

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

A Holy Mess

I LOOKED over my last week's batch of newspaper cuttings with a certain degree of puzzlement. It was almost a case of "I dunno where I are." I found a number of professedly religious teachers setting down things which almost indicated that they were of the same opinion as Martin Luther, that "poor half-witted God" might be overcome by the devil, that even God might not be strong enough to give us victory in the war against Hitlerism, unless we were strong enough to win the war without God's help, or unless we acted in such a way that we could do without it. Clergymen told us, sometimes in set words, sometimes by implication, that unless we were very careful and simply smothered the Germans with an overwhelming production of munitions the world would be godless, or at least a place in which God would be dethroned. For example, I found the Roman Catholic "Universe" reporting a Father Dudley, of the Catholic Missionary Society, as saying we must not lose sight of the fact that the twenty years that followed the last "peace" ended in a godless Conference in London." When we remember how the gallant Cardinal Hinsley and others fought against that Conference, lied and lied with all the sanctified strength of which they were capable, that the godly Sir Samuel Hoare confessed to his "dear Ramsay" at present interned in the interests of the nation, his regret that he could not prohibit the Conference, and that the Conference was a triumphant success, one would not be surprised if believers generally had lost their patience and said, in effect, to God, "well if you don't bother about it neither will we." After all, man may exist without gods, while it is an historic fact that gods cannot live without man. Gods, fairies, devils, the whole catalogue of supernatural beings have lively existence only so long as men and women believe in them. A Royal Pageant is tremendously impressive if one believes in what it stands for. It sinks into a pantomime when one does not. The ancient Greeks spoke of the nectar of the gods. Modern anthropology has demonstrated the truth that this nectar was compounded from man's ignorance and fear.

God's Help

Where gods are concerned the situation has been gradually growing more serious. Belief in them and their action is growing more hesitant and is now expressed almost apologetically. For instance, Mr. Churchill said recently that the

withdrawal of our troops from Greece (it will be noted that the enemy does not "withdraw," he always retreats) was "almost a miracle." Almost a miracle! Can we have half a miracle, or a quarter miracle? Does a miracle ever come by instalments? Of course we speak of a man as being half dead, but everyone knows that a man must be either dead or alive. He cannot be half of each. A man may be half silly—that is, his stupidity might be more complete than it is. There is wit in W. S. Gilbert's description of a man as being "idiotically sane with lucid intervals of lunacy." That we find illustrated in many a B.B.C. parson giving an address on sociology. He might naturally be nearer one side or the other as circumstances decided. But a miracle either is or it isn't. How can we get into contact with a miracle without being in touch with a full blown one? A miracle is not like a turnip which begins as a seed and ends as a fully grown vegetable. There was a miracle at the dawn of creation when God, as expressed in the Westminster Confession of Faith, "created everything from nothing," finishing with the same amount of raw material in hand that he had when he started. But I find it impossible to think of an event, half of which is a miracle and the other half being quite normal and ordinary.

But suppose that the withdrawal from Greece was almost a miracle. What does God Almighty mean by giving us half a loaf when we had a right to expect a whole one? His followers did not pray for half a miracle, or a partly worn out one. They were on the look out for the real thing. And as they were faithful followers of the Lord they were justified in expecting one. It almost suggests that God is playing with both sides—offering half a miracle to us to help a "withdrawal," and the other half to Germany in the shape of a few thousand prisoners and a good stretch of territory.

All the same God might remember that, according to his own selected interpreters in this country—the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cardinal Hinsley, the Bishop of Manchester and a cock-eyed street corner preacher that I often see—we are fighting his battle, and that if Hitler wins, God's rule and ours will fall into the background. And all our leaders agree that this is not the time for half measures. Even the United States is helping us without stint. We do really need a few miracles, but not of the "almost" variety. We want something of what the Americans would call a "real honest to God" miracle, something of the kind that used to appear in the days of old. The only one that we get is the one that occurred to Balaam. The asses speak and wise men are astonished at the commotion.

Fair Play for Satan

Then comes the ex-Dean Inge, who writes in the "Church of England Newspaper," that this war of Hitler is "Satanism." I think that is an unjustified aspersion on Satan. According to the book to which Dr. Inge owed his position in the Church, according also to the Church's account of the activities of Satan, he was not at all like Hitler

nor did his activities fall into line with those of Hitler. Satan challenged God because he would not allow criticism in heaven, as Hitler will not allow criticism in Germany. He was cast into the first concentration camp that ever existed—again in line with Hitler's dealings with his opponents Satan met this with "better to rule in hell than serve in heaven," just as many Germans have said better exile where freedom is than life where it is not. It was Satan who roused in our first parents the idea of freedom. His record shows that he was always encouraging men to question, to seek new ways of life. It was the Christian Church that made Satan responsible for the true nature of the solar system, for the invention of printing, for that spirit of unrest which leads to better and wider views of life. I do not think that Satan deserves the insult of being likened to Hitler, nor Hitler the compliment of being like Satan.

Dr. Inge goes further. He says "miracles will not be wrought to save us." The present occupant of the position in the cathedral once held by Dr. Inge, says that the escape of the whole of the cathedral from complete destruction was a miracle. Of course Dr. Inge being out of office may be out of touch with things. Dr. Matthews being in office may have received later and better information. Not that this miracle in saving part of the cathedral is not in itself curious. It looks as though, to God, it should have been as easy to save the whole of the cathedral as half of it. God, it will be remembered, created everything with a comprehensive "Let there be." But that, of course, was before miracles were rationed and cut down to half-ones. One cannot imagine that God was angry with the custodians of the cathedral, and merely wished to give them a hint that he was still there. But if so he should have gone for them. What a striking illustration of God's power and his love of righteousness it would have been if in the midst of the general devastation the Churches—of an orthodox character—had remained untouched! There are occasions when impartiality amounts to a crime.

By the way, it may be noted that Dr. Inge will not have it—as so many clergy assert—that we are being punished for our sins. He is too much of a true-born Englishman to say that we are getting our deserts. And to be quite impartial he does not believe either that God will punish the "aggressor." Indeed I am a little puzzled to find out what it is, in Dr. Inge's opinion, that God does—save exist. He does not punish us for our sins; he will not punish Hitler for his, he does not interfere with the order of nature. Where in the picture does he come in? If he does nothing should we be any worse off if he was not there?

Dr. Inge's devastating talk on religion does not end here. Mr. Churchill consented to half-a-miracle. But Dr. Inge says, "No miracle will be wrought to save us." He does not allow us even a fraction. He does not ration the Churches, he cuts them out altogether. And that must include National Days of Prayer, and B.B.C. moronic religious broadcasts. And he drives home the lesson by saying of miracles in general, "This is not the way in which the world is governed."

"Steady!" What of the miracles of the Bible, and of the New Testament? Are they all fiction, mere products of the religious imagination, or expressions of ignorance? Was the famous "Let there be" no more than the "Hey presto" of the music-hall conjuror? When Jesus fed the multitude with a few loaves and a handful of fishes, and wound up with having more food at the end of the feast than was present at the beginning, was he

trying something similar to what a hypnotist does when he induces a subject to eat soap under the impression that he is chewing cheese?

Again, we ask, if God does not, as every generation of believers have held, work miracles, what does he do? Does any religious person accept the situation that having created everything, including the properties manifested by things, God has ever since been doing nothing but look on? And if we accept that position, does it really matter whether we believe in God or not? It is our understanding of nature that is important; it is the quality of human actions that matter. God may exist, but he has ceased to count.

* * *

Thus Saith the Lord

There is one other matter touched on by Dr. Inge which I notice, because it enforces what I have often said with regard to the Christian Church and Hitlerism. Dr. Inge says he has been re-reading Augustine's "City of God," and says that the idea had a great future, but "Unfortunately the Catholic Church became the first Totalitarian State, and totalitarianism in religion is as hateful as it is in politics. The inquisition was the precursor of the Gestapo and the concentration camp."

Excellent, but as with the other aspects I have pointed out very many times there is not a feature in the Totalitarian State that is not also in the Christian Church. It is part of the Christian case that the Christian religion did not arise as other theories of life have arisen, by the method of trial and error. It did not develop from experience, and therefore human experience is not competent to revise it. It is something that is derived directly from God. It must be accepted without question, and it must remain immune from criticism. Greeks and Romans also had their gods and their religions. But they were inherited, and at all times were open to question. If questioning it was sometimes a dangerous practice, this was because the questioners were up against a "Thus saith the Lord," or the danger of their going to hell for raising a query. All they had to fight was the surviving influence of the belief that gods might wreak a collective vengeance for individual offences. The result was that the old pagan world was more open to new ideas, more susceptible to the growth of unbelief.

But Christianity came before the world in a different manner it wielded a different authority. Its theory of life is not one that has been achieved by experience, and the test of its value is not to be found in this world, but in some other where "natural law" does not apply. This life is a preparation for the next, and it is in that light everything must be judged. Man, as he was and is, must judge the rightness or wrongness of things from the point of view of his eternal welfare. Everything that tended to question the truth of Christianity was hostile to God, and the better the man—if he believed in Christianity—the nearer he approximated to totalitarian (Hitlerian) principles. Children must be brought up to realize that to question the Christian religion is in itself a sin. They must be secluded from contact with anything that would disturb their faith. Heresy must be suppressed, persecution becomes part of one's duty to God, as in Germany it is part of one's duty to Hitler. There is not a single principle in the totalitarian idea that is not present in the revealed religion of Christianity. Hitler, Goering and Goebbels have been born too late. A few centuries ago they might easily have become princes of the Church. CHAPMAN COHEN

THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF A REFORMER

PIERRE ABELARD was born at Nantes in 1079, and has been regarded as one of the keenest thinkers and outstanding heretics of his time. The story of his monkish career and his loving care for Héloïse is intensely interesting. The ashes of the ill-starred pair now repose in Père la Chase, the famous cemetery in Paris named after a Jesuit priest.

The most intellectual of the wandering scholars of the Middle Ages, Abelard's philosophy was distinctly coloured by his life's experiences. In his scholarly "Studies in Medieval Thought" (Nelson, 1940, 2s. 6d.), Dr. G. G. Coulton notes that "Héloïse was as much part of him as St. Bernard and the two condemning Councils were." Abelard's independent character was not only displayed in domestic affairs, but also in his daring speculations, which stamp him as a giant when compared with the immense majority of the Churchmen of his century.

Celibacy was officially considered the ideal for the priesthood. Yet, sacerdotal celibacy, from the poorest and most humble cleric up to the very Popes themselves, was commonly far more honoured in the breach than the observance. Perhaps priestly marriage and concubinage were more infrequent in medieval days than they later became. Dr. Coulton reminds us that "many of the mystics had each his own Egeria; some nun or authoress to whom he attributed as much inspiration as J. S. Mill to Mrs. Taylor . . . or Auguste Comte to Clotilde de Vaux."

Nevertheless, stern Church disciplinarians frowned on "pious friendship," and even epistolary communication between clerics and women was not always permitted.

The union of Abelard and Héloïse is the most celebrated instance of clerical companionship in the Middle Ages. In his letters Abelard extols the mental power of his mistress and her own correspondence corroborates the high estimate entertained by the philosopher. When the real relations of the couple were revealed to Héloïse's uncle, her nearest relative, he was infuriated with Abelard, but he ultimately promised his pardon if the couple became united in holy wedlock. Strict secrecy concerning this was, however, imperative for Abelard combined his instruction to students in the schools with the Canonry of Notre Dame.

But like the heroine in Grant Allen's novel, "The Woman Who Did," Héloïse refused. Not only did she herself disapprove, but Abelard assures us that she persuaded him to relinquish his intention to make her his wedded wife. Héloïse contended that matrimony would make Abelard the subject of scorn and ridicule. Again, it would degrade the Church. Abelard tells us that "she pleaded that my loss of reputation would be grievous; and she urged those difficulties of wedded life which St. Paul exhorteth to avoid." In Dr. Coulton's words: "She exposed in plain language the miseries of crying children, dirt, the disorder in a home of limited income: none but the rich can enjoy learned leisure in the married state. In all ages, philosophers have kept their independence only by leading a life of limited means." And not only would a marriage imperil Abelard's philosophical standing, but Héloïse also urges the danger of returning to Paris "from the safe home I had found in my native Brittany for her and our boy." Indeed, Abelard declared that she preferred to be considered a mistress rather than a wife.

But the promise of matrimony had been given

and must be kept. In the uncle's presence the union was secretly solemnized. Rumours of the wedding soon spread abroad for, although Fulbert, Héloïse's uncle, had sworn solemnly to preserve the secret he promptly broke his oath and announced the nuptials. Héloïse denied the report and then, to escape her amiable relative's insults, accepted Abelard's advice and retired to a nunnery.

Abelard was now charged with mean duplicity in releasing himself from his responsibility by immuring his wife in a nunnery. Then two miscreants were engaged to attack Abelard at night and emasculate him. "Public opinion," notes Dr. Coulton, "reprobated the outrage: the two ruffians were themselves caught, blinded, and emasculated; yet it shattered Abelard's career as an official teacher."

The philosopher was himself driven to seek the seclusion of the cloister. Dr. Coulton pertinently observes that the position of nearly all Medieval scholastics was so ambiguous in relation to marriage that it puzzles the modern mind. He notes that: "On the one hand the three 'Major' or 'Sacred' clerical Orders (Priest, Deacon and Subdeacon) had gradually been debarred from marriage under any circumstances. In the later Middle Ages the thing was not only forbidden under heavy penalties, but even annulled as legally impossible, and Sir Thomas More only voiced the opinion of orthodoxy in his own day when he insisted that the marriage of a priest was 'more sinful than whoredom.'"

Yet, clerks in Minor Orders, who usually formed the majority, were legally entitled to marry. But there was this reservation: if in possession of a benefice, in case of marriage they sacrificed all right to their benefice. Even parish clerks were supposed to be celibate. Dr. Coulton remarks that "although the scholastic teacher was too often only a celibate in name, it can only have been in the smallest minority of cases that he had the least chance of criticism and advice from an intelligent woman."

Before he reached man's estate Abelard disputed in the schools with the doughtiest dialecticians in Paris. There after his appointment as Canon of Notre Dame, he became acquainted with Héloïse, a girl of bright intellect and solid acquirements. She became one of his pupils with the consequences already recorded. After his misfortune Abelard retired to St. Denis, a religious house in which the monks indulged in indolent and lascivious lives. Abelard was horrified by the laxity and immorality around him so, desiring an abode in which he could study in tranquillity, he entered a cell in Champagne where a flock of students soon gathered around him. But even here he was not left in peace, for an old antagonist, Riscellinus, accused him of heresy. This terrible charge, as it then was, led to the convention of a clerical council, in which Abelard was pronounced guilty practically unheard. Béranger was one of Abelard's disciples, and Dr. Coulton concludes that the satire he composed on the proceedings of the assembly which convicted his revered teacher "cannot be dismissed as mere fiction. The bishops, he writes, dined not wisely, but too well; they deserved that description from Persius's 'Satire':—

'Between one goblet and the next
The fuddled Pontiffs con the sacred text.'

Preposterously enough, the insignificant charge that caused Abelard's condemnation was his audacity in lecturing on the Holy Trinity without troubling to secure authorization from the Pope or the Church. Consequently, Abelard's book was

publicly incinerated and the sinner himself sent in dire disgrace to the Abbey of St. Médard until influential friends procured his reinstatement at St. Denis.

Here, however, the philosopher was soon in difficulties. The conceited monks bitterly resented his obvious superiority to themselves, while to make matters worse, Abelard cast doubts concerning the identity of the alleged saint, Dionysius, who was revered by the monks of St. Denis as the founder of their community, with Dionysius the Arcopagite, who is said to have engaged in controversy with St. Paul. At this, the attitude of the monks became so menacing that Abelard later deemed it advisable to retract his ill-received opinion, and for the time being sought safety in Champagne.

In 1125 he decided to retire, and he accepted the abbacy of St. Gildes in Brittany, where he found turbulence and loose living even worse than at St. Denis. When he strove to restore decency of conduct, the monks promptly plotted his murder. Now, however, Abelard resumed his correspondence with Héloïse, but the storm was about to break. He came into conflict with the powerful St. Bernard, who first assailed the reformer, Arnold of Brescia, and then attacked Abelard himself. Apparently a man of irreproachable character in ordinary life, St. Bernard was so sunk in traditional theology that he could discern nothing but sinful wickedness and pestilent heresy in Abelard's humanistic teachings. So a Council was convened at Sens where Abelard, perhaps the ablest dialectician of his time, instead of fighting the matter to a successful conclusion, for some conjectural reason suddenly left the assembly with the intention of submitting his case to Rome. But Abelard's sorrows and sufferings had shattered his health. On the way to the Eternal City, he rested at Cluny a broken man, and he expired at Châlon-sur-Saône in the year 1142.

T. F. PALMER

LA METTRIE (1709—1751)

(Continued from page 224)

At this time his most prominent opponent was Jean Astruc, a celebrated physician who, in his "De Morbis veneris libri VI," published in 1736, vehemently attacked La Mettrie. Our author answered this attack at first by a polite letter which he appended to his work entitled "Traité du vertige." Astruc, however, proud of his elevated position and his acquired authority preserved a disdainful and haughty attitude. The quarrel became envenomed. The attacks on La Mettrie developed with increasing violence, and afterwards were reinforced by all the most celebrated medical men of Paris arraying themselves against him.

He returned to St. Malo, where he undertook the translation of Boerhaave's principal works. In 1739 he published "Les Aphorismes sur la connaissance et la cure des maladies" and the "Traité de la matière médicale": in 1740 the "Institutions de médecine": the "Traité de la petite vérole": also "l'Essai sur l'esprit et les beaux esprits," following these in 1741 with his "l'Abrégé de la théorie chimique, tiré des propres écrits de M. Boerhaave.

Eager for adventure and keenly desiring to increase in knowledge, he again left his home-town in 1742 and went to Paris. There the surgeon Morand and the Doctor Sidobre interested themselves on his behalf; through them he obtained a

position with the Duke de Grammont, who procured for him a commission as an army surgeon—he was attached to the Guards. With his regiment he went on active service, and at the Siege of Fribourg he was attacked by a burning fever. During his illness he became aware that his mind weakened with his body, and observed that his faculties fluctuated with his physical state. These observations and the results he arrived at therefrom induced him to further investigations, which resulted in his becoming a convinced Materialist and started him on his philosophic career. He determined, after his recovery, to maintain with untiring energy that physical phenomena were but effects of organic changes in the brain and nervous system: that the conception of a soul independent and different from the body is a mere chimera, and that our mental functions are rigorously conditioned by our organic functions.

Wheeler states: "The boldness with which he made his ideas known lost him his place, and he took refuge in Holland. Here he published his "Histoire Naturelle de l'Âme" ("The Natural History of the Soul"), under the pretence of its being a translation from the English of Charp (Sharp), La Haye, chez Jean Neaulme, 1745."

This work, first published under title "l'Histoire Naturelle de l'Âme," was afterwards expanded into "Traité de l'âme." This volume raised a violent storm of opposition, his assailants on this occasion being augmented by a formidable array of priests and their partisans.

Meanwhile La Mettrie had been appointed Medical Inspector of the Military Hospitals at Lille, Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp and Worms. He would have been able to have settled down comfortably in Holland, had he been of a disposition to forget or ignore the offensive criticism of Astruc, and to remain indifferent in face of the routine and the ignorance of the medical men of that epoch, who then, as since, invoked ancient authorities and met arguments that they were unable to answer, with intolerant presumption and abuse. His penchant for sarcasm and free satirical raillery found in the conduct of his confreres, an occasion far too favourable to let it escape him. So he wrote, published also in 1745, "La Politique du médecin de Machiavel, ou le chemin de la Fortune ouvert aux Médecins." In this scathing satire he attacked and unsparingly ridiculed the most prominent medical men of the epoch. Their indignation was beyond words. Instead of attempting to answer it, they clamoured for its suppression. The offending satire was condemned, by degrees of the French Parliament on July 9, 1746, to be openly torn to pieces and burned with the rest of La Mettrie's writings—which was done, in the Place de Grève, at Paris, by the public executioner.

Threatened with arrest at any minute, La Mettrie judged it prudent to resign his official position and to take refuge at Saz, near Ghent. Here, however, the unceasing malice of his enemies, followed him, and caused him to be falsely accused of espionage, a crime, then as now punishable with the death penalty—it was a trumped-up, utterly unfounded charge, but lest false witnesses should swear away his life, he was obliged to make another move, and he forthwith found refuge in Leyden, but only for a very short time.

All this hostility did not succeed in silencing La Mettrie. It awakened and aroused all his latent ability, vigour, and amazing power of ironic humour, to find expression in a still finer satire. This was entitled "La Faculté Vengée" a Comedy in three Acts, with curious title-vignette, 182 pages, and an added leaf giving the real names of

the Dramatis Personæ depicted, except that of "Valère," his librarian friend: "Crispin," his valet, etc.; and in his own case—but admitting himself "L'Auteur du Machiavélisme des Médecins et de cette Comédie," revealed his identity. The book was printed in Holland, but published "Chez Quillau," Paris, early in 1747.

In his work Astruc and the members of the Faculty of Paris are subjected to ridicule in the most vigorous and virulent manner.

This composition belongs to the most brilliant creations of La Mettrie, the satirist. With a wit worthy of Aristophanes, it describes how the Paris faculty deliberates over the banishment of the brawler "Chat-Huant" (Screech-owl), i.e., La Mettrie. The members of the faculty are concealed under such names as "Savantasse" "Learned Swindler" (Astruc), "Muscadin" "a dude" (Sidobre), etc. The true names of those ridiculed are added in a key.

The preceding paragraph is taken from "Die Satiren des Herrn Maschine," by Ernst Bergmann a scholarly exponent of La Mettrie's works, who had the great good fortune to possess some of the most rare original editions, including one of "La Faculté Vengée.

While yielding to none in our admiration of La Mettrie as a man and a philosopher, we must confess—being then acquainted with his satires—that, on first reading, the challenging claim on his behalf as a playwright, staggered us. For a comedy to vie with the genius and amazing wit of the humorous dramatist, Aristophanes, it must indeed be a veritable 'magnum opus.'

With high hopes and eager anticipation we have since hunted widely for this rare treasure, and have at length been fortunate in obtaining one of the few existing first editions.

Having read it, with keen critical interest and the liveliest appreciation, our great expectations have been abundantly gratified. However, our own conviction is that the whole style, method, scope, tenor and 'modus operandi' of this astounding satire can be most appropriately compared with the works of our own individually best beloved of ancient classical authors—that world renowned satirist, the laughter-loving epicurean Lucian.⁶ He must have been studied, appreciated and made his model by La Mettrie. There is a remarkable resemblance in the way he makes his characters live and move and exhibit themselves. With what astonishing vitality and vividity he makes them the targets of his irresistible wit! With what dazzling brilliant lightning strokes he exposes his malicious enemies as laughing stocks, objects to excite hilarity and derision! The unbridled effrontery of his invective is beyond all bounds, and his audacity in publishing the real names of those lampooned increased the number and intensified the deep-rooted envy, hatred and malice of his enemies.

ELLA TWYNAM

(To be continued)

⁶ Although Lucian riddled with ridicule the leading philosophers of all schools in his own times, he really revered Epicurus, of whom he wrote: "Epicurus, a Man well-skilled in the Nature of Things, and who alone attained to the Truth therein." "Eminent Hand Edition": 1711, Vol. I, p. 160.

Readers versed in the philosophy of the Ancients will be able to find traces also in Lucian's works of the influence of Heraclitus, Leucippus, Democritus and Aristippus—making his viewpoints vast and varied and his exact position difficult to define, but unless placed altogether in a class by himself, we conclude upon the whole temour of his works he can be only classified as an Epicurean.

I'LL BE BACK SOON!

THOSE who are anxious to show that Christianity has something of social importance to impart to us are loth to expatiate on the Second Coming of Christ. Nothing more completely disposes of the modern pose of Christianity as a social panacea than this doctrine of the speedy end of all things with Jesus coming in the Clouds and picking up the elect, and a new life commencing for them in the sky. What Jesus said is plain enough. Paul in 1 Thessalonians thought he had got the meaning of Jesus, and if Jesus meant other things than what he said then he successfully misled Paul. Gibbon, in his famous Fifteenth Chapter, gives this belief in the speedy dissolution of all things as one of the contributory causes to the spread of Christianity, which shows that Jesus successfully imposed upon his early followers also.

It was universally believed that the end of the world and the Kingdom of Heaven were at hand. The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples, and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ Himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds before that generation was totally extinguished which had beheld His humble condition upon earth, and which might still be witness of the calamities of the Jews under Vespasian or Hadrian. The revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the mysterious value of prophecy and revelation; but as long as, for wise purposes, this error was permitted to subsist in the church, it was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians, who lived in the awful expectation of that moment, when the globe itself, and all the various races of mankind, should tremble at the appearance of their divine Judge.

This is sufficient to dispose of the myth that Jesus came to found a New Jerusalem in this green and pleasant land, and that in the Sermon on the Mount he gave us a bundle of aphorisms that, if acted upon, would make this earth a place worth living in. It was the opinion of Jesus that in a little while there wasn't going to be any green and pleasant land—even England was included in the general débâcle.

Fortunately this belief, in another of Gibbon's delicious phrases, "has not been found agreeable to experience." A little matter of that kind, however, does not daunt a theologian. A theologian is much weighed down by what he terms Christian Morality and Christian Morality teaches him to have the Tapleyan characteristic of being jolly under the most lugubrious circumstances.

The Commission on Christian Doctrine appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York sat for fifteen years and gave us 242 pages of considered opinions, but "not for the general public." Just as Moses in his account of Creation credited Jehovah with having "made the stars also," and incurred Ingersoll's witty criticism that he nearly forgot the stars, so did our Commissioners nearly forget the predicted end of the world and second coming of Christ. It is not everything, of course, which is important!

Still they admit the essentials.

The New Testament Scriptures, taken as a whole, are dominated by the thought of the approaching "end"; by the conviction that the new "Age" is at hand.

and

(Continued on page 246)

ACID DROPS

The alliance between the Roman and the English Churches continues. The bond of union is to "collar the kids." Each would like to capture the lot, but as this is not possible the next best policy is to agree in the capture and share the plunder afterwards. These two groups resemble nothing so strongly as rival Chicago gangsters, at the stage when neither of them can secure the whole of the blackmail, and so agree to join forces, with each leader waiting for an opportunity to "down" the other. If the Churches, backed by members of the Government, manage to secure the establishment of dogmatic religious teaching in the schools, and to see to it that this teaching is administered by teachers of whose orthodoxy the parsonry and the priesthood are assured, the next move will be with each group of Christians a striving to steal a march on the other groups. The schools will become a battle-ground of the sects.

For fear some may consider we have overstated the situation, we ask them to consider one fact. A course of lectures has just run to an end. (We are actually writing this before the conclusion of the course.) The series was initiated by the "Sword of the Spirit" movement formed by Cardinal Hinsley. The subject was that of religion in the schools. The last of the meetings were held on May 10 and 11, Hinsley taking the chair at one meeting and the Archbishop of Canterbury at the other. We all know that the Archbishop's religion will not suit Cardinal Hinsley, who officially would be compelled to deny that God called him to his job. And it is certain that on the conditions of the Archbishop receiving his annual £15,000, the religion of Cardinal Hinsley is false and dangerous to him. But when it comes to "collaring the kids," anything under nine and over ninety arouses the warlike fervour of these gentlemen, there is an agreement to form an alliance to make sure of getting the plunder, although there may be a row over the shareout. So, with the connivance of the Government we shall have revived inside the schools a religious fight in the one place where religious strife should be kept outside.

This fight of the Churches, we say for the thousandth time, is essentially a fight for clients, for customers, as plainly as is any commercial rivalry. With this difference. The commercial rivals must stock goods that suits the customers. But the Churches cannot alter their goods beyond a given point. In the end they have tied round their necks what Arnold called the millstones of the Bible. So as the Church cannot hope to adapt their goods to suit the changing generations of customers, the next best thing is to breed customers to suit the goods. The Churches are in cordial agreement with Hitler that the only way to get their systems generally accepted is to see to it that the growing generation is carefully guarded against the newer and better thought.

The Pope is asking for a month of organized and simultaneous praying from the faithful for peace. But the faithful, and others, have already been praying for peace ever since the war began. And they were praying for it before the war began. As those on the side of the Allies mean by peace the complete defeat of the German armies, why not be honest and pray for the defeat of Germany? Do they think that God will be easily fooled, and will give to us, without knowing that he is coming down heavily on his German children? Why this effort to save God's face, and pretend that he is concerned only with peace, when whichever side wins it means the slaughter of huge masses of men, women and children. Preachers are fond of telling us that we cannot deceive God. We do not know. Our acquaintance with gods is very slight. But it is quite clear that his representatives on earth believe that the feat is not an impossible one.

In one week, according to the Minister of Information, and no one would ever accuse Mr. Duff-Cooper of misrepresentation, 58 Catholic Churches have been destroyed or seriously injured, and 135 less seriously damaged. The "Universe" suggests, probably as a method of apologizing for God not looking after his own that these figures probably include convents and other Catholic buildings. Maybe, but it shows a curious discrimination on God's part—or ought we to say impartiality? We do not say, but in any case it looks as though whether a place is a Church or a brothel it stands much the same chance of escape or destruction.

For example, in Ludgate Circus, with buildings in ruin all round, one building that stands practically unharmed is a well known public house.

Another building that is in ruins is the home of the Lord's Day Observance Society. Now that is sheer ingratitude on God's part. After the Society spending hundreds of pounds to have spontaneous protests from every part of the country protesting against theatres being opened on the Lord's Day, the said Lord doesn't protect them from a German bomb. Really after seeing our own premises wrecked it almost makes one believe that it was the Memorial Hall that was aimed at.

The Rev. K. E. Kirk, is reported in the "Oxford Hall" as saying that while we are all sorry for those who have been killed or maimed during the war, "should we not feel infinitely more distressed for God's sake?" We wonder! Of course even the more sensible and more independent of believers will look down their noses at the little God appears to be doing to save even his own followers. If we did not know religious human nature so well we might easily believe that the scenes under their very eyes should make people reject the stupid notion of a great fetish controlling either the good or the evil in this world. But Christians have always manifested their faith by believing the impossible and venerating the absurd.

In another sense we may all of us feel very sorry for God—the same kind of sorrow that we feel for a general who goes out to conquer and meets with defeat, or the man who means to do good and is always doing harm. But if we wish to be intelligently religious, why not say at once that we are very sorry for the God who, if he rules, has made such an awful bungle of the mankind he made and the world in which he placed them. As an Atheist we should feel sorry for the Christian God, but as it is our sorrow is for those who believe in him.

But here is a case in which it claimed God did something. Our readers may remember the sinking of the Volendam last August. One little boy was left unknowingly in the ship after the boats had pulled away. He ran on deck, and fell down on his knees and prayed to God. He was afterwards rescued by a destroyer that came alongside the torpedoed ship. That was a clear answer to prayer. God did it. But why on earth couldn't God destroy the German submarine that fired the torpedo? God seems too fond of spectacular performances. He could have saved the whole of the ship's passengers easily enough. But then the people would not have known that he had done anything. So he permits the submarine to hit the ship, lets the other children be taken away and waits to show what he can do in saving the one that is left behind! What a showman! Barnum himself could not have bettered it.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

"The Freethinker,"
(Temporary Address),
68 Farringdon Street,
London. E.C.4.

"Freethinker" War Damage Fund.—J. H. Etheridge (Kenya), £10; J. Boulting, 10s.; G. T. Thornton (S. Africa), £20.

E. Thomson.—You are out by a long way. The first to use the expression "The survival of the fittest" was John Milton. You will find it in "Areopagitica." Of course it was not used with reference to the evolution of species, but to the utility of permitting the struggle of ideas to continue.

S. Gordon Hogg.—Thanks for good wishes from Mr. and Mrs. Simpson. Same handed on.

H. Redford.—Pleased to hear of the result of the debate. Good is bound to follow. We congratulate you on the result.

H. C. Hughes, in remembering his Annual Subscription, says, "In these days of propaganda I certainly have no intention of stopping my sub to the sanest publication I know. My best wishes to all concerned in the publication of the "Freethinker."

G. Burton.—Many of our readers have written regretting the inability of "Mimnermus" to continue for the present his welcome weekly contribution. Thanks for correction. As you say, it should read "not a virtue that has not at some time or other been labelled a 'vice.'" But the paper has often to be got out under difficulties nowadays.

H. Drake.—We quite agree with you that quotations in a foreign language should be accompanied by a translation. Consider our knuckles have been rapped. Will see the offence is not repeated.

"Chelsea."—You have omitted to give your name, so we are obliged to use "Chelsea." We quite agree with what you say of the B.B.C. and its religious propaganda. Since the war began religious propaganda has been more shameless and even more stupid than ever.

J. St. A. Jewell.—There is a condensed version of the "Golden Bough" issued in one vol., price 12s. 6d. The Commission to which you refer was set up by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York. It was published in one volume several years ago. Our own copy has been destroyed, with the rest of our office books.

C. M. Stapleton.—Thanks for your very kind and considerate letter. Also with enquiries as to ourself. We shall manage well enough, at least for the present. We are not foolish enough to do anything that would weaken our power to work for the cause in which we have spent our life.

SUGAR PLUMS

As previously announced the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. will be held this year on Whit-Sunday, June 1, in London. Owing to war conditions it does not seem possible to arrange for an evening demonstration as is usual, and beyond a general discussion only items of importance will appear on the Agenda. But this will not prevent resolutions being sent in for discussion during whatever time permits.

The Conference will be held in the Waldorf Hotel, Aldwich, and will be meeting in the morning and afternoon. Arrangements for a luncheon are also being made at a charge of 5s. 6d. We take this opportunity of pressing upon intending visitors to send along their names as early as possible. Visitors from the provinces who wish to stay over the Saturday night should write as early as possible.

Our ever welcome contributor, Mr. W. Kent, sends us a correction of a passage in a recent article. He points out that there is no such Church in the city that is devoted to St. Blaze. The Church we had in

mind is St. Etheldreads, in Ely Place. Mr. Kent also points out that this is the only Church in possession of the Roman Church that held the same position in the middle ages. Mr. Kent is an authority on London, and the author of several books on the subject. We are obliged to him for the correction.

Mr. Kent, we regret to say, is a sufferer from the German raiders, which destroyed his house and about 3,000 books—almost his entire library. He now writes us, and we insert his letter here for the greater publicity:—

Will any reader of the "Freethinker" who has freethinking works to dispose of kindly communicate with me, giving particulars and prices asked.

There must be others similarly placed. They may be interested to know that the National Book Council has published a list of English classics, which can be obtained in cheap editions. It is a useful compilation, and can be obtained from the Council, Sixpence, at 3 Henrietta Street, W.C.2.

The Manchester City Council has passed a resolution that games in the Council's Parks shall be permitted on Sundays as on week-days. We congratulate the Council on its decision, and, among others, we fancy that Manchester folk have to thank Alderman George Hall for this permission to use their own parks in a reasonable manner. But imagine such a step having to be fought for in a community that claims to be civilized!

There is, judging from the issues we have seen, an excellent series of books under the general title of "The World of To-day," issued by the Oxford University Press. One of this series deals with the "U.S.A." This volume has one excellent feature in the shape of a full version of the Constitution of the U.S.A. It also has a very short but telling description of the working of the American Broadcast systems, which we commend to all who are interested in getting our own B.B.C. to adopt a policy of decency and truthfulness towards the general public. Here it is:—

One aspect of American Radio is of the greatest importance. Public questions are discussed on the air far more frequently and far more realistically than they are in Britain. Instead of occasional formal speeches, great political events like the national conventions are put on the air, and it is widely believed that whatever hopes of victory the Democratic Party had in 1924, were ruined by internal feuds at the convention that was provided by the Radio. There can be no doubt that one of the most important factors in the political development of recent years has been the fact that incomparably the greatest Radio speaker in the United States is the President. Mr. Hoover and Mr. Landon both suffered from the contrast between their comparative incompetence before the microphone and the virtuosity of Mr. Roosevelt. The "fireside chats" have restored the old direct relation between the national leader and the people, with an audience of tens of millions in place of the thousands of the old mass meetings. And the comparative ineffectiveness of the Press Campaign against Mr. Roosevelt in 1936 and 1940, was in part, due to the fact that the electors listened to the candidates instead of reading about them.

But not only presidential candidates go on the air to expound their case. Minor and indeed hopeless causes are preached freely, and the radio industry, not altogether of its own volition, has become the vehicle of a freer, more varied, and more representative expression of public opinion than the Press can now claim to be.

No one who has a real interest in freedom of opinion can miss the significance of this excerpt. The Press has ceased to be a reliable display of public opinion,

and on top of that we have a Radio system, largely under the control of the Government of the day, and marked by the most impudent exhibition of one-sided propaganda, religious and otherwise, that one can imagine, short of something on the German model. There is a movement on foot to provide a radio service that shall be a real expression of public opinion on all subjects in place of the hypocritical and dishonest system that we have now in operation.

Now that the more timid of the clergy are suggesting, and the bolder ones deliberately lying about the evil results to children who do not receive definite and dogmatic religion, the following from the President of the Manchester Teacher's Association is worth recording. We take it from the "School Child":—

The behaviour of children is not good or bad in proportion to the amount of formal religious training administered; it is determined rather by the example of the child's leaders and by his environment. The responsibility of the teacher is to display a character worthy of imitation. He has to make the school a community in which right behaviour is seen now as a means of avoiding punishment or of currying favour but as an indispensable condition for the members of that community to associate happily and profitably. War restricts opportunities, but those who have engaged in sport, camps, and the many other informal activities in which teachers and children join will agree as to their wholesome value as moral training in its truest sense.

There is not a competent and unprejudiced teacher in the country who will question the truth of this statement. The development of our elementary schools has gone on in the face of, mostly covert, sometimes open, opposition from the Churches. To hand the schools over again to the control of religious bodies is the equivalent of handing over the management of the educational system to German Nazis or to their British Quisling equals. We call the special attention of Trades Unionists to what is going on.

We have received a number of letters sympathizing with us on the destruction of the office. Some of them ask in what way we can be helped. We cannot give an answer to this yet, and with all stock and books gone, our earliest aim will be to replace this loss. Much of the stock is the property of the Secular Society Limited, but there was much that belonged to the "Freethinker." The problem in both cases is not easy to solve, owing to the paper shortage and other considerations. We take this opportunity to thank those who have made personal enquiries. Later, we hope to make a detailed statement. But the main thing is that the paper will continue. That is an indispensable feature of our propaganda.

Meanwhile, until we can acquire some kind of premises in which to carry on, we are housed in the N.S.S. offices, 68 Farringdon Street, E.C.4. That too has been damaged but is habitable—if not conveniently so. But the situation is with us day and night, and will remain so until we can settle down in more convenient quarters, and are able to begin reprinting.

We continue to receive complaints from men entering the Air-force that they are informed when attesting and wish to be recorded as Freethinker, Atheist, Agnostic, or as 'no religion,' they are met with the remark, "You can't join the Air-force if you have no religion." That is a piece of religious impudence.

The recruit has the full right to be described as he wishes. A further complaint, by the N.S.S. Secretary of this intolerance has brought the following from the Air Council:—

With reference to your letter of the fifteenth of April, I am commanded by the Air Council to inform you that, as indicated in their letter of the fifth of December, 1939, airmen entered into the Royal Air Force have complete freedom regarding the declaration of their religious denomination (if any), and steps have accordingly been taken to direct the attention of Attestation Officers to the regulations on the subject.

THE "FREETHINKER" AND THE BLITZ

LAST week's issue of the "Freethinker" was one which I had hoped would never be printed. It was set up some time ago, ready for the press to meet an emergency such as that with which came on May 10-11. The whole of the "Freethinker" premises, paper, books, and pamphlets, a £1,200 linotype machine, with other plant were completely destroyed. On the same dates the offices of the National Secular Society, and the Secular Society Ltd., were also set on fire, but the damage here was that done by water. Much stock, etc., were ruined.

But of the "Freethinker" office nothing was left but a mass of rubbish that was still smoking on May 14. The building itself was simply not there, not even the external walls. There was nothing but a hole. The ruin was complete, which relieved us at least of the task of scratching among the debris. It was the worst raid that has occurred since the great London fire-blitz of some months ago. That, the first great fire blitz, was said to be inconceivable. This one was impossible—but it happened. The scene of devastation really did beggar description.

Now for the serious consequences of the raid to us. First. The destruction of account books belonging to the business. It will help if those who receive their copy through the post will be good enough to send us the date of their last subscription payment and for how long. If an exact date is not possible an approximate one will do.

Second, all but a small part of our stock of books and pamphlets has been destroyed. There were small quantities safe in another building. Part of this stock has also suffered from water. Among these is a limited number of my "Almost an Autobiography," and a supply of Nos. 13 and 14 of the issues of "Pamphlets for the People." What are for sale will be duly advertised. So soon as possible, the reprinting of books and pamphlets will be done. Next to the "Freethinker" these are vital to our movement.

Third. The loss we feel most—for a time—is the destruction of a quantity of printing paper, and at a time when paper is getting even scarcer. This issue is of 12 pages, but owing to insistence by the "Paper Control" we shall be compelled, until the war ceases, to make one issue per month of eight pages only. On these dates there will be no advertisements, and with other alterations the reading matter will not be greatly lessened. We

do not expect any complaints from our readers on this matter.

There is a final loss, which while personal, I feel keenly. This is the destruction of between 1,000 and 1,500 volumes, representing a fine collection of (mostly) scarce books on Freethought subjects dating back to the middle eighteenth century, and some earlier of a semi-religious character. There were the first edition (folio) of Cudworth's "Intellectual System," the first edition of Donne's Sermons, a fine set of folio edition of Bayle's "Philosophical Dictionary, etc., etc." While I am writing they pass before me like a procession of ghosts. Most of these books cannot be ordered, copies have to be found, and my time for book-hunting is very limited by both age and pressure of other things. The passing of these books makes me think of Milton's "He who destroys a good book kills reason itself," and I would apply that to all books whether "good" or "bad," whether it brings agreement or otherwise. The destruction of books kills the lessons that intelligent readers might derive from the wisdom of folly or their authors. And in the few years I have before me I am little likely to make good my loss. Fortunately I have my other books elsewhere—at least for the present.

We had offers of help directly the catastrophe was known. Unfortunately there was not much that could be done. The disaster had been too thorough. All that could be done was to see that the continuity of the paper was not disturbed. I heard of the matter early on Sunday morning, and was on the spot by mid-day—to find that my business manager had got there much earlier than I did. Ever since he has worked like the proverbial nigger. I have almost had to threaten him to make him stop. I owe him much for all he has done, and so do the readers of this paper, although the editor gets the bouquets—with occasional brick-bats.

Of the future? Well the paper will go on. That is certain. Until we can secure proper premises and refit—which would take time with even great resources, we shall have to get the work done outdoors. This will, in addition to the normal rise in war-time costs, mean a great increase in general expenses. How to face that for, perhaps, two years will be the problem. But I know I can rely on everyone interested doing their share whenever called on.

It is not well to dream plans, although we all do it, I am nearing my seventy-third birthday anniversary, and have sometimes dreamed of being able to throw on one side all the responsibilities of my position, including that of editor of the "One and Only," a post which I pride more than I should that of Prime Minister. Not, of course, to cease writing for the paper. That is not so much work as a safety valve. But just to watch the movement in which I have spent my life growing stronger and stronger, but never so strong that it could in a state of pampered supremacy forget its history and significance and wield a slave-whip in the name of freedom.

And now. Well I have, in a way, to begin all over again. To build almost from the ground upward. But German bombs can no more crush Freethought than British tyranny was able to crush or silence that band of heroic men and women who did so much to build up a heritage and to establish a tradition.

The "Freethinker" goes on and with it the advanced movement.

CHAPMAN COHEN

JOAD'S THEORY OF VALUE

"SCIENCE cannot account for living organisms" was the cry when the material realm was being freed from the supposed operations of Deity.

"Science cannot account for mind" was the cry when biology became more and more mechanistic.

"Science cannot account for Values" is the cry now that psychology, too, has discarded obscurantist conceptions. Dr. C. E. M. Joad, in his "Philosophy for Our Times" (1940), posits Value as something existing in its own right independent of human judgments, the rightful object of human desire and that which science can never hope to analyse.

He employs a kind of logical refutation of science reminiscent of Lord Balfour's. If, he says, what science teaches is true, we can never, if we are materialists, know it is true. All that happens is that certain chemical changes take place in our hands and beget certain ideas. As to whether these ideas are true or not, the materialist has no criterion whatever. Dr. Joad has been using this argument for many years. It has been smashed thoroughly, I consider, by the "Correspondence Theory of Truth" developed in American Critical Realism, into which, however, it is not opportune here to enter.

Our old friends, Truth, Beauty and Goodness, are the types of value proposed by Joad. These, he claims, do not depend essentially on the perceiving subject (the person who experiences them). The view that they do he terms subjectivism, and for the sake of argument we may accept that terminology. He strongly opposes the subjectivist view, which is usually held by Atheists. It may briefly be stated thus. When we say that an action is a good one we mean it is worth doing in relation to man's needs and circumstances. Alter these and the action may no longer possess social merit. When we say that a piece of music is beautiful we mean that someone is pleased by it. Take away that Someone and the adjective "beautiful" no longer has any significance with regard to it.

Dr. Joad likes the music of Bach. It is beautiful as perceived by Dr. Joad. Confront the primitive savage with it and the relationship is altered. A value, that is, depends on the relationship of Someone to Somewhat. I dislike most of the poetry of Wordsworth. But I take full blame for it, and do not attribute the dislike to any inherent principle of Ugliness in the poetry itself. The person who loves his Wordsworth and abhors Keats, simply has a responsive equipment different from mine. The relation Someone R Somewhat must operate before the quality of beauty can emerge (materialistically) from the interactions of material existents.

Such is the "subjectivist view." But, says Joad, if A declares a picture to be beautiful and B says it is ugly, then on the subjectivist view they are not making judgments about the same thing (the picture); "A is affirming that his psychological state is on the whole pleasurable; B, that his is neutral or unpleasant." This, however, does not seem to be a fair statement of the subjectivist's case, for Joad has omitted the important words, "his psychological state in relation to the picture." The subjectivist, that is, does not ask you to believe there is nothing in the external world to condition his pleasure or displeasure. Once this is appreciated Dr. Joad's further argument, that subjectivism leads to solipsism (the hypothetical belief that everything exists as part of my dream) loses its strength.

Bu if subjectivism is true, says Joad, then

beauty is to be assessed by counting heads. We need only take a majority vote to decide whether a picture is beautiful.

Now by this argument he is merely foisting on his opponent the position which he himself holds, and which the subjectivist does not hold, namely, that the picture must finally be catalogued as to whether or not it displays beauty in its own right. If ten people are questioned and the result is seven to three in favour of its beauty, then according to Joad, the subjectivist must with finality write down the picture as beautiful and forget about the minority of three. But the subjectivist is guilty of no such nonsense. It is Dr. Joad, not the subjectivist, who creates the category Beauty as some mysterious power latent in pictures. It is he who wants finally to label the object irrespective of its human associations. Why, then, travesty the subjectivist as one who awards the merit of Beauty on a majority vote?

As a materialist I do not dispense with the word "beauty." A sound way of approach would be to discover what it is in an object, and what it is in ourselves, that causes us to say it is beautiful. The term beauty thus becomes valid subsequent to, and not prior to, the consideration of the relation. Somewhat R Somewhat. And though we do not yet know all there is to know, it is probably true that music is founded on smooth mathematical effects and the power of suggestion.

The qualities that make for beauty when confronted with an appreciative human organism are physically conditioned and await our perception. Is there any sense in which we can say that Bach's music is more beautiful than the primitive tom-tom? I believe there is, but it is founded on biological evolution and not on Dr. Joad's hypostatical Value. This position may be regarded as a compromise between Dr. Joad and an extreme subjectivism. Beauty, I would contend, is man-made by appreciation in subjectivist fashion and evolves gradually with mental evolution. I do not say that "in itself" a Bach fugue is more beautiful than a tom-tom. I say to an ardent music-lover it is more pleasurable to him than the tom-tom is to the savage. And while the Bach-lover can perceive some elementary sense of beauty in the beat of the tom-tom, the savage confronted with Bach derives no enjoyment at all; it is completely foreign to him and finds no response in his mental equipment. The Bach-lover has obviously evolved to more complex level of appreciation, and can perceive more complex qualities in the object. There are different levels of beauty, as there are of usefulness, truth and goodness. Those levels will depend on the reciprocal complexity of the perceiving subject and the perceived object.

Consider the "values" in this light, beginning with truth. If after propitiating the Rain God in vain, the primitive man concludes, "The Rain God has not granted our request," that is a true statement insofar as its contrary, "The Rain God has granted it," is not true. But the statement "There is no evidence of the existence of any Rain God," represents a higher level of truth, enunciated by civilized man at his higher stage of mental development. Similarly "The apple is red" will pass for a true statement at the common sense level, but as we, or rather the scientist, rises to successive levels there is a deepening of the cognitive act by scientific method, which improves the adequacy of our knowledge (e.g., by inferring an unseen planet from the irregular motions of Uranus), with its use of mathematics and of scientific instruments. This theory of levels will also explain errors of perspective and illusion.

Consider beauty. Distortion of the lips in sav-

age tribes is presumably beautiful and decorative—to them. At our level it is considered ugly. Consider goodness. To feed the poor man on Christmas Day was a good action for King Wenceslaus. To have him well fed on 365 days in the year is, to most of us, a higher conception of goodness.

Dr. Joad speaks of the evolution of man's knowledge of Value. I would speak of the evolution of value along with man's knowledge.

G. H. TAYLOR

(Continued from page 241)

In a literal sense, the denouement, which in the New Testament age was expected, did not take place.

Good enough! but the Commission continue with a "though"

though many scholars have urged that there is authority in the New Testament, and notably in the Fourth Gospel, for the view that there was a real Parousia of the glorified Lord in the coming of the Spirit.

What the Commission think of these "many scholars" is not stated. They evidently content themselves with chronicling this "get out" in case any good Christian may like it.

We presume the Parousia referred to is on the lines of that chronicled in the second chapter of the Acts. On that occasion, we are told, when the Day of Pentecost had fully come

Suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

And, in this wise, our "scholars" think, was fulfilled the words of Jesus (Matthew xxiv. 29).

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.

And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and with great glory.

And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Instead of the Son of Man appearing in the Heavens we have the Holy Ghost disguised as cloven tongues sitting upon the shoulders of the members of a select prayer meeting. But, of course, Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one. Person Two appeared in the guise of Person Three! We begin to see unsuspected utility in this doctrine of a Christian Trinity.

Christian Morality through its Christian Scholars is in short approving the Three Card Trick.

No, Sir, Your's unlucky. That's not the Son of Man. That's the Holy Ghost. Have another try, Sir. Thank you, Sir.

T. H. ELSTOB

ARCHBISHOP TRENCH AND PHILOLOGY

ALTHOUGH my knowledge of philosophy, etymology and semantics is, alas! but slight, I am sufficiently interested in the world of words to take up and enjoy the perusal of any relevant book that happens to fall my way. It is, I suppose, almost impossible to over-estimate the importance of language in the affairs of civilized man. Today, in particular, behaviour and social and political development are inspired by verbal abstractions so subtle and complex that many thinkers are beginning to question the rationale of much of our technical phraseology. But, apart from this consideration, I have a dilettante interest in words as words, in their uses, their origins and their histories. It provides a pleasure which nowadays can easily be pursued and gratified; lexicography has developed to an extent unimagined by Dr. Johnson, compiler of the first important English dictionary, and merely dreamed of by Archbishop Trench, initiator of the greatest English dictionary.

Recently I have been reading Trench's series of lectures, "On the Study of Words," delivered in 1851. Philologically speaking, 1851, was almost prehistoric; the authoritative material on which Trench could draw was not only slight but unmarshalled. But he garnered, collated, improvised and even, one suspects, invented, with pioneering zeal and in presenting his finished work aroused a wide and fruitful interest in the subject. As might be expected many of his ideas and derivations have been discredited by later research and no one now would seriously consult him on a linguist point.

His most heinous fault was a strong theological bias. During his philological lecturing period he was a Professor of Divinity, and it is perhaps to be expected that he should have dealt with a disproportionate number of pulpit works. He tended however to view nearly everything through ecclesiastical spectacles, and thereby has left us some unexpectedly entertaining reading.

One of his earliest topics in the origin of speech and the diversification of modern tongues. He begins by dismissing the hypothesis that man invented language from "rude imperfect beginnings," because of the "decisive objection . . . that it hangs together with, and is indeed an essential part of, that theory of society, which is contradicted alike by every page of Genesis, and every notice of our actual experience—the 'orang-outang' theory as it has been so happily termed—that, I mean, according to which the primitive condition of man was the savage one, and the seed out of which in due time the civilized man was unfolded: whereas, in fact, so far from being this living seed, he might more justly be considered as a dead withered leaf, torn violently away from the great trunk of humanity, and with no more power to produce anything nobler than himself out of himself, than that dead withered leaf to unfold itself into the oak of the forest. So far from being the child with the latent capacities of manhood, he is himself rather the man prematurely aged, and decrepit, and outworn.' And he

proceeds to explain how all mankind was once endowed with a language and that all existing languages contain within themselves evidence of this common root. The fact that the speech of living "savage tribes"—not "primitives"; he won't brook that suggestive word—is comparatively elementary is adduced as evidence that these unfortunate peoples are "the remnant and ruin of a better and a nobler past," that, in other words, they have paid the price in "degradation" for the sins of their more civilized forebears.

A solemn thought indeed! It reflects perfectly that amazing smugness of the educated Englishman of the late nineteenth century: within it lurk Kiplingism and the White Man's Burden: from it can be evolved a justification of the fate of Cetahwayo and Lobengula. And it is to be noted that this theory of society is, in its turn, contradicted alike by every page of "The Golden Bough," and every notice of anthropological experience.

As to Trench's treatment of individual words, a few examples—admittedly glaring ones—will be illustrative. Pain, he notes, being derived from the Latin poena, punishment, is thereby witnessed to be "the correlative of sin," as proclaimed by all the best Christian apologists. The word libertine once signified a "speculative free thinker in matters of religion and in the theory of morals, or, it might be, of government. But as by a sure process free-thinking does and will end in free-acting, as he who has cast off the one yoke will cast off the other, so a libertine came in two or three generations to signify a profligate. . . ." Trench also inveighs against the substitution of love-child for bastard, and declares that it "would be hard to estimate . . . how many young women it may have helped to make the downward way more sloping still."

Observe, especially in the last example, how Trench insists on the power of words to influence action. At the end of the third lecture he goes so far as to maintain that words "do not hold themselves neutral in the great conflict between good and evil," and generally to suggest that they have personalities and persuasions of their own.

Even I jib at this: what the Logical Positivists must think probably makes the worthy Archbishop turn in his grave.

N. T. GRIDGEMAN

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

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Lecture notices must reach 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

CORRESPONDENCE

FACE THE FACTS

Sir—Better late than never! I enclose original Bank draft for £20, made out in your name, for your Air Raid Fund for the "Freethinker," and hope that it will not be too late for inclusion. Our mails out here are very irregular—a small price to pay—it is about the only one so far—for the prosecution of the war to a successful end.

You people are sticking it out wonderfully at home, but in my opinion—and I am the only one I know to express this side of the question—it all serves you jolly well right! We Britishers have been asking for this for at least the last 40 years, and now we have got it. (I am a home-born person). The Versailles Treaty caused this war? Yes, because it was never carried out. We made Macdonald, a Pacifist in the last war, Prime Minister, and shut our eyes to every evasion Germany made in the terms of the Treaty, to her open and avowed re-armament, and believed every long-haired, cadaverous tub-thumper who spoke of brotherly love and the Sermon on the Mount and universal brotherhood and so on—and called those who warned us—such as Churchill—war-mongers" and "Die-hards" and "Scare-mongers," and now we have the inevitable sequel, war.

You will see that though a Freethinker I am not one of those who think you can appease mad dogs with penny buns. Why will we never face facts, grasp the nettle and cease to practise our greatest and most outstanding fault as a nation—pusillanimity? If only we had one tenth as much thoroughness as the Germans! Because one nation carries one virtue to a vicious extreme, that is no reason why we should pat ourselves on the back because we don't possess the virtue at all.

Best of luck to the "Freethinker"!

G. J. THORNTON

THE SLAVONIC JOSEPHUS

Sir,—Mr. Cutner need not have gone to Milman for information about the language in which Josephus wrote the "Jewish War." Josephus tells us in his preface that he wrote it first in "the language of his fathers," i.e., Aramaic. The peculiarity about the Slavonic text, which Eisler holds on linguistic grounds to go back to an Aramaic original, is that the story of Jesus contained in it is inexplicable either as a wholly Jewish or as a wholly Christian forgery. On the one hand, it contains obvious marks of Christian handling: Jesus is made to work "miracles wonderful and strong"; the author refuses to call him human; Pilate pronounces him innocent, and releases him because he has "healed his dying wife"; finally the scribes give Pilate thirty talents, and are allowed to crucify him. All this speaks for itself. On the other hand, the passage says that Jesus was followed by a mob who wanted him to destroy the Romans and reign as king, that he "did not disdain" them, and that in consequence Pilate "sent and had many of the multitude slain" and Jesus arrested. What are we to make of this patchwork? Did Jews and Christians collaborate in forgery?

Eisler claims to restore the original by deleting everything that can conceivably be due to Christian forgery, and treating the residue as genuine Josephus. He thus gets a picture of a Messianic pretender who heads a violent outbreak and is crucified for it. Unfortunately, the chain of reasoning contains too many links to be foolproof. The most we can say is that such an event is consistent with the account in Tacitus' "Annals," and would explain why Christianity, unlike Mithraism and the other mystery cults, was considered by Rome to be politically dangerous and repressed accordingly.

I quite agree with Mr. Cutner that this is speculation. But I wonder if Mr. Cutner realizes how much of ancient history is, and is bound to be speculation. The historian's business is to explain the facts; and if documentary explanation is missing or contradictory, he can only speculate. In the case of Christian origins, the myth theory is just as speculative as that

of Eisler, Loisy or Strauss. It rests on a supposed pre-Christian cult of a God Jesus, and a supposed "drama" transcribed, for some reason, into narrative and mistaken for history. After reading the evidence of J. M. Robertson, Rylands and Couchoud, my impression is that we know about as much of that God and that drama as we do of the man Jesus, i.e., nothing at all, but that we can speculate without detriment on one or another or both lines, until new evidence turns up

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

THANK GOD!

Sir,—Reading your essay in the "Freethinker" for May 5, 1941, reminds me of an incident that happened during the evacuation of the B.E.F. from France.

I was in hospital aboard the s.s. "Cronsay," and the parson (or priest), was "going the rounds."

He asked a man lying next to me if he was allright, (we were survivors of the "Lancastria"), and the man replied effusively, "Yes thanks, Sir, it makes you realize there's a God."

This was too much for me, and I said, "Oh! and what about the hundreds who were drowned, didn't they have a God? What would have happened to me, for instance, if, instead of trying to save myself, I had merely knelt down and asked God to save me? I certainly would not have been here now."

I would have gone on, but the parson, at this juncture, walked away, his hand on his chin, and he appeared in a thoughtful frame of mind.

JAMES HARRIS

OBITUARY

GEORGE BAULKS

The little group of Freethinkers in Cramlington have suffered yet another great loss. Within a fortnight of losing Adam Younger, George Baulks died after a short illness. His loss is a tragedy to his locality, for he was well known and respected by all. He was manager of the local Co-op Society, and his work for this movement will not easily be overlooked. He never tried to hide his atheistic outlook, and could always be counted to help in any way at any time, in any place, the greatest of all causes. He was a person of rare personal charm, and his cheerful concern for the welfare of others was outstanding. He was the hall mark of sincerity, and even those who disagreed with him will readily say he was one of the most sincere men in the North East. His father had been a fighter before him, especially in the Trade Union movement, and George Baulks was just as much a fighter for freedom. He helped many and no one knows the real extent of his good offices. The little group rightly mourn a real comrade, and an intelligent helper in their life's work.

At the request of his relatives, Mr. John T. Brigh-ton, paid a tribute to him in a funeral oration delivered to a large gathering at the graveside.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, stead): 11.0, A Lecture. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.0, A Lecture.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 7.30, Thursday, A Lecture. Sunday, A Lecture.

Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): A Lecture

COUNTRY

Outdoor

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound): 7.30, A Lecture.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, A Lecture.