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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Looking for God

LAST week I paid tribute to the skill of the B.B.C. in staging a falsehood without telling a lie. This is a very fine art, but the B.B.C. has had many years of experience and has now become very efficient, particularly where the interests of religion are concerned. It is an expert in what Shakespeare would probably call "the lie suggestive." During the year the public gets over a thousand broadcasts emphasising the greatness of Christianity, but never does one get a chance of hearing the opinion of the very large body of disbelievers in religion in this country. More, it openly declares its policy to be that of taking the more ignorant section of the community as the standard of quality for its religious talks.

In "The Listener" for July 8 there was published a "talk" by Mr. T. E. Jessop, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Hull. I know nothing of Professor Jessop, but if his lecture is a specimen of the kind of teaching he gives his students, most of them will leave the University with a heavy load of misunderstanding. His subject was one of a series bearing the general title of "Why I believe in God," and that forbids one expecting anything new. Mr. Jessop opens with the candid remark, "I first began to believe in God because I was taught to do so." That really gives us the true reason why any person believes in God nowadays, and Mr. Jessop does not better his position by adding "That is nothing to be ashamed of, because I began to believe that two and two make four for the same reason." The analogy is poor, very poor. The multiplication table merely codifies experience, for even a dog recognises that two pieces of meat are more than one piece, and a baby will make a grasp at two objects, and howl if one is taken away. The man who discovered that he had been talking prose all his life would still have spoken prose even though he had never known it by name. Numbers are rooted in experience, but experience always tends to set the gods on one side.

Mr. Jessop pays tribute to his forbears, but not to his power of perception, by saying "It is not reasonable to

assume at the start that our forbears are fools." We do not know that any such view of one's forbears obtains. No one brands a savage as a fool because he believes in a number of ghosts and gods, just as though he had been brought up in a strict Roman Catholic family. But if succeeding generations do not improve on the outlook of their ancestors, their progeny might as well have escaped birth. A man lacking knowledge need not be a fool, but no amount of mere learning will transfer a fool into a philosopher.

"Clearly," says Mr. Jessop, "if God exists, his existence is supremely important." I do not know. At any rate, the conclusion does not follow. Let us assume there may be something that is called "God." I do not know where it is, what it is. I should not know a god if I met one, and I do not know what the deuce he does, and his followers are not sure why he does it. And to avoid a cheap retort, I affirm that all others are in precisely the same position that I am in. The world we know is the same, so far as knowledge and useful practice goes, the same to us all. Mr. Jessop's "clearly" is not clear, it is quite cloudy. Neither is it clear that if God does not exist, no existence at all is important, for importance has an abiding meaning whether God exists or not.

This runs on the true level of B.B.C. religion, and I imagine Mr. Jessop will be asked to speak again. But to outsiders, if God does not exist, the world will remain what it is. Poison will kill, good food will fatten, fire will cause heat, water will produce the feeling of wetness, and B.B.C. preachers will pursue their foolishness with unabated vigour. The foolishness of the fool will not become wisdom and wisdom will not become folly. Even the folly of some of our professors of philosophy will not alter. Folly and wisdom will continue.

I am not certain, but it looks as though Professor Jessop agrees with what we have said. Take the following:—

"When we try to think of the sort of world we are living in, we have to turn to science, to our history, to our personal experience. In the scientific analysis of the world no place at all is given to God. . . . Scientists concern themselves only with what happens within the world, not with the world as a whole. . . . They take the physical universe as a going mechanism and trace it back step by step to the primordial nebulae."

That seems fairly conclusive and also inclusive. If we can trace everything back to the nebulae, and forward so far as our knowledge and intellect will carry us, it looks as though Mr. Jessop is giving us a version and verification of Spinoza's dictum that "God" is just an asylum of ignorance. For God begins, even with Mr. Jessop, where knowledge ends.

It is only fair to Mr. Jessop to say that he does his best for deity by saying that "God" is a problem of philosophy,

not of science. To that all we need say is that all sound philosophy builds on science. A philosophy that does not build on science and is not guided by scientific principles is just elaborated nonsense.

With a suspicion that he has been emptying the baby with the bath-water, Mr. Jessop proceeds to explain that one reason why scientists ignore God—in their science—is

that their business is to study the world, not themselves (and then, feeling that he has given away too much, he adds), of course, they do study themselves, but only as bodies and minds working in certain regular ways, not as scientists—that is, as beings with the curious power of knowing . . . (they ignore) the fact that the universe has produced one type of being (and only one) that can know it. . . . The Materialist philosophy can make nothing at all of it.

For a moment, it must be confessed, I felt like a boxer who had received a "knock-out." The business of a scientist is to study the world, not himself. So far the scientist is not a part of the world. But at the same time he does study himself, but only as bodies and minds. That brings the scientist back in the world—with a jerk. And the body and mind thus brought back into a world to which one of the pair does not belong has the curious quality of knowing his environment, but it becomes, says our Professor, "a miracle." And, of course, the essence of a miracle is that no one knows why it comes, where it comes from, and what is its purpose.

Recovering from my dizziness, I bethought me that after all man is not the only thing on the earth that studies himself to some extent, and we know that the process of "knowing" is one that can be traced a very long way back in the animal series, and that all this "knowing" forms a constant study for scientists all over the world. The poorest of living things must be adapted to its environment if it is to survive.

I am writing this in a garden, and within almost arm's reach a couple of bees are buzzing and settling, taking a flight and settling again, and extracting something from the flower on which they rest. They do not settle at any time on the slates that border the plants. A little farther away a specialist friend assures me that a wire-worm has attacked the apple tree. A fish will recognise the nature of a ripple on the water's surface, a dog will find its way home at a considerable distance, and will pick its master out of a crowd of people. Some animals will store up food for the winter, others will recognise the approach of the cold weather by sleeping until the warmer weather returns. And all these are clearly evidences of the existence, in a simple form, of a degree of recognition, of knowing the character of the environment. Just a little understanding of the nature, significance and development of conditioned reflexes might be of assistance to Professor Jessop.

Just one or two further illustrations of the Professor's wisdom. Pontifically we are told that "the whole human race is a miracle, and miracles are impossible in a godless world." Well, I have never met a God and I have never seen a miracle. The reasoning here is, however, quite clear. Miracles are worked because there is a God. There is a God because miracles occur. I agree that if A equals B, then B equals A. If you ask how to distinguish one

from the other, the answer is that one does not occur apart from the other. But *when* you come across one, the other will not be far away. I merely make the timid suggestion that "unexplainable" is not the equivalent of "understandable."

Professor Jessop reserves his strongest blow to the last. He says he has been arguing, "but no man rests his strongest beliefs on arguments. He believes what he has personally experienced." One would have thought that it is only as a form of argumentation that Mr. Jessop publishes his experiences. But in these godly matters I am a mere child. So when the Professor says

"Like millions of others, I am convinced that I have met God face to face, in worship, in prayer, and in other ways for which everyday language has no names,"

we merely comment that millions of people have indeed had this experience. The native Australian, the Indian Fakir, the dancing Dervish, the habitu  of the seance room, and the whisky soaked dipsomaniac, with thousands of others in every age, have had these visions. If Mr. Jessop has faith in his abnormal visions and experiences, why should he set the testimony of these others on one side or treat them as illusions?

A confession by way of explanation. Both this batch of notes and that of last week were written mainly with the desire to set before readers the policy and performances of a monopoly that may become a serious social danger. There are representatives of Goebbels in every country in the world, and if he indulges in more obvious lies, distorts truths, and is more dangerous than many other monopolies, it is only because he has greater opportunities for working his will. If the B.B.C. maintained an open platform the correction to falsehoods and distortions would come. But it is a close monopoly pledged to maintain a creed that the world is rapidly outgrowing. It becomes a liability where it should be an asset.

I have one suggestion to make. Let Professor Jessop leave Hull and come to London. He could then join hands with Professor Joad. If I believed in a God, I would say that God intended them to work together.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE SAD STORY OF CARDINAL NEWMAN

THE most illustrious convert to Catholicism in the 19th century was the Protestant priest, J. H. Newman. While an Anglican, his views vacillated. He craved for certainty and was ever morbidly solicitous for his soul's salvation, so he ultimately decided to enter the Church which claimed to be the only real expression of divine authority and the exclusive passport to paradise. That Newman's mind was critical and even sceptical his writings clearly prove. Indeed, T. H. Huxley averred that he could compose a Freethought primer from his publications. In his self-revealing "Apologia," Newman sorrowfully admits that when surveying the busy world of men he sees little evidence of its Creator, while avowing that he himself possessed an inward assurance of God's being.

The details of Newman's career within the Roman fold, as given in Wilfrid Ward's "Life of Cardinal Newman" (Longmans, 1927), provide a profound psychological study. Apart from his literary masterpieces, the many enterprises he undertook

were all unsuccessful. Newman and most of his fellow converts were suspiciously regarded by the hierarchy. Moreover, after Manning's conversion, that scheming ecclesiastic, in collusion with Mgr. Talbot, who was influential in Rome, constantly poisoned the minds of the powerful officials of Roman propaganda against Newman and his adherents. He was well aware of the machinations of these plotters and, as Purcell relates in his revealing biography of Manning, when the latter attempted to regain Newman's confidence, he was told that when dealing with him one hardly knew whether one was on one's head or one's heels.

Outwardly one and indivisible, divided and opposing interests have ever existed within the Church. The most erudite Catholic of his time, the late Lord Acton's loyalty to historical truth made his admissions unpalatable at Rome, and the " Rambler " and the " Home and Foreign Review " were soon suppressed. Newman was firmly convinced that the final struggle would be between Rome and Rationalism, and he deplored Catholic indifference to the intellectual revolt against religion in the ascendant throughout Europe. As he himself confesses: " O my God, I seem to have wasted these years that I have been a Catholic. What I wrote as a Protestant has had far greater power, force, meaning, and success than my Catholic works, and this troubles me a great deal."

Purcell's biography of Manning alarmed Romanists, and Shane Leslie was deputed to present a more favourable picture of that imperious priest. Perhaps this induced Ward to state his reasons for concealing nothing in his biography, where Newman dissented from the policy of the hierarchy. " I have not felt at liberty," writes Ward, " to treat this portion of his correspondence, perfunctorily for various reasons. First, it represents a feeling which was clearly among the deepest he had during some thirty years of his life, and an account which touched lightly on it would be inadequate to the point of untruthfulness. Secondly, his views are so widely known, and have been expressed to so many in writing, that it is quite certain that any such omission on my part, even were it lawful, would result in some letters which I might omit in these pages being forthwith printed elsewhere."

After the Achilli trial, Newman waited two years before Cardinal Cullen granted permission for the establishment of a Catholic University in Ireland, in the success of which Newman saw divine assistance. But the University proved a dismal failure. It was ignored by the leading Irish Catholics, while Newman was denied freedom in administration, and the Papal proffer of a Bishopric which would have enabled him to act on his own initiative was cancelled.

Then came Newman's projected rendering of the Bible, upon which much time and money were wasted. Ward considers that Newman naturally concluded: " That the hierarchy should so readily allow the scheme to fall to the ground showed how little value they had really set on it! The task had been assigned to him with a ' flourish of trumpets ' and with the most flattering recognition of his eminence and of the importance of such an enterprise in his hands. Then it had simply dropped out of the Cardinal's mind, and the other Bishops had all allowed it to drop. In both these cases he seems to have felt that his name had been advertised—in one case as a political weapon against the Queen's Colleges, in the other as a testimony that the English Catholic body could hold its own in scholarship."

Newman had hoped that a University and his version of the Scriptures would ensure the Church's triumph in her conflict with militant Freethought. But the heresy hunters accused him of unorthodoxy, and when writing to a friend in 1864 who desired the establishment of an Historical Review, Newman said: " Nothing would be better . . . but who would bear it? Unless one doctored all one's facts one would be thought a bad Catholic."

Newman's sustained silence and his mournful letters to his intimates led to the rumour, soon published in the Press, that he contemplated a return to Anglicanism, but this report he publicly denied. Discussing widespread stories concerning him he wrote: " Catholics seem to have begun them by their silly and mischievous statements about me. It was said that I had preached in favour of Garibaldi, had subscribed to the Garibaldi fund, etc." Then came Kingsley's attack in Macmillan's Magazine, which brought Newman once more into prominence when his " Apologia " appeared.

So striking was the success of this volume, which even those who dissented from its claims acknowledged as a literary triumph, that Talbot actually advised Newman to preach in Rome after spreading evil reports of his character. He sent what Newman regarded as an insolent letter, allegedly with Papal approval. His proposal, wrote Newman, " was suggested by Manning—the Pope had nothing to do with it. When Talbot left for England he said, among other things, ' I think of asking Dr. Newman to give a set of lectures in my church,' and the Pope, of course, said, ' A very good thought,' as he would have said if Mgr. Talbot had said, ' I wish to bring your Holiness some English razors.' "

Newman's suspicion of Talbot's duplicity was confirmed a little later when the Monsignor wrote to Manning: " Dr. Newman is the most dangerous man in England and you will see that he will make use of the laity against your Grace."

Many other disillusionments were met with, and Newman was preparing for death when, so late as 1879, the Cardinalate was bestowed upon him by the new Pope, Leo XIII. When the dignity was suggested, Manning professed to approve and promised to lay the matter before the Pope, but when the Duke of Norfolk saw Leo in Rome he was amazed to discover that no one had ever previously approached the Pope in the matter.

T. F. PALMER.

APPALLING CASE OF BLASPHEMY IN THE ANGLICAN PRAYER BOOK

THE Church of England, in the communion service, which is admittedly the most solemn of all her ceremonies, presents an anomaly fit to distress the conscience of everyone who understands the plain words used, and who uses them with sincerity. On that occasion the priest says the Ten Commandments, and at the end of each one the people say, " Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law."

Now the third of those ordinances forbids the taking of God's name in vain, whilst the fourth enjoins the keeping holy of the seventh day. But, as this is the one now called Saturday, which neither the priest nor the people have the slightest intention of thus observing, it follows that the Third Commandment is flagrantly broken every time when the people, after hearing the fourth, implore God's aid in its observance.

The earliest Christians, being Jews, observed the seventh day, but they revered the first day as the date of their Lord's alleged resurrection. Afterwards, when the Gentile element of the Christian community overwhelmed the Jewish element, Sunday observance therein took the place of Saturday observance, despite Paul's strong declarations about the vanity of all sacred days. (Gal. iv. 9-11; Col. ii. 16.)

The duty of the Anglican Church on the present matter is clear. Believing the Ten Commandments to be divine ordinance, she must either prove that the observance of Saturday was divinely transferred to Sunday, and consequently make the requisite change in her Liturgy; or else oblige her communicants to keep Saturday in strict accordance with the precise descriptions of the ordinance which they, at the communion service, beseech God to assist them in obeying.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

ACID DROPS

IT has been said that nothing is more ridiculous than an Englishman in a state of virtuous indignation about some alleged immorality. We venture to put as a candidate for first place the Christian of to-day who is clamouring for the establishment of a Christian democracy. Such a thing never has existed and never will exist. The greatest exhibitions of Christian control were to be found under, say, the Roman Church, Geneva under Calvin, or Scotland under Knox. But no one claims that any of these offered a real democratic rule. In each case the people had to accept Christianity if they were to be tolerated. Every Christian group has claimed the right to differ from other groups of Christians, but also has held it to be its duty to suppress the religious freedom of others—given the opportunity.

"The Times" newspaper, in its leading article for July 17, offers a fine example of this. Dealing with the attempt to Christianise the schools, "The Times" says that there has been "a virtually overwhelming demand for an educational system which will educate for democratic living, and an overwhelming demand for one which will educate the people for democracy based on *Christian principles*." (The italics are ours)

That is one of the most impudent statements, coming from what it would claim was a responsible organ, that could be made. It is confessed that only a comparatively small minority of people attend Church. It is also admitted that more than half the population take no interest at all in religion. There is also the substantial admission that if the schools are not religiously controlled the days of the Christian Churches are numbered. And, in the face of these admitted facts, in the name of democracy, this minority of believers in Christianity is to dominate the school life of the country. And in addition there is the admission that if children cannot be taught to say "I believe," they will never—where religion is concerned—say it at all.

The Rev. F. C. Bond is reported in the "Catholic Herald" as saying: "Before the State intervened, the Church of England had built 12,000 schools for the poor of the country." That is what we may call the "lie suggestive," for the essence of the matter is not stated. We will mention only two things. First, the character of the schools, with rare exceptions, was as bad as it could be. Second, the State was forced to take education in hand because the religious control had made English education for the people a disgrace to a civilised people.

Fifty Methodist preachers have been let loose on Sheffield. The "Sheffield Telegraph" says that "since the war there is an underlying desire among all classes for a fuller approach to the reality of religion." We bow in humble appreciation at such a "wopper," and we challenge the "fifty" and the "Sheffield Telegraph" to produce half-a-dozen genuine converts from no religion to religion when the fifty have departed.

Now that it looks as though Italian Fascism is drawing to the end of its course—at least as a dominating social theory—the Roman Catholic and Anglican press are more anxious than ever to prove that the Church has no affinities with it. Yet, setting aside the degree of brutality exercised by Fascism—even in this the historic Roman Church could make a brave show—the affinities between the two are very striking. The head of the Church and the head of the Fascist regime are both appointed by a limited body, and after that everything depends upon appointment. The duty of the people, in both theories, is to obey. The right of objection is denied, and both measure out punishment for attacking the established creed. With both systems it becomes a "sin" to differ or openly to oppose the established authority. So far as punishment is concerned, the Church has never had the opportunity to act as modern Fascism has done, but it has denied the rights of citizens to independence of opinion, it has tortured its enemies by way of judicial procedure, and has carried the punishment out of this world into the next. Neither in

Germany nor in Italy would Fascism have been opposed by the Church had it not clashed with the aims of the Church concerning the training of children over the control of adults. Roman Catholicism is Fascism applied to both religious and secular matters. Fascism is Roman Catholicism applied to civil life.

The "Daily Mail," which generally takes up an intensely religious attitude, gave an account the other day of the intellectual status of 58 candidates for training for the ministry as revealed at the Church Assembly recently. More than 50 per cent. failed completely in answering the following preliminary questions:—

What were (a) the Incarnation, (b) the Transfiguration, (c) Pentecost? Who were (a) St. John the Baptist, (b) St. Peter, (c) Pontius Pilate?

We think these men were absolutely fitted for the Ministry. They knew little, but they were ready to believe much. It is an old theological maxim that Christ delights in drawing to himself the greatest sinners. Now the Church can say that it delights in getting the least intelligent. The days have passed when it could hope to get the better specimens of society.

At a meeting of Roman Catholics and Anglican teachers, held the other day, the discussion of the abolition of the dual system was discussed. Mr. Morgan, M.P. (a Roman Catholic probably) sneered at there being in the schools "a little Wesleyanism, a little Anglicanism, some Hinduism and, perhaps, a pinch of Confucianism." That was supposed to be very crushing, and to those present witty.

But if there were in the schools samples of all these and other religions, and if they were dealt with by teachers—who are teachers and not merely men and women having a job—we would support the system. For it would be all to the good if children were taught that there were many religions with grosses of gods, and if they were to be taught the origin of religious beliefs as they are taught the origin of animal forms. They would then leave school much better educated—in the better sense of that much abused word—than they are at present. We should also have *all* honest teachers. They would not be afraid to tell their pupils the truth, because they would have nothing but the truth to tell.

For the drawback of our educational system at present is that pupils have to undo, if they would become educationally useful citizens, much that they have learned. Religions have played a great—not a good—part in life. Religious belief has affected the evolution of institutions, it has established what the vast majority of people to-day would admit they know to be untruths and inutilities. They block in a hundred and one ways the free development of people and, as things are, perpetuate insincerities and lies. Children *should* be taught religion, but it should be along the lines of a scientific lesson in botany or astronomy. Finally, we should have an end to that policy which is expressed "I will leave my children to find out about religion for themselves," which is the equivalent of saying "I will let my children eat non-nutritious food, and leave them to find out what is the best food when they grow old enough to search for it themselves."

In these days of paper shortage it is worth noting that in one issue the "Daily Telegraph" published six letters from six Christians on the subject of why people did not attend Church. It would be informative if the "Daily Telegraph" opened its columns to a few non-Christians to an explanation of why *they* do not go to church. But that is a greater measure of honesty and truthfulness than any of our leading papers would dare to exhibit.

The same holds true of the many gatherings in church to deal with the same question. We wonder whether there is to be found in the whole of this country a single church or chapel that would dare to invite one who was, but now is not, a Christian, or an address on why some people think it is waste of time for anyone to go to church. If any such church can be found, we undertake to supply the speaker free, gratis and for nothing.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

E. JOHNSON.—Thanks for cutting, which will be useful. We are continually calling attention to this plot hatched by the religious "diehards" and other interested people in the Government, and will return to the matter later. The only sound rule, one endorsed by the experiences of all countries, is that the most dangerous person to have in a school is a priest.

F. G. WILKINSON.—We hope to reprint the book soon. Our trouble is to get printing done. Those who feel they can help in any way would greatly oblige by writing.

E. K. S.—We heard the statement made during the "Children's Hour, on July 21: "After the death of Joseph, when Jesus was working in the workshop to keep his mother." It is one of the most impudent lies—in the game of "collaring the kids"—that even the B.B.C. has fathered. We may take that kind of thing as a sample of what we may expect in the schools if the Board of Education and the Churches have their way.

W. FREEMAN.—Thanks, but the person named is not worth bothering about. His obvious motto is "It doesn't matter what is said so long as something is said." That was the affirmed policy of the greatest of showmen—Barnum.

E. WATSON.—Thanks for letter and cutting. We fancy the B.B.C. is beginning to feel the pressure. The unfortunate thing is that so many cannot forbear the opportunity of advertising the B.B.C. offers.

Wm. H. Neil send on his address so that his order for literature can be forwarded.

R. KELLERMAN.—An excellent account of the various manuscripts and the languages which have gone to the making of the Bible will be found in the work of Sir F. Kenyon entitled "Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts."

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

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

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, Farnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

THE Archbishop of Canterbury has resumed his weeping over the state of the people. The special complaint is the "alarming collapse in respect of honesty and sex morality" with the promise of "a great access of selfishness in the individual family, class and nation." Which being interpreted and put into plain English means that the British people are a rotten lot. Suppose this to be granted, what are we to argue from this state of the British people? Remember that this humbugging, dishonest, selfish, immoral lot has had a Christian ancestry; there has always been a plentiful supply of parsons, etc., etc., and yet we are selfish, dishonest, and so forth, and so forth. What then is the value of many centuries of Christianity?

It is true we have been at war for over three years, but a people who, directly it finds its usual routine interfered with, degenerates to such an alarming extent as Dr. Temple declares, has, or soon

will, cannot be worth much. Would they be worse if Christianity had never been heard of? If the diagnosis of the Archbishop is sound, the answer is: "Certainly not."

We do not believe that this cry of the clergy is anything but a lie, a conscious slander upon the people by the Archbishop and the clergy generally. More than that we believe that these men know it is a lie, it is the desperate throw of a class that finds its privileges and power declining with a threat of their claims being discarded and their power taken from them. The lie of the politician is bad enough, but the lie of the pulpit is far more slimy, objectionable and poisonous.

Let us admit that there has been some dislocation of social life and conduct since the war began. That, all reasonable men and women would expect. War, as we have been saying for many, many years, is a demoralising business at its best. It uses the virtues and qualities developed in social life and dissipates them in armed conflict. But there have been displayed during the war, as there is in all wars, acts of courage, of self-sacrifice, of kindness of personal and family devotion of which we may all be proud, and which will outlive this war as it has outlived others. And the social training that has developed these qualities will be at work after the war as it was before the war began. Of that also we are sure.

What is upsetting the Archbishop and his like is that the after-war state of things promises no advance in the power of the clergy. The people are better educated than they have ever been. They read more, they are doing more thinking, they are asking for a greater share of their social heritage than they have yet enjoyed, and when they are asked to win the war in a way that will prevent a similar outbreak for a long, long time, they are asking for greater independence of mind and body. Even though these ideals are only partly realised, they necessarily involve a weakening of supernatural religion. It promises a poor time for Popes and priests and parsons. It means a sad time for the gods, with churches and chapels emptier than they have ever been. The Archbishop of Canterbury foresees this state of things. And the weapons with which they seek to avert is the time-honoured Christian ones—lies, slander a distortion of facts and the creation of fear.

As in other parts of the country, Scotland is going ahead where Freethought is concerned. In Glasgow there is a steady increase in the sale of literature, and we have for some time been unable to gratify the demand for "The Freethinker" in Edinburgh. Mr. F. Smithies has been working like the proverbial Trojan, lecturing and debating week after week with considerable success. There seems a greater readiness publicly to discuss religion in Scotland than there is in England, but the true Scot always loved to "argy," and his fondness for disputation extended to religion. We wish further success to Mr. Smithies in his efforts to spread Freethought.

We were pleased to note a letter in the "Manchester Guardian" from the Press Secretary of the Manchester Teachers' Association in reply to a suggestion that more sectarian schools are needed in the interests of "morality." He points out that whenever the matter has been tested the percentage of offences by young people in the Council Schools have shown the smallest percentage. He cites Bradford as an example. There it was found that six per thousand of delinquents came from Council schools, and 11 per cent. from sectarian ones. In the case of delinquency, the Roman Church comes an easy first.

We have always been more or less surprised that there are not many public protests among the more intelligent group of trade unionists, teachers, and similar bodies, that there is not some strong public resentment shown against the patronising manner adopted by prominent clergymen when addressing them. The assumption that any body of intelligent men and women need the impudent patronising they get, with the insulting

assumption that if they are not helped by some supernatural power they cannot hope to do their duty as men and women, is a standing insult to all who have reached maturity, and perfectly poisonous when it is impressed upon children.

For the above reason we were pleased to see the following remarks, made by Mr. C. Jarman at a meeting of the National Union of Seamen, on July 10:—

"For years we seamen have been selected as the objects of missions of various types, some to make us more God-fearing, others wanting us to submit to regimentation of one type or the other. My attitude, which I believe is that of 99 per cent. of the men, is 'Leave us alone.'"

We should like to find other bodies of men and women take the same attitude, and in particular teachers. If the Government succeeds in reinstating clerical power in the schools, part of the fault will lie with the teaching staffs of the nation's schools.

THE MASSACRE OF ST. BARTHOLOMEW

II.

WHETHER the massacre was a premeditated plan on the part of Catherine de Medici may never be known, but there can be no doubt that her hatred of the Huguenot leader, Admiral de Coligny, and the rising influence of his party in court, was a determining factor in forcing her to do something, no matter what, in ridding France of their power for ever.

The marriage of her daughter, Marguerite de Valois, to the young King of Navarre—who was a Protestant—brought a great influx of the hated heretics into Paris, and it was an opportunity too good to be missed. The whole might and power of the Guises were on her side; for they never ceased to blame Coligny for the assassination of the elder Duke of Guise, though he was, in fact, quite innocent of the charge.

Paris was so thoroughly Roman Catholic that the Protestant religion was not allowed to be practised there, and it is therefore all the more piquant to learn that its streets were the last word in filth and stink. Although the death of Henry of Navarre's mother, who was anxious for the marriage to take place, and who had arrived in Paris some weeks before, was believed to be caused by Catherine through the Medici family's famous poison methods, it is much more likely that she died from some "dirt" fever. Things may have been bad enough in the way of lack of sanitation and common decency in England in Elizabeth's time, but they were far surpassed by the state of Paris. True religion appears to have had a valuable ally in sheer filth.

The Huguenots were by no means terrified or cowed in Paris. "Their fearless and rash behaviour," says Miss England in her book, "The Massacre of St. Bartholomew," "is amazing in a Paris so furious and bigoted, with a spy at every turn of the road and in every house, often listening at doors and windows." This reads like a description of the towns in Germany under the Nazis; anyway, the "spy everywhere" was good Catholicism when that religion was in full power.

Coligny himself, with fine courage, took no notice of the "messages and warnings foretelling danger to his own life." He had made peace with the Catholics and would be no party to a civil war. He trusted to the honour of those with whom he had made a pact—and here again the likeness to the Nazis is remarkable. As we know, they were ready and are ready to sign any pact at any time and anywhere. But the people who expect them to keep their solemnly pledged word, they look upon as quite mad. Catherine and her Catholic nobles made a fine precedent for all true Nazis.

The wedding festivities of Henry of Navarre and Marguerite lasted a week and was a wonderful affair; and descriptions by eye-witnesses show how amidst all the feasting and dancing the presence of the Huguenots was bitterly resented by the Paris

populace. Even the court entertainments were designed to slight and insult the followers of the reformed religion.

But Catherine had already made up her mind. Admiral de Coligny was to be killed not only because that was her implacable wish, but also because many of her favourites, her Italians, and her son the Duke of Anjou, as well as Mme. de Nemours, the mother of the Duke of Guise, had urged her to the crime. There is proof, however, that it had been decided upon long before.

A desperate attempt on August 22, 1572, to assassinate the Admiral was made by firing at him through a window. He was hit, but not fatally. Charles IX. seems to have been genuinely sorry on hearing of the attempt, and wanted Coligny to be taken to the Louvre for safety, a proposition that had to be turned down as the wounded man was too weak to be moved. It is said that the King was pleased later to learn that Coligny was out of danger.

Catherine was afraid that if the Huguenots were allowed to carry on they would force a war with Spain, and she pretended to the King that they were plotting against his life. Already many soldiers and would-be murderers had been placed in all sorts of key positions in Paris; and so, with everything set for the crime, the order was given "to kill, to kill them all." It was St. Bartholomew's Day, Sunday, August 24, 1572.

The massacre began with the brutal murder of a Huguenot by a Catholic soldier, and soon the Duke of Guise, with a band of his ferocious followers, went to find Coligny. The Admiral stood bravely up to his murderers, but was cut down without mercy. Everybody suspected of being a Huguenot was then also attacked and savagely murdered. I have no space to give details; but the kind of thing Hitler's gangs have done to the Jews, Poles, Greeks and other "subject" peoples, was all done by the Catholics of France nearly 400 years ago. Even in the Louvre itself, where the King resided, the murderous beasts were allowed full play with Charles laughing and jesting at the crimes. He had completely changed his attitude in favour of Coligny, and was shooting at the Huguenots through an open window.

What happened to Coligny was multiplied thousands of times to Protestants all over Paris. I subjoin the account as given by Miss England:—

"The Admiral's body had been dragged into a neighbouring stable . . . it was taken in triumph by a frenzied mob, among which were two or three hundred children. They cut or tore off his fingers and hands, and pulled out his teeth. These were carried round on poles throughout the city on exhibition. . . . Meanwhile, the people put a rope round the trunk and drew it through all the blood and filth of the streets down to the Seine . . . the body being dragged out of the water, some then cut off the ears, the toes and the nose . . . (the head was cut off) and embalmed, sent to Rome, destined for the Cardinal of Lorraine. The body was once more pulled . . . to Montfaucon, where they hung the headless corpse up by the feet. A slow fire was lit, which was extinguished after the limbs had been scorched. Someone fixed a horse's tail in the place of the head. . . ."

But enough. I have given this account because hundreds of people, possibly many thousands of poor people, were treated like this or worse. Some accounts are unprintable; and it must not be forgotten that the Roman Catholics were given a free hand to do what they liked. These people were not mere "politicians." They were, on the contrary, intensely religious.

Let me be fair, however. The records certainly show that not all Catholics lost every sense of humanity. We know that many Huguenots were saved by Catholics. They must have forgotten their religion, and thought of themselves for once as human beings.

Bad as the atrocities were in Paris, they were equalled and even surpassed in the Provinces. Miss England's chapter on them is sickening in its horrible details.

One of the beasts in Paris—Tavanne, who had been brought up at the Court of France—yelled himself hoarse in the streets with "Blood! blood! To make them bleed is as well done in August as in May!" His son, who wrote his biography, says that on his deathbed he gloried in the atrocities. In confessing his sins, he declared that what he did on St. Bartholomew's Day "was so meritorious that it should wipe out the whole of his other sins." And this was the general impression. Voltaire (who is not referred to by Miss England) gives a marvellous picture of the massacre in his "Henriade," with many historical notes. Needless to say how that great humanist felt towards the "Infame"—by which he meant the Roman Church.

It is impossible to compute how many people were killed during those terrible days. But there could not have been fewer, on the most conservative estimate, than 50,000. The spectacle of Frenchmen thus killing other Frenchmen for religion will last as long as history lasts.

But we must still deal with some of the judgments recorded not only in the Protestant and Catholic camps, but with those of impartial historians.

H. CUTNER.

PAINE STILL POPULAR

"At that date (1794) the works of Voltaire and Paine were reckoned class-books for infidel argumentators."—R. P. GILLIES, "Memoirs of a Literary Veteran."

"Though all else perish
The golden thought survives."

—WILLIAM WATSON.

WRITERS boast of the glories of a fifth edition, and publishers smile at the records of their much-advertised "best-sellers," but very few authors achieve uninterrupted sales for a century and a quarter. Yet this truly amazing thing happened to Thomas Paine, who, whilst living, was treated like a mad dog by the majority of his countrymen, and whose books were attempted to be destroyed time after time by the authorities, with all the resources of a great nation behind them. These works were so much in advance of his generation that even to-day they are still text-book reformers.

Paine's works, "The Age of Reason" and "The Rights of Man," were indeed live wires. The author intended the books to arouse the workers with Democratic ideals, and the pioneers had to pay a heavy price for their opinions. And, be it remembered, "The Age of Reason" was a thunderous engine of revolt. There were critics of the Christian Religion, it is true, long before Thomas Paine, but they were mostly scholars whose writings were over the heads of ordinary folks, and who used, deliberately, a vocabulary that darkened knowledge. Paine himself, a man of great genius, had sprung from the people, and he spoke their own language and made their thoughts articulate. Paine not only addressed the flower of the working class, but he proved them to be of rare mettle. Boldly as Paine might write, his books would have been still-born from the printing-presses but for the truly heroic courage of the Freethinkers. Richard Carlile, a hero amongst heroes, endured over nine years' imprisonment in this terrible and prolonged battle. The authorities were thoroughly aroused by so determined a resistance, and persecuted without mercy. They attacked women as well as men, and Carlile's brave wife and courageous sister were dragged to gaol for two years each. As each Freethinker was imprisoned fresh ones stepped into the breach, and one after the other went to prison. Think of it! One small circle of Freethinkers serving between them over 50 years in prison, thousands of pounds worth of books destroyed by order of the Courts, and all in defence of the elementary right of free speech, in a country supposed to be in the very van of progress and civilisation.

(Continued on next page)

CORRESPONDENCE

THE B.B.C. AND ITS BROADCASTING

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. P. V. Morris, challenges the B.B.C. to deny that actors were used in the orators' scene in the Hyde Park programme of "Transatlantic Call." They were—for two very good reasons. The American network which rebroadcasts this series has a ban on recorded speech. On the other hand, security regulations forbid a live broadcast with open microphone for a transmission going overseas. The only solution was to take a verbatim report of a number of speeches on the Sunday before the broadcast, and put them—uncut and uncensored in any way at all—into the mouths of actors.

It is suggested further that the heckling and laughter were produced by a well-rehearsed crowd. This is quite untrue. The background effects were actual recordings of Hyde Park crowds round the Hyde Park speakers. Recorded effects are admissible in United States practice.—Yours, Etc.,

KENNETH ADAM (Director of Publicity).

[We do not see that the B.B.C. has met the charge brought against it. A selection of noises—the selection being obviously intended to produce a particular result—and a rehearsed version given by professional actors, can hardly be a fair presentation of what actually did occur. The fact is that the B.B.C. policy with regard to many of its presentations of politics, and with nearly all of its representations of discussions on religion, are sheer fakes. The B.B.C. mistakes devotion to set opinions as devotion to truth. There is plenty of the first with the B.B.C., but very little of the second.—EDITOR.]

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields: 3-30 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park).—Thursday, 7 p.m., Messrs. WOOD and PAGE; Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. E. C. SAPHIN and supporting speakers.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. (if wet, Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate): A Lecture.

Bristol (Durdham Downs).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m. Mr. G. THOMPSON: A Lecture.

Burnley (Market).—Sunday, 7 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture.

Cliviger.—Friday, July 30, 7-30 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound).—Sunday, 7 p.m. Debate: "Man Cannot Sin Against God"—Messrs. F. SMITHIE and GORDON LIVINGSTONE, M.A.

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Church Street).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. J. W. BARKER: A Lecture.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m. Mr. W. A. ATKINSON: A Lecture.

Newcastle-on-Tyne (Bigg Market).—Sunday, 7 p.m. Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Worsthorne.—Thursday, July 29, 7-30 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON: A Lecture.

AN ATHEIST'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY,
A Survey of Positions, by Chapman Cohen.
Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

CHALLENGE TO RELIGION (a re-issue of four lectures delivered in the Secular Hall, Leicester), by Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.

PAINE STILL POPULAR—(Continued from previous page)

It was a battle between brains and brute force, and brains won in the end. There were humorous interludes, too. After a score of Carille's shopmen had been sent to durance vile, a Freethinker invented a device by which the money was placed in an opening and the book fell on the counter. The thing was done to baffle the police, but it proved to be the first slot-machine.

Paine's fame is quite secure, for he has written his name too deep on history's page for it to be erased. Nor is it to be wondered at, for in a generation of brave men he was one of the boldest and noblest. A veritable Don Quixote, no wrong found him indifferent. He used his pen of flame not only for the democracy which might reward him, but for dumb animals and negro slaves who could not. Poverty never left him; yet he made large fortunes, and gave them, with a smile, to the cause he lived. "The Rights of Man" was a brave book for any man to write with the threat of transportation as a convict facing him; but "The Age of Reason" was the bravest book ever written by any man, for it challenged the entire priesthood to a duel to the death. Not only was its author threatened with damnation in this world, and "hell" in the next, but scores of men and women were actually imprisoned for merely selling it. Paine himself was libelled and lied about to such an extent that his very name was threatened with an immortality of infamy. Every act of his life was distorted by his venomous opponents, and his gestures of open-handed generosity were described as the actions of a drunken sailor. So completely did the clergy do their dirty work of vilification, that it is safe to say that Paine's own generation hated him; but his evangel has made its way, and will be hailed ultimately as the gospel of rejuvenated humanity.

Paine's masterpieces are still an inspiration. "Where liberty is, there is my country," said old Benjamin Franklin, and Thomas Paine's magnificent answer was "Where is not liberty, there is mine." What inspiration there is in the sentences: "The world is my country," and "To do good is the only religion." Paine's was the hand that first wrote the arresting words, "The United States of America," and the great republic of the West owed as much to the swift, live pen of Paine as to the sharp swords of Lafayette and Washington. A democrat among democrats, Paine was always thinking of the poor and the oppressed. In his superb reply to Edmund Burke's rhetorical tirade against the great French Revolution, in which he reserved his compassion too exclusively for the sufferings of royalty and aristocracy, Paine said: "Mr. Burke pities the plumage, but he forgets the dying bird." Even Burke, stylist that he was, might have envied the brilliance and felicity of the illustration. The poet Shelley, no mean judge, thought this so excellent that he used it as part of the title of one of his own pamphlets. Fine writing as it is, the thought is finer. It embodies the watchwords of Democracy, the marching music that drove Paine himself forth as a Knight-errant in shining armour, that sent Lafayette to far America and Byron to Greece, and inspired generations of sweet-souled singers from Shelley to Swinburne, to hymn the praises of Liberty, "the one word by which all other words are vain." "MIMNERMUS."

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A PAINTED DEVIL

IN a letter to Horace Smith, dated April 11, 1822, Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote:—

"Moore seems to deprecate my influence over Lord Byron's mind on the subject of religion, and to attribute the tone assumed in "Cain" to my suggestions. Moore cautions him against my influence on this particular, with the most friendly zeal; and it is plain that his motive springs from a desire of benefiting Lord Byron without degrading me. I think you know Moore. Pray assure him that I have not the smallest influence over Lord Byron in this particular, and if I had, I certainly should employ it to eradicate from his great mind the delusions of Christianity which, in spite of his reason, seem perpetually to recur, and to lay in ambush for the hours of sickness and distress."

Till the very end of his life Shelley proclaimed himself an Atheist. He rejoiced in the name. "It is a good word to stop discussion," he once said to Trelawny, "a painted devil to frighten the foolish, a threat to intimidate the wise and the good. I use it to express my abhorrence of superstition. I took up the word as a knight takes up a gauntlet in defiance of injustice."

The less kind would have said he did it for effect; for in reality he was not an Atheist. An Atheist does not believe in the existence of a God, whereas Shelley hated God with all his heart. One cannot hate what one does not believe to exist. Shelley called himself an Atheist because Christians used the name of God to justify their wickednesses. Like Godwin, he felt that the orthodox God was a tyrant and revolted against him because he condemned the world he had made. Consequently, in the Shelleyan mythology, God is the force of evil, is in fact the anti-God who has usurped the throne of God in Heaven, just as the Jupiter of his "Prometheus" had usurped the throne of Satan. Everywhere in his poems the snake is the symbol of righteousness, the Morning Star that has been changed into a venomous reptile by his enemy. Thus he really believed in two Gods—one good and one bad.

Know then, that from the depths of ages old
Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold,
Ruling the world with a divided lot,
Immortal, all-pervading, manifold,
Twin Genii, equal Gods—when life and thought
Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential
Nought.

Christians have expanded the incarnated dualism of good and evil into God and Devil. They believe that God, or good, reigns omnipotent in heaven. Shelley acknowledged the existence of these two powers, but reversed them. Unable to reconcile the theory of an omnipotent power for good in a world of chaos and disorder, he came to the conclusion that the power for evil was established in heaven and that the power for good had been relegated, temporarily, to the fiery caverns of Hades, there to remain until the innate good in man called it forth and restored it to its rightful status.

Shelley's theories, in this respect, are every bit as theistical as the theories of Christianity, though less prone to contradiction. In spite of this Shelley permitted himself to be called an Atheist throughout the whole of his lifetime. At first he was proud of the distinction, but towards the end he tired of the constant repetition of the intended calumny. "Tell me," he says in a letter to John Gisborne, "what they say of me besides being an Atheist." He was more anxious to know how his views on political matters were being received.

(This article is based on extracts from the author's forthcoming book, "Cradled Into Poetry.")

ERNIE TROY.