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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

God and the Churches

THINGS are not going well with the Churches. In the blitzes no more respect was paid to God's buildings than to public-houses. Part of this may be explained by the fact that God withdrew his protecting arm—or foot—from the churches because those who should have had faith in his protecting arms—or feet—moved the more expensive objects from the churches and placed them where it was considered they would be quite safe. Many of them placed sandbags before the entrance to the church just as though it was on the level of a public-house or a business office. After all, gods have their feelings, and if they are not approached in fear and trembling and, above all, if they do not get their ration of prayer and praise, it is not to be expected that they will fail to seek some kind of reprisal. Gods have their rights and their feelings, and they are rather "touchy" about them.

Consider these two cases—both occurring in a London suburb, Hornsey, to wit. The Rev. W. F. Chadwick has spiritual charge of Christ Church. He complains that his offertory boxes are continuously raided. The loss of money is to be regretted, but we are sure that what concerns Mr. Chadwick is not the loss of the money but the sacrilege of the act. In peace-time it might be said that when money is given to the Lord it is his business to look after it. But there is a war on, and we have the authority of General Montgomery, and of the late Governor of Malta, that our successes so far are due to the watchful care of God. Naturally, Christians would sooner have God attending to the welfare of the Allied armies than stand guard over the offertory boxes of Christ Church.

But Mr. Chadwick. In his garden—which we assume is connected with a covered arch for the purpose of evading taxes—he grows apples. The garden may thus be considered semi-sacred ground. But not only do the people steal the semi-sacred apples, but they have also stolen the parson's tree. We hope that when the tree has made itself not home and produces more fruit the marauders will at least be gracious enough to send the vicar a portion of the growth. It will be remembered that all our human troubles are owing to the Lord planting an apple tree in the Garden of Eden. Perhaps if God had stuck to potatoes and cabbages things would have worked out better. I do not stress that point because we can all see more after an event than before.

Not far from Christ Church is St. Mary's Church. There are no apple trees there, but other things happen. There seems to be a taste of a more Catholic character. This church has been burgled so often that it has to be kept locked up all day. Of course, "all day" does not mean that the doors are locked during divine service. But we

should not be surprised if the sidesmen and other officials are instructed that even when kneeling in prayer one eye shall be kept open to watch the offertory boxes. Raiding the boxes is not the end, for Mr. F. Bowyer sadly complains that even the fence round the church "has been removed plank by plank and sold for firewood." What is the good of God solemnly saying: "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark" if he cannot prevent people stealing the fencing round his church and selling it for firewood? If God makes punishment fit the crime, we can imagine that when these marauders reach hell they will find themselves in a special corner where the fire will be sustained by church railings, collection boxes and stolen trees, and the burning criminals will have no other food than the sourest of sour apples. These are two out of many instances.

Yet another illustration of the moral value of religion. In the "Glasgow Herald" of November 1 there appeared a lament from the the Rev. Neville Davidson, of Glasgow cathedral, that

not even a sacred building dedicated to the worship of Almighty God is regarded with respect. Thefts from churches are common. We have had here in the Cathedral to give up an open bookstall, so serious was the financial loss.

There was, of course, a time when such an act of sacrilege would have led to action on God's part, and the thief would be struck blind or paralysed. Nowadays God does nothing. But as we have prayers for victory in war, might there not be introduced an official prayer against those who steal church fences, church collections, and rob the church bookstalls?

One other illustration of the progress of events. My readers may remember that some time ago a crusade was started in Manchester to increase church attendance and generally to bring back to the church those who were not able to distinguish between "God's house," a cinema or a "pub." The headline was "Religion and Life." The movement had a fairly good press, if it was not a very enthusiastic one. The crusade travelled as far north as Tyneside and, we think, as far south as Derby. The religious press saw in it the possibility of a revival of religion—at least they said they did, but they are old birds, and these revivals average about one per month in the busy season, and one may assume that in their hearts (I think this phrase must be an explanation of the quality of religious thinking, since other non-religious thinking is done with the head) they could have expected but little. Now, after a very brief period, apologies are made in the religious press for the failure of the move. There certainly is not more religion about, and what exists is not very remarkable for its quality. The "Church Times" explains that these "mass" meetings were not intended to secure the "conver-

sion of souls; the meetings were just a call to the faithful." One may surmise, therefore, that the movement was the religious analogy of a failing business man calling his creditors together in the hope that they will find it profitable to give him a new start in trading. The Mayor of Manchester said they were doing God's work, but evidently God left them to do the fighting and waited quietly to see what came of it. If successful, God would listen to all the thanks given; if it was a failure his defenders could point out that he took no part in it, and even suggest that where God himself had failed to keep people loyal to their faith a bundle of amateurs are not likely to succeed.

To Help the Churches

Some few years ago, just when the then Archbishop of Canterbury was wishing that people would drop analysing the part that he and Baldwin had played in the dismissal from the throne of Edward VIII, he launched a crusade with the cry "Back to the Bible." But it must be back to the Bible, the real Bible, not the Bible that is praised as literature or the Bible that developed a language of its own under the guidance of English writers at a time when our language was itself undergoing a rapid development. The quality of Bible English is one of those interested pleas that so often come to be accepted as historical truths. The people did not find salvation in the English Bible; it was the Bible that found perpetuation in the English tongue.

The one certain thing to-day is that it is of no avail looking for able and educated men, if they have intellectual honesty, to come back to the Christian Church. As business men they may find it profitable to do so. As politicians they may count their expressed intellectual attitude in terms of votes, or promotions, or a well-paid office.

We cannot get back to the social state that fits real Christianity. The most any Church can do is to create a society within a society, a people within a people, each having, so far as religion is concerned, their own teaching, their own view of life, their own methods of "salvation." The outside world must be held at arms' length, if not further. The Roman Catholic Church is the only prominent Christian body that has been able to do this to any considerable extent. It retains its miracles, its solid hell and heaven, it does not fear creating new miracles when they are demanded. When the German occupation of France closed the miracles in one of its most famous places, the "saints" willingly set up business under British and neutral control. The latest is that of the Fatima miracle, surely one of the greatest swindles that organisation ever indulged in. That was as late in origin as 1936. The Catholic world is really a world within a world. We outsiders are so used to it that we sometimes forget this, and regard the Roman Church as merely a society within a society. When the truth is driven home to newcomers it is met with the surprise that a man who went out shooting rabbits might feel if he came across a dinosaur.

There is a faint illustration of the truth of which I have said in the existence of a State Church, and also in the attempt being made—with the help of the Government—to regain control of the schools. The Churches realise that so long as children live in a non-religious atmosphere in

schools that are guided by contemporary culture they must lose ground. The non-religious influences are too powerful. The battle between liberal and enlightened opinion and religious belief holds out no prospect of success for the Churches. They may fight a delaying action, but that is all.

So I suggest to Protestants that the only plan to give the Churches a continuation of real life—for a time—is formally to renounce the modern world, create a real, if small, society within the larger social group, and train their members to say what Mr. Hilaire Belloc said with reference to his Church: "I accept what she teaches and trust her more than I do the evidence of my senses. Whether I can imagine the thing believed or not is to me of no intellectual consequence at all." Perhaps to realise this stage of mental prostitution does not lie within everybody's capacity, but pious souls must do their best. It certainly does require courage—of a kind. But the fact remains that somehow or other the Churches must isolate its followers from the world of modern scientific thought if they are to renew their power, or even to lengthen their life.

Having withdrawn itself from close contact with modern culture, I would, still in all seriousness, suggest a firm re-establishment of the devil and the old-fashioned hell. A critical examination of the history of belief in Christianity will show that it rested far more on the fear of hell than on the love of heaven. The gentle Jesus was always on the platform, but it was the hell awaiting all unbelievers that brought the converts. Whenever in Christian history—from the earliest times to the Salvation Army, from Jesus Christ to General Booth—mass converts have been made, it is the fear of hell that has brought "sinners" to "repentance." There are plenty of people still alive who can recall the commanding part that Satan played in filling the churches. The Established Church does not now press it, but it cannot with honesty repudiate the "devil and all his angels." The historic Christian Church owes Satan much, and the Roman Church is as much tied to him as ever. As a recruiting agency nothing has successfully replaced Satan. The most selfish book that was ever written, Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," is still alluded to as a manual of Christian religious ethics. Yet the whole concern of Bunyan was the saving of his own miserable soul from hell. Negatively, he welcomed heaven. Positively, he was afraid of hell, and he was ready to drop all domestic and social duties to attain it. Bunyan was a good Christian. Pity it is that he was not a better man. That such a book could maintain its place in the affection of Christians is an indictment of their religion.

Can the Churches revive hell? That is the important question, and I think the answer, so far as the general population is concerned, should be in the negative. But it can be done to the extent the Church succeeds in placing some kind of a barricade between its followers and the influence of modern civilised thought. That is why I am suggesting to the Churches that they must, if they would survive, place a barrier between their followers and the outside world. The Church can at least follow the present policy of the German Army and fight a retreating battle. For the question of historic Christianity is that of Germany—How long can the inevitable end be evaded? That is another question.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

AN EMINENT PIONEER OF MODERN SCIENCE

WITH his elaborate volume, "John Ray, Naturalist" (Cambridge, 1942; 30s.), Dr. Charles E. Raven has restored this great pioneer scientist to his merited position as an outstanding forerunner of modern biology. Ray must have been an attractive personality to have secured so many genuine friends, as this son of a village blacksmith, despite the prevailing pride and prejudices in favour of "gentle" birth, found friends who enabled him to enter Cambridge University, while his ability became recognised by the leading scientists of his time. Moreover, Ray's undaunted perseverance is revealed in the enormous output of scientific publications he penned in the last 20 years of his career.

Little is known of his ancestry, and his early biographers merely mention his father's occupation. As Dr. Raven intimates: "It was unconventional if not indecent. . . . Of Ray's birth-place, family, school and circumstances we are told almost nothing; and to-day it is almost impossible to recover more than a few fragments of what we have lost." Still, Ray's writings remain, and these sufficiently prove the eminence of this son of Black Notley, an Essex village where he was born in 1627 and died in 1705. His life was spent in a turbulent time which witnessed the Civil War, the Commonwealth, the Restoration and the Revolution of 1688. Yet, although he suffered for conscience' sake, Ray pursued his scientific studies scarcely without intermission despite straitened circumstances and an increasingly painful malady until his death.

Willughby was another important pioneer who, if not reaching Ray's stature, proved an able and industrious collaborator and a firm and generous friend. In his company, Ray toured the Continent and their joint botanical collections formed the foundations of Ray's "History of Plants," the "Flora of Britain" and other writings. In zoology, Ray was likewise a pioneer, as his remarkable "Ornithology," "History of Fishes," his studies of reptiles and mammals and his "History of Insects" indicate. Moreover, his attitude towards fossils and geological studies was in many respects in advance of his age. Also, when most religious men regarded the study of Nature with indifference or even aversion, Ray's "Wisdom of God" acclaims natural history inquiries as a devoutly pious tribute to the marvels of Creation. Whatever the exact truth of the story, the following account illustrates popular opinion concerning entomology in Ray's time, when biological studies were deemed as fantastic as Mr. Dick's fondness for kite-flying in "David Copperfield." When commenting on the Granville fritillary, Moses Harris stated: "This fly took its name from the ingenious Lady Granvil, whose memory had likely to have suffered for her curiosity. Some relations that were disappointed by her will attempted to set it aside by Acts of Lunacy, for they suggested that none but those who were deprived of their senses would go in pursuit of butterflies. Her relations and legatees subpoenaed Dr. Sloane and Mr. Ray to support her character. This last gentleman went to Exeter and on the trial satisfied the Judge and the jury of the lady's laudable inquiry into the wonderful works of the Creation and established her will."

Most men of science then explained fossils as freaks of Nature, but Ray regarded them as genuine imprints of plants and animals that had once lived on earth. Although two of his most cherished friends and fellow workers rejected this view, which long before had been proclaimed by Da Vinci, Ray clung to his conviction of their authenticity. In consequence, he carried his researches into the structure and functions of the living plant to the trees and ferns that have left their impressions in the rocks.

Had he lived at a later day, Ray would doubtless have adopted the uniformitarian doctrine of the earth's evolution

from a dimly remote past. Even then he was disconcerted when the facts he ascertained seemed incompatible with the commonly accepted chronology of "5,600 years" for our planet's existence. Raven surmises that the above estimate was taken by Ray from Pearson's "Exposition of the Creed" (1659), where this figure is given. Ray's modernity is illustrated in the following reflections: "That the rain doth continually wash down earth from the mountains and atterate or add part of the sea to the firm land is manifest from the *Lagune* or flats about Venice; the 'Camarg' or the isle of the River Rhone about Aix in Provence, in which we are told that the watch-tower had, in the memory of some men, been moved forward three times, so much had been gained thero from the sea." He noted that both loss and gain of soil occur in our own island home, and that the loftiest and most refractory mountains are constantly being worn down.

Dr. Raven admits that Ray was seriously handicapped by the traditional religious sentiments of his time, and that even otherwise enlightened men of the period were at the mercy of the same Scriptural impediment. "Descartes and Malpighi," he notes, "not less than Locke and Newton, hesitated to move out of their ancient intellectual home. . . . Nor was their hesitation solely due to fear that Church and State, regarding all questioning of the established order as heresy and treason, would combine to punish innovations with damnation and death. It was, in fact, impossible for even the most independent intellect to emancipate itself from the postulates of contemporary thought or to realise the scope of the changes for which mankind was being prepared." Even the iconoclastic Thomas Hobbes himself apparently accepted the traditional cosmology, so it is not surprising that Ray, although he acknowledged the teachings of Copernicus and Galileo, still clung to the creation legend and never suspected the hoary antiquity of our earth.

Still, Ray consistently commended careful observation and experiment as scientific essentials. Organisms, both animal and vegetable, must be studied at first hand and their structure determined in order to establish a truly scientific classification. The belief in alchemy, which had never been abandoned by Newton or Boyle among most others, was distinctly repudiated by Ray. Concerning witchcraft, then almost universally credited, he expresses no very definite opinion. In 1682, the year in which Ray published his "Methodus," three Somerset women were judicially murdered for this imaginary crime, while 120 were burnt in godly Scotland in this period as malevolent witches. Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor and many other eminent men all testified to the existence of wizardry and witchcraft, but although Ray denounced magical procedure, he never asserts his belief in it.

Many devout people deprecated the inquiries conducted by Fellows of the then recently created Royal Society, which they viewed with grave misgiving. To them it appeared that "the new knowledge" was blasphemous and impertinent. To these objectors Ray, as Dr. Raven observes, "has his answer and gives it unequivocally: Nature is of God; its study is His service; its truth His wisdom." On the other hand, Ray for some time held back his adherence to Grew's demonstration of the sexual organs in the higher plants, while his extreme caution hindered his acceptance of other discoveries. Raven himself declares that his hero "ought to have done more than hint at the impossibility of Ussher's chronology and grasped at once the concept of geological time."

Raven is decidedly critical towards some of the more recent scientists, and blames the biologists for their alleged remissness in failing to investigate and solve certain problems emphasised by Ray. He opines that the real history of science is as yet unwritten, but he seems to overlook the fact that practical scientists are naturally more concerned with the present than the past. As Sir Charles Eliot sagely says: "In science most

students want to know what is certain in theory and useful in practice, not what were the discarded hypotheses and imperfect instruments of the past."

Raven's fine study is obviously inspired by reverence, and will probably prove the definitive authority on Ray's life and works; and it is certainly a sign of the times that a distinguished Cambridge theologian should, in a period of war, turn from the arid fields of sacerdotalism to the more ennobling realms of science.

T. F. PALMER.

"THE STORM O'ER STORNOWAY"

"It was with amazement and much vexation that I learned you had a reaper in operation on Manor Farm yesterday (the Sabbath)," writes the Rev. Macrae to Farmer Duncan, from Stornoway's Free Church Manse.

Continuing, he says: "This is the first time such a thing has happened in the island. I trust it will be the last.

"Although you are a stranger to the ways and customs of the people of Lewis, yet surely you cannot be so ignorant of the Christian religion as not to know that your action was not only directly defiant of the law of God, but also manifested a callous disregard of the Christian conscience of the community.

"Unless I receive an assurance from you that such conduct will not be repeated, together with an apology for the offence given to the Christian people of the town, I shall take immediate steps to call a public indignation meeting, at which, no doubt, a demand will be made for your dismissal."—(Signed) K. A. Macrae.

"John Bull" rightly stigmatises the letter as "idiotic." It is. It is interesting. It is amusing. It is dangerous also.

It is a mystery where these pedant parsons get all their fanciful "Laws of God" from. When anything touches their own fierce prejudices and abyssmal ignorances, then it is claimed to be against "the Law of God" and the "Christian Conscience."

They fail so often to produce said "Law of God" and "Christian conscience" that it is to be doubted if any such exist outside their own dogmatic desires, abounding arrogance and intemperate imaginations.

Well might we "wonder what kind of a people they think we are." Do they think we cannot "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest the Holy Scriptures" or assess the real weight of what they call "Christian conscience"?

When, or if, this "public indignation meeting" is held, let us all go "in spirit" and sing and pray.

Let us sing an old song to Mr. Clergyman: the "Harvest Festival" hymn, "O Holy, Awful Reaper; Have Mercy in the day Thou puttest in Thy sickle [cast Duncan] not away."

Let us pray. "We beseech Thee to hear us," Mr. Clergyman: "That it may please Thee to give and Preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them" in the knowledge that sailors did not risk their lives, nor craftsmen waste their skill, nor dockers their energy; nor did we pay "C.I.F." to obtain from across the seven seas that which Duncan wanted to save and preserve on a Sabbath Day.

"We beseech Thee to hear us," Mr. Clergyman, that you take off your coat, and go help bold Duncan "provide for the fatherless children and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed" by this stern, solemn spectre of war that troubles even Lord Woolton upon the Sabbath Day, and upon Sundays also.

It was the first day of the week upon which The Duncan reaped, yet does Exodus say "But the seventh day is the Sabbath"—wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day."

Yet you would have brave Duncan die for breaking the Sabbath seventh upon the Sun-day, first day.

Is it that the "Christian conscience" is so elastic that it can stretch itself across the week to commit murder upon a day not yet born? or is this some new form of blood sacrifice to the old pagan Sun-God? Does this paganism of yours represent either "The Law of God" or the "Christian conscience" that would create "dismissal" of its own subjects? Or are you a modern would-be representative of "The Inquisition"?

So little do you reverence the "Sabbath"; so small is your real regard for the day which your God hallowed and sanctified, that, when the murderer Constantine legalised the first day—because Christ was supposed to have risen from the dead upon it—you preferred to take the word and deed of the murderer, and to utterly disregard your own God's word.

"Think on these things," we beseech you; for it would seem that:—

... This Duncan

Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
The deep damnation of his taking off."

"Blessed are the merciful."

By what "Law of God" dare you, sir, Mr. Clergyman, to stand athwart the closed field-gate threatening as a "common, tub-thumping agitator," to cause unrest by means of "indignation meetings"; with the "tommy-gun" of "dismissal" in one hand, and your unread Bible in the other; thus defying Him who said "Feed my lambs"; "I will have mercy, not sacrifice."

For, "at this time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn, and his disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat. But, when the Pharisees saw it, they said"—as you, Mr. Clergyman, now say—"Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath." "But he said unto them"—as is now asked of you, Mr. Clergyman—"Have ye not read what David did when he was an hungered, or, have ye not read in the law how that on the Sabbath days the PRIESTS in the Temple profane the Sabbath?"

"If ye," Mr. Clergyman, "had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."

Is it the "Victory V" sign, or really the "Nazi salute" you are making?

This question we commend to you, for, "except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven," for, by your own "Law of God," by your own "Christian conscience," by our own "Law of Man" and even by our own "British Constitution":—

"It is lawful to do WELL on the Sabbath Day."

For that stands true
At Timbuctoo
And up to Stornoway!

B. B. B.

TERMS OF ABUSE

IN the years immediately preceding the outbreak of war, there sprang up a tendency which is still obvious enough, and a tendency which deserves to be resolutely "debunked." I refer to the tendency to think that the attachment of a disliked label to a man or a movement is sufficient to damn that man or movement in the eyes of all who are politically minded or interested in freedom of thought, speech or deed.

No branch of political or religious thought (except the Anarchists and the Freethinkers) have been quite free from this. A few years ago it was quite sufficient, in the eyes of gentry of the political right, to call a man a Bolshevik. He was

then automatically outside the pale. Similarly, in the eyes of the true Communist (i.e. the obedient member of the Communist Party, who toed the "party line"), the label of Fascism was enough to condemn any man or any movement. We all remember the days when, in Communist literature, the Labour Party was responsible for a kind of Social Fascism, and this was enough to condemn it. This, of course, was during one of the periods when the Communist Party was not applying for affiliation to the Labour Party! Readers of these columns will understand the parallel to the religious sphere.

But the coming of war seems to have increased that tendency, and in a rather a remarkable way. If readers think that matters of nomenclature are of little consequence, let them reflect on a recent Communist Party pamphlet, which they can buy for twopence anywhere. It is entitled "Clear Out Hitler's Agents!" and it is written by Mr. W. Wainwright. One would think, from the title, that it would be a condemnation of those people, moving for the most part in circles usually described as "High Society," who never attempted to hide their great admiration for the Nazi suppression of all working-class organisation, for the binding of the German people to the German Capitalist war machine, and for supporting papal machinations. This, however, is not so. It is an attack on the I.L.P., and on various other groups who have stood resolutely against the domination of the working-class movement by political careerists seeking for power. It is one of the clearest demonstrations which we have had for a long time that the whole political set-up as we have it in all countries at the present time is based, fundamentally, on the lust for power, secular and religious.

Why I have mentioned this in connection with a discussion of the general use of terms of abuse is that the word which is used to describe all schools of political thought that do not obediently toe the party line is significant. It is "Trotskyist." Read this: "You've heard of the Fifth Column. The Trotskyists are their allies and agents in the ranks of the working class." That is the blunt, unproved statement which Wainwright makes, and he goes on to accuse all sorts of people of being (in his undefined sense of the term) "Trotskyists." Of course, the fact that many of them have possibly little in common with the theory of international revolution which was Trotsky's main contribution (apart from the building up of the Red Army—but we don't mention that now!) to the general development of working-class politics is well slurred over, and is nowhere developed. In fact, the pamphlet is noteworthy in that the most controversial terms are used without any attempt at definition, but are turned into terms of abuse.

It should surely be obvious, at this stage in the world's history, that anyone who attempts to make a political or economic analysis of a situation should define his terms clearly before attempting to use those terms. Words like "Fascist," "Communist" and "Trotskyist" really have no meaning at all unless we make it clear beforehand whether we mean to reserve them for the description of people who are members of particular parties, accepting all the twists and turns of political opportunism, or whether we mean to imply that the mere use of these terms is enough to condemn a man or a movement to oblivion.

Working-class history teems with examples of the term of abuse as a way in which to condemn a man without trial, and the extension of this to the political left is one of the worst tendencies of recent times. Not merely admirers of Trotsky are now called "Trotskyists." The political purge is a well-tried weapon, by Fascist and Communist alike. I think that all who value their integrity should be brought to realise the danger.

It is not always easy, in the midst of the upheavals which characterise the present break-up of capitalism, to keep our

Here again the parallel with the more thoughtless of the religious propagandists should be clear.

heads and to realise that only by a careful definition of terms can we be sure that we are not allowing mere terms of abuse to become substitutes for thought. One of the most valuable functions that can be performed by literature of a generally freedom-loving tinge is that it calls attention to these difficulties, and that it shows how political and religious thinkers degenerate into exchangers of abuse.

The work of modern psychologists (as Mr. Herbert Read has pointed out) shows the way in which such terms as "Fatherland," "The Mother Country," and so on acquire emotional overtones, due to the circumstances of childhood. And I am not at all sure that the use of such words as "Trotskyist" in current literature is not a similarly based mistake, embodying all the ideas of the "Big Bad Wolf" of fairy tale. It is always satisfactory to the mind of the under-developed to be able to find a villain on whom everything can be-blamed, and it is far easier to attach a convenient label to all who differ than to decide where political or religious strategy has gone wrong.

A psychological analysis of the term of abuse would be a valuable study, and I hope that some of our leading psychologists will see fit to undertake it, one of these days. S. H.

ACID DROPS

THOSE who can recall incidents connected with the last world war (1914-18) will remember the tales of how eagerly the men at the front were taking to religion, and their intense gratitude to the chaplain: not for the help that one man might expect from another in facing difficulties, but because of the gospel of "joy" the chaplains brought with them. We exposed many of these religious lies—without, we expect, causing the liars to settle down to the truth. The Angels of Mons was another indication of the same quality of Christian propaganda.

Now we see the lies of 1914-18 are admitted by no less a person than Dr. David, Bishop of Liverpool, who says that when an inquiry was instituted as to what were "the men thinking about God and His relation to them," the characteristic reply was "The men are not thinking at all." That may be taken to mean that the men were not thinking about religion. No other interpretation can be given.

But Dr. David finds that the men in this war are deeply interested; indeed, it is "one of almost universal interest" among the men. Well, we have plenty of evidence that both in the last war and in this one interest is being taken in religion—but the interest consists very largely of doubts of the truth about religion and the circulation of Freethinking ideas and literature. It is really astonishing how frequently highly placed religious dignitaries resort to this yarn of people flocking to Christ, and then, when the truth comes out, admit that church attendances get smaller and smaller.

The Rev. Patrick McLaughlin has no use for "British Christianity," and the "Church Times" comments "Neither have we." This looks serious; but perhaps the explanation may be found in its description of "a growing tendency to regard as a quick-drying national cement, representing merely the high aspirations of the British people." We wonder what the Archbishop of Canterbury thinks of that. There is a bitter satire in the description, and is one that covers a great many to-day. It extends to a great many Socialists and others who find what it is which enables them to run with the hare and keep in with the hounds.

We hope it is true that, as the "Church Times" remarks, "The Church (not the 'Churches,' be it noted) in South Africa bears a fine record for its struggle against a racial discrimination which erects a colour bar between black and white within the Union." By reflection, this shows a strong light on the humanity of the white Christians in the Union. Of course, all the white Christians believe in the brotherhood of man, but when it comes to equality in actual life that is quite another story.

Writing for the "Sunday Graphic," the Bishop of Liverpool says that in the last war what seemed to trouble most people was the question, "If God is good and all-powerful, why does he not stop the war? . . . The question is far less frequent now." We do not know whether that is the case or not. These preachers have a habit of finding what they wish to find. But if it be true we guess it is because more people have given up that old question as just nonsense. The great feature of to-day is not that more or less people are asking the Bishop's question, but that they have given up the idea of God as nonsensical. Atheism was never so common as it is to-day; and if not all who are Atheists have the courage to say so, that is to be expected until Atheism becomes more common than it is. After all, the philosophic student of life is not surprised at what one may call, conveniently, physical courage; it requires moral courage to stand up against the habits and beliefs of the majority.

Of course, the Bishop falls back upon the idiotic excuse that God gave us "free will" and we must take the consequences of our actions. But there are two comments on that which should make it plain for a bishop to see were it not that he is professionally interested otherwise. The first is that the consequences of action do not fall wholly upon those who act, but on others who have had no hand in bringing about the consequences of action. The child in the cradle and the adult who has had no hand in bringing about evil conditions, alike have to suffer. Too many illustrations of this lie are at hand for us to use space and time in particularising them.

The other is that, if Christianity is true, then a lot of us will, when we get to heaven, be so changed that we shall have no desire to commit "sin." That is, we shall become automatons—doing the right thing in the right way all the time. In heaven we shall all reach a state which Dr. David believes we shall have when we take up our residence with God, and which is a direct denial of the validity of his apology for God's blunders in this world. One wonders how Dr. David would deal with a father who put the finger of his child into a fire in order to teach it what fire meant, and then apologised: he wished his child to exercise its "free will" by experience? Would it be very rude to say that where Christianity does not find a man a fool it usually leaves him one—unless he happens to be worse than a fool.

The Catholic Church in this country claims the full support of the State for its schools, and also to select teachers and maintain a complete Roman Catholic atmosphere. The leaders also declare that they will not on any account hand their schools over to the State. We do not see how they can. If they surrender the children to the impact of modern thought and a sound social teaching, what hope have they of maintaining their hold on the rising generation? The answer is: None at all. With all the Churches it is a case of "collar the kids." It is also the cry and the policy of Mussolini and Hitler.

There are reforms and reforms. For example, a burglar has reformed his business when he uses up-to-date tools to force an opening into a house instead of using an old-fashioned jemmy. So we notice that there is to be a "reform" in the management of the Church of England income, which amounts to £5,000,000 per year. It is suggested that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who are responsible for the income derived from investments and property, shall merge with the Governors of the Queen Anne's Bounty funds, who receive title redemption payments. It will make no difference to the public, but it will give the Churches more cash and thus heighten the spiritual enthusiasm of the parsons.

It should be mentioned by way of explanation that originally first-fruits and tenths (the value of a living for the first year and 10 per cent. afterward) began with the Roman Church, but was taken over by the Crown, which disgorged at least a part of it. Then Queen Anne—the dead one—surrendered the tax and made it over to the poor clergy. But directly after the Government increased the Royal Grant by the amount that had been given, so that the people paid in the end. But that is one of the purposes for which people exist. In Russia the huge incomes of Churches have been abolished. That was one reason why "Christian" England could not associate with Russia—

that is, until the believers in turning one cheek when the other is smitten discovered that the Russians were good soldiers.

The President of the Manchester and District Free Church Council says that Christians must "be much clearer on what are the fundamental principles of Christianity." Bless the man's innocence—or artfulness! Christians have been nearly two thousand years trying to do this, and they are as far off as ever from their professed goal. And if we may trust the New Testament, the immediate followers of Jesus were quarrelling over the same question. I think the favourite House of Commons determination to "explore every avenue"—which usually means that the Minister is in a glorious fog—has its origin in the New Testament.

The Rector of St. George's, East London, says: "It is our job as Christians to look at society and ascertain what can be done about it." That really is a valuable contribution to the solution of social problems. It reminds one of the Scottish preacher who told his congregation that "we must look every difficulty in the face, and having looked the difficulty before them in the face we will pass on to the next subject." No wonder that some people are soothed by a Church service.

Bearing in mind the boast of the Churches that Christianity is the only sure guarantee of effective morals, it is worth noting the Westminster Moral Welfare Committee report that young Irish girls form a very large proportion of what they describe as the "unmarried mothers" in England. And knowing that no other order of Christians have their people under stricter control than do the Roman Catholic priesthood, we leave the explanation to the Church.

The Stornoway trouble over the farmer who insisted on looking after his crops on Sunday still continues. It is not pretended that human beings will suffer from the farmer working on Sunday; it is the clergy who are hurt, and they claim that God disapproves this violation of the Sabbath. Well, why not leave it to God? Remembering that the Churches believe that God sends us either good or bad seasons, why not leave it to him to paralyse the crops of those who violate the Sabbath? After all, it is God's business more than ours.

There is also trouble in other parts of Scotland concerning the Sabbath. The Hamilton Presbytery has just reported on Sunday entertainments. The Presbytery appears to be fighting a losing cause, since it professes itself content with the Council sanctioning Sunday entertainments provided the times do not clash with the hours of Church services. This does at least confess that the roots of the trouble are just commercial. The Churches do not want competition. They know that if equal competition is allowed the vast majority would attend other places of amusement.

Another source of trouble, this time in Glasgow, is due to there being a demand for opportunities for playing bowls on Sunday. Sheriff Black has decided, as against the Glasgow Council decision to permit so demoralising a game of bowls on the Sabbath, that this is illegal. The secretary of the Lord's Day Observation Society says that "our people" do not want to play bowls on Sunday. Well, no one is suggesting that "our people" should be compelled to play on Sunday. Let them go to Church. It serves them right. But there is no reason why these survivals from the Stone Age should control the harmless amusements of civilised individuals—especially when we are fighting a war for freedom; that is, for more or less freedom.

The Bishop of Chelmsford says, in the "Daily Mail," that "organised religion in every country has a weaker hold than it had fifty years ago." That is rather a mild way of putting it. Religion has a weaker hold than it had five years ago, and the weakening is continuous. That is one of the reasons why the present alleged Coalition Government—which cannot deal with other important matters until there has been an election—can, after a great deal of back-stair manoeuvring, try to pass a Bill which substantially hands over the schools to the Churches. And as the attendance at ordinary meetings of Parliament is very poor, and often a large percentage of those who do attend are holding some office, or hope to do so, the Bill may become law if those interested, outside Parliament, do not get to work.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

- C. MARTIN.—There is no immediate prospect of the "Almost An Autobiography" being reprinted until there is a more plentiful supply of paper, but it will be re-issued as soon as possible.
- O. W. FORD.—Thanks for report. The meeting must have been interesting, and also useful.
- G. B. LISSENDEN.—Thanks. Shall appear as early as possible.
- C. R. WALKER.—We should be only too glad to re-issue our edition of Paine's "Age of Reason." The only obstacle in the way is the paper shortage. Do you know of any printer who would undertake it? We hope soon to issue another volume of "Essays in Freethinking."
- T. MOSS.—Thanks for information. They who keep us posted with anything occurring in the local press are giving real help.
- H. SPENCE.—Received; shall appear as early as possible. We agree with you that to call a "thing" unknowable is coming dangerously near nonsense. "Unthinkable" is very little better. If one does not know, or cannot make the thing we are talking about to some degree thinkable, the only sane course is to say nothing about it. A "thing" should indicate a thinkable existence.
- S. R. GAINES.—Pleased to find you still enjoy "The Freethinker." Will be more cautious in the future with your initials. But "what's in a name?" We once knew a politician who was named "Straight!"
- THE GENERAL SECRETARY gratefully acknowledges a donation of 10s. 6d. from Mr. W. E. K. Griffin to the Benevolent Fund of the N.S.S.

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

SUGAR PLUMS

ON Sunday, November 28, Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Cosmo Cinema, Rose Street, Glasgow. His subject will be, "The Coming of the Gods." It is an afternoon meeting, and the chair will be taken at 3 o'clock, doors open at 2-30. Admission is free, but there are "donation" tickets, which we take it to be the Scottish equivalent for the English "reserved seats." At any rate, they will serve the same purpose. The tickets may be had in advance from Mrs. Macdonald, 149, Stanmore Road, Mount Florida, Glasgow, and Collet's Bookshop, 15, Dundas Street, Glasgow, or at the Cosmo Cinema on the afternoon of the meeting.

There are numerous discussion groups all over the country, and if run on broad, liberal lines should do good. We note that the Warsop Discussion Group recently met to discuss "The Mythology of Christian Theology," the opener of the discussion being Mr. Tom Mosley, whose name should be familiar to our readers and who has been doing some useful work in the

Nottingham district. We are not surprised to learn that Mr. Mosley laid out a good case in justification of his title and that a lively discussion followed. The opposition was led by the Rev. W. E. Morgan. The meeting appears to have been a very good one, and we congratulate the Warsop Discussion Group on it having taken place. We hope that other discussion groups will see to it that the Freethought case is heard more frequently.

Roman Catholic leaders are disturbed because, they say, the National Union of Teachers is spending £10,000 on a campaign against some of the Government proposals concerning education. We hope the N.U.T. will bring all its power—and in this matter it has much power—to prevent the Government and Church plot to give the clergy substantial control over the schools. Teachers know what that means both for the teachers and for the pupils. And if the N.U.T. sticks to its guns it can foil one of the most reactionary plans that has been seen for many years.

All the same, we believe that a still stronger warning to be issued to the Government—which exists for the conduct of the war, and which has no mandate from the electorate for any other revolutionary purpose—would be for all those who wish to stop this misuse of power to withdraw their children from religious teaching. That would be a very solid warning which could not be ignored.

Roman Catholic influence is fairly strong with the Government, and it is worth noting that, in the "Catholic Times" for November 5, Bishop McCormick says quite bluntly that the Government plan involves a religious test for teachers. The Bishop says: "We have no room for the glib and false appeal that claims for teachers, as for civil servants, freedom from religious tests. Teachers must be tested by those to whom the parents look for instruction in religious and moral questions." Teachers who start their career as a servant of the Churches cannot but be of an inferior type. Self-respecting men and women could not be at ease under such a test.

The Anglican clergy of Willesden, London, have formed a panel of three to watch for attacks on the Christian faith from any quarter and answer them. The information was given in the "Willessden Chronicle." To ensure a successful watch, the General Secretary of the N.S.S. wrote a letter to the "Willessden Chronicle" with an offer to send a speaker to put the case against religion before any public session of the panel; also asking for a copy of the issue containing the letter. In reply, an old copy of the paper was sent. On a second application being made for the actual issue required, with stamps to cover cost of paper and postage, the stamps were returned with a statement that the secretary's letter was too late for publication as the correspondence was closed for the time being. We fancy the panel of three Willessden clergymen will be grateful to the "Willessden Chronicle."

We have much pleasure in publishing the following part of a letter from an old Freethinker. The Freethought movement never had a keener brain, a more brilliant writer or a more determined fighter for Freethought than G. W. Foote, the founder of this journal. We have heard it said that Foote would have reached a prominent position in the political world. We doubt it. Politics is not for men of first-rate intelligence. It usually has no attraction for men of first-class mentality, and we have noted not a few who have gradually deteriorated under party political pressure.

"Being down with the flu, I have been re-reading "Bible Romances," by G. W. Foote, and although in some pain, it has given me a good laugh. What a marvellous writer he was. His sentences flow like water, and his humour is both delicious and infectious; he goes right to the point every time. A good thing for this world that men like him were born. We could do with hundreds like him now, in this world of professional priests and politicians of all colours, whom, under a cloak of patriotism, sell every principle they ever claimed to profess."

THE "BRAINS TRUST" ON FREEWILL

BRITAIN'S leading thinkers have considered the question and told wireless listeners that the belief in the freedom of the human will has had good results for mankind. The leading thinkers are, of course, the B.B.C. "Brains Trust," and their pronouncement was the outcome of a question put by Miss Marjory Fry, herself a frequent performer in "Brains Trust" sessions on other occasions than this one, when she changed her role to that of ostensibly a seeker of enlightenment.

In fairness to the "Brains Trust" personnel who had to deal with this question, it must first be conceded that Miss Fry and the B.B.C. have taken advantage of them. Usually the topics that the "Brains Trust" is allowed to discuss are confined to trivialities on which those taking part can harmlessly expend their wit, and specialised studies that provide opportunities for individual members to shine in turn as repositories of little-known facts. To be suddenly faced with a test, not of brilliance or memory, but of simple logic and common sense must have come as a shock to a group of people who knew full well that almost invariably such questions are eliminated in advance by the power behind the scenes. No wonder they floundered! But need they have done so so pitifully?

It should be noted that the question was concerned with the effects of the belief in freewill, and not with its truth or falsity. B.B.C. censorship would certainly not permit the latter point to be discussed at the microphone, and the "Brains Trust" obligingly made no reference to any arguments for or against the belief. Nobody appeared to be aware, however, that in making out any sort of a case for the utility of the belief one must necessarily jettison the case for its truth, since human conduct cannot at the same time be due to a belief and to an unconditioned or freewill.

Really, it looks as if Miss Fry has been having a sly game with her "Brains Trust" colleagues on the one hand and, on the other, with the B.B.C. itself, unbeknown to that august body which has so often told us that it regards itself as the champion of the Christian religion. Miss Fry's subtlety in getting one of the cardinal doctrines of official Christianity logically demolished in the course of a broadcast ostensibly praising it is delicious. Thank you, Miss Fry, and thank you, members of the "Brains Trust" who fell so innocently into the neat trap set by her question!

Nevertheless, satisfactory as it is to see the freewill doctrine unintentionally disposed of by its friends, they ought not to be left the comfort that the belief in this doctrine has at any rate been a blessing to mankind, if it can be shown to have been the reverse. So let us look at the case they stated in its favour. Miss Jenny Lee said that the belief in freewill had certainly had good results, by giving human beings a sense of responsibility. Sir William Darling, Provost of Edinburgh, merely endorsed Miss Lee's remarks, adding "even if it is only an illusion." Professor Julian Huxley commented that our freewill was limited, but agreed with the others that the belief had been productive of good.

It is clear from Miss Lee's and Sir William Darling's statements that they misunderstand the nature of one of the terms they have used—either freewill or responsibility. The doctrine of freewill is not concerned with anyone's feelings of freedom from influences that determine that person's actions, but alleges as a fact that the person possesses a faculty that has the power of willing good or bad actions independently of circumstances. Religious people say that this power comes from God. Professor Huxley, therefore, who has publicly described himself as an Atheist, must mean something different by his "limited freewill" from the freewill of the others. Probably he means something which has no validity in a discussion of freewill in its historic sense. He did not tell us what good the belief in his limited freewill had

ever done, and presumably meant us to infer that it gave us a sense of responsibility, following the lead of Miss Lee and Sir William Darling. Responsibility in the moral sphere, however, does not arise from mere freedom of action, but involves a knowledge of consequences. A young child, left alone in a room with an unguarded fire, is free to act so as to get burnt, but the responsibility belongs to the adult who left him there. Similarly the evil wrought by human beings endowed with freewill, but not with moral discrimination, must be God's responsibility if this word is used in its customary sense.

To answer Miss Fry's question satisfactorily the "Brains Trust" should have made a comparison of various types of conduct resulting from different theories of behaviour. First it would have been noted that most human actions are not consequent on beliefs, but on instincts, habits and social pressure. People who argue that man has freewill are apt to see extenuating circumstances for what they ought logically to regard as his perversity; and those who claim to believe in the other religious doctrine of Predestination are for ever attempting to guide the course of events that God has fore-ordained from the beginning; while the thoroughgoing scientific Determinist is liable to be as prejudiced in his judgments as anybody else. Still, there are many examples of actions based on the various theories to which we can turn.

For instance, all modern progress in the treatment of delinquency has resulted from the growing realisation that human conduct is determined by heredity, education and environment. When sin was regarded as simply a man's misuse of the freewill God had given him, there was nothing else his fellows could do about it than vent their vindictiveness on him. They were thereby demonstrating to their offended God how greatly they abhorred the wrongdoer's perversity. All the cruelty of the Inquisition, all the disproportionate punishments for petty crimes that disgrace the history of our courts of justice, all the remnants of vindictive treatment still existing in our penal code can be debited to the belief that the "Brains Trust" tell us has been a beneficial one. Predestination as a basis of justice has had similar results. If God has already fore-ordained the eternal damnation of those whom he created evil, what consideration do their fellows owe them? The intolerance and cruelty that have characterised Calvinist communities have, accordingly, become a by-word. History also tells us of the ferocity with which the Mohammedans waged their religious wars, urged on by the fore-ordained salvation of all who should die fighting for Allah's glory.

So the correct answer to Miss Fry's question is that there are three theories of the human will, two religious and one scientific. Both the religious ones in practice result in suffering and injustice, while the more the scientific one is applied the greater is the area over which the spirit of progress and humanity rules. But the B.B.C. would soon close down its "Brains Trust" if it talked in that way.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

WE WILL PLEASE OURSELVES!

"When travelling in summer take
Your fur coat; in winter—please yourself!"

I COULD not help but call the above quotation to mind after reading Mr. R. B. Kerr's letter in "The Freethinker" of October 31.

I suppose I could "please myself" as to the interpretation I put on the subject matter contained therein; whether, for example, the writer is of the opinion that this planet of ours is incapable of sustaining its present population, or whether, for reasons perhaps known to the writer, its capacity for the production of food has not yet been fully exploited.

It is because readers may put the wrong interpretation—may, in fact, forget to don their “fur coats,” that I venture this short essay.

Frankly, I believe Mr. Kerr holds the opinion that the world has reached the limit of its productivity, and as such is incapable of giving little more than a meagre food ration to the vast majority of the world's population. I take this to be his opinion since, apart from the general tone of his letter, he quotes Colin Clark to the effect that “The world is found to be a wretchedly poor place.”

The fact is, of course, that the population of the world is, in the main, “wretchedly poor.” In that restricted sense, then, it is true that “we” have not eliminated want, and in our present “money” world I can see little prospect of “our” doing so. Like other commodities food is now produced only if there is a profit to be made; this is a *sine qua non* of a world of commerce.

But the sting is in the tail! In his last sentence he writes: “It is unreasonable to expect Canadian farmers and fishermen to send food to India and China and receive nothing in return.” I agree! Most unreasonable!—in a commercial world. But is this not good reason for the change to World Commonwealth—a world without money, wages, trade, etc., and in which goods are produced for use and for “free” distribution?

Unlike Mr. Kerr, I am unable to give “infinite” quantities of evidence to support my contention that the world is capable of supplying the food requirements of humanity (and in a World Commonwealth *would* do so), but I will give “some.”

In the “*Britannica*” (14th Edition, Vol. IX., page 462), Alonzo Englebert Taylor, Director of Food Research Institute, Land Stanford, Junior University, California, concludes a very informative article on the “Food supply of the world” with the remark, “The food resources of the world have never been more ample for the world than at present.” Needless to say, though stated as a fact, this rightly must be considered as an opinion; but some evidence to support it is given. For example, he states quite early in his article: “Taking good and bad land together, it may be estimated that five acres are required, directly and indirectly, to sustain one human being.” From this he concludes that, “Other things being equal, this would fix the limit of population of the globe at something like 6,000,000,000.” [Three times its present population.]

From this it does seem reasonable to conclude that, even if it be true that “we” have not eliminated want, it may be possible that “we” can. But how?

Let us consider the views of Sir John Boyd Orr, the world-famous nutrition expert, who, writing in “*Reynolds's*” (August 8, 1943) on the World Food Conference at Hot Springs, states (italics are my own):—

“By carrying out the recommendations . . . the governments will bring life, health and happiness to the many millions who have hitherto been submerged in poverty, and by doing this they will go far to solve many of the social and economic problems . . . which baffled our politicians. *They were baffled because they regarded trade and profit-making as ends in themselves.*”

Evidently the sponsors of the World Food Conference do not regard as insoluble the problem of supplying the peoples of the world with sufficient food for “health and happiness.” But note the implied proviso—that “trade and profit-making” should not be regarded as “ends in themselves.” I can, of course, please myself whether I regard such a contingency as possible in a commercial world; whether, in fact, such a dream is not more Utopian than the wildest imaginings of a super-Wellsian novelist.

But I will conclude with a suggestion. As I see it, the problem is not one of “Have we eliminated want?” but “*Can we?*” From the above, together with other authoritative opinions, I believe that “we” can, but there is an important proviso.

It is simply that “we” who wish to solve the problem of want, together with its associated social problems, must get rid of this dodo, the “money” system, and with it, its implications. Then and only then, in a World Commonwealth will the problems of mankind be seen in true perspective; then, and only then, will “we please ourselves”—in both senses.

J. PHILLIPS.

THE FUTILITY OF PRAYER

LAST Sunday evening I sat listening-in to an American programme which was being broadcast especially for United States forces in the Pacific area. I didn't listen long; nevertheless, I became convinced that the Americans are the bravest people on earth. Only a nation with terrific courage and fortitude could possibly listen to a band of men playing so consistently and so atrociously out of tune; only a race of super-men could possibly pretend to like it, and applaud so vigorously. Being but a normal British subject, I felt appalled and bewildered. So I turned the knob. I became doubly appalled, for I heard a parson praying. After listening a while to him, it became apparent that he either knew too much of what was going on upon this mud ball of ours, or else his god knew too little. Certainly, he was telling the Lord all about it, and at times was piously confidential in tone. He knew exactly what little his god knew, for he interspersed his petitions with phrases such as “Thou knowest, O Lord,” and “Thou seest, O God!” and, taking it all in all, he seemed to be on pretty good terms with the Most High. But what intrigued me most was the exhibition of mental gymnastics which such praying revealed.

One moment he was asking for Divine protection for the Allied boys “over there,” and the next he was petitioning that they be given courage and fortitude to bear all the trials and sufferings which they would be called upon to bear. Now it should be pretty obvious that if his first claim upon the Almighty was allowed, or conceded, his second was quite unnecessary. If that parson's god “did his stuff”—to use a cliché—in protecting soldiers in battle, then those soldiers should have no need to anticipate any trials or sufferings. Protection, especially Divine protection surely means no sufferings and trials, or suffering and trials surely mean no protection, especially Divine protection.

It is not for me, as a benighted unbeliever, to say how his god would undertake the protection of soldiers in the midst of conflict. But I might ask about it. Would it mean that the parson's deity would cause the enemy's marksmen to squint just at the moment that they were taking a pot shot at our boys, thus causing the bullets to go wide, or would it (or He) reverse the law of gravity, and cause the bombs dropped from aeroplanes to go up, instead of down and down? Perhaps the parson meant that the Divine power was to be manifested in taking the sting out of those mosquitoes that bit our boys, so that there would be no malaria, and that the same spiritual influence would see to it that the venom in the stings of those mosquitoes which jabbed at the enemy personnel should be double strength so as to wipe them all out in double quick time, in the best Christian fashion.

If, on the other hand, it was asking too much of any god that the laws of gravity, and optics, be reversed in patches, it necessarily follows that this god would have to devote his attentions to supplying courage and fortitude in large doses. Would that mean that our boys would be so worked upon that a jab in the belly with a jagged bayonet wouldn't hurt, or that a direct hit with a two-ton bomb wouldn't even part their hair in the middle? And if that didn't mean anything like that, what good was this parson's god, anyhow? Then again, when one remembers that this parson and all his faithful followers have been supporting missions for years, and that possibly some of those of the enemy forces might be backing the same god as the parson himself, as

a result of the missionaries' work in the vineyard, what's the poor god to do about it? Obviously, even an omnipotent god can't give an all-embracing protection to both sides in a battle . . . somebody has got to win . . . and to which side can he give that power of his that will cause them to win? That's a pretty tough proposition, even for a god. I think that parson was a little unfair about it. Gods have their rights, surely. To ask for protection from injury, and at the same time to petition for fortitude from the injury if the protection doesn't come to light, is, in a manner of speaking, loading the dice. Heads I win, tails you lose. The only thing to commend it, of course, is that whatever happens, whether it be protection or no protection, the parson could claim in either case that his god had answered prayer—and that ought to confound any damned unbeliever, didn't it?

But, as I see it, the parson's praying was doubly idiotic and unreasoning, in that the god to whom he was praying is said to be all-seeing and all-loving. Well, if that be so, it is obvious, surely, that long before the parson opened his mouth about the matter, his god would have foreseen the need for protection of "the dear lads" and, being all-loving, would not have needed any promptings from below to be lavish with loving care; with fortitude and courage thrown in. Either the god already knew what was needed along those lines, and didn't feel inclined to move in the matter, and therefore needed jabbing into action by one of his own appointed, or if he didn't need a parsonal kick along, was perhaps getting (or was thought by the parson to be getting) somewhat lazy. Taking it for and by, it would seem that the parson or his god were somewhat muddled over rights and duties; human and divine.

But the servant of the Lord didn't let it rest there. He had other petitions, and they were as absurd as those already mentioned, and reflected even a greater muddlement of mind. He asked that his god would give wisdom to our leaders and strength to our men, "that the forces of evil might be overcome." Now, this parson's god is either good or bad. He is either wise or foolish. He does know, or he doesn't know. The parson would claim that his god outdoes all other gods that have ever been known for wisdom, goodness and power. In fact, he would claim that his god is infinite in all perfections. It follows then that such a god would never need to be goaded into imparting wisdom, or imparting goodness, or imparting power. He is almighty in all those departments. It follows then that if leaders are lacking in wisdom, or men lacking in strength, that parson's god has been nodding. He must have been withholding that wisdom and strength. If he was omniscient he would know that such wisdom and such strength were sorely needed. If he was all-loving he would impart such wisdom and such strength without prompting. But the fact that the parson had to pray to his god to do these things surely implies that the parson had concluded that his god had not yet done them. And if he thought his god had not yet done them, when that God knew the need for doing them, what becomes of his belief in the goodness of his god? To refrain from what is good, when one had the power of so doing would be counted indefensible in a human. What when a god refrains from doing the good that he could do? The parson might reply that his God, being All-knowing, would know that it was better not to do that good. All right. Then what was the use of the parson praying about the matter, anyway. It seems to me to be yet another case of an overwrought mind attempting to gain some mental solace by a process of mental gymnastics. The exhibition was not without its humour. And it was not without its pathos.

"SPEX."

Environment to the nurture of character is what food may be to a plant: it cannot alter intrinsic attributes, but it can develop or dwarf, encourage or deaden, incite or restrain.—EDEN PHILLIPOTS.

NATIVES

SEVERAL times we have mentioned the "Study of History," by Arnold Toynbee, as one of the greatest attempts at writing a history of the world that has yet been attempted. In the completeness of its survey it stands without a rival. Six large volumes have been issued, and three more are due for the completion of the work. It has none of the waste of time and energy that marks the orthodox of history—the details concerning kings and leading politicians, figures that were great because they possessed qualities with which the "Study" deals very scantily, or ignores. It is a genuinely scientific study of world civilisation. Everyone will find in its pages much with which to disagree, but if they have any power of understanding they will find more with which they will agree. Its main and governing theme is the rise and fall of civilisations.

As a mere illustration of the attitude of the author, we may take the following, which scathingly reproves a very common attitude of western civilisation. It will be found on pages 151-2:

"Civilisation is in essence one and indivisible. . . . This thesis that the present unification of the World on a Western basis is the consummation of a single continuous process which accounts for the whole of human history, requires a violent distortion of historic facts and a drastic limitation of the historian's field of vision.

"In the first place, his vision of the contemporary world must be confined to the economic or political or social life and must be inhibited from penetrating to the cultural plane, which is not only deeper but is fundamental. While the economic and political maps of the world have now been "Westernised" out of recognition, the cultural map remains substantially what it was before our Western society ever started on its career of economic and political conquest. . . . Even the fainter outlines of the frail primitive societies that are being ground to powder by the ponderous Western steamroller have not quite ceased to be visible.

"How have our historians closed their eyes lest they should see? They have simply put on the spectacles—or the blinkers—of their generation; and we may best apprehend what the outlook of this generation has been by examining the connotation of the English word 'Natives,' and the equivalent words in the other vernacular languages of the contemporary Western world.

"When we Westerners call people "Natives" we implicitly take the cultural colour out of our perception of them. We see them as trees walking, or as wild animals infesting the country in which we happen to have come across them. In fact, we see them as part of the local flora and fauna, and not as men of like passions with ourselves; and, seeing them thus as something infra-human, we feel entitled to treat them as though they did not possess ordinary human rights. They are merely natives of the land they occupy; and no term of occupancy can be long enough to confer any prescriptive rights. Their tenure is as provisional and as precarious as that of the forest trees which the Western pioneer fells or that of the big game which he shoots down.

"And how shall the 'civilised' lords of creation treat the human game, when in their own good time they come to take possession of the land, which by right of eminent domain, is indefeasibly their own? Shall they treat these "Natives" as vermin to be exterminated, or as domesticable animals to be turned into hewers of wood and drawers of water? All this is implicit in the word "Native," as we have come to use it in the English language in our time. Evidently the word is not a scientific term but an instrument of action; and a priori justification for a plan of campaign. . . . In short, the word native is like a piece of smoked glass which modern observers hold in front of their eyes when they look abroad upon the world in order that a gratifying spectacle of a Westernised surface

may not be disturbed by any perception of the native fires that are still blazing underneath."

We may from time to time treat readers to piquant but pertinent selections from the great historical treatise. Its bulk—each volume spreads over about 600 pages, and not in large type—will prevent many reading it, and the cost will prevent others having it on their shelves.

C. C.

WAR FARE

"**Norway Revolts Against the Nazis.**" (Worm-Muller, 1941; Lindsay Drummond.)

This former professor of history at Oslo University gives evidence of unrest in his country which, he says, suffered from the "It can't happen here" mentality.

"**Holland Fights the Nazis**" (L. de Jong, 1941) is an account of the five days' war in Holland.

"**Why War?**" (Joad, 1939.)

"**What is at Stake and Why Not Say So?**" (Joad, 1940; Gollancz.)

"**Journey Through the War Mind.**" (Joad, 1940.)

In the first of these, Joad is a pacifist because war against a State is always against innocent persons. He says he would choose Denmark to live in because Denmark, having no arms, is secure (this was written before the Germans ate up Denmark). On the other hand, England is insecure because defended.

The turn of events made Joad abandon his pacifism in the second book, and his example, Denmark, is excellent as a realistic test of pacifism in the world as it is to-day. Denmark did not resist, and its liberties were taken away by the Nazis (German and Danish). For the restoration of those liberties Denmark now depends on the energies of countries which have resisted.

In the third book Joad talks to a variety of ordinary people, and concludes that man is moral and society immoral. We should therefore break the culprit, the Nation-State, which should be subordinated to a federal authority.

"**The Foundations of International Law.**" (Winfield, 1941; C.U. Press.)

Law, he says, "can develop no faster than the society which governs permits it to develop." G. H. TAYLOR.

CORRESPONDENCE

TRYPHO.

Sir,—Mr. Hollingham's reply to Lady Simon is one more proof that mythicists have to paraphrase and twist this passage of Justin before it fits their argument. Trypho does not say, "Jesus is unknown." He says "Christ"—i.e., Messiah—"is unknown, even to himself, and powerless till Elijah comes and anoints him." Trypho may or may not have known of Jesus, but the words in question prove nothing one way or the other.

The pity of it is that ingenuity should be wasted in wrangling over a secondary issue. The question whether a man did or did not contribute a few features to the myth is of minor importance, and would not be worth powder and shot if mythicists did not mistakenly treat it as the whole case for or against Christianity.

—Yours, etc., ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

RUSSIA AND ATHEISM.

Sir,—Bearing on Mr. V. Kilpatrick's letter in your issue of November 7, it behoves all Atheists to remain sceptical of the recent changes of policy under the present regime in Russia. Some of these changes are:—

1. The dropping of the Third International.
2. The complete reversal of Russia's co-educational policy to segregation of the sexes in schools, *vide* this week's issue of "Soviet War News."

3. The permission given by the Government for calling of the Moscow Synod, and the Archbishop of York's visit.

The latter event alone would tend to show that there has been some departure from the policy of the Leninist State which established the Marxian axiom that "religion is the opium of the mind." Can it be that some kind of reactionary movement has set in against the Russian people which aims to turn the Marxian maxim into a Bonapartist one—"Religion is the vaccine of the intelligence"?—Yours, etc., A. R. ANDERSON.

Sir,—Stalin has surprised the rest of the world in many ways. The ban upon the Atheist sheet "Bezbozhnik" may be due to several reasons, but that he banned it because of the Editor's alleged admission of "the Godless" defeat is the writer's or the Editor's personal opinion, and not Stalin's. There is no mention of God's blessing in the Soviet war communiqué; 20 salvoes from 200 guns are preferred to a National Day of Prayer. The Communist Party, the directing force behind Russia, is known for its militant Atheism, and being a mental development. Atheism does not change overnight like the strategic "game" of politics.

I should have added one important exception to my opinion that "in Russia there is no suppression of the intellect." Literature, the professions and the scientific field are open to all irrespective of parents, colour or language—there are over 150 languages in the Soviet union; but there is only one political party. Organised opposition to the Communist Party is not tolerated. A long list of individuals, including priests and old Bolsheviks, have been executed for intrigue against the State.—Yours, etc., E. HANSON.

[Letters have been slightly curtailed.—EDITOR.]

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting Held November 14, 1943

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the Chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, A.C. Rosetti, Bryant, Ebury, Lupton, Horowitz, Griffiths, Morris, Mrs. Grant, Miss Woolstone and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Birmingham Branch and to the Parent Society. On a question of help for outside organisations opposing the increase of religious control in the schools, the Executive ruled that apart from its own efforts it was prepared to help outside organisations in any way possible on that question.

Correspondence was dealt with from Staffordshire, Bristol, Nelson, Southampton and London areas, and progress in lecture arrangements reported.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for December 12 and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m. RENNIE SMITH, B.Sc.: "Russia and Ourselves, 1918-1948."

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics Institute, Bradford).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: A Lecture.

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, Dennistoun).—Sunday, 3 p.m.: Open meeting.

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. U. K. KRISHNA MENON: "An Indian speaks on India."

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