of facts is not the philosophy of history; an historian unskilful in the art of applying his facts amasses impure ore, which he cannot strike into coin.

I. D'Israeli.

When we are young, we always say that riches do not give happiness; but in proportion as we advance in life, we learn that they add considerably to it. *Chateaubriand*.

(Continued from page 137)

Slavery of the body amongst mankind has been almost entirely abolished; it was felt to be an intolerable thing in its undisguised form. But slavery of the mind still persists—and, it may be feared, actually increases amongst us as mechanical aids to propaganda under the control of Authority increase. Mental slavery is subtler and less perceptible to its victims than physical slavery. A man knows when he is the slave of a human master, but he does not always know when he is the slave of a newspaper or a church. And just as many slaves of old were contented with their lot, and neither desired nor welcomed emancipation, so it is with mental slavery.

To put our thinking out—as we put out our washing—saves trouble and expense of spirit. It is a comforting thought that Jesus Christ or the Roman Catholic Church will save our souls, and it is a disquieting thought that we must, with infinite toil and pain, and at personal cost, save ourselves. Again, it is easier to leave the destinies of our country in the hands of its Government and acquiesce in governmental policy, whatever it may be, trusting that our rulers know better and will do better than ourselves, than to think out difficult questions of politics and economics and check our rulers upon them. It is an arduous nuisance for most of us with so many other interests and duties, to become political-minded and think politically for ourselves.

But fearful evils, both for ourselves and others, are the result of this failure to do our own thinking. The slothful, inactive, unexercised mind degenerates into the incapable mind. Unperceived evil becomes its good; mental poison its daily food. The mind itself is the victim of vicious propaganda. It mistakes falsehood for truth, and unreason for reason. It becomes the prey of other minds, which are not disinterested, but which have a commercial, political, ecclesiastical, or selfish interest in debauching, exploiting, or cheating, it of its birthright of truth. It is drugged and doped by a diet which a healthy exercised mind would instinctively reject.

Minds which were bond-servants of the Biblical words "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," condemned in the English law-courts harmless old women innumerable to be burned alive for the "horrible sin of witchcraft." Minds which were bond-servants to the Romish faith in the reign of Queen Mary murdered "Protestant heretics" in hundreds. In our own time we see German minds enslaved by vicious Nazi propaganda, and English minds equally enslaved into uncritical hatred of Germany by the newspapers and the wireless. Advertisements which appeal to the unthinking show how the vendors of patent-medicines and other worthless or little-worth products, and others, can play, to their own enrichment, upon the suggestibility of the mass-mind. One can multiply examples of the evils, wrought both to the community and to the individual, by the slave-mind.

We must face the fact that many minds, like many bodies, are sluggish or weak by nature. But such minds, like such bodies, can be improved by exercise and good feeding. There are also timid minds and masochistic minds that find pleasure in subjection. Such minds lean upon Authority and find "peace" in unquestioning acquiescence in the dictates of Church or State or other outward Authority, either organized or individual. We all despise the weakling who is under the undue influence of another man or woman of stronger character and opinion; but we are not so quick to see that the individual who has surrendered his mind to the keeping of Church or State is equally despicable, and a proper subject for pity or blame, or both.

C. G. I. DU CANN

(To be continued)

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

RELIGION AND LIFE

SIR,—You will be interested to know our eldest son has been refused a commission plainly on grounds of religion. He was recommended by the S.M., and as he's a B.C., and had taught others who went in front of him he can only conclude that his religion is at "fault."

You stress the need for Freethinkers to have their children withdrawn from religious instruction in school. Having had six children to so "withdraw," I would like to advise the vital necessity of doing so during the tender years before the seventh birthday. I am a great believer in (I forget who said it) "give me a child up to seven years—you can have him afterward." My meaning may be clearer when I explain how I went to the school time after time to impress on the "Head," I really was conscientious about the matter, and how as the children grew older, they begged me not to trouble any more—they understood, they said, and were not concerned with the religion, but what they missed by not going into the hall for morning prayers—something like the 7.55 rubbish before the news on the B.B.C.—items of interest after the "dose"—well—my eldest son came home with many a sixpence for correct answers to math's questions put by the "Head" after prayers, and the second boy won a *scripture prize*! All six are fine healthy Freethinkers, and I hope one day will do something for the cause—they don't realize yet, how necessary it is, but I'll say this for them, they try to make converts. I once worked for the "cause," and might have done more, but (much to Miss Vance's disgust) I married and brought up a family instead; she was a grand woman. Which reminds me, I've much to thank you for. In my youth I couldn't think of the *Freethinker* without G. W. Foote—it just wasn't possible—well, you've proved it just was, and although I've been perhaps too much occupied with my family, I've done my best to bring them up to be a credit to the noblest of causes, and never missed a copy of the *Freethinker* in 28 years—even before that I read my father's copy, so am a pretty old stager. MAY R.

CONFLICTING INTERESTS

SIR,—To-day we read that the Viceroy of India has "appealed to all religions in India to join with Britain in the National Day of Prayer."

But elsewhere we have read, many times, that this war is being "waged for Christianity and freedom from heathendom." "for the Christian Faith," and so on.

It appears that an anomalous condition has arisen. Those of our Allies who are Parsees, Hindus, Buddhists, Mohammedans, etc., cannot be fighting for the Christian Faith, and are, in this connexion, antagonistic to our object as we must be to theirs. Each is, in fact, fighting, like Hal o' the Wynd, the bandy-legged smith in Sir Walter Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather* "for his own hand."

EDGAR SYERS

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Conway Memorial Lecture. Professor J. C. Flugel, D.Sc.—"The Moral Paradox of Peace and War."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S.—Annual General Meeting and Social will be held in the "Lamb and Flag," 24 James Street, Oxford Street, on Saturday, March 29. Reception 6 p.m. Meeting 6.30. Social 7.15. Members and friends invited.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 3.0, Mr. George Podmore, the well-known Negro Socialist, Journalist and Lecturer—A Lecture.

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