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• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Religion and the Child

"THE TRIBUNE" is a London weekly, edited, I am informed, by Mr. Raymond Postgate. One of its "features" is a column of replies to people who wish to have some of their problems considered or to receive advice in an emergency. This particular section of the paper is looked after by Miss (?) Lenora Eyles. In a recent issue there appeared the following question: "Can you suggest a boarding school where my twins of eleven will not be exposed to religious teaching?" I was brought up in a convent and want to save them from all that mumbo-jumbo." It would have been quite simple either to answer briefly in the negative or, if possible, give the necessary information. It was apparently the "mumbo-jumbo" that led to some gratuitous and almost impertinent remarks. Otherwise a plain yes or no would have sufficed. But where religion is concerned, advice, of a kind, is easily given, particularly where it is intended as a rebuke to an obvious unbeliever. So instead of a plain "yes" or "no" we get the following:—

"But is that fair? A knowledge of religious belief is, to say the least of it, as much a part of our national culture as literature and history. To 'expose' a child to religious teaching of the school-type nowadays, is exposing it to something mild indeed. And anyway, why not let the child hear both sides—scepticism at home and a certain amount of faith at school. He can then make a choice based on his own temperament and judgment. To some people a religious belief is essential, and your children may be of that type."

There is nothing new in this type of advice. It is used by the more artful of religious advocates, and by the more timid kind of person who, like Madame de Staël, does not believe in ghosts but is afraid of them. Still, one must compliment Miss Eyles in getting into a very few lines as many fallacies and as much bad advice from either the secular or the honestly religious point of view as I have yet met. Miss Eyles spreads the net in full sight of the bird that is to be caught, by—under a cloak of liberalism—saying, "why not let the child see scepticism at home and faith in school?" But why not reverse it by

saying, give the child faith at home and scepticism at school? If the desire is to let the child see both sides one method ought to be as good as the other. But those clergymen who are taking part in the plot to capture the schools know that this will not do, even in cases where there is plenty of faith in the home. They know, as Miss Eyles must also know, that parents should have, and ought to have, complete trust in the teachers to whom they entrust their children. They are sent to school to be trained as citizens, not to be prepared as material on which the churches may work when the teachers have converted them into suitable material. To say that the religious teaching is "mild" is very ingenuous. If religion is either true or useful to the training of children, it should not be mild. It should be very strong and very definite. On this point I agree with the clergy. Miss Eyles' plea reminds me of the story of the girl who apologised for the appearance of an illegitimate baby on the ground that it was a very small one.

Culture and Religion

I agree with Miss Eyles that religion is part of our national culture. I go further than she does and say that it is impossible to *understand* our national culture without taking religion into account. But I have in mind religion in its broadest and most inclusive sense. I am afraid that Miss Eyles has in view one particular brand of religion. She does not envisage the teacher informing the children of the religion of the primitive inhabitants of this country, or about the Roman Catholic religion in a way that dissenting sects would approve, or of the dissenting sects in a way Roman Catholics would approve. Neither would she teach her pupils that the same mental atmosphere which gave rise to the belief in good and evil spirits, now relegated to the world of fairyland, are of the same stuff of which the reigning angels and devils and spirits and gods are made. She would not have the children taught anything of the evils committed by the Christian Church in the shape of the women and children burned for witchcraft, of the tortures which religion sanctioned, of what modern culture has to say about religious origins, or of the suppression of freedom of thought and speech by religion. I agree that religion belongs to our history, but it is the true history of religion that is required, not that taught in schools whether they be elementary or advanced. The Roman Catholics would certainly not have the Protestant version of the history of their religion, neither would the Protestants agree to have the Roman Catholic version of their creeds taught.

The result is that the place of religion in the culture history of a nation is *not* taught in the schools. There is not even provided a preparation for it. Everyone knows that before the developing boy or girl can understand religion and the part it has played in life, they now have to *unlearn* all that they are taught during their school years. Religion in the schools places obstacles in the way of the adult understanding religion, and *it is intended to do so*. The religious lessons given in schools do not *educate*, they merely instruct, and the instruction involves beliefs that are in substance rejected by millions of educated men and women to-day.

Miss Eyles says that it is the place of the parent to correct at home what is given in school. That is the worst kind of advice that I have heard for a long time. It implies a degree of misunderstanding of the functions of both school and home that it is possible to hold. In the first place it should not be forced upon any parent to place himself in opposition to the teacher. Teachers and parents should work together, not against each other. If a teacher is to have an influence over his pupils, that influence will be measured by the confidence the child has in its teacher. To break the confidence that a child has in its parent and its teacher is to weaken the influence for good of both. It is a choice that should never be forced on a child.

Religion and Citizenship

But our schools are, in theory, and should be in practice, *national* schools. Their aim should be to prepare children for their adult life as citizens, to develop a healthily informed frame of mind capable of forming independent opinions and of expressing them without it weakening the respect that one citizen should have for another. In what way does religious instruction do this? What becomes of a sense of a common life of citizenship if children grow up feeling that separative beliefs are more important than the feeling of a common citizenship? It is the belief about gods and the next world, and of a number of gross superstitions that had their origin in the darkest periods of human history, which to-day offer the most serious obstacles in the way of the development of a serviceable national culture. There is no other question that so certainly as religion divides people into warring and irreconcilable groups. We are seeing to-day the extent to which the sense of a common citizenship may bind men and women to secure a common end for the common good. But we are also seeing that the one thing that definitely prevents this sense of a common effort to a common end is religion. For centuries the one thing that deliberately barred a man from the common rights of citizenship was religion. It is but yesterday that dissenters were permitted to enjoy those rights of citizenship enjoyed by members of the established Church. Later, dissenters and Episcopalians joined in denying these rights to Jews and Roman Catholics. And when these wrongs were wiped out, there operated, and still operate, the social and family divisions arising from religion. We see it illustrated in the world war that is now in being. From the entrance of a man into the army he is marked with this or that separative brand, he is Church of England, Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, or Jew. Within the army men will sleep together, walk together, fight together, die together. The one thing they will not do is to pray together. The aim of the schools is, or should be, to plant in the mind of each pupil this sentiment of a common life to which each ought to contribute his or her mite. They can live this common life so far as their ordinary studies are concerned. But when religion steps in they cease to be members of the State, they are members of this church or that chapel.

Freedom for the Child

Miss Eyles, without, I am afraid, great sincerity or adequate understanding, says that the child should be allowed to make his choice "based on his own temperament and understanding." I hope Miss Eyles will not think me impolite if I say that this is just nonsensical chatter. Of course, whatever decision the child makes, if it is allowed to make its own, will be determined by his temperament and judgment. But how, if the judgment is formed for him and not by him; and if his temperament is one that has been guided by men and

women who give—from the safety of a teacher's desk—which is in its way arbitrary in its decisions—a prepared judgment and will brook no contradiction? Can the judgment so formed be counted of any value to anyone save a professional class that financially and otherwise have a direct personal interest in the judgment formed? And by what rule of even decency is one justified in placing before children doctrines that vast numbers of adults reject as false, and that even the majority of those holding them admit—outside the school—are just matters of opinion and may be wrong? As I have so often had to point out, the greatest objection to what is called religious education is that it is not education at all. It is mere instruction, and instruction the subject matter of which can neither be demonstrated as true or proved to be useful to society at large.

I submit to all reasonable and just-minded men and women that the education in school should be such as will form a foundation on which the pupil may build an understanding of things for himself. But how many millions of men and women have had to undo and discard what they have been taught as truth in order to discover what they believe to be such? The aim of a teacher should certainly be to see to it that this situation arises as seldom as possible. It is not without significance that the religious world has made common the difference between religious and secular truth.

One last misstatement in Miss Eyles' budget of false reasonings and hollow pleas. She is asked by a mother who asks for a school that will save her children from the evidently painful discovery of the falsity and uselessness of part of her own education, to advise her of a school where they may be brought up with an informed and open mind. She is warned, by way of reply, that "to some people a religious belief is essential, and your children may be of that type." I am quite certain from the question asked that if the mother can protect her children, as she desires to do, this will not occur. But it may if the advice of Miss Eyles is followed.

I do not deny that such cases occur. They exist by the thousand, even by the million, and they are found in all ages. They commence with the savage who, by fasting and other methods, gets into touch with his tribal gods. The starved lives of the monks and nuns of the Christian Church will provide multitudes of witnesses. The users of opium and other forms of "dope" will come forward to give evidence of transcendent pleasures they have experienced while under the influence of their favourite drug. And many thousands of men and women have been brought into contact with the spirits of the departed in the seance rooms of modern Spiritualism by methods and conditions that no modern scientific psychologist will accept as a genuine and useful experience. Men and women crave for religion as others crave for "dope" of one kind or another. The visions of these people are as real as any of those narrated in Christian history.

It really is not a question of what, by training, you may induce an individual to believe is essential to his being. It is actually one of framing the education given to children, and an environment that surrounds the adult that will enable men and women to form opinions that will stand the test of modern science and social utility.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

WAR

With regard to war, the greatest and most pompous of human activities, I would fain know whether we shall regard it as arguing some prerogative or as a testimony of our imbecility and imperfection, the science of defeating and killing one another, of ruining and destroying our own race.—MONTAIGNE.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE VIRGIN CULT

IN early Christianity there is no trace of the Mariolatry that gradually became an integral constituent of Catholic theology. Originally regarded as the mediator between an incensed God and sinful man, Jesus was subsequently developed into a stern and unforgiving judge of human frailty. Some other mediator, therefore, became necessary as an intercessor on man's behalf, and the cult of the Virgin steadily gained ground. An acknowledged authority, Lucius, assures us that not until the fifth century did the Church leaders "insert in the liturgical prayers used in divine service any separate honourable mention of Mary. This omission must be regarded as all the more remarkable, since it had become usual in all the churches, during the fourth century, at each celebration of the Holy Sacrifice to make special mention of the Patriarchs, Prophets and Apostles, and to celebrate the memory of the martyrs or to recommend oneself to their prayers."

The subtle distinction Cardinal Newman elaborated between the adoration and worship of Christ's Mother was as unreal to the mediæval lay, or even clerical, mind as it is in popular Catholic estimation to-day. As a matter of superhistorical fact Mariolatry was distinctly encouraged by the clergy as at least a means of edification. In his learned and discriminating "Five Centuries of Religion" (Cambridge University Press, Vol I.), Dr. Coulton refers to some of the moral tales concocted for popular perusal in which the Virgin's power is displayed. For example: "A monk who cannot obtain his petition from Christ threatened to complain of Him to His Mother; a woman failing to recover her son, stole the Christ-child from Mary's lap in church and refused to restore it until her own child was brought back. The good moralists explain, in both cases, that it was only of Christ's condescension that he yielded to this holy violence, but they show no dismay at the popular attitude which prompted it."

Mediæval religious concepts, both with priests and people, were rankly anthropomorphic. God was pictured as a venerable patriarch of uncertain temper in close association with his sacrificed Son; the Holy Ghost was conceived in the form of a dove or pigeon, while the Virgin was a handsome lady endowed with superlative graces. Moreover, the motives and emotions which characterised the heavenly hierarchy were markedly human in expression, especially in moments of anger. Human likewise were the weaknesses of the deities. They revelled in praise and prayer, but bitterly resented all signs of unconcern regarding their majesty and might. To neglect the divinities was an unpardonable offence.

By the opening of the 13th century the cult of the Virgin had been fully established. All the major churches and many of the minor ones had erected special chapels for her service, and in these the ceremonial was frequently more ornate than in any other part of the sacred building. The monastic orders were said to possess her constant solicitude. Indeed, St. Bernard's devotion to the Virgin was so pronounced that Dante in his immortal masterpiece selects him to recount her virtues in Paradise. Yet, it is noteworthy that St. Bernard severely censured the then recently propounded doctrine of her Immaculate Conception, and in this he was supported by outstanding Churchmen during the 13th and 14th centuries.

According to earlier orthodox teaching, so vast a majority suffered eternal torture in the world to come, that the reassuring promise of the Virgin's successful

intervention on behalf of her devotees was gladly welcomed. She was said to have spent three entire days in entreating her divine Son to open wider the gates of heaven. At last Christ replied: "I know, sweet Mother, that souls perish for lack of preachers, having none to break unto them the bread of Holy Scripture, or proclaim the truth to them or open the sealed books. Wherefore, moved by their prayers, I will send new messengers into the world, an Order of Preachers, who shall draw the people unto the solemn things of eternity; and then we will close the door upon all that slumber, or stay in their sins, or bear no fruit." Thus, Christ ordained the Friars Preachers and sent them forth on their mission to reform the people.

Consequently, in 1216 the Dominican Order was approved by the Pope and the Preachers began their chequered career. Fables which exalted Dominic and his disciples were later expanded on even more realistic lines on behalf of the competing Franciscan Order. As Dr. Coulton observes, "when the strictly orthodox and conservative Dominicans had been outstripped by their more enthusiastic rivals, and were left to share with St. Bernard the stigma of having fought against the Immaculate Conception, the Franciscans were looked upon as favourites in a special sense of the Queen of Heaven. So ran the wheel of fortune; we may find in this celestial court an echo of the intrigues and rivalries and vicissitudes of favour which troubled a court on earth." Fictions and fairy tales concerning Our Lady multiplied unceasingly, and these legends of her miraculous activities were widely welcomed during the Middle Ages and beyond and are not entirely discredited in illiterate Catholic circles even to-day.

Roman Catholicism current in mediæval centuries propounded positively revolting theories concerning life after death. All those unbaptised were doomed to endure unending torture, however exemplary their earthly conduct. For the average Christian, there was no certainty of salvation, even after purification in purgatorial fires. Moreover, mediæval descriptions and pictorial representations of Hell were so appalling that those who took them seriously must have shrunk in horror and dismay. So, naturally, Mariolatry which provided a comparatively easy release from eternal damnation was accorded a hearty welcome. The Franciscan Pelbart is recorded as assuring his contemporaries that devotion to the Virgin will secure salvation to the most hardened sinners. He instances various evidences of Mary's clemency. And from these examples Pelbart concludes that "it is manifested that this very Mother of Mercy doth not suffer sinners to perish, but that she will mercifully free from damnation those that turn unto her." Truly enough, this marked departure from traditional orthodoxy almost constitutes a separate cult, in which a spirit of humanism predominates.

Stories of the Madonna's struggles with the spirits of evil for the possession of the souls of the dead are distinctly realistic. One collection of tales stresses the surprising circumstance that the defunct sinners had no redeeming feature save a punctual or even perfunctory regard for Mary's sacred character and image. A bandit knight of infamous character plundered the poor without mercy. Yet his many misdeeds were forgiven because he had reverently saluted the Virgin daily. We are told that an abandoned female who could claim nothing to her credit in the entire course of her lascivious life, nevertheless entered the abodes of bliss because "she visited the Virgin Mary daily and saluted her with the Ave, and one single Saturday she caused a Mass to be sung in

praise and glory of the said blessed Virgin." In twelve recorded cases, as Dr. Coulton informs us: "Christ in his severity refuses to pardon until the Virgin's pleas bring about a change in the Divine Mind; in three others, where direct prayers to God have failed, the prayers of the Virgin are successful."

One legend relates how a gambler who, having lost all he had staked, "even to his breeches," was so exasperated at his ill-luck that he flung all the curses at his command on God and the saints. Not satisfied with this, one of his boon companions urged him to further imprecations, for, said the latter: "No ribald is a hearty swearer who spareth either God or his Mother; . . . since thou dost such butcher's work upon God, and hast so moved him to wrath, wherefore shrink from dividing the entrails, the joints and the hide and all the members of his Mother?" "Aha!" cried the other, "evil thief, how poor is now thy faith in God! By the holy belt of God . . . if I provoked Our Lady to wrath, who then would make me my peace with God?"

Still, Cardinal de Vitry, a contemporary of the writer of the foregoing story, greatly laments the scurrility and wantonness of tavern-haunters who "suffered things to be said of the Virgin Mary and the Saints which they would not suffer to be said of their own wives."

Apart, however, from mere ribaldry, sincere and thoughtful scepticism was not entirely unknown even in mediæval times. Some doubted and openly expressed their doubts concerning "the transcendent glories" of the Madonna. Dr. Coulton notes that Razzi records several instances of unbelief in Mary's virtues, while Gautier de Coincy complains that even among the educated "he knows men who hate to hear these Mary miracles who slink out of the hall or growl under their breath like mastiffs"; who even say openly "that the miracles de Notre Dame are no less false and fictitious than those miracles which beggars feign at monasteries, at wayside crosses and at fountains."

T. F. PALMER

LUCRETIOUS

EARLY in his epic poem Lucretius said, "One thing, therefore, at starting, I will tell you first—how that nothing can be produced from nothing—and when you are once made certain of that, you shall see clearly how all things can be produced and done without the hand of gods."

Thus, nearly 2,000 years ago, began the real struggle between science and religion. There had been a few skirmishes before this period, but Lucretius, inspired by the doctrines of Epicurus, commenced the first great offensive. Listen to this:—

"When human life, a shame to human eyes,
Lay sprawling in the mire in foul estate,
A cowering thing without the strength to rise
Held down by fell religion's heavy weight—
Religion scowling downward from the skies,
With hideous head, and vigilant eyes of hate,
First did a man of Greece presume to raise
His brows, and give the monster gaze for gaze."

In a poem of epic grandeur, and containing some of the loftiest poetry in all Roman literature, Lucretius traces the evolution of the universe out of its original elements; investigates mind and matter; human and animal life; organic and inorganic nature. In short, he gives a complete scientific explanation of the universe.

This stupendous achievement he called "An Essay on the Nature of Things." He professes the belief that when once religion with its blighting influence is exterminated, there are prospects of "a better, and above all, a happier state of existence," for the human race. It is his doctrine that no event can occur that is not connected with a material change, and is not explicable in terms of matter.

Despite the remoteness of the age in which he lived, he is singularly like the modern scientist in outlook. The teachings of Lucretius anticipated the evolution of the present universe; the indestructibility of matter; the struggle for existence; the survival of the fittest; the origin of language, of religion, of the State, of law, and the progress of science generally, besides other points.

Our special interest in Lucretius is because of the likeness of his thoughts to much of the present thought on these subjects. There are the same ideas, but they are expressed in different words. Primarily, Lucretius wrote as a man of science, but the zeal of a teacher and reformer is more strong in him than even the intellectual passion of a thinker. In his poem he repeatedly pays tribute to his master Epicurus, whose doctrines he teaches. Because he expressed himself so singularly and, at times, so confidently and fiercely in a poem of much beauty, the ideas he expressed are now regarded as belonging to Lucretius himself.

He felt rather than expressed the truth of the remark, "there is no darkness but ignorance," which is the cause of fear, "for," he says, —

"Fear takes hold upon the human breast,

When we see many things by nature done,

Whereof the ways and means are known to none."

—And accordingly these phenomena are ascribed to the supernatural.

Lucretius is very severe on the deeds perpetrated in the name of religion, and instances the tale of Iphianassa, sacrificed on the altar by her father:—

"That so ships the wished-for wind might gain,

And air puff out their canvas. Learn thou then,

To what damned deeds religion urges men."

The genius of Lucretius was remarkable. As a poet he had to raise the commonplace to the mysterious, and as a scientist to bring down the mysterious to the commonplace. He said:—

"I have another mile to go,

And in the Muse's car must mount on high,

Mid storms and winds, and tell you how they fly."

Thus Lucretius—the Beloved—as he was called. Poet and scientist, he used these attributes in assailing the ogres of superstition and ignorance. He regarded himself as supreme in the claim of liberator of the human spirit from the cramping bonds of superstition.

S. GORDON HOGG

IN THE BOOK WORLD

"The New Psychologies." (Allers.) 1938.

"The New Psychology." (McLellan.) 1939.

"Secrets of the Mind." (Wager.) 1940.

"Hypnotism: Its Meaning and Practice." (Cudston.) 1938.

"Mental Deficiency." (Duncan.) 1938.

The first three of these books on psychology indicate that psycho-analysis may easily lend itself to religious quackery.

The first author, for instance, regards Christ as the precursor of some notions now current in psycho-analysis, thus giving a new twist to his traditional nose of wax. The second, a clergyman, also twists psychology so as to reconcile it with Christianity, but there is rather less excuse for the third—C. E. Wager, whose book is published by the Rationalist firm of Watts, who promise, in the R.F.A. Annual Report, that the work will clear up "the complexities of psycho-analysis."

With the latter remark in mind, how is this for a start? "Psychology says, in effect, whatever 'God' is, we need the whole of ourselves to be at one with Him."

We need the whole of ourselves to be at one with whatever God is. A recent Freethinker editorial, commenting on a passage in St. John, said that if the words were shuffled and re-dealt at random nothing would be lost in lucidity: the same remark would appear to apply. But the *pièce de résistance* is that this nonsensical jumble is not merely

what the author says, but actually what "psychology says." Which particular psychologist has said it is not indicated, so let us hope it is only what Mr. Wager says. This will save us the trouble of digesting it further. Mr. Wager may have cleared up the complexities of psycho-analysis, but we have no heart for the job of clearing up the complexities of Mr. Wager.

Cuddon's book on hypnotism is well in line with the best of the works which have followed the publication of Milne Bramwell's "Hypnotism; its History, Practice and Theory" at the beginning of the century. In contrast to those already noted I should describe Cuddon's work as important in that it gives an interesting introduction to a department of psychology, though his acceptance of Myers' theory of "subliminal consciousness" should be taken as opinion and not as fact. He disavows the existence of any so-called "hypnotic power"; he speaks rather of skill in applying hypnotism, of which there are graded stages linking it up from normal waking experience to somnambulism at the other extreme. It is not too well known, either, that a subject under hypnosis does not accept a suggestion which he would normally refuse, especially if it offends his sense of decency. A book published in 1937, "Psychology Without Sighs" (Aitchison), also makes this point, and I believe the experience of Milne Bramwell in this particular has not been contradicted.

The work on mental deficiency contains statistics and conclusions valuable to any student of eugenics. It is also an armoury for the materialist, in showing how physically observable cerebral conditions are associated with mental defect. Deficiency of grey matter, irregular arrangement, imperfect development of the cells—all these may lead to dementia (deficiency at birth). Tredgold also writes in his book on "Mental Deficiency," "The amount of change discoverable by the microscope is directly proportionate to the degree of mental deficiency present during life."

Duncan has to paint a gloomy picture of an England which in the next 300 years does not resort to Eugenic measures. The mentally deficient, including the feeble-minded, defined as those who require control for their own protection and cannot benefit much from learning, and the morally defective, who require control for the protection of others, rose from about 4½ per 1,000 in 1908 to about nine in 1929. Imbeciles, who cannot manage their own affairs, and idiots, who cannot guard against physical dangers, rose in the same period from 0.98 to 1.87. A table prepared by Dr. Cattell shows steadily increasing size of family as descent in intelligence scale is made, so that in 300 years' time half the population of England and Wales is at present destined to be mentally defective. That is, improvements in education may raise the national intelligence efficiency, yet this can co-exist with a falling national intelligence. It is only possible to utilise fully the intelligence with which individuals are by nature endowed; it is not possible to raise that intelligence capacity itself. The fact that one tank contains a gallon and another one two gallons is no criterion to the size of the tanks. Our tanks of national intelligence will get less and less, even though improved education will fill them to a greater proportionate capacity.

It is well known that there are more m.d.'s in rural than in urban schools. Duncan takes the usual line of attributing this to the departure of the more enterprising from the rural areas at the Industrial Revolution, and the intermarriage of the inferior stocks remaining. It may also be that of those going to the towns the less able are driven to the slums. Dr. Burt has stated that well over half the children in London who are dull and backward come from poor homes, barely 1 in 10 coming from homes that are well to do.

Many people allow their politically Left sympathies to warp their judgment and incline to the view that it is the overcrowded slum which causes backwardness, if not deficiency (though it is hard to see how it could cause the latter). This theory is simply pulverised by experience. Cattell, in his "Fight for our National Intelligence," publishes the results of years of work on studying the effects of a complete change of environment on children. "The children come, for the most part, from very poor homes indeed, many of which are of the . . . slum type. The parents generally are intellectually dull and some are

defective. . . . They come to a residential school where environmental conditions have been planned with minute care. The conscious purpose has been to try to make as perfect an environment as possible. The children improve in every possible way except in I.Q. (Intelligence Quotient). The I.Q.s do not rise. . . . Evidence generally is that actual test intelligence is not raised by improving environment." There are, of course, Performance Tests as well as Mental Tests.

There is again evidence of material associations, since "Feeble-minded children on the average are inferior in height and weight to normal children" (Duncan). The sound materialistic conclusion is that intelligence, like body, is inherited, and Duncan quotes some interesting experiments in Hampshire towns affording a contrast in parents' occupations.

G. H. TAYLOR

"ONCE GLORIOUS EUROPE"

—Winston Churchill.

ONCE glorious Europe held the world in fee
(To echo William Wordsworth at his best);
It was a case of "Europe—and the Rest,"
But looking at her now, what do we see?"
We see a Continent, no longer free,
Of Robots lacking enterprise and zest,
Where Art decays and Science is oppressed,
And Brotherhood has died, with Liberty.

No, no, not dead; hear ye that thunderous "No!";
Europe will rise, her glory shine again,
For Europe dealt herself this felon blow;
From self-caused wounds has come her grievous pain;
Disloyal sons have brought her honour low,
But wiser offspring shall restore her reign.

BAYARD SIMMONS

ACID DROPS

WHAT a change! And what is the real value of public opinion? Yesterday our leaders were, with a few exceptions, all against friendly relations with Russia. Some amount of commercial traffic might be encouraged, but as for an alliance—well, Russia was a country ruled by a handful of brigands, the people as a mass were held down by a system of terrorism, and one of these days the people would rise against the tyrants. As for religion, the country was strongly Atheistical; people were not allowed to attend Church or to worship as they pleased. A highly civilised, conscientious, god-fearing people like ourselves could have no really friendly intercourse with Russia.

And then Russia joins us in fighting the Germans. The people that had no fight in them are fighting with a courage that astonishes even the Germans. The Russians fight, in many instances, to the last man—and woman—and even when tanks are destroyed the men form themselves into handfuls of fighters and carry on the conflict. Representatives of the Russian Army, Navy and Air Force come to London. The papers acclaim them, distinguished men greet them in the station at which they arrive, they are cheered throughout the streets and, at the moment, next to America, Russia is one of our greatest assets in conducting the war. A couple of years ago they would not have been received at the station, and there would have been many hints as to the fiendish plans in view concerning their intentions and their visit.

The religious Press, with others, are meanwhile trying their best to convince the public that there is no real alliance between ourselves and Russia, and that there must never be one. We are merely fighting on the same side against the same enemy. That is the Christian measure of things. We can join with Russia in making war, but not in creating and maintaining peace. Our bishops and archbishops and B.B.C. preachers who are slobbering about

"love" until they make the very word stink in one's nostrils, cannot and will not tolerate a country where its government will have nothing to do with religion. And when the war ends with the defeat of Germany, we shall have to look out for these gentlemen sabotaging the peace. Otherwise we might find a free Sunday in this country, religion being disestablished, blasphemy laws wiped out, the millions paid to the clergy sinking to a much smaller sum, and life discussed from the point of view of human well-being and not from that of what "God requires from us."

When the war ends the archbishops will have the nice job of thanking God for victory, and to offer regrets to him that he could not give us the victory without giving it to Russia as well. God will be in as great a fix as the archbishops. We almost pity both.

The Pope, the other day, blessed the Italian people for having the privilege of "harbouring the centre of Christian Unity." Big words, uttered with a tongue in the cheek, unless the Pope is a bigger fool than we take him to be. What of nearly half the Christian world that are not Roman Catholic? We suppose the Pope would reply they are not Christians. So that what he means is that Italy is the centre of all who believe that the centre of Christianity is in Italy. That is not a bad sample of Christian reasoning, where theology is concerned, but we did expect the Papacy to wrap it up better. There used to be some very able men among its leaders. It looks as though priests and potatoes have this in common—they have their most enjoyable parts underground.

There is one point that is rather puzzling. Roman Catholics in England are praying, or say they are, for the victory of Britain. But that involves a defeat of Italy. In Italy Roman Catholics are praying for the defeat of this country. Of course, it is possible that English Roman Catholics may attach a kind of postscript and tell God that when he reads Britain, will he please take it to mean Italy. Otherwise God won't know what to do in the matter.

It is high time we left off blaming Hitler, or even that mysterious entity "Germany," for the war. On what is to many millions of people unimpeachable authority, we now learn that Germany was a mere pawn in the game. For the real author of the war we must turn to the Pope's recent Sunday broadcast. After declaring that the "triumph of evil will endure only for a fixed time," the Pope said ("Catholic Herald," July 4):—

"The hour of God will come . . . after having let the hurricane loose for a moment on humanity the all-powerful hand of the Heavenly Father, with an imperceptible motion, will allay it, and disperse it, and . . . will restore justice, calm and peace to the nations."

That is quite plain. God began it, he let the hurricane loose and he will, with "an imperceptible motion," stop it. It looks as though we might stop all our armament works and disband all the armies. All we have to do is to watch for the "imperceptible" wave of God's hand. We shall recognise the motion, even though we cannot see it.

The only thing that puzzles us is why God let the hurricane loose on the world, and why, in that case, we should blame the Hitler gang for it? To attribute a world war entirely to one man or to one nation is a state of mind at which competent historians will smile, but it is at least excusable for the time being. But if God is responsible for it, why did he begin it? And as in the end he will stop the war, it looks as though he let the war loose either to show the world what he could do, or because the world was taking too little notice of him. The cry of the Kaiser in the last war was that Germany wanted a place in the sun. Can it be that God felt the same urge? It is certainly a very spectacular way of making his existence known. But we do know now who it is we have to blame for the war.

A religious conference was told by Bishop Price that churches should have fireproof registers for the protection of valuable documents. But surely that is God Almighty's job! What is the good of asking for his protection if that protection is only forthcoming when it is not necessary. Fancy putting a notice in a church, "All valuable documents in this House of God are protected by fireproof and burglar-proof safes." Even the dull ones might ask what part God plays in such a situation? Perhaps the reply would be that God guides the parson in buying a really reliable safe. But against this is the fact that quite ordinary folk, even Atheists, may secure immunity in the same way. The difficulty is a very ticklish one.

The Rector of Christ's Church, Brondesbury, complains that of 6,000 children attending elementary schools in Willesden, only a small percentage attend Sunday school. That is why he wants "compulsory" religious teaching for children in elementary schools. The rector is quite honest; he is out for more customers, and is willing to use force to get them.

In his essays on religion John Stuart Mill wrote:—

"If the law of all creation were justice and the Creator omnipotent, then in whatever amount suffering and happiness might be dispensed in the world, each person's share in them would be exactly proportionate to that person's good or evil deeds."

Granting the premiss, there seems nothing wrong with the conclusion. But as it attacks religion, a special article in the "Manchester Evening News" intercedes and points out that equitable consequences cannot happen because men and women are bound together for good and ill, suffering from the faults of others and benefiting from each other's good deeds. That is quite sound reasoning, but how does this disprove what Mill said? What Mill said was that if the existence of an omnipotent God was granted, then the world of mankind should not be what it is. The reply is that it cannot be what it might be without things being worse than they are. And Mill's case was that the fact of things being what they are, the belief in an omnipotent god is ridiculous. Of course, we quite understand that it is part of the business of a newspaper to say what it can in defence of religion—so long as it serves the sacred purpose of increased circulation. But the exhibition of folly displayed in the criticism cited was surely gratuitous.

Proposals are being made that the University of Oxford should withdraw the degree it conferred on Mr. Wodehouse because of his behaviour in Germany. We suggest that it should be a warning to Oxford, and other universities, not to confer degrees for superiority in literature, science, art or philosophy. The habit of conferring degrees upon all kinds of people who happen to be in the public eye, from royalties downward, should be discarded altogether. The present method makes universities cheap and unimportant. There should be some things in this country that cannot be bought or thrown about as though they are of little or no value.

Truth will out, sometimes it "outs" slowly, sometimes with the force of a bullet. Thus, the "Church Times" remarks quite casually, "The religion of the child is only the religion of the adult in a preparatory stage." We agree. And it accounts for the very childish views that so many religious adults have. The danger is, of course, when the adult outgrows the religion of his childhood. But the "Church Times" hit the nail or the head that time.

According to the Roman Catholic Press, the Church is in trouble in the Malabar district of India. Someone named Petta complains that Hindoos are now organising against Roman Catholics. Some are actually teaching Atheism. And Petta doesn't know what to do about it. Atheism is a very old thing in India, and we can imagine the poor show our missionaries make against an educated Hindoo. We remember a contest of this kind that we witnessed many years ago. In the end the Hindoo had to give it up. What could a mere Hindoo hope to do against the cast-steel armour of stupidity worn by a very English preacher?

"THE FREETHINKER,"

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,
London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

C. EVANS.—Education was made compulsory by the Act of 1870. Until then the education of the children in this country was lower than most of the continental countries. For over 70 years the main body of schools was in the hands of the Church and Nonconformists. The chief interest of both was to use the schools against each other. There was very little real zeal for education as such. Only a small proportion of youth—male or female—were able to read and write. To-day we have both Nonconformists and Churchmen, with Roman Catholics, and the probable connivance of members of the Government, engaged in turning the schools into training grounds for Christians.

J. H. CHARLES.—Mr. Cohen has no recollection of debating with a Rev. Harold Mason at Burslem, and does not think that any such debate ever took place. Thanks for what you are doing. Some good results, even though it may not be as great as you wish.

H. LUCAS.—The quotation was taken from the writer named, but we do not know of any English translation.

M. CHAPMAN.—Thanks for anecdote. But it has appeared before in "The Freethinker."

WAR DAMAGE FUND.—H. Sykes, £1; H. L. Stone, 2s. 6d.; H. de Montmorency, 5s.

Mr. C. C. DOVE writes congratulating us on the way we have surmounted the difficulties the "blitz" created. He adds: "It is impossible for the Freethought Party ever to express their admiration for the services they owe to your zeal, courage and resourcefulness." We thank Mr. Dove for his bouquet, which, in form, has been expressed from many sources. Will they please take our thanks for the appreciation shown. The matter may rest there.

For distributing "The Freethinker": C. M. Hollingham, £1.

G. WALLACE.—Thanks. We are keeping well, but frightfully busy. We were looking forward to a brief holiday, but we do not see how we are going to manage it. Work is piling up.

J. HUMPHREY.—Thanks. Shall appear.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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

Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

"The Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

SUGAR PLUMS

FOR purposes of binding we need copies of "The Freethinker" from January 1, 1941, to July. These are required for binding for office use. Perhaps some of our readers will oblige. We should also be glad to hear from those who have Freethinking writings—books, pamphlets, periodicals, etc., from, say 1750 to about 1890—for disposal. We are filling in our "spare time" with an attempt to replace some of the losses sustained in the great "blitz."

Mr. K. L. Munro writes:—

"I must trespass on your time to thank you for the articles on Sir James Frazer. What a pity you stopped where you did. I offer the suggestion that you give us in

the future more of these analytic and synthetic studies of men who are worth while. Very few seem able to do such a job with adequate efficiency."

Many have written us in the same vein. All we can say is that we had as much pleasure in writing about Frazer as anyone could have had in reading him. But there are so many items of current interest that call for notice. Besides, we don't want to write the whole of the paper. That is a very fine plan for killing a periodical.

The ignorance of the average Briton about Russia is simply colossal. For instance, a great deal of surprise is expressed because of the firm stand the Russians are making against the German forces. The surprise is quite unwarranted. To begin with, the courage to fight is not among the very highest qualities of human nature. It is one of its commonest features. In turn we praise the fighting qualities of those with whom we are in agreement, and even of those with whom we are fighting, without drawing a sound conclusion from our praise. Given an occasion for fighting and there will be plenty who will take part in it. Given something that appeals to what is at once the deeper and higher feelings of mankind and there are few who will not fight. These should be commonplaces, not discoveries.

Next we may note that the Russian people—with all their backwardness in civilisation, for which Czardom and the Russian Church were so largely responsible—have not behind them the glorification of war that is common in the European world. The folk-lore of European countries, and their traditions, reek with praise of the soldier. Children are brought up with tales of ancient heroes whose chief actions are concerned with fighting. In our history and in our lives the soldier takes a very prominent place. In Russian folk-lore, Russian literature and the songs of the people, while the soldier is not absent, he is not the principal figure.

Next, until the Revolution, Russia was a country of villages, and the attachment of people to their native village can be seen everywhere. In a village a man is part of the local life. In large towns and cities he is just a number in a street, living for years among people to whom he is practically a stranger. There is no organic connection between him and his fellows. He becomes alive to their inevitable communion chiefly in moments of danger. He will then fight "like the devil," but so will the villager, and his fighting is apt to have a deadly seriousness that others just as often lack.

These are some of the reasons why the Russians have fought so well, and have simply refused to surrender in conditions that have surprised the Germans. There are other reasons. And the Russian of to-day has something to fight for. He is not the Russian of Czardom, brutalised by both State and Church. As we said when the Revolution came, the great advantage the revolutionists had was that Czarist Russia was so vile that any change was bound to be for the better. It could not leave the people worse than they were. And, of course, pre-revolutionary Russia was very religious.

And now we have the Churches and other influences that could remain almost unmoved by the unrelieved brutality of the Czarist reign, which deliberately fostered drunkenness and illiteracy for the purpose of perpetuating a vile régime, insisting that we must have no alliance with Russia—we merely welcome them as fellow fighters. Perhaps the most contemptible feature of all, in this connection, is the refusal to permit the Russian national anthem to be played with others on Sunday evenings. The Russians are not allies, so what might be welcomed as an act of courtesy is set aside in deference to sheer prejudice. That is not too good an omen for the new world that is to follow the war. A desirable European peace with Russia left out can be desirable only to fools—and worse. It means another armed peace, which is just a degree better than actual war. But it ends in war, as experience proves.

We usually read with pleasure Mr. A. J. Cummings' "Spotlight" notes in the "News-Chronicle." But what is one to make of this: "Godlessness is not a natural impulse of the Russian people"? If Mr. Cummings means by "natural," primitive, we agree with him. It is inevitable that primitive peoples, in their first interpretations of nature, shall get wrong ideas of the world. That is as true of the primitive people in this country as it is of Russia. If he means there were not very many "godless" among the Russians before the revolution, then he is quite wrong, and his acquaintance with pre-revolutionary Russia must be but slight. If he means that those who have seen the light will presently revert to the belief in God, then he is "wrongest" of all. Men and women may never reach the stage of mental development for which Atheism stands, but once having reached it—short of some mental collapse—it is impossible for them to revert to a superstition the nature of which they have recognised. Man may not learn, but normally he does not unlearn.

It may interest Mr. Cummings to know that Atheism is unknown among lunatics, and very rare with those suffering from confirmed mental disease.

We are pleased to see the following in "Reveille" for June 21, a paper intended for the Forces. It is our own statement of the law on the subject, printed without comment, but evidently intended as a guide for men entering the Army, Navy or Air Force:—

"RELIGIOUS BELIEFS"

All men joining any branch of the military, naval or air services, and who have no definitely religious belief, have the legal right to register as Atheist, Agnostic, Freethinker or Rationalist without giving any explanation whatsoever. If they are already registered under some religious heading they have the legal right to apply for a suitable alteration. If difficulties are put in the way of their avowal being registered as requested, appeal should be made to the superior officer.

Should difficulties be experienced, or the right to be registered as desired refused, a man joining any branch of the Services is justified in refusing to sign what to him is a false declaration.

The ancient Greeks seem to always "get there." Here is a passage from the "Euthyphro" of Plato:—

Socrates: Sacrificing is giving to the Gods, and Piety is asking from them.

Euthyphro: Yes.

Socrates: Upon this view, then, piety is a science of asking and giving.

Euthyphro: You understand me capitally.

It would have taken a B.B.C. preacher 20 minutes to say that much. But the aim of the Greek thinkers was to get at the truth. That of the B.B.C. is to bamboozle its listeners.

THE N.S.S. AND THE LAW

THERE would have been no need for me to say more than was said last week concerning the summons issued against Mr. Ebury had it not been for some remarks made by the magistrate, after judgment had been pronounced. I refer to the following:—

"I am not deciding this case because these people have no religious belief. That is a matter between themselves and their creator and it is no concern of mine. But why a society should send out people like these to try to disturb other people's belief—a belief from which many people, especially nowadays, get infinite comfort—passes my comprehension."

It was an individual who was before the Court, not a collection of individuals amounting to a large number and scattered all over the British Empire.

Now, I wonder what Mr. Sandbach knows of the National Secular Society? One must not assume that he has so little acquaintance with current events that he has never heard of a society which has existed in substance for more than a century, and by name was founded by that little known individual Charles Bradlaugh, and afterwards by that great fighter for freedom G. W. Foote, whose trial for blasphemy led to a new and now accepted re-reading of the common law of blasphemy. To assume that he is unacquainted with these facts would be verging on an insult. Mr. Sandbach offered a gratuitous insult to thousands of men and women whose decency, "respectability," consideration for others, the desire to benefit others, and intelligence are in no respect lower than his own.

Let us assume something that is not true: that Mr. Ebury is a foul-mouthed individual, careless of what he says and whose feelings he lacerates. What ground does that offer for saying that the society knowingly sends out speakers of that description? Suppose that it was some speaker representing a religious organisation, or any organisation that was not of an unpopular political or ethical character, who was charged with the offence Mr. Ebury was accused of. Can anyone doubt that the magistrate would have said, "The society should be more careful as to the characters of the persons whom they send out to address the public."

One wonders whether Mr. Sandbach, who does not live perpetually in the cloisteral seclusion of Marlborough Street Police Court, has never come across cases of drunken or dishonest clergymen, defaulting officials of religious societies, preachers who have even been charged with using language calculated to create a breach of the peace, etc. It seems almost impossible that he should have escaped such an experience. And if he has met the cases cited, would he, in fining the defendants, have wondered why a society should send out such men? One expects he would have satisfied his feelings by advising the society to exercise more care in the selection of their advocates.

The rebuke for sending out lecturers to disturb other people's beliefs sounds strange when coming from Christian lips. When a Protestant lectures against Roman Catholicism or a Catholic lectures against Protestantism, when Christians send missionaries all over the world to convert people to their belief, what are they doing but "disturbing" other people's beliefs? A belief is, of course, something that is held, but it is also something to be attacked if the world is ever to develop at all. What is the intellectual development of the world but a continuous battle of belief? The world war that is now in being is, consciously, a battle of beliefs. And these battles of beliefs are not merely facts, and inevitable facts; they are progressive facts. With all due respect to the Court, the assumption that beliefs should not be disturbed is a very, very unenlightened view of life.

I recall an incident that occurred in the case of the G. W. Foote trial in 1883 for blasphemy. As a result of something that was said by Lord Coleridge, who was a great legalist as well as a great gentleman, said to the prisoner (he was already sentenced): "It would be unworthy for anyone in my position to insult anyone in yours." This was to a man who was already serving a brutal sentence from a brutal judge. I am quite sure that Lord Coleridge would not, under the protection of his position, have spoken of the many thousands of men and women who are associated with the National Secular Society as did Mr. Sandbach.

I think it will be kindest to agree that Mr. Sandbach was expressing the truth when he said that the efforts of the N.S.S. in trying to "disturb other people's beliefs" was doing something that "passes my comprehension."

Particularly when it takes the form of saying that beliefs should not be "disturbed" nowadays" when Christians get "infinite comfort" from their beliefs. That sort of reasoning is not only bad philosophy, but Mr. Sandbach is himself evidence of its falsity. I have already referred to the miserable procession of specimens of our civilisation that paraded before the magistrate, charged with being drunk and disorderly. They were punished—they had to be punished—but in inflicting the punishment Mr. Sandbach did it gently; there was a kindly look in his face, and the fine—2s. 6d., 5s., 7s. 6d.—seemed to come

within the "sinner's" financial resources. One could imagine him even paying the fine himself.

But suppose that one of these "drunks" had said to him, and he had the legal right to say it:—

"You are punishing me for being drunk. I would remind you that my faith in the cheering quality of alcohol is based on many years' experience. Without it I am depressed, miserable, forlorn. It is the only reliable aid I have. And it passes my comprehension why you, an educated man, should try and disturb my belief which, especially nowadays, gives me infinite comfort."

I imagine that in this situation Mr. Sandbach would reply that "the fact is that the belief in alcohol exists, and it cannot be denied that some people find infinite comfort in its use. It makes the poor man feel as important as the rich one, it gives some a sense of power that is very gratifying; it makes the sad cheerful. All this may be omitted, but, my poor creature, if you will only refrain for a while and consider what other methods there are that will give you equal or better comfort, with none of the drawbacks attaching to the use of drink, and further that all of us develop only so far as we change our beliefs in the comforting value of things to which we have accustomed ourselves, you will be, in even your own estimation, a much better individual."

There is truth in the first statement, but there is a greater and deeper truth in the second. And for that reason I would remind Mr. Sandbach that thousands of men and women do not bind themselves together in a movement that can bring them nothing in the shape of social prestige, money or position, merely to rob people of comfort. Be content is the cry of the slave driver. Let me remain content is the prayer of the born slave. But our urgent need to-day is that we should all of us grow discontented with what we have previously been content, and if we are to achieve this "divine discontent," it must be by doing what the magistrate has officially declared he can see no reason for doing, and more importantly, attacks a large body of men and women who have convictions that they are really working for the betterment of the human race.

C. C.

CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY

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MAKES EXCELLENT PROPAGANDA

FUNDAMENTALISM

SO much is said about Fundamentalism in the U.S.A. that some recent publications of the University of Chicago Press come as a breath of fresh air.

Some ten elementary books on Biology have so far been issued.

The particular tonic occurs in a book on Botany, "The Story of the Plant Kingdom," by Merle C. Coulter, 1935.

I quote from the preface.

At Chicago the core of "the respectable minimum of general education" is provided by four one-year courses, "Introduction to the Humanities," "Introduction to the Social Sciences," "Introduction to the Physical Sciences," and "Introduction to the Biological Sciences."

These courses are variously known as "comprehensive courses," as "survey courses," as "orientation courses," and as simply "introductory courses."

The Author (from the name I take it a lady) says still in the Preface, "The course instructors wince when the first two titles are used. These instructors do not claim the courses as comprehensive."

If the "instructors" include the authors of these manuals, they are certainly modest, which fact we do not usually associate with the great American nation.

Apart from details which one may get from technical books and journals, all the Biological series are clearly written expositions of the Evolutionary theory, and these books deal with the simpler and less organised plants and animals.

All the books are well written, in non-technical language, as far as it is possible, so much so that a child of seven or eight, granted a wise, sympathetic teacher, could study and easily understand them.

As these are intended for first-year University students, it is an easy guess that in America, as in this country, the earlier schools have not taught these important facts.

I have always thought that the time wasted on religious instruction should be devoted to these very matters.

I, for one, learnt the "shorter" catechism forwards and backwards. I have never yet discovered whether there is a "longer" catechism.

I thought I had discovered a gold mine when I ran across these books by accident. I promptly got all the series of the Physical and Biological Sciences. It cannot be too often emphasised that "Scientia" just means knowledge, neither more or less.

Anyone who can read and spell can follow the authors. The books are well illustrated; surprisingly, most are illustrated and written in a really humorous vein.

Now, ordinarily one might just mention and recommend the series, it needs little praise.

Only, in the book on botany, "The Story of the Plant Kingdom," chapter XIV., the author goes the whole hog.

Merle C. Coulter, having mentioned the conservation of matter, and the conservation of energy, says: "For a long time it was felt that that these two laws were inapplicable to living organisms. Even to-day the doubt exists, and a perennial controversy goes on between the mechanists and the vitalists."

The author continues, that the mechanistic view is that the living organism is a machine, and granted the further knowledge needed, can be described, that is its mechanism can be described in knowledgeable terms, the terms known as Physics and Chemistry.

On the contrary, the Vitalistic view is that a living organism is something "distinctly more than a machine, and there are at least some of the very important activities of the organism that can never be explained in mechanistic terms, for some of the phenomena of life transcend, and are therefore not subject to, the (known or knowable) laws of physics or chemistry."

To continue to quote: "With very few exceptions the men who are making contributions to biology are mechanists. The reason for this is not difficult to see. Scientists, as a rule, have been sufficiently intelligent to avoid tasks which are clearly hopeless. If a young biologist takes the vitalistic view, he concludes that the more deep-seated and important phenomena of life are beyond the reach of human analysis, and refrains from an investigation, which is hopeless from the start."

"But if he is a mechanist, he has faith that his research efforts will some day be rewarded. That by finding out a great deal about the living organism he may come to find out the causes of its activities, in essentially the same way as he can understand the workings of a man-made machine. The substantial contributions to biology have been based on research. It follows, therefore, that the leading biologists of to-day are mechanists."

Later the author says: "We are in debt to the mechanists for a great deal of what goes to make up modern civilisation . . . medicine, hygiene and agricultural methods."

Note again that this very definite statement occurs in an elementary textbook. And could even our revered Editor put it more plainly.

But fancy teaching children all this. No wonder Chicago has a name for badness, and breeding gangsters. Anyone interested should see these manuals.

What a difference to what we understood happened, and no doubt happened in a Catholic University in Dublin, in which city I studied medicine. When a delicate problem in Embryology, and any such subject turned up, a priest replaced the lecturer, and explained the matter (to be crude, he told the students they would rot in hell if they dared discuss the Immaculate Conception), or what slight difference existed between a normal functioning brain, and the same brain in a second, when it was torn asunder in apoplexy, by hæmorrhage from a broken blood vessel. Everything is still there except the soul, which has immediately fled. Souls being timorous things and, when they are needed most, just vanish. Anyhow, I cannot imagine my gifted author waiting outside the door while freewill was being explained.

Propos of nothing, there is a problem which has always intrigued me; re the famous watch story. What would happen during the five minutes, whilst the Atheist was waiting to be struck down, if the watch stopped? I mean, should he decide that Providence was merciful and saved him, or should he trust to Science and remember he had forgotten to wind it up!

Regarding freewill. Life happens in virtue of colloid chemistry. In colloid chemistry, instead of atoms and radicles interacting, the huge molecules concerned are made up of large unstable molecules, which act as the atoms do in a simple chemical reaction. The size and instability of the tremendous molecules in the human brain, are certainly outside our view.

Especially as we can only study them when the brain ceases to be a brain and only something to put on toast (pre-war).

At the other end of the scale, Einstein and his friends talk of a principle of indeterminacy (as regards electrons, etc.).

It seems to me that this indeterminacy is more likely to exist in the unpredictable region of huge conglomerations of atoms, etc., built up into the structure known as the brain.

Surely if anything can be said to be unpredictable it is the interaction of these molecules (colloid) as it occurs in the human brain.

In other words, one never knows what a woman will do next. I heard a man say once, "Being married, I know."

Is this unpredictability responsible for freewill? This is the paradox. My friend said he knew, what he did not know, what she would do next. When I asked the lady about this, she said, "A man like that would drive anyone distracted, even a saint."

I left her telling her beads, and making signs against the evil eye.

For the benefit of those who do not know:—

Electrons, in the broad sense, unite to form atoms.

Atoms unite and interact to form molecules, molecules unite to form bigger molecules, and these bigger molecules unite together to make up the colloid substance we know exists as Protoplasm. The protoplasmic mass is unstable, but under optimum conditions is eternal. (Paramœcium, etc.)

W. L. ENGLISH.

THE CULT OF SATAN

(Continued from page 320.)

FOR a more detailed description of the present tenets of the anthropological school, I recommend two excellent books by Dr. M. Murray—"The Witch-Cults of Western Europe" and "The God of the Witches." I may add that Dr. Murray, like so many pioneers, seems to ignore other aspects of her subjects in favour of her own school's exclusive interpretation. Apart from the Pagan cult which the anthropologists have undoubtedly unmasked (literally), there can be little doubt that many professing Christians, entirely unconnected with the cult of the "Horned God" (cp. ut infra), suffered as "witches" for magical practices frowned on by the Church. Dupes equally with their judges, they shared in the prevailing belief in Satanic inspiration. Moreover, whilst the Inquisition, despite its popular reputation to the contrary, was rarely vindictive, or deliberately unjust according to its lights, yet there were exceptions; and, particularly in the more remote districts, judicial murders of perfectly innocent people must sometimes have taken place. To that extent, the rationalist "debunking" of witchcraft as a pure delusion must still be accorded a limited justification.

We express the substance of the contention of the anthropological school in these terms:—

"The Cult of Satan" was a genuine cult; "witchcraft" did actually exist: "Witches Sabbaths" were actually held; and even the traditional witch's broomsticks were genuine articles—accessory to the cult. Moreover, "Satan"—or, at least, His human incarnations and earthly representatives, did actually appear to His worshippers horned and masked in the likeness of a goat, a bull, and other sub-human creatures." In a word, and with the exceptions already noted by us above, Satan was—Satan! The Black Mass was—Black! The innumerable witches, both male and female—for the term was originally indiscriminate as to sex, and was used impartially of both men and women by the most experienced inquisitors—who were burnt at the stake in both Catholic and Protestant lands as witches, really were witches!

In brief, we are spared the humiliating admission that several of the most brilliant centuries in human annals were given over—as the nineteenth century supposed—to sheer delusion, sheer insanity. "Satan." His cult, His worshippers were real; as real as the fires which but too often devoured them! The Inquisition did not go to infinite trouble and expense merely for sheer cussedness! The hard-headed Presbyterian Elders of the Scottish Kirk did not waste good faggots on empty delusions. For that matter, they did not waste physical fire on psychical "substance" incapable of enduring physical pains. Did not that most learned of Jesuit theologians, Denys Pétau, demonstrate the sensible conclusion that "it is as impossible to torment an incorporeal (evil) spirit with fire as it is to encase him in a coat of paint." Irrefutable logic!

Satan, then, was real—despite the nineteenth century mania for rejecting tradition wholesale and for indiscriminately emptying out alike genuine babies with legendary bath water. But—who was He? Upon which mysterious question anthropology is also able to shed convincing light.

The cult of "Satan" was, in fact, an old Pagan pre-Christian cult of magical origin and great antiquity, which maintained its ground with extraordinary tenacity in face of all efforts of the Catholic Church to eradicate it, first by propaganda, and finally by force. Its strongholds were amongst the peasantry of the more backward European nations, amongst whom old superstitions, cults and beliefs died hard.

(In this connection, it is altogether relevant to recall that it was amongst the most backward nations of Europe that the persecution of "witches" and "devil-worship" raged most fiercely (n.b., Scotland and Sweden).

Just as the word "Pagan" is usually derived from the rustics of ancient Europe, who clung tenaciously to the worship of Pan, Bacchus and Apollo, long after the towns had gone over to the new Imperial Religion so, "il vecchia religione," the still older magical cult, also lingered amongst the obscure masses of the countryside right down to the eighteenth century, about when it seems to have faded out. The study of Comparative Religion teaches us unambiguously that the time-honoured tag: "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" is only true—and, indeed, not always then—viz., *ep.* seventeenth century Japan, where Christianity itself was exterminated in favour of the local animistic cult of Shinto—of the persecution of a higher creed by a lower one; and not vice versa. In the case under consideration, the Inquisition and the Kirk succeeded in their bloody eradication of the old Magical cult of "The Devil" which now seems to be extinct. (Its last stronghold in England appears to have been the Chiltern Hills in Buckinghamshire, which seems to have remained a pagan stronghold down to the industrial revolution in the eighteenth century.)

Who was the "Devil" whom the "witches" worshipped on their Black Sabbaths? None other than the Pagan God, Who appeared masked, and by proxy at the Black ritual, and to Whom its initiates did public homage. In accordance with its then universal custom the Christian Church transformed this Pagan Deity into a "Devil," just as it had already acted in the case of the already vanquished Deities of classical Greece, Rome and the Druids: the gods of the defeated religion usually became the devils of the conquering creed! The "witches" are those belated (and, in consequence, benighted) devotees, who fail to move with the times; and the religion of whom, consequently, automatically becomes "superstition"! The Pagan of yesterday becomes the "witch" (or wizard) of to-day! For example, the seventeenth century Jesuit missionaries in Tibet, who referred to the Dalai Lama of Lhasa—the alleged Incarnation of Buddha—as "Devilish God the Father who slayeth such as refuse to adore him."

Who, then, was the "Devil" of the "Witches." No Devil at all in the estimation of His adherents; but a true and veritable God, as much so in the eyes of His votaries as the Christian God was in the eyes of His: though the grim court records of their executions remain their only memorial, it is certain that many of these poor deluded Pagan rustics died for their magical Beast-God with whom they had danced in the woodland glades on many a joyous Sabbath, with a heroism unsurpassed by the most famous martyrs of any creed whatsoever. The Inquisitors themselves testify to their "frenzied mirth" even under the most sickening tortures and in the death-agonies of the flames. This identical "frenzy" would have been called "heroic virtue" had the persecuting roles of the two religions been reversed.

Who was the "God of the Witches"? And what was the nature of His cult? We have before us no classical cult of historic name and times. It is a nameless nature-cult, magical in origin, and without a proper name. Akin in origin to those nameless "gods of the Lower Culture" which still survive amongst the animistic shamans of Siberia and the Ju-Ju cults of African Benin and Dahomey: the so-called "Secret Societies." To be sure, the oldest pictorial representation of this god is to be found in the pre-historic drawing of the "Masked Sorcerer" in the

Pyreneean caves of fabulous palæolithic antiquity. Amongst the Romans the cult was known as that of "Cernunnos"—"The Horned One"—and was widely diffused throughout Gaul and the Western Empire.

As for the cult itself, it had its priests or shamans, masked and horned to represent its Deity. It had its ritual and "public worship" in the woods—the so-called "Witches' Sabbaths." (Even the broomstick had a symbolical significance: the legend that the witches flew there is Apochryphal and of late origin even amongst the persecutors of the "ancient religion.") Masked dances played a prominent totemistic role in the ritual. There were "covens," or prayer-circles; amongst whom the number 13 was sacred. (Hence, probably its later unlucky character amongst Christians!)

We will only add that it is now virtually certain that Joan of Arc—now a canonised saint of the Roman Church!—was a Pagan Divine Incarnation, who was what they actually burnt her for: viz., a "witch," and that her "Lord God" was not the Christian God! nor her famous "voices" the accents of authentic Christian Saints. For instance, in Court she refused to swear on the Gospels. Her "Chief of Staff," Gilles de Rais, also died as a "witch" along with his "coven," unrepentant to the last. Also let us add that William Rufus—1087-1100—was a Pagan, who died as a voluntary royal Sacrifice in the New Forest in the thirteenth year of his reign. Contrary to official history his death was not an "accident." By an ironic chance he was sacrificed to the "Devil" just as his exiled Archbishop Anselm was demonstrating (in "Cur Deus Homo") that Christ was sacrificed not to the Devil, but to God! Moreover, his grandfather, Robert Duke of Normandy—father of William the Conqueror—was not called "The Devil" ("Worshipper of the Devil"?) for nothing.

(To be concluded)

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.0, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.0, Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 7.30, Thursday, Mr. E. C. SAPHIX. Sunday, 6.0, Mr. L. EBURY.

Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Sunday, 11.0 a.m., Mr. J. McCABE. "Germany: An Interpretation."

COUNTRY

Blackburn N.S.S. Branch (Market), Thursday, July 31: 7.30, Debate, "Has Christianity Benefited Humanity?" Affirmative, Rev. G. A. WEST (Queen's Hall); Negative, Mr. JACK CLAYTON. *If wet*, in Lees Hall, Mincing Lane, Blackburn.

Kingston and District N.S.S. Branch (Market Place): 7.30, Mr. J. W. BARKER.

Blyth (The Fountain), Monday, July 21: 7, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Burnley (Market), Sunday, July 20: 7, Mr. JACK CLAYTON.

Chester-le-Street (Bridge End), Saturday, July 19: 7.30, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Higham, Tuesday, July 22: 7.30, Mr. JACK CLAYTON.

Newcastle (Bigg Market), July 20: 7.15, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Read, Thursday, July 24: 7.30, Mr. JACK CLAYTON.

Worsthorne, Friday, July 18: 7.30, Mr. JACK CLAYTON.

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