

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Continued from page 142)

Morals and God

IN the more scholastic section of the Christian world there are two opposing positions with regard to morals. One is that the existence of God is manifested by the quality of "creation." The other that nature, apart from man, shows no trace of morality and only when man analyses the nature of morality and his own natural capacity is he driven back to assume a God as an explanation of the origin of ethical concepts. Our new Archbishop of Canterbury advocates this view. He has frequently aired it through the medium of the B.B.C. which carefully guards him and others from direct contradiction. But there is really nothing new in these two positions. Ever since the Christian Church came into existence these two opposing theories have been adopted by defenders of the faith, and some of our modern preachers have adopted both. Christian advocates are always more hospitable to a mental muddle than they are to intellectual coherence.

It may be noted as a curious fact that it is not usually claimed that God is responsible for man's intellectual development—except on the broad ground that he is responsible for "mind," which C. E. M. Joad appears to hold is a chunk of something that has been planted in the body of man but which has no necessary connection with it. Apparently there is "mind" and there is "body" but how the two got together is past all understanding—at least it is past the Joadian understanding. To use a simile of Huxley the first (T.H.) this type of character appears to think of "mind" as something stuck in the brain as a price card is stuck on a chunk of cheese in a grocer's window. It is usually hesitant of any conclusion that is not a foolish one.

But throughout the ages Christian preachers, and they who love to loiter in the shadow of the Church, have agreed substantially that man's intellectual development might have been achieved without God. In a large number of cases it was attributed to God's opposite, but generally more admirable, character. It has been agreed that all the arts and sciences, all the non-religious philosophies might have been brought into existence without religious influence. Man could have mastered the earth, the seas and the skies without the aid of God. But when it comes to the discovery that truth is better than a lie, honesty better than dishonesty, kindness superior to cruelty, then it needed a God to explain the situation. It is a strange world in which we live, and when religion is allowed to run free it is very often a mad one.

The Meaning of Morals

What is morality? It is often defined as right action. But as right action is defined as morality, we seem to be in danger of wandering in a circle. We may, however, with security say that morality is ultimately based on action. The moral man is one who in a given situation acts in a certain manner. A second assumption is that morals deals with a defined relationship. Mainly, even in the broadest terms, it is a relationship of kind. No one would argue that a man has, or can have, a moral relationship to a rock, or to anything inanimate. Finally, as Socrates pointed out long ago, a thing or an action to be "good" must be good for something. The alternative is that it is good for nothing. My next point, a fairly obvious one, is that what biological "laws" are to living organisms, "moral laws" are to social groups. "Moral laws," like biological ones, are expressed in practice long before they are explicitly recognised in theory. Animal life and social life would be impossible were it otherwise. The surprise of the character in a famous French play that he had been speaking in prose all his life without knowing it has many analogues.

Morality, therefore, in all its phases represents an adaptation of the individual to a social group. There are wide differences in this adaptation, but the fundamental fact remains unchanged and unchallengeable, from the simplest forms of associated life up to its highest expression in man. Adaptation is the law of life, from the simplest to the most complex forms. Once these simple facts are recognised, once these simple truths are understood, and the efforts of men such as Dr. Temple or Professor MacMurry to establish a place for God in human conduct begins to look like philosophic clowning. Once the significance of these simple statements is recognised the theory that moral qualities rest upon a belief in gods is seen to be on all fours with the sublime religious rhapsody of the preacher who saw the hand of God in large towns being found near great rivers, and death coming at the end of life instead of in the middle of it.

Man and Society

We are now in a position to say,

- (1) Morality precedes religion;
- (2) In its origin religion has no concern whatever with morals;
- (3) What may be called the humanising and moralising of religion is a consequence of social development, or, in other words, the pressure of social life on religion.

Taken in its broadest aspect morality may be defined as the right adjustment of man to his social environment. But here we have to take our stand on what may be called pre-human society. For whatever be the species of animals from which humanity is derived it was quite demonstrably that of a gregarious character. Mankind derives from a gregarious type. The fundamental characteristic of human nature is that of adaptation to others, and in this semi-human environment we may see the roots of the higher morality that is distinctly human,

But mankind as we actually know it shows more than the membership of a mere animal group. His real history begins as the member of a social group. And a social group marks several important distinctions. First we have the beginnings of language. Next we have the making of tools, finally the creation of institutions. It is in these phases of development that we time the development of mankind. Tools replace the slow organic development by which the animal world overcomes the difficulties of its physical environment. What he discovers, what he creates, all his inventions, the improvement of language, all are passed on from generation to generation in increasing quantity and quality. What he invents he holds, and instead of starting from the point at which his progenitors began and ending where they ended, his discoveries and inventions are embedded in institutions, leaving it for his descendants to add to the total. In other words, the progress of the superior animal world, the slow method of biological growth is replaced by the cumulative effects of stored up inventions and discoveries. Mankind becomes more helpless from the animal point of view, but man gathers great and increasing strength as a result of the social environment into which each generation is born.

No single man could or did invent a ship. The building of the greatest of modern vessels began when our savage ancestors learned to float down a stream on a log. The work of building a modern ship is not the work of men, it is the work of Man. And what is true of a ship is true of the special subject with which we are now concerned.

For the condition of life in all its phases is that of adaptation to environment, and in the human phase there is always the growing power of the social environment. The animal love of the mother for its young develops into the human love of the mother for her child. The coherence that is essential for the tribe to survive demands at least a workable degree of honesty, truthfulness, good feeling, the readiness to defend one another from attack, and a feeling of loyalty to the tribe as a whole. The individual who falls short in these matters, if his offence is a grave one, is eliminated. If a mild offence he feels the disapproval of the tribe. But there is a limit beyond which neither the tribe nor the individual can go without paying the price of extermination. There is an interesting chapter yet to be written dealing with the decay and disappearance of tribes of men because they ventured too far.

I have been trying to compress a volume of philosophy in a few paragraphs, but I think most of my readers will have followed what I have said, and, in any case, I may have said enough to weaken the force of the mystical nonsense and religious rubbish that is being forced upon the public in the name of philosophy and religion.

Man and the Race

In this history of the race what part does religion play? Morality, as I have said, is practised before its nature and value is recognised. Religion, on the other hand, begins in the phase in which there is a semi-aimless groping to understand the world. Anthropologists have to-day found the origin of religion in that stage in which man begins to question nature and finds the answer in the assumed existence of a mysterious force to which the name of "Mana" has been given. Later this force becomes personified in gods or spirits, thence to the historic religions, and finally—to date—in that cluster of nebulous deities who appear to be disappearing into the mist out of which they came.

But the gods, when they do come, are not concerned with morals. They are neither moral nor

immoral, they are amoral. They care for but one thing, they ask but for one thing—service. From the dawn of intelligence down to the present day, the gods have clamoured for service. They will not help unless man repays them in the form of prayer, of worship, of adoration. These things are the food of the gods. All have been reared on it, none long survive its absence.

But the gods do not begin in the region of morals, nor have they ever cared for morality. But religion and religious institutions, if they are to exist, must keep within reach of man. The Church must never be at too great a distance from the collection plate. In the presence of developing humanity the gods must be on their better behaviour.

Consider one or two matters. One of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian Church as it appears in history is that of celibacy. It is still regarded by Roman Catholic and High Church leaders as the purer life. But if the Church had been successful in their efforts, the human race, so far as Christendom is concerned, would have died out. So the Christian world had to content itself with the teaching that celibacy indicated the higher and purer and more Christian life, but it was given to the minority only to achieve it.

Another illustrative thing that indicates the non-moral character of religion is that of eternal damnation and the Christian hell. That doctrine brutalised the race as no other single thing could have done. That doctrine is still held by the largest Church in Christendom, and with hopes that hell will not be quite so hot as it has been depicted by a large number of other Christians. But most of the Protestants have cultivated the hope that hell is not quite so hot as it was thought to be, and perhaps there would be a liberal ticket-of-leave allowance. But the Christian religion remains as an historic feature, and much as it would like to cancel out a great part of its record, the facts remain for all to understand who will.

One would be inclined to be merciful to the gods in these their later days, and to let them linger on as fairy tales, remaining as a mere reminder that fairies and goblins were once very real things, but have now become the harmless playthings of children and the amusement of adults. But, despite their history, the gods are still honoured by multitudes, and their influence works continuous ill for the human mind. The slander of the pulpits is still with us, the screen that hides a man's motives from himself is still serving its purpose. The clergy tell us they can see the gods in man. If man would only see himself in his gods he might more profitably realise that the gods he sees are the reflections of his own undeveloped nature.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
 When noon is past: there is a harmony
 In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,
 Which thro' the summer is not heard nor seen,
 As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
 Thus let thy power, which like the truth
 Of nature on my passive youth
 Descended, to my outward life supply
 Its calm, to one who worships thee,
 And every form containing thee,
 Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
 To fear himself, and love all human kind.

—SHELLEY.

"WHY I AM A RATIONALIST"

MANY readers of this journal will, I am sure, find the booklet "Why I am a Rationalist" (Watts and Company, 1s.) of great interest. We must all be curious sometimes to learn what it is which makes the other fellow a Freethinker (or Rationalist), and here we get 54 "confessions" from men and women in all ranks of life who tell us clearly why they gave up belief in religion and joined that movement often—and rightly—named as "the best of all causes."

They make a particular point in telling us which were the books which influenced them, and a pretty wide field is covered. In fact, I must confess myself being surprised at some of the works which turned the believer into a heretic, which changed the narrow outlook of a thorough Theism into that of complete emancipation from all religious influence. Yet, just as it takes all sorts of people to make a world, so it takes all sorts of books to make a heretic—and I think this is a very good thing.

The pride of first place is given to Lord Snell, familiar to many of us as plain Harry Snell, especially when he graced the N.S.S. platform with his vigorous Secularism. He does not mention—rather unaccountably—those stirring times, but plunges straight away in explaining that for him there was no "sudden Patmos revelation of light and truth. The satisfactory end had to be fought for step by step." And he explains that it was along the line of "the theory of man's slow evolution from lower forms of life" that he first saw the dawn. So it is not surprising to learn that it was Darwin and Huxley and Lubbock and Andrew Wilson on evolution who influenced him, to say nothing of the "co-ordinating and mind-expanding works of Herbert Spencer." One begins to wonder whether Lord Snell in those early days had heard of the work of the "fighting" Freethinkers—of Foote and Bradlaugh and their enthusiastic followers; and so I was glad to read his generous acknowledgment to the "ephemeral literature" of the Freethought Movement and his tribute and "sincere acknowledgment of all he owes" to the "National Reformer," "The Freethinker" and the "Agnostic Journal."

Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, who seems to have had an exceptionally pious upbringing, "was fortified against accepting the claims of Christianity by the study of two books which, though rather out of date, are very well worth reading. These are the Bible and Haeckel's 'Riddle of the Universe.'" The latter book, however, did not convert Prof. Haldane to accepting Haeckel's "rather crude materialism"—though he would still like to see it "very widely distributed." Engels' "Anti-Duhring" and "Feuerbach" provided him with "a far more credible philosophy." Here, again, I cannot help wondering whether Prof. Haldane ever heard of the hard-working Secularistic movement which must have surrounded him—at least sometimes—with its thunder. Did an echo never reach him?

Of the six ladies who contribute to the symposium, Miss Marjorie Bowen is perhaps the most well-known, for there must be few novel readers who have not sampled her fine historical romances. She seems to have been both "terrified and rebellious" during her childhood at Christianity, but was early influenced by ancient authors like Plutarch and Lucretius and Marcus Aurelius, and found few Christians she could admire. The "Cartesian philosophy, where Monism was substituted for Dualism," was very grateful to her, and Miss Bowen finally expresses her deep appreciation for the "excellent handbooks" published by the R.P.A. She also seems never to have heard of any active Freethought Movement in her formative years.

Of the other ladies, one found in Vivian Phelps' "The Churches and Modern Thought" her salvation; another found the Bible "shattering beliefs instilled in childhood;" the "Golden Bough" first "really disturbed" another's faith; while it was Ingersoll's "Lectures and Essays" which influenced an Australian lady most. Lady Maud Simon (whose graceful contributions are well known to readers of this journal) found the arguments of Huxley "most convincing."

It is interesting to note, however, that Prof. H. Levy was led to read Paine's "Age of Reason" through "hearing it quoted at a street meeting," and he pays tribute to "those unknown street-corner propagandists"—one of the few who does, by the way.

I personally was glad to see that Mr. Ivor Brown owed so much to Robert Blatchford's "God and My Neighbour"—a book which aroused the ire of contemporary Christian Socialists perhaps more than the blunt attacks of Bradlaugh and Foote, and evoked many replies from people like the late G. K. Chesterton, Frank Ballard, J. Warschauer and others. I read all that I could buy of these replies, and found so much undiluted drivel in them that I sometimes feel they are even more responsible for my own Atheism than the great Freethinkers. Mr. Brown, however, is a great admirer of "the Jew who was crucified," in whose existence he seems devoutly to believe. It obviously takes a long time to eradicate beliefs instilled in one's childhood.

Many of the contributors to the symposium were brought up in a very pious atmosphere, and it is not altogether surprising that they found the break with religion an extremely hard one. Mr. Ernest Carr went "groping for light, stumbling through swamps" for many years until he came across "Sartor Resartus," which was "a revelation." Mr. Howell Smith found Farrar's "Mercy and Judgment" destroying for ever his belief in Hell. But later he read very widely of Freethought literature, though he is now "somewhat disturbed by certain apparently well-authenticated psychic phenomena which seem to point to man's survival of bodily death." He candidly confesses that he is "still a stumbling and bewildered wayfarer on the path that leads to truth." And so one could go on analysing many extremely interesting cases of conversion—though I hope I have said enough to influence any reader to study these cases for himself.

For myself, I must confess that I simply cannot understand why, in so many instances, it was necessary to read such a lot before coming to the conclusion that orthodox religion was just so much nonsense. And also why the break with religion was often so painful. "Why I am a Rationalist" therefore will be found an invaluable study of the causes and books which led to unbelief.

H. CUTNER.

ACID DROPS

THE "Church Times" devotes an article as a "salute" to the departing Archbishop of Canterbury. We might have passed that as part of the proceedings when an Archbishop or a king or queen dies. In both cases the country is plunged into grief; we have lost a great and glorious figure, etc., etc. We remember a copy of an old "Morning Post" recording the death of that notorious blackguard, George IV., and we might have noted the praise of the Archbishop as a mere customary compliment but for a casual reference in the article to the Duke of Windsor. It was the Archbishop and Baldwin who engineered that mean trick, although it was also the Archbishop who had stood sponsor for his high character and general fitness to be King. (Fitness is, of course, a

term quite out of place where the monarchy is hereditary. The fitness of a King of England is determined by an act of Parliament more than 200 years old.) We do not champion ex-King Edward as a character, but that does not relieve the responsibility of the Archbishop for what was really a dirty deal.

The Bishop of Chelmsford asks, in the "Evening News," whether England can stand without a religious faith? Of course, that means without the Christian religion. Naturally, being a pedlar in faith, it cannot. In other words, the country can be saved only when there is a certain number of people here like the Bishop of Chelmsford. May the Lord give us a good conceit of ourselves.

Presumably, the Bishop thought he might put the matter too baldly, so he qualifies his statement and concludes that England will be saved, "for the believing minority are still with us." It is something to hear it admitted that the believers in God are in a minority, and reasonable for one to assume that with the present "rationed" supply of worshippers it might easily happen that if the numbers continue to shrink, God will look at the quality of the shrinking minority and decide that so few a number and such scurvy specimens may not be worth the saving. Perhaps the B.B.C. and Brains (rest) Trust would consider the problem. It provides fine material for the amiable imbecilities for which it has become famous.

But while not rabid Nationalists, we protest against this slander on the British public. We deny that while, say, the Russian people can do well, and can do so much without God, that English people must have God to look after them. We protest. We claim that Britishers are as good as Russians; if the Bishop says they cannot be, then we reply that they can be as good as Russians without God—if they try. But, of course, if they persist in playing the fool they may never be able to stand alone. Still, Christians might try.

The new Rubber Control Order in restricting the use of rubber in certain directions and banning it altogether in some cases, does not interfere with rubber contraceptive appliances. Roman Catholic priests are concerned with such matters and protests are being made in the Roman Catholic press. The hon. secretary of the Catholic Pharmaceutical Guild recently wrote a protesting letter to "The Times" pointing out that not only were these articles untaxed, but "There seems to be every encouragement given to their distribution on so-called hygienic grounds. It appears that instructions are given to recruits." From this we may gauge the kind of freedom we should have if the Roman Church ruled.

Every sensible person knows that the choice before the Army authorities lies between keeping young men clean and healthy, or filthy and diseased. The Church places this first consideration last. Not the quality of the population, but numbers is what the Church aims at. Hitler had exactly the same idea when he initiated a crusade for a hugely increased population with a people who were complaining that they had not enough living room. Power based on numbers is the policy of the Roman Church. Human nature is just a possible tool for the Church. Once more we say there is little fundamental difference between the Papacy and Nazism; and the other Christian Churches get as close to the Mother Christian Church as circumstances permit.

Our pious contemporary, the "Daily Mail," published an article by Mr. Ward Price extolling National Days of Prayer, and the next day printed many letters all agreeing on their absolute necessity with almost hysterical fervour. One of the writers wants the Premier to lead the nation in this—by broadcasting, we suppose, the hopeless bosh which our Bishops have put forward being just the kind of thing the Almighty loves to hear. Another writer—this time an Army man—wants a Secretary of State for Religion with Cabinet rank, while still another wants a day of national repentance. It will not be long perhaps

before a determined effort will be made to make praying compulsory under heavy fines, with open heretics like ourselves, who ridicule all this crass superstition, being given imprisonment without the option of fines. At least, reading the letters agreeing with Mr. Price, that is the impression we get from these ardent Christians—and haters of light and reason. Millions of people in this country still seem to be in that primitive state of mind which we thought was the prerogative of, let us say, the Australian bushmen.

Folly is often found in high places. There is no reason why it should not be, since so many fools get into high places in the shoes of rogues who were there before them. But there should be no need for Winston Churchill to play the fool. In the "Sunday Dispatch" for March 29 he trots out the age-old stupidity that when he was in danger of capture by the Boers he could not have been saved without the aid of God. Once more, may the Lord give us a good conceit of ourselves. But he "prayed long, earnestly and so forth, and so forth—and God saved him. True, it was God disguised in the person of a Dutch farmer, but Churchill saw God through the disguise; and having seen the hand of God, he was too polite to ask God why the devil he didn't save him earlier and so prevent him getting into the hell of a scrape in which he found himself. Perhaps it would not have been polite to ask God questions of that kind.

"T. W. R." writes in the "Christian Herald" that what we need to-day is more evangelism, and recites the wonderful results obtained by evangelists in the last years of the last century. He particularly notes two great evangelical crusades, one in Chicago and one in Melbourne. That is very interesting. We had two miraculously successful Christian campaigns, and to balance things we have had two world wars. Christian blessings are hard to understand. The fewer we have of them the better.

We are a democratic people. So are the Scots. Both are democrats, but, as Dan Leno used to say, both of us with nobs on. So we are not surprised to learn that Mr. R. E. Muirhead, of Loch Wimmick, has been summoned—not for the first time—for non-payment of Church rates (Teinds). Mr. Muirhead replies in justification that he is not a member of the Church of Scotland and never has been. But that makes no difference to the Church. You can't come in without paying but you can pay without coming in. It is the oldest law and practice of God's Church. So Mr. Muirhead has to pay or—not for the first time—go to prison. Still, we are a democratic people—with nobs on.

FOR THE FORCES

Members of the Forces who are in any way interested in the Freethought Movement who would care to have a copy of the "Freethinker" sent them weekly, and who are not already subscribers, are invited to send their name and full address to the General Secretary, National Secular Society, 2 and 3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4.

Freethinkers who are willing to entertain men in the Army during the evening, and Freethinkers on war service who would value such invitations, are invited to write the General Secretary.

Men belonging to the Armed Forces are always welcome at the Society's offices, any day except Saturday, between eleven and five o'clock.

Let every man, if possible, gather some good books under his roof and obtain access for himself and family to some social library. Almost any luxury should be sacrificed to this.—W. E. CHANNING.

Literary history is the great morgue where all seek the dead ones whom they love, or to whom they are related.—HEINE.

"THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,
Telephone No.: Holborn 2601. London, E.C.4.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

OWING to the Easter holiday, and the fact that printing establishments were closed from Friday till Tuesday, matters that would have been dealt with in this issue are held over until next week.

"TAB CAN."—We have seen the report that General Kai-Shek had adopted the Methodist creed, but have seen no verification of it. He has always been regarded as Buddhist and a believer in the general Chinese philosophy of life, and that is, intellectually, as far removed from Christianity as anything can be.

F. WARBURTON.—Many thanks for quotation, which will be useful. It is difficult to get an impartial consideration of a war in being as it is to get a clerical assembly to take a sensible and scientific view of religion; and he who strives for it is in for troublesome times.

WAR DAMAGE FUND.—J. McIlwain, 3s.

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, H. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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.

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.

SUGAR PLUMS

MR. COHEN has not paid many visits to the provinces this season, but he will visit Manchester to-day (April 12). The meeting will be held in the Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints. It will be an afternoon function. Doors open at 2-30; chair taken at 3 o'clock. Freethinkers might do useful work by bringing a Christian friend with them. Subject: "What Will Follow Religion?"

We confess to being rather diffident in selecting books for children. So much depends upon knowing the child intimately that one may easily give wrong advice. Frankly we envy those who have the capacity for getting into the mind of a child, and that envy is based on the "bloomers" we have made. It is so easy to take one's own preferences and imagine that the child will have the same likes and dislikes, which it seldom has. Personally we have found no better advice than that given by Ruskin: "Turn your children loose in a well-stocked library and let her, or him, browse where they will. In the long run they will most probably find what suits them better than any adult can manage; a child is not a small edition of an adult—it is just a child, and blessed be they who can get on intimate terms with him, or her."

So when we were asked to recommend books for children we adopted the not too courageous plan of "passing the buck" and asking readers to say what they found good for children. Here is the first list, sent by one of our lady readers, one whom we know to possess good judgment. She advises the following: "Early Life in the Old Stone Age," by Marjorie; "Man Before History," by Mary Doyle; "Life in Early Days," by Elizabeth Frazer; "Life and Its Story," by A. W. Low; "The Early Cave Men," by Catherine Jeff; "The Wonder World," by Gowans Whyte; "Days and Ways of Early Man," by J. Davidson; "The Origin of the World," by R. McMillan; "The Progress of Early Man," by Stewart Piggott. We shall be pleased to hear of other lists. Also the results.

India is very much in the news to-day, and it would be well if the prevalent ignorance of the British public concerning a fifth of the world's population was displaced by understanding. For this reason we have pleasure in commending "Ethical Ideals in India To-day," by Edward Thompson (Watts and Co.; 1s.). This little work is one of the Conway Memorial Lectures (1942) and is full of meat. We fancy Mr. Thompson is the author of "The Other Side of the Medal," a book which we read some years ago with interest and profit, since it throws much light on India that is not to be acquired from standard histories and governmental reports. Both should be read with a critical mind. As a footnote we add that we lost our copy in a common way with those who, while probably bad arithmeticians, are excellent book-keepers.

Will readers please note that the Editor's "Almost an Autobiography" is now out of print. There has been a good demand for the book, and it will be reprinted as soon as possible. But the paper situation grows steadily worse. It is annoying, for just now there is a greater demand for real Freethinking literature than there has been for some time.

The following excellent letter appeared in the "Schoolmaster":—

"Sir,—Sir Frederick Mander states that 'teachers are overwhelmingly in favour of religious instruction in schools.' So-called opinions are nothing but whims or prejudices unless they are based on facts and are reached by a process of scientific reasoning.

Will you please let me put a few questions to our members before they join this latest 'War March of the Priests'?

1. Why cannot we have a big, bold, completely secular system of education in this country?

2. Why should we even negotiate with Archbishop Schemers and Agreed Syllabusters whose outlook belongs to a bygone age of animism, superstition and witchcraft?

3. Why should State-aided schools be used to try and save a Church whose palpable decline is largely due to its own neglect of the great human problem?

4. What are we to think of religious leaders who inflict this pettifogging controversy upon us when a whole world is ablaze with war?

5. What conceivable authority is there for the grotesque assumption that morality is derived from religion?

6. How can we develop reasoning powers and cultivate unreasoning faith simultaneously with a mixed religious-secular curriculum?

Llanelly. DAN GRIFFITHS."

There appears to be rising protest against the plot to capture the schools in the interest of the clergy, and to which the Board of Education is lending a hand. We hope all who see the plot will make whatever use they can of the public press to guard against this retrogressive step in our educational system.

The new Radio Freedom League will hold its first public meeting in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, on Sunday, April 26, at 6-30; doors open at 6-15. Mr. Chapman Cohen will take the chair and there is a good list of speakers. We think this is the first public protest against the policy of the B.B.C., and there will be a platform of distinguished speakers. Fuller particulars next week.

Discussion is still going on in many papers as to whether public schools should be abolished or not. That is getting the wrong end of the stick and perhaps it is not wholly accidental. It is not the quality of public schools, but their monopoly that is in question. All that is good in public schools should be preserved, but they should be open to all, irrespective of the wealth or social position of their parents. Ability should be the only test and the only qualification. We should then have a better chance, as a nation, of putting on one side the army of incompetents that, generation after generation, stands in the way of national reform.

HA'PENNIES AND PENNIES

MY daughter Helena (aged eight) is generous almost to a fault. The following amusing incident, which exemplifies that virtue, and which at the same time shows a remarkable shrewdness in one so young, occurred some weeks ago, but was recalled to my mind as a result of reading Mr. F. J. Corina's reply (February 8) to my criticism of January 25. At her auntie's home Helena presented her cousin Wendy (aged four) with a nice new penny. But Wendy, like Oliver Twist and equally unsatisfied, proceeded to ask for more in no uncertain fashion. "I want two," she cried. Helena looked thoughtful for a moment, but quickly made up her mind. Opening her purse, she examined its contents carefully; then, retrieving penny from Wendy, she gave her two ha'pennies!

Now Mr. Corina is even more generous than Helena. He is, moreover, a conjuror! He takes my penny—the World Commonwealth—puts it into his hat, and hey presto! pulls out *five* World Commonwealths! (paragraph 4). This is no doubt a clever piece of legerdemain, but Mr. Corina is not sufficiently expert. He gives himself away when he asks, "Which World Commonwealth does Mr. Phillips mean?" (paragraph 4), since this shows quite clearly he has not read closely the article he is criticising. For did I not in that article define a World Commonwealth as "a world in which goods are produced for use and free distribution, and in which money no longer exists"? (paragraph 3 of my article); and did I not in paragraph 7 repeat and expand this definition? How does a World Commonwealth thus defined compare with any one of the five, so called, that Mr. Corina pulls out of his capacious hat? Let me make it quite clear that so far as I am concerned the words "World Commonwealth" mean exactly what they say, and that is, "wealth common to the people of the world." If Mr. Corina, and those of his friends who are anti-Semitic, prefer to use these words in any other sense, they are, in my opinion, using them wrongly. There can be "wealth common to the people of the world" only in a World Commonwealth as I describe it. Can the same be said of the five others?

So, Mr. Corina has no need to regret the futility of his efforts (paragraph 1). He has, after all, given me an opportunity of teaching him something, and as by teaching him I am learning a lot myself, we should both be satisfied.

Nor need he regret his "stupidity" (paragraph 2), though no doubt his anti-Semitic friends might call him stupid. There are probably thousands of people in this country, and millions throughout the world, who would call him stupid. But I have not, and will not, call him stupid. He is, in my opinion, letting his finer feelings run away with him, and for an injustice which, as he must be well aware, is only one of hundreds of injustices. As he himself admits, the Atheist is penalised for his beliefs much in the same way as the Jew; and what of the coloured races, the negroes, the racial and national minorities all over the world? And do not the anti-vivisectionists and the anti-vaccinationists demand justice? The unemployed clamoured for justice for years, and it needed a war to give it to them; but is it only for the duration? And the poor: do they not clamour for justice? And they are *not* a small minority. As Mr. Justice Mathew so aptly put it, "In this country justice is open to all—like the Ritz Hotel," though in my opinion, "world" could quite well take the place of "country" in this quotation.

In any case, to whom does he plead for justice? Not to the just; surely? To the unjust? the intolerant? the bigoted? And does Mr. Corina suggest, by implication, that I am insensible to the injustices to my fellow men and their resultant sufferings? I emphatically deny such a suggestion. On the contrary, it is because I am so conscious of the innumerable injustices which so many human beings endure, and (more important) understand the basic cause of *all* the injustices, *and* the remedy, that I take up the attitude I do. In fact, I go much further than those who, like Mr. Corina, plead for or demand justice. I point the way to a world order in which injustices could not occur, and by showing the true cause of our economic

ills, dispel the ignorance which is the basis of anti-Semitism.

As a Freethinker of 21 years standing, Mr. Corina must also be aware that there is a certain element of danger in pleading for justice for minorities; for is it not a fact that such tend to become equally intolerant when circumstances permit and their own interests are at stake? What State showed greater intolerance towards the Jews than the Polish? And how the Poles pleaded for justice for themselves when under Tsarist rule. And is not Calvin another classic example? So I repeat, to plead for justice in a world of injustices is not stupid—it just serves no purpose. It involves pleading for and demanding justice from those who are neither likely to listen to pleas nor to grant demands. In spite of hundreds of years of pleading for justice for the Jews, what have the pleaders to show in the way of results? So little that Mr. Corina himself numbers among his friends *five* who are avowedly anti-Semitic! And one of them, by implication, a supporter of the only Socialist (sic) State! So little that in spite of all the assertions and protestations that the Jews are not the cause of our economic ills, we find anti-Semitism as widespread as ever it was.

So it seems quite clear that mere assertion will not convince the ignoramus in the face of assertions by anti-Semites who usually have behind them the backing of powerful interests and publicity; and so Mr. Corina may agree with me when I say that the efforts of Freethinkers and others should be directed not only towards the assertion that the Jews are not responsible for our economic ills, but also towards proof. What better proof than to show the *true* cause—and the remedy? The remedy is a "moneyless world," a World Commonwealth, in which there would not be injustices, because there could not. That the Freethought Movement is a fitting one for this task of education is to my mind quite clear for would not such a world see the realization of all the aims of Secularism? And more?

But if Mr. Corina no longer intends to "twiddle with the symptoms" (paragraph 3), there is little I can do in the matter except perhaps to express my regret that he apparently intends to cease writing for "The Freethinker." I am sincerely sorry if I have been the means of inducing in him that decision, and I can only hope he will change his mind. To cause offence in any shape or form was and is far from my intention. Rather was I hoping by my writings to revive in the Freethought Movement that wider horizon, which, it seems to me, it had in days gone by, and which it now tends to lack. I did have the feeling that Mr. Corina might be encouraged to take that broader view.

We arrive, then, at Mr. Corina's last paragraph, in which he writes, "So long as ignorant people believe that the Jews as a class are responsible for our economic ills, so long will there exist a special Jewish problem—of persecution." To this I reply simply that so long as there is a "money" world there will be unjust, intolerant and bigoted people, because they either have, or believe they have, some interest at stake; that such people must of necessity be ignorant no matter what their colour, class or creed; that so long as there are ignorant people they will believe that the Jews are responsible for our economic ills, or the Germans are responsible for our economic ills, or the capitalists are responsible for our economic ills, depending on the particular prejudice of the ignoramus concerned. Said Robert Ingersoll: "I do not hate a man that has the rheumatism; I hate the rheumatism when it has a man." I crudely paraphrase him when I write, "I do not hate the people that persecute the Jews; I hate the system of society that makes such persecution possible."

As I am a Freethinker, and not a "Freethinker (!)" I find it difficult to answer Mr. Corina's last question, especially as I am not quite certain what he means by a Socialist. So now, I in my turn become conjuror. I put his penny in my hat, and hey presto! But, my goodness! 57 varieties! (with apologies to Messrs. Heinz).

J. PHILLIPS

FIVE COUNTRIES

"What Happened to France?" (Waterfield, 1940; John Murray).

THE writer was on Reuter's staff and war correspondent to the French armies.

He seeks to explain the internal dissension and other causes leading to the fall of France. Paris was not defended on account of the unreadiness of rich property owners to see their buildings flattened. There was at the same time a great fear of Communism, and Weygand, fanatically anti-Communist, is reported on good authority to have started a scare story to the effect that Thorez and the Communists had occupied the Elysee. The Paris police, he says, had orders to fire on the Renault workmen if they should attempt to defend the capital.

On the military side he speaks of "Maginitis," a complacent reliance on the Maginot Line, and Gamelin strangely evacuated Forbach "in order to save lives," little counting the extra lives thus placed in danger. From Luxemburg to the coast the extended line was weak and little was done to strengthen it, a move which Belgium would have regarded as "unfriendly." This should have been ignored by the French, for "they had long known that the Belgian temper was uncertain and that Leopold was not entirely to be counted on as a friend of France."

De Gaulle had years before pointed out that the topography of the Meuse crossings made defence difficult, yet a weak and untrained force under Corap had charge of this country.

As for Holland, "In The Hague the Germans got into the city dressed as Dutch soldiers and began firing from the roofs. Dutch soldiers then went up to the roofs and were taken for Germans and killed by their compatriots. A few of the Boy Scouts who were responsible for the A.R.P. work were Germans and began firing on the Dutch soldiers. . . . Everyone began looking for a probably mythical car which was supposed to be showering gas grenades. . . . Soldiers belonging to the Palace Guard died from smoking poisoned cigarettes. German housemaids who had been recalled to their country some months previously were brought back into Holland with baskets of provisions which concealed hand-grenades for the fifth columnists and German soldiers. No one knew who was friend and who was foe."

"France, having been so careful to weed out suspicious foreigners . . . was now at a critical moment being invaded by a host of men, women and children of various nationalities who were even passing through the Maginot Line itself. . . . They should have been stopped by rifle fire if necessary." The Meuse bridges were not blown up by the French through incompetence, treachery and the fear of blowing up refugees with them—the latter coming on, no doubt concealing enemy agents and consuming petrol and food as they came, so that all spare supplies were soon used up.

Weygand was not particularly pleased at being given command at this critical stage. He "has had for a long time leanings towards Fascism and once or twice addressed meetings of Colonel de la Roque's *Croix de Feu*."

The peace party at once came to the fore and won over President Lebrun. "Better Hitler than Blum!" was their cry. This internal strife dated back to Munich (which will have a lot to answer for at the bar of history). Reynaud found himself compelled to include in his Ministry such men as Baudouin and Prouvost, the latter managing director of "Paris Soir," backed by the French counterparts of Thyssen and Krupps, hating any Left Government and prepared to back the new Fascist State, even at the price of German occupation. Even a member of the *Croix de Feu* (comparable to Mosley's Blackshirts) was numbered among them, and it was he who started the capitulation proceedings through the Spanish Ambassador. It was now that German propaganda to divide the Allies began to bear fruit, and the usual theme of the "perfidy of Albion" was afoot, so that the undertaking not to make a separate peace was not carried out.

In de Gaulle's words, "The French army had been created to fight on a stable front. When the front disappeared it found that it could not go on fighting. The army was dislocated from top to bottom, and actually there was

greater confusion and disorder at the top than at the bottom."

"Is Germany a Hopeless Case?" (Rudolf Olden, 1940; Allen and Unwin).

Before Hitler came to power the writer of this book was assistant editor of the "Berliner Tageblatt." He sees Hitler as "the spoilt child of the Western Powers." They little realized that Hitler carried nothing like the home support with which he is credited. The author attempts to show by an appeal to history that the Germans as a people have nothing of the Prussian militarism and do not present the problem posed by Duff Cooper—an incurably, because inherently, warlike people. He points out that in March, 1933, Hitler polled only 43 per cent. of the votes, and whereas two or three lies led the German people to war in 1914, for the present war, whips, revolvers, concentration camps and secret police were needed. Does not this prove that Germans change? The Nazis, he says, are hated and despised more than any leaders before them, and he speaks of a terrible day of vengeance, not this time in underground cellars but in the broad light of day, so that this time the gentlemen of the West *will* be shocked.

"America Chooses" (Gordon Beckles, 1941; Harrap).

This book traces the course of Roosevelt's policy through his speeches from June of 1940 to July, 1941.

Reading them, one gets the impression that Roosevelt has not led the people, but driven them before him. He has not taken any step until he has first carefully prepared the public mind for it, and when the step has eventually been taken, it has seemed that he was but interpreting the will of an overwhelming majority of his countrymen. This is perhaps the only way of dealing with a democracy. We see it in each stride forward—the shipments after Dunkirk, the 50 destroyers deal, Lease and Lend, supplies for the Burma Road and the opening of the Red Sea to shipping. In each case he has made the public run a little ahead of him.

"Inside Italy" (C. M. Franzero, 1941; Hodder and Stoughton.)

The writer lived 18 years in England before revisiting his native Italy in the spring of 1940, just before the invasion of Norway. He edited an anti-Mussolini paper here, but stopped for fear of reprisals in regard to his relatives. He particularly describes his talks with Gayda, and sees Count Grandi as, at heart, an anti-German. He speaks of Italy as being potentially ready for revolt against Fascism, but "unconscious of it." They were at the time of his visit feeling a sense of political vassalage to Hitler.

"After 17 years, Fascism has grown into feudalism, unbearable to the Italian people. In Italy to-day there are the barons and the serfs. There is not even a third class. In Fascist Italy either you are a baron or you are a serf." Do not blame the Italian people, he says; revolt may be in their hearts, but "where are the weapons?" "The Spanish Dilemma" (Peers, 1940; Methuen).

The great fear of Franco's Spain, says this Liverpool professor of Spanish, is Soviet Russia. Franco's papers condemned Russia's and condoned Germany's occupation of Poland, and made no complaint about other German aggressions. On the other hand, Russia's invasion of Finland was "barbaric." A close friend of his brother Catholic, Petain, Franco strongly denounced the British naval action at Oran.

The Spanish dilemma is whether or not to aid Germany in the war. If Franco decided on this he would run the risk of a Republican rising. If not, he loses the chance of expansion and earns the chance of being relegated by the victors to an insignificant Power.

The author is an admirer of Spain and is amiably disposed towards Franco. His remarks on the Soviet look silly in the light of subsequent events. G. H. TAYLOR.

CHRISTIAN CIVILISATION

Do you not think the English odd,
A Day of Prayer to offer God,
Whose help they seek;
But when they call for human aid,
For pounds and pence appeal is made
In Warship *Week*?

B. S.

INTELLIGENCE •

If we suppose that the popularity of certain "type" questions put to the B.B.C. Brains Trust is indicative of their frequencies among the thousands actually sent in, it would appear that the Thinking Public is aflame with curiosity about intelligence, talent, mental capacity and allied matters. I myself, it so happens, have never been of the company of savants whose microphonic task it is to extemporize upon all—well, nearly all—topics. Were I to be there, although unhelpful of vying with the best and fearful of botching with the worst, I should at least try, if opportunity arose, to emphasize another approach to the problem of intelligence—other, that is, to the well-plugged philosophical and biological ones. Let us not neglect, I should say in effect, experimental psychology. Please withhold for a moment any mistrust you may entertain about that complicated and controversial subject.

As the latest born and most inexact of the sciences, psychology is particularly open to animadversion. A certain lack of objectivity here and there, the existence of widely divergent and polemical schools, confusion between psychology and psycho-analysis and ignorant bandying-about of technical terms are all factors contributing to the low status. But there are many branches of psychology, and the one now to be invoked is that which is most eligible to qualify for the Kantian requisite of a scientific subject that its essentials can be expressed mathematically—an extremist view if you like, but for most purposes it errs on the right side. This branch is the assessment of intelligence by means of standard tests—intelligence in the commonly understood sense of innate ability to grasp ideas and to reason.

The first really useful tests were devised by Binet before the last war. Using children as his subjects he very painstakingly recorded the responses of a range of age-groups and thereby obtained norms for each group. The response of any individual child, judged against the scale of norms, was therefore indicative of his *mental* age which, expressed as a percentage of his true age, yielded the famous Intelligence Quotient. A random sample of children would necessarily contain as many I.Q.s of more than 100 as of less. Binet's methods and those of his many successors have suffered considerable misunderstanding; critics aplenty have attacked intelligence testing with every weapon from venom to ridicule. Perhaps we have all a natural inclination to regard intelligence as an imponderable and to class belief in the possibility of its being measurable with phrenology. But to read accounts of mental testing is a salutary experience; we find that great ingenuity has been applied to the construction of tests in which language, environment and other circumstantial factors are minimized, that different types of tests usually produce results that show excellent agreement, that unbiased adults who know the children generally agree with the derived orders of merit, that most of the experimental work is strongly laced with statistical reasoning, and finally and most importantly, that few investigators forget that intelligence testing is an infant science that has arduous years yet before it. The claims made are tentative: there is little extravagance or dogmatism.

What generalities may be made from the results? Principally, four. Firstly, that intelligence increases "deceleratively" through childhood until at about the age of 16 it attains a maximum, after which it keeps steady until old age, when a slight decline usually sets in. Secondly, that there is no good evidence for any racial (or shall we say territorial?) differences within the white and yellow peoples. Thirdly, that there is evidence that intelligence is not wholly determined by heredity, that environment and nurture probably have some formative influence. Fourthly, that it seems plausible that intelligence can be resolved into general and specific factors, the latter being reflected as "giftedness" in a particular direction.

Of equal importance is what intelligence testing has *not* shown—that the mental age of the community at large has declined or is declining. A moment's consideration of the rationale of the tests will reveal just how incapable they are of even touching this problem—yet.

It is interesting to speculate on the future developments and repercussions of intelligence testing. Let us assume that in course of time great technical advances will be made. We can visualize the introduction of precise and reliable standard tests for specific faculties and general mental capacity. On the academic side, a new era would be inaugurated, an era in which accumulating scientific records of intelligence provide invaluable material for the historian, the anthropologist and the ethnologist. On the practical or educational side, however, the picture is more obscure. Superficially the idea of being able to assess with some accuracy a child's capabilities and vocational bent is most attractive. Dick will make a craftsman, if not an artist, so we will canalize his training accordingly; poor Tom is not very bright, he is best suited to a light general schooling and will make an excellent routine operative; Harry, with a high I.Q. and a fertile imagination, will be worthy of an elaborate education with a profession in view. All very neat, few occupational misfits, no wasted brains and unprofitable cramming. But how to avoid a concomitant class stratification more inelastic and fatalistic than any hitherto known? At least, in to-day's society, the lowly-placed can cherish the belief that he is as capable as the Prime Minister, and but for circumstances. . . . No, unless we can evolve a pattern of society in which no one is unduly exalted for the merely accidental possession of high intelligence and in which no stigmata are attached to an enforced low-grade educational background or to the wood hewers and water drawers, vocational planning might prove to be a most disturbing institution. And even if we do eventually begin to remould society to a form that can profitably and happily make full use of its human material, we shall have to take care to avoid a drift towards Huxley's *Brave New World*. How complicated! Alas for us alive to day; we may never know the solution.

N. T. GRIDGEMAN.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): Parliament Hill Fields: 3-30 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11-0, Professor G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D., "The Future of the Pacific."

West London N.S.S. Branch (The Lamb and Flag, St. James' Street, W.1), Annual Meeting, Saturday, 11th, 6-30; to be followed by Social Evening at 7-30.

COUNTRY

Indoor

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (P.P.U. Rooms, 112, Morley Street): 7-0, a Lecture.

Blackburn N.S.S. Branch (Jubilee Hall, Market Hall). Monday: 7.15, Mr. J. CLAYTON. Lecture.

Kingston-on-Thames N.S.S. Branch (Market Place or Castle Street), Sunday: 7-0, Mr. J. W. BARKER.

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate): 3-0. A Lecture.

Outdoor

Chester-le-Street (Bridge End), Saturday: 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Newcastle (Bigg Market), Sunday: 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Manchester N.S.S. Branch (Chorlton Town Hall, All Saints): 3-0, Mr. CHAPMAN COHEN, "What Will Follow Religion."