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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The Lie of the Creed

I COMMENCE with a lie; but it is not of my making. I do not mean by that I could not tell a lie, or never have told a lie. I only say that I commence with a lie. The lie is that belief in God or attachment to a Church is essential to the well-being of man. That is a lie that everyone knows—even the clergy. Their business is to fool other people—there is no clear evidence that they fool themselves. The priest may insist on the importance of his religion, but he laughs at the non-Christian priest hanging on to his own creed. At all events he thinks the other fellow should be on his side. But each priest laughs at the other with a foreign creed. Each one laughs at the rank absurdity of the other priest's religion. The awe-inspiring narrative of one religion becomes a source of derision to a different congregation. If the story of Old Mother Hubbard had been in the Bible it would have been presented as a great moral and religious sermon. So long as we know only one religion we can hang on to it. It is when we take religions in a lump that we realise how easily we can part with all.

What justification is there for the opinion that it is important to have right ideas of God and a future life? Does it really matter? Other things equal, the student, the scientist, the man of the world, gets nothing from the belief in God. He is just as good or as bad without God as he is with him—or it. The belief in God never made a fool a wise man. Religion has never made an honest man a rogue, but it has often enabled him to play the part of one with comparative ease. No one when there is anything at stake—say, a house to let, or business credit to be given—will take belief in God as a sufficiency to guarantee an appointment. In all the practical affairs of life we look to a man's record for character, not to his profession of faith. You simply cannot properly guide your road through life with nothing but belief in God.

Today we are struggling to build up our commerce. Advice comes from every side except "Trust in God," if that is all man feels, he has got to the end of his efforts. One of the famous men in the recent war was said to be a great believer in God; if that were true, it was noticeable that God whispered in his ear, "Don't attack until you can get the enemy into a corner and that everything is in order." Is there any real difference between the Atheist who trusts to his wit and his courage and the Christian doing the same job with God? Obviously God is the king-pin of the position. If a man is sick we send for a doctor. The law says that, in the case of young people, a doctor must be sent for, the parents or guardians must be controlled by the same law. At what point does the godite come in? The belief in God, minus knowledge, is of no value. All history endorses that. Insurance Associations endorse for

what we have, and the owners of churches and chapels have to insure their property on exactly the same terms. Individuals and nations flourish in proportions. God does not appear on the scene. The God of old who influenced the weather has gone never to return. The God who was responsible for the seasons, for health and disease, for victory and defeat, was something to be reckoned with. But a God who does nothing, who waits for an atomic bomb and superiority of arms, looses his hold on a world that increases in understanding.

The sober truth is that religious doctrines never trouble men who turn their back on them, or study them as a declaration of the inadequateness of primitive thinking. The professed interest in religion is today a manufactured one. So far as it exists it is something that has been forced upon children. It is the result of huge masses of preachers pressed upon the people and enforced by ill-educated parents on their children. The prominence given to religion by State functions helps to perpetuate the illusion of godism, and the result is not the creation of a living conception of the value of religion, but a divorce between theory and practice that makes our political life a mass of insincerity and mental crookedness.

Long ago Emerson said:—

"Our young people are diseased with the theological problems of original sin, the origin of evil and the like. These never presented a practical difficulty to any man—never darkened any man's road who did not go out of his way to seek them. These are the soul's mumps, and measles, and whooping coughs—a simple mind will not know these enemies."

But a simple—that is a free—mind is precisely what, so far as the Churches exercise power, the rising generation will not get. In spite of all the improvements made our education is still damned with religion, and our social environment is so arranged that the dice are loaded from the start. Our enemies wear the garb of friends, and our friends are unconsciously turned into our enemies. The black army is still active, and a free life in a free state is not yet secured. We give places of honour to our enemies, and our best friends are kept in the background.

It is a very old complaint from the pulpit that men have lost God, or they have forgotten God. Both of these ways of phrasing invite the question, "Why has man ever forgotten God?" We don't lose the darkness or the sunlight, we don't forget the trees, or men and women. Why is it that gods get lost, or forgotten? A god who plainly did something could not be forgotten. Hitler died only the other day, but he did something, and that something is enough to guarantee for him a certain persistence of memory. None of us is desirous of remembering Hitler; but there he is, he is remembered. So it runs right through the human story. A mere man does something that is good

or bad, but we don't lose him. God, who should be in everybody's mind, gets forgotten. Why? And the interesting thing is that there is nothing in the world that is so thoroughly and so easily forgotten as Gods. And it is not peculiar to one kind of god, it applies to every kind of god that has ever existed.

The suggestive thing is not that gods are ignored, but that no one remembers losing them. There is no reward by anyone who has lost him—or it. Gods just get lost and they remain lost.

Now, natural facts do not occur in this fashion. They cannot be treated in this contemptuous manner. An ugly horse is destroyed, but numbers remember it. We have an unusual storm and people bear it in mind. The season is rain, rain, and still more rain, and crops are destroyed, but it is all duly remembered. But with the gods, people lose them and never even pay them the compliment of advertising what has happened. It is no cause for wonder that the clergy of every religion are down on those who lose a God. They know that once lost a god is never found.

The truth is that the gods are not so much forgotten as they are found out. No one wants them partly because there is nothing for them to do. Or, to put the matter plainly and accurately, man sees that all the gods in the world are just mistakes, blunders, and no sane human ever goes about to advertise a blunder. To put the matter very politely, a god comes into existence as an hypothesis and he disappears when the hypothesis breaks down. It is what happens all over the world.

It is not true, then, that the question of finding God, or establishing a religion is of vital importance. It is only needful for people to understand. For the rest, there are a thousand and one things that man need discover, that he *must* discover if he is to prosper. The housing question, the land question, education, there are a thousand other needs which have no vital connection with religion in any form. Yet we put "matters of great pith and moment" aside to discuss the conditions of a life that will never exist, and the value of a god that one day will disappear as other gods before him. We squander millions of pounds on the upkeep of ideas that are obviously of no real use for man. We allow the priesthood footing in our schools so that they may believe in something that is unbelievable. We cry out for reform, and refuse to take things in the order of their values. We were all born in this world. We were bred here, we have lived here, and we shall have not lived in vain if our striving has made this world a little better for our having been in it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A BUTTERBY CHURCH-GOER

To hear many of the inhabitants of the City of Durham talk, a stranger would suppose that the hamlet of Butterby was in possession of a *bona fide* religious edifice—the fact is, that in the slang of Durham (for the modern Zion has its slang as well as the modern Babylon) a Butterby church-goer is one who does not frequent any church at all; and when such a one is asked, "What church have you attended to-day?" the customary answer is, "I have been attending service at Butterby."—See Hone's Table Book i. col. 368-9. E. H. S.

"THE TRUE WORD"

I.

IN our analysis of the classical anti-Christian literature we are forced to refer mainly to the work of Celsus, thanks to Origen, since, otherwise, we have little else to go on, so effective was the subsequent literary censorship of the victorious Church.

"The True Word" was written, probably in Egypt, to which there are many references, round about the summer of 173, when the Emperor Marcus Aurelius had just left Rome for the German "front," in order to meet the threatening invasion of the German barbarians, those sinister forerunners of the "Dark Age" which was, a couple of centuries later, to engulf the Western World and civilisation. Precisely at this serious turn in the affairs of the Empire, which had now become a synonym for the classical civilisation with which it was coeval, the civic intransigence and refusal of military and civic service by the fast-expanding Christian Church was causing serious alarm to the Roman authorities, as we know from the edict of Marcus Aurelius against illegal cults (176), and from the various anti-Christian "Pogroms" which were just then breaking out in parts of the Empire as far apart as Gaul and Asia Minor. (There was a particularly bad one at Lyons in 177, the year before Celsus wrote.)

We may add, as being "wise after the event," that Celsus and his Pagan contemporaries were fully justified in their fears. For the Roman Empire almost collapsed before A.D. 300 under the barbarian invasions; only a series of accidents prolonged Western civilisation a couple of centuries. A pre-industrial civilisation, like that of antiquity, however, declined slowly, and the Roman Empire had not yet reached the end of its resources. But its "Decline and Fall" was definitely beginning. A far-sighted man like Celsus could, so to speak, "smell" the coming Dark Age afar off. And, as his eloquent conclusion demonstrates, it was as a patriot and politician, far more even than as a philosopher or pagan controversialist, that he wrote "The True Word" in the hope of arresting the spread of the new pacifist and other-worldly creed, the increasingly probable victory of which spelt the certain end both of the classical civilisation and of the Roman Empire itself, the last remaining bulwark of that civilisation.

We may add that Celsus, unlike the Pagan writers of the generation of Tacitus, "got up" his subject thoroughly. His work shows first-hand knowledge both of the Christian Scriptures (including some "gospels" now relegated to the apocryphal class, but then recognised as part of the still fluid canon) and of the Christian "apologists," such as Justin Martyr. And, in addition, in his preparation for his magnum opus, Celsus studied not only the earlier Pagan, but equally Jewish anti-Christian literature. And, in fact, it is this Jewish line of attack with which "The True Word" begins, and to which the first of its four books is devoted. His own philosophic point of view varied in eclectic fashion from Platonist to Epicurean, and does not seem always mutually consistent; in fact, Origen was later puzzled as to how to classify him. (N.B.: The following paragraphs are based upon M. Rougier's reconstruction of "The True Word," including the lost sections which Origen omitted to quote—our translation).

In the limited space at our disposal we can but present the bare outline of the argument in the following paragraphs.

"THE TRUE WORD"—BOOK ONE.

Jesus, says the Jew, is not God, or even a distinguished man. Quite the contrary! He is the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier named Panther, who seduced a Jewish girl named Mary in an obscure village where he was stationed. (Here Celsus repeats a Jewish canard which later found its way into the "Toldoth Jesu," the "Talmud," etc., and played a big part in mediæval Jewish literature). Mary took her illegitimate child to Egypt, where the young Jesus acquired the kind of magic in which the Egyptians were notoriously adept. Upon

reaching maturity he returned to Galilee and posed as a wonder-working healer. Accompanied by a band of sailors, fishermen, publicans, and other down-at-heel vagabonds drawn invariably from the poorest and most ignorant classes, Jesus adopted the life of a vagrant charlatan who lived on his wits. His "miracles" were the usual sleight-of-hand tricks which Celsus (later on when speaking in his own person) says that he has himself exposed in Palestine and neighbouring lands.

The Jews, who are, at least, an ancient people, though (in Celsus's own opinion), far from a civilised one, refused to have anything to do with this imposter, and the Romans gave him his eventual due on the Cross as a public nuisance and seditious-monger. Later on, the Christians interpreted the Old Testament prophecies as referring to Jesus. But this (in the opinion of the Jew) is a lot of nonsense. No decent Jew would ever dream of recognising Jesus as the Messiah, or even as a serious teacher.

"THE TRUE WORD."—BOOK TWO.

In his second book Celsus takes up the argument himself. Christianity is a recent "break-away" from the Jews, who themselves, God knows, have got a bad enough reputation. Further, the Christians are themselves divided into fiercely antagonistic sects. (Celsus seems to have known the now lost works of the heresiarch Marcion—died about A.D. 144). Their theology is like the Egyptian temples where a magnificent outward structure conceals some wretched animal, like a monkey, cat, or crocodile, as its unworthy object of adoration. (This argument seems borrowed from Lucian). Whilst the Christians refuse the honours of godhead to Greek heroes and benefactors of mankind, such as Hercules, Dionysus, etc., they give them to Jesus on account of his alleged resurrection. However, there are so many examples in history of fake and imposture in connection with supposed post-mortem appearances, that no validity can be claimed for those recorded in the Gospels. And, to make their own conduct even more ridiculous, whilst they accept all these "fall stories" about Jesus, they laugh at the cults of the Pagan deities, such as the Cretan Zeus. They recruit their converts from sinners and ne'er-do-wells, who alone, they announce, will be saved. And they thus accuse God of gross favouritism. "God or the Son of God has never come down to earth and He never will." The Christian idea of God is grossly anthropomorphic, and their cosmogony is anthropocentric. Why should men, any more than bees or ants, whose social order in many respects equals that of man, think that the earth was made for their special benefit? The Jews are a ridiculous race, and the Christians are, if possible, worse, adding their own fresh absurdities to those of the Jews.

"THE TRUE WORD."—BOOK THREE.

The Christians are divided in their doctrine. "The great (i.e., Catholic) Church" is monotheistic but the Gnostics believe in a "Second God," and oppose Satan to the Deity. The Christian Scriptures have been repeatedly re-written: "three times, four times, many times," before they reached their present shape. The Christian doctrines have been plagiarised wholesale from the Greek philosophers. And if there is anything good in the Gospels it can be taken as coming from Plato. Both Judaism and Christianity are a mass of clumsy plagiarisms.

F. A. RIDLEY.

"POLITICS" SECULARISED BY SCIENCE

WHEN there are evident signs of trouble and danger ahead, all Freethinkers and Secularists worthy of the name prefer to face it in free, frank, debate among those with whom they are associated—Free, or non-Free, no matter. If there be apparently no way to avoid the dangers, we have a particular responsibility to ourselves as Freethinkers, as members in Groups or Parties of various sorts and as citizens, to decide how we shall act. No Priest, Parson or other official of any Spiritual Mystery and Authority, can relieve Freethinkers of their individual respon-

sibility: nor can Secular "Leaders" do it either. Out of that, arises this; although it may be a bit off the course that had been charted.

My last Article (September 29), near-ended in these words: "Few, even among Freethinkers, seem to realise the complete change in the nature of the Political Struggle that has taken place as the outcome of the war to save Political Democracy. We are at the end of an Epoch and the beginning of another. Already the forces of Political Parties are being re-aligned for the greatest struggle in Human History. . ." Previously, another Fact had been clearly stated (April 21, 1946): "It is in 'politics,' in military war or peace, that all the antagonistic 'interests'—Economic and Ideologic—struggle to hold what they have and/or gain what they want. Further, for more than many a long year, 'progressive politics' has been largely a struggle to break or, at least, modify the political power of some Godism—particularly Christian Godism. Even to-day, every Church—Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jewish, etc.—from the largest to the smallest sect, is in 'politics.'"

World events, since the defeat of German "Nazi" Fascism and then that of Japan, justify the statement that this "complete change in the nature of Political struggles" has not proceeded from the "Political Democracies" to the rest of the Human World: nor has it spread from the United Soviet "Economic Democracies" of the U.S.S.R.ian Lands. It is rather the long delayed Birth of Democracy, among too long oppressed and exploited Peoples, in the shape of a demand for the Right to decide, *themselves*, how they shall live together. This Birth is, in a way, a socially "reflex process" arising out of the experiences of the War, among all the many Peoples who, hitherto, have had no chance to give birth to any form of Democratic Life—and a too-long obstructed delivery is indeed dangerous to the Babe, Individual or Social, about to be born! "T'would be invidious—"comparisens are odorous"—to say which of the three "Midwives," Sam, John or Joe, did, or is doing, most to ease the Birth. Mysel', I hae nae doots; for Sam and John have both prescribed and used far too much dope, over far too long a time—a serious hindrance to natural healthy parturition.

This Birth of "World Democracy" involves a complete change in "World Politics" and, consequently, in the Form and Content of the "World Parties" which shall operate; for "World Democracy," in Idea and in Fact-to-be, far transcends any "National Democracies" acting internationally. The use of the three "Primary Principles of Force" has been greatly extended since Newton's time. ("Principles" is a more definite term than "Laws.") Darwin's revolutionary work consisted in finding out how these Primary Principles operated in Biology. They have been applied, with success, now, in Physiology—including nervous system and brain, in the physiology of the Brain. Marx, as a *Scientist*, found out, not without error, how these three Primaries operated in what I have termed "Evolutional Sociology"—i.e., Science dealing with the evolution of Human Social Existences; Past, Present AND Future. This is a very brief summary of a theme which "ought" to have been "explained" long ago. This is, that what is called "Dialectical Materialism" is as "Mechanist" as was the "Materialism" of previous centuries; or, more correctly, that the latter was as "Dialectical" as is the former, because it was the outcome of Analytic Reasoning. The only difference is that, in the "Mathematics" of Biology there were more "unknown" factors than in the Physics of Newton, still more in Brain Physiology, and a yet greater number in "Evolutional Sociology"—which, based on evolutionary Economics, includes Politics. Personally, I should say that what Bruno, Vanini and Galileo did to burst the curtain of mystery which the Christian Church had put around the "Mathematics" of Copernicus; "Stalin" did for the somewhat insufficient "Maths" of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

To all this may be added that the three Principles of C.C.'s Scientific Atheist Philosophy, as I put these in "The Freethinker," November 4, 1945, elaborate, *but in no way contradict*, the basic Principles of Marx's Analysis of Human Social Evolution—whatever else they may do to Political Party Policies. To adapt: "Where Science is, Godism is not." In their Science, Faraday, Lodge and many others, had no Godism: in their Spiritual or Religious *Beliefs* (Godism), they had no Science. So it is to-day, and that explains a lot about the mixed-up *Mess* in Human World "Politics" at present.

Now to return to the U.K., where I want to be. Just as the Birth of the "Will to Democracy" among the oppressed and exploited Peoples is a "socially reflex process" arising out of the World Civil War; so also the complete change in the "Democratic Lands" ("Western Bloc") is the reaction to the Force of that Birth. To the casual spectator of British Politics or the One-Idea'd Py. Disciple or the Professional Py. Politician, "Politics" may appear to be proceeding, largely, on the good-or bad-old lines. It is openly said, on the one side, that the "Tories" will never be "In" again; while the "Outs" are saying we shall soon be "In," and the "Boulder" used to say "You can't be too sure." But, to those who look at "Politics" more closely and who *try* to make some sort of Analysis on the various Sociologic Forces at work, the great change soon becomes apparent.

Pages could be filled with instances and aspects of this; but a few must suffice, before passing to the point which particularly concerns us, as *Freethinkers and Secularists*. Tonight (12th), I read in an evening paper that Sir John Boyd Orr had said in Princetown, New Jersey: "Science had advanced more in the past 40 years than in the previous 2,000. 'It is this terrific impact of Science on human society which has brought about the present crisis. . . 'The day of great empires is finished.' World Government was inevitable if our present civilisation was to continue. 'The people of the world want to get together. It is the governments that have lagged behind.'" Sir John, possibly the greatest scientific Authority on Food and Agriculture, can only succeed in and by "Politics." Q.E.D.

One of the first of the new World Organisations was the World Federation of Trade Unions, which was formed to unite the World's Trade Unionists—irrespective of Nationality, Colour, Creed or Sex. That is a *Secular*, not a *Secularist*, Basis; but it is in accordance with the *Secularist* Principles—in things Essential, Unity; in things Doubtful, Equal Liberty; in All things, Sympathy. The W.F.T.U. is of supreme importance to the World's Common People; and, against great antagonism, it has secured its position. Already, the nominally "liberated" workers, as well as those still oppressed, are looking to it to fight for them in that "World Government," which Sir John says is "inevitable." For them, Unity of the World's Trade Unionists is "absolutely" Essential: Unity of Belief in Spiritual Forces (Godism) is not only not essential, but it is "absolutely" impossible; while, no matter how foolish some Trade Unionists' Beliefs about Spirits, Ghosts and Gods may be their Comrades can have sympathy with them—provided they are loyal to the Common Purpose. The "Workers" among *all* the Semitic Peoples—Arabians, Abyssinians, Babylonians, Assyrians, Aramaeans, Phoenicians, Canaanites and Hebrews—can have Unity as Trade Unionists. They can never have it as Muslims (variety), Jews (various), Christians (v.), Spiritualists or "Secularists" in outlook—as tens of thousands of them are. The same applies to India, China, South Africa, etc., with a few more Fancy Religions (Godisms).

Another new "World Organisation," linked in Interests to Sir John, is the World Farmers' Union; and "God knows," if it knows owt, that Science has to a large extent displaced Godism. Many of Its Professional Apologists are dreadfully afraid they may have to "sign-on" at the Spiritual "Buroo"—

before they die. Talking about the land, the sober-minded "New Statesman" has exposed the possible or probable growth of Fascism in South Africa. That would be Lutheran rather than Roman; but Calvinist Christianity has been and can be as fierce a Wholly terror as the Vatican Variety. If you don't believe me, ask some of your Spiritualist friends to get through to the Ghost of Servetus and ask its opinion about green wood as fuel.

Last instance at present of this secularising process in Politics, in Fact if not in Form, was seen in the recent Tory Py. Conference. The almost violent criticism from delegates was a repeated demand for a programme of definite concrete proposals to put to the Electorate through their Multiple Channels. True, Winston Churchill threw a pinch of incense on the Altar of the English Tribal God, as he is willing to do to any other Altar that will serve the Empire. Besides, as he recently announced that the (Roman) Catholic Church is now Democratic, what more do you wish? Lord Woolton is likely to count for far more than the ex-Premier in the new Programme; and, though it be Secular in fact, as a most successful shopkeeper he'll be quite willing to put a packet of the Old Dope in with the Programme, just as an Insurance Policy could once be bought along with a weekly pound of tea. Alas! for the Hope of Glory: this is a competitive World—and there are others!

ATHOSO ZENOOL

ROME AND RASCALITY

"VATICAN Policy in the Second World War" by L. H. Lohmann, and published in New York, is a booklet of 50 pages containing revelations of the part played by the Roman Catholic Church behind the scenes, before and during the Second World War. The hand of the Pope and his Church, from the rise of Mussolini to the end of the war, is seen in all the major events of that period; Ethiopia, Italy, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria, France, Japan, U.S.A., etc., are all in the net. The close co-operation between the Fascist dictators and the Roman Church puts more truth into the clerical cry that the war was one for Christianity, than the average British citizen could have realised.

The shadow of the Vatican over the world's nightmare may also throw into understandable relief some of the strange decisions of British statesmen, for example, their tenderness towards General Franco.

The author gives chapter and verse for his numerous quotations and appears to be well qualified to deal with his subject. He was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1921 and was awarded the degrees of S.T.L. and D.D. in Theology, served as a priest in Europe and South Africa, and acted as negotiator in legal matters at the Vatican for several years. He is now editor of "The Converted Catholic Magazine."

With the precedent of the Russo-Japanese war, when Christian England supplied heathen Japan with engines of war to defeat Holy Christian Russia, there seems nothing un-Christian in the Vatican welcoming a Japanese ambassador to the Holy See after the treachery of Pearl Harbour, and the sweeping Jap victories in the Philippines and Dutch East Indies. In 1929, Pope Pius XI. declared that Mussolini was sent by Providence, and the two heroes signed a working agreement known as the Lateran Pact. After signing the pact Mussolini paid the Pope "750,000,000 lire in cash, and one billion lire in Fascist State bonds." There was probably a V-£ s. d. D. y in Heaven when the deal was clinched, and the stock of "the old firm" which had been slumping began to rise, for in 1933, Cardinal Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII.), papal nuncio in Germany, placed his signature with that of Von Papen's to the Vatican Concordat with Hitler's Third Reich. And so a new Trinity of Hitler, Mussolini, and the Vatican was born to Christendom. As Fascist

military successes and the misery of the world increased other holies were roped in. Four days before France signed the humiliating armistice with Hitler, the religious orders were restored and monks began to enter France in force, and in Europe betrayal followed betrayal, but the booklet must be consulted for names and actions. No Freethinker should miss "Vatican Policy in the Second World War"; it is an armoury of documented quotations, and a very useful work to pass on to religious friends. The booklet can be obtained from the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C.1, for 1s. 5d. post free. And now in conclusion something for the ladies. It is the copy of a letter—given in full in the booklet—sent by the New York State Catholic Welfare Committee, speaking for the Catholic Bishops of the country, protesting against the "Equal Rights for Women Proposal." As a result of the letter the Chairman of the Judiciary Committee in Washington, and two other Catholic members of the Committee changed their pledged votes to accommodate the protest.

R. H. ROSETTI.

LET'S DROWN THE PUPS OF WAR

I BELONG to the generation which was born during the 1914-18 war and grew up in an atmosphere of pacifism and disgust with war. On all sides were to be seen speakers, books and exhibitions all pointing out the horrors and, above all, the futility of war. Nearly everyone told me that I was lucky to have been spared the task of killing my fellow men and that thanks to the League of Nations such bestial behaviour was not to be expected in my lifetime.

This sort of talk did not entirely convince me for reports of the League of Nations clearly showed that it was merely a theatre in which national feeling and attitudinising could be indulged to the heart's content of the members. If a nation became unduly sensitive to criticism it could leave the League and, in any case, some nations were for quite a long time denied membership. The very word "Nations," as in today's "United Nations," implies that nationalism would persist. I would be happy to see it changed.

The idea that "horrors of war" would prove a deterrent did, however, carry some weight with me. Everyone seemed so sincere when he said it, though I recollect that as schoolboys we were never happier than when we could lead our mentors away from irregular verbs to their experiences, up to the eyes in blood, on the Western Front.

Well, I, too, have had my war now and it has taught me what I wished to know. People enjoy more than 50 per cent. of what war means. When you are fighting for your life the killing of him who would kill you is no horror—it is damned good luck. The killing of your comrades, though it shocks you and grieves you, is somehow preferable to your own violent end and in any case after the first two or three unpleasant occurrences you begin to get used to them.

When out of the fighting line you can visit countries and see peoples that you could not have visited or seen on civilian pay. Women seem more liable to overlook your unattractive side if you are in uniform. Food is exotic and exciting and all aspects of life are more keenly apprehended. Not having to think of tomorrow means that spending does not affect your conscience and, taking all in all, most things in the garden are lovely. Provided that you come through unscathed and provided that your family is also unharmed, the horrors of wars are only a figure of speech.

Then comes Peace, and in a life which allows more contemplation you see the reverse side of the picture, the dull, unpainted canvas side. You realise that this is the real fabric of life and you are disappointed by it. Your importance and your pleasures are now overlooked and you are bewildered. You begin to see

that war paint makes a pretty picture but that its intensity rots the canvas. A subconscious rationalising process follows thus: "Life is now unpleasant. War must be the cause for was not pre-war life heaven? War is bad. We took part in it but as we have no fault we could not have enjoyed it. We did not enjoy it. Think, after all, of all those corpses. It must never happen again. Let us form a 'League of Indissoluble Tribes' and write thousands of novels showing the horrors of war and thus we shall prevent another. Of course, Colonel Ironwhiskers must be president of the local branch of the Peace League." And so it goes on.

It is not "horrors" which will outlaw war. It will not be outlawed until the same stigma attaches to war as now attaches to dropping aitches or not paying for your round of drinks. War will not be seen in its true light until Peace can offer the same chances of travel for all and of exotic love affairs for ageing majors as does war. When we are bored a couple of dogs fighting each other soon cures that, but if we are intent upon some quiet enjoyable study we regard a dog fight very differently.

If everyone looked upon war as the supreme interruption of his happiness soldiers' strikes would be commoner than those of railwaymen and dock workers.

LYNDON IRVING.

THE ATOM BOMB PRIEST

IT has arrived at last; Our Contemporary "Der Freidenker," organ of the Swiss Freethinkers Union, reports the following poem broadcast over the Swiss Radio from Beromunster on August 18. Our contemporary comments—

I am sure the poem will give you pleasure; the poem is the prayer of the Atom Bomb Priest. Not only has it been broadcast, but it has also appeared in print, published by the Basler Mission Book Publishing Company Limited, under the title "The Atom Energy in the Light of God's Word." Here is the poem:—

Praise the Lord.
 Praise Him, all you angels,
 Praise Him you Legions,
 Praise Him, Sun and Moon,
 Water in the clouds,
 Praise the Lord.
 You Electrons, praise the Lord,
 You atom nuclei, praise the Lord,
 You Planet system, Praise the Lord.
 You gigantic,
 You smallest of the small,
 Praise the Lord.
 You primary particles,
 You Electrons,
 You Neutrons,
 You Protons,
 You split elemental particles,
 You liberated energy,
 Praise the Lord.

In that Beromunster Radio commissioned the Atom Bomb Priest to present the poem it is obvious that they wished to celebrate an historical and significant year, for a year ago (July 17), the first atom bomb was tested successfully in New Mexico.

Significantly, the sermon was not delivered by the usual type of radio priest, but by a Professor of Theology of the Basler University. Perhaps it is considered that the atom bomb sermon is an improvement on the usual Bible verses. Our Contemporary is of the opinion that not only is it an impudence but also a gross stupidity for an atom bomb priest and a professor to get mixed up with the physics side of the University.

J. S.

ACID DROPS

More than once we have expressed our appreciation of the skill shown by a good and artistic liar. He was noted in the days of old Rome and amid the art and wisdom of ancient Greece. Also we have had, as in the case of geniuses like Dean Swift, famous men who have driven home wisdom and wit by the same medium. Now and then we moderns come across some very clever liars who work from and for the Christian pulpit. But, with rare exceptions, they prove themselves to be destitute of skill. They shout out sentences that carry with them their own destruction. Instead of being shocked by what is said it is often so obviously untrue that very few are affected by it. It is a lie wasted, and the liar ends in exposing himself.

What we have said has its application in the statement made by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Salford. He draws a vivid picture of the life of the people—mainly women, and the decay of "religion in the homes," and of the growth of "secular education." The cure to it all is to bring people back to "the love of God." And to that we need only say that it is a lie, and the Bishop knows it is a lie. The real fact is that the general public are better housed than they used to be, they are better educated than they used to be, the younger people are more intelligent than they used to be, but—and here lies the real secret of the Bishop's nonsense—they are less inclined to be frightened by religion than they used to be. We challenge Bishop Marshall to disprove that, allowing for the disturbance due to the war, the youth of today are cleaner, better clothed, with greater ambitions than youth ever dreamed about a couple of generations ago.

But suppose that we were to give both the Roman Catholic and the English bishops their way on one point, namely that the conduct of the youth of today has declined. To what conclusion are we driven? Just this. That after centuries of rule by one or another body of Christians, the people who exist today are worse than they used to be, and are steadily growing worse. To those who face facts, the conclusion then is that the type of character produced by all the centuries of religion falls to pieces unless it is carefully placed under strict religious supervision. These bishops are also declaring that the only people they can hope to help are those unable properly to understand what is going on around them, and, therefore, may be relied upon to pocket the insults of their spiritual leaders.

For example. The Roman authorities say they will stick to their practice that they will not sanction the marriage of a Catholic with a Protestant unless the Protestant solemnly promises to see that the children of the marriage are brought up in the Roman belief, under the supervision of a priest. The wife must also be kept under the control of the priest. In other words, the heretic parent—man or woman—is to cease to direct the child's training, whatever may be the beliefs of either of the parents. That, of course, spells an unhappy home sooner or later. It is an arrangement that, in most cases, will wreck the home life, and bring up children without any appreciation of modern thought.

The "Catholic Times" reports the stealing from a French Cathedral of a crown which is said to have been worn by the "Infant Jesus." Strange are the ways of God! With crowds of angels rustling round they cannot prevent a mere man bolting off with the only headgear Jesus is said to have worn. And the thieves get away with it. There was no paralysing of the thieves' hands when they touched the sacred hat. What a price it would fetch in London!

We are pleased to see the "Daily Worker" is keeping up the attack on the B.B.C. . . . Quite plainly it asks for the broadcasting of such subjects as the existence of God, and in time to come religious questions will certainly be brought forward. If only those who are unbelievers could outgrow the desire to shine in the eyes of the public, and insist on freedom of thought, instead of helping to strangle it, we might see a great change. Religious interjections where they have nothing to do with the

subject on hand are common, although there would be a good chance to strike a blow for Freethinking. It will come one day.

Lourdes, which was quite peaceful during the war, is now getting to work to re-establish its first place in bringing together a number of miracles sufficient to fool the foolish and feed the credulous. We are beginning to get accounts of a few recoveries from complaints that probably never existed. And in any case the number of people cured is very, very small, and when angels take on the job of curing disease it should really supply more cures than are effected by two or three miracles. Angels should not favour one here and there, and if good Christians had any pluck in them they would kick against this favouritism shown by God's ministers. However much God and his angels fall short of what we would like, they should not open themselves to the offence of favouritism. We are God's children and favouritism should be discarded.

Moreover wicked and non-religious medical authorities tell us that people may be taken ill and die from a complaint they have never had. Santa Theresa had many night visits from Jesus, and she had all the feelings that a lady would have when visited by a distinguished male visitor. Medical men of great distinction have also taught us that all the symptoms of male and female saints and saintesses were due to quite natural causes. Here, for example, are the feelings of a famous saint who lived in the days when the visits of Jesus and his subordinates revealed themselves. It is a lady speaker—

Jesus my holy love, my sweetness, Jesus my joy, my heart.
Jesus my darling, my life, my balm. Kindle in me the blaze
of thy enlightening life. Etc.

The cause of this outburst is not hard to discover. Nearly always it is the female worshippers who have these peculiar satisfying visits from Jesus. It is the male worshippers who find themselves entwined in the arms of one of the heavenly ladies.

So we do not say that cures and visions do not occur at sacred places. We expect them too. They are as real as to one who over-drinks whisky. Cures may well happen, but it is the nature of the complaint and of the person that is important. Actually those who brush aside all the miraculous cures are just playing into the enemies' hands. The properly equipped critic of these visions finds no difficulty disposing of them. He knows what to expect. And it is notorious that the friends—the professional friends—of God are wideawake enough to keep quiet concerning a situation that explains all religions out of existence.

In addition to what we have said about the colour question, the following item of news is interesting. It comes from South Africa. Of a family of seven, six were counted as "whites." They were allowed to go to a "white" school. The seventh was darker than the other children and so was labelled as "Black" and was forced to attend a "coloured" school. This so preyed upon him that he committed suicide. We suggest that General Smuts should take this matter in hand. He has been so full of the praise of liberty, humanity, equality, democracy, etc., that he should be the first man to attack the evils of the colour line. In the world war, the coloured men did their share well, and that happens to be one of the equalities that has been received with much praise. At any rate we have here a volcano that one of these days may break into action.

When the editor of a Roman Catholic paper answers approvingly a question from a Roman Catholic reader, its intelligence is equal on both sides. For example: A reader of the "Universe" inquires from the editor whether the walls of Jericho were crushed by the blowing of a ram's horn, as stated in the Bible. To this the editor replies that "recent research has shown that there was a collapse of the city walls." That should settle it. Some broken walls were found, therefore they were broken by or at the blowing of a trumpet. If the story is doubted we have no doubt that the "Universe" will produce the "blast" of the trumpet, that was discovered petrified. What a grin the editor must have had when replying to that question.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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41, Gray's Inn Road,
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TO CORRESPONDENTS

W. FREEMAN.—Thanks for compliment. But our job is not work, it is just a habit. Thanks for cutting. Always handy.

J. McCHEE.—Sorry, but your suggestion did not meet us in time for carrying out.

J. K. KILLON.—The answer to your question, as a Christian, is that Henry Spence lived an honest and useful life, and many would be the better for his having lived. If of your Christian friends you can truthfully say the same they may count themselves as being equal to Spence and other Atheists we have known.

J. HUMPHREYS.—Next week. Thanks for portrait.

C. L. WATERS.—You are quite mistaken. It was the rapacity and dishonesty of a large section of the leaders of the English Church that led to the Government taking the wealth of the English Church in hand. If you can see a copy of the "Extraordinary Black Book"—a rather big one—you will have your eyes opened. We are afraid you will have to go to the British Museum for that purpose. Our copy is dated 1831, and covers 576 pages.

The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges the following donation to the Benevolent Fund of the Society:
Mr. W. Nuthall, 5s.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, 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.

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Lecture notices must reach 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

SUGAR PLUMS

It is part of our law that in every case where an oath is required it is open to anyone to Affirm. Only one question should be asked: "On what ground," and the answer may be either: "I have no religious belief" or "I have a religious objection." Any further questioning should be met with: "I must respectfully decline to answer any further question." It is seldom nowadays that there is any difficulty. In the armed forces a very large number of men and women felt they could be honest without calling on some supernatural power to help one to speak the truth. Unfortunately there are a number of military and naval officers who have not yet developed sufficiently to appreciate the fact that there is a multitude of men and women who can and will tell the truth without God helping them. But the law on the subject is plain, and that should be enough for officers and others concerned.

We have said this because in the House of Commons the Financial Minister to the Admiralty said, in answer to questions, that "while every facility is to be given for voluntary attendance to divine service, officers (those who are under the age of 17) are no longer required to attend." It is to be noted that it is only the officers who are freed from "divine services." But if our reports are correct there are very few of the men who are allowed to stay away from religious service, and while the officers under 18 are freed, the elder ones are expected to be present at the service because of its influence on the whole of the men

aboard. "Influence" is rather a too gracious term. It is not by "influence" that these religious services of the armed forces are brought. It is mainly by authority and consciousness that those who insist on their rights are made to pay for freedom of action.

We have received from the U.S.A. a consignment of booklets entitled: "Vatican Policy in the Second World War." The essay covers over 50 pages, and is well and usefully studded with authoritative references. We have but a limited supply and we advise those who wish to have a copy to apply without delay. Price: 1s. 3d.; by post, 2d. extra.

We notice that the Birmingham Branch of the N.S.S. has been doing some useful work concerning the question of Sunday entertainments. It is just long standing impudence that demands all entertainments shall be arranged so as not to interfere with the interests of the clergy. We wonder what would be said if all the public houses demanded that all the churches should be closed while they are open.

The Newcastle-on-Tyne Branch N.S.S. reports a very successful opening of its syllabus of Sunday evening lectures in the Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Newcastle. To-day, Mr. R. H. Rosetti will be the speaker on "Do We Live When We Die?" Local Spiritualists have been invited to attend, and if they respond an interesting evening should follow. The lecture begins at 7 p.m. Admission is free, with some reserved seats at one shilling each.

Mr. F. A. Ridley will be speaking for the Halifax Branch to-day in the I.L.P. Rooms, St. James Street, at 3 p.m., on "The Social Origins of Christianity." Mr. Ridley has a growing popularity as a writer on religious, social and economic questions, and we feel we can promise an interesting and instructing address.

The clergy continue complaining of the salaries they receive. They say they do not get enough; and we agree that if people must have an appointed parson to tell them what hopeless rascals they are, these poor specimens of humanity should be paid a living wage, and it should be collected from those who are themselves religious. Further, as preaching the gospel is as much a business as anything, all the parsons and preachers should strike until a living wage is given them. And if the newspapers will not give them space to publish their wrongs we will give them a column of the "Freethinker." The labourer is worthy of his hire, and the payment should be got from those who want the labourers.

The revolt against Christianity, and religion in general, is developing all over the world. The Archbishop of Cape Town laments that there is in being a "flight from religion." He told his congregation that "The preaching of the gospel seemed to be futile because the Bible was out of rapport with the ordinary man of to-day." We are pleased to say that we have many readers of "The Freethinker" in Africa, and we are quite sure that it has at least a fair influence about which the Archbishop laments.

There is, in fact, no other form of belief that carries as much insincerity as religion. Most believers are afraid to talk about it in common life. In common converse religion is considered bad form. In some clubs religion is forbidden as a subject for conversation. If they did talk about it it would be forbidden because, it is explained, it would lead to trouble. Of course, the majority might, if pressed, profess to believe in some religion, and that is all.

When people really believed in Christianity they flourished their belief. The Puritans tried to regulate life by it. Knox in Scotland, Calvin in Geneva, the Pilgrims in America, the Puritans in England, with many others, tried to keep religion to the front. All, in the long run, broke down. In those far-away days the difficulty was not to get a talk about religion; the difficulty was to stop them talking about religion. To-day we sacrifice religion to comfort and cultivate hypocrisy, which, where religion is concerned, holds the field.

ANTI-SEMITISM

ONE of the strangest delusions shared alike by Christians, Rationalists, and, of course, the Jews themselves, is that there is such a thing as a Jewish race. It can be demonstrated, almost with mathematical certainty, that there is not, but it would be very rash to assume then that such a demonstration would change the opinion of anybody—or at least of any but a very few.

Years ago, in a book on the Jews by Dr. Fishberg, the author did his utmost to show by means of photographs of immigrants into the United States, that it was almost impossible to tell which was a Jew or a Russian, or a Jew or a Pole, and so on, but his book was probably received with a shrug of the shoulders and a smile of incredulity. You can always tell a Jew—he wears a long dirty coat, a beard and has a big nose. He always speaks in a foreign accent and can't pronounce the letter "s." Jews all look alike.

A hundred years ago that brilliant pioneer, Robert Taylor, pointed out in one of his "Devil's Pulpit" lectures that there was no such thing as a Hebrew race, though for most people of his time, Jews were almost always depicted as the type popularised by that fine artist, Julian Rose, on the music hall stage; and indeed it is this type which is always, even these days, associated with the word Jew. To get people to believe that there are black, brown, and yellow Jews, as well as ginger and blonde Jews, with many having an unmistakable Mongolian cast of feature, is very difficult. They would solemnly tell you that a black Jew living long enough in Europe was bound to become white—eventually; and of course a white Jew living in the East would gradually turn quite black. No ethnological absurdity is too silly when one deals with Jews.

Of the books dealing with the subject, take "Anti-Semitism Throughout the Ages" by Count H. Coudenhove-Kalergi (Hutchinson and Company), the English translation of which was published about ten years ago. It is interesting for many reasons. First, the author was a Bavarian Roman Catholic who started out with such strong prejudices against the Jews that he could well have been called an anti-Semite. Secondly, it was written in 1901, and therefore was not prompted by the modern movement against the Jews initiated by Hitler and his friends and admirers.

Coudenhove set out with two theses, one to prove that anti-Semitism or, as it ought to be called, anti-Jewism, was due almost entirely to religion; and the other was to show that there is now at least no such thing as a Jewish race. In both these he has, in my opinion, brilliantly succeeded.

I have said that Coudenhove was a Catholic, and so he was, but his son (in the Introduction) adds that "intellectually he was almost a Freethinker"; and in any case, he appears to have been particularly hospitable to all kinds of people and to all creeds. "Fanaticism, intolerance and clericalism were hateful to him," we are told. It was only because he valued truth and fair play that he took up his pen in defence of Jews, for he (unlike so many anti-Semites) had no intimate Jewish friends, nor "did he feel a particular sympathy for the Jews." Yet his book is a flaming indictment of anti-Semitism, and a whole-hearted defence of those people who, because they preferred to worship as they pleased, and who proudly acclaimed their allegiance to Judaism, no matter at what cost, have been for nearly 2,000 years the victims of the foulest persecutions perhaps ever witnessed on this earth. Count Coudenhove never denies it. He puts the chief blame on his fellow Christians and on their religion.

Over and over again, as he gives the sickening details, he insists that the reasons for this persecution are religious ones. He pours scorn on the idea that the Jews were hated because they were moneylenders, or hard-hearted landlords, or wore dirty overcoats, or had big noses. In chapter after chapter he shows that it was their loyalty to their religion, their obstinacy in

refusing to recognise Jesus Christ, that really was the cause of all their misery. He points out a number of Popes who had, if only in small measure, some kindly feelings towards the persecuted people, but they seemed powerless in a lawless age to prevent their bishops and cardinals from starting pogroms to inflame Christian mobs to looting, violence and murder against the Jews.

Even in Mahomedan countries they were treated often almost as badly, but there were periods when they had some relief from persecution which made Jews turn to Islam from Christianity and its followers, ready to give their aid to any enemy of the Pope.

Coudenhove is very sarcastic on the subject of the "Jewish Press" which in the hands of anti-Semites played about the same kind of part as the "Capitalist Press" plays these days in the hands of Socialists and Communists. Just as the latter pour out all their hatred on the Capitalist Press when the Capitalists themselves cannot be got at, so the anti-Semites were always yelling about the lies and the foul influence of the Jewish Press when they were not allowed any more pogroms. The attacks on religion with their anti-clericalism did not come from the Jewish Press but from the anti-religious Press, points out Coudenhove—in any case, he asks, "Who in the world forces Christians to read these 'Jewish' newspapers?" And he makes the point again that "the fight against Judaism is almost throughout a religious fight. It is not directed against the Jews as Jews but against the so-called unbelievers."

Coudenhove goes very deeply into the question of race, and insists that the "Semites" differ only in language from the "Aryans." He shows how authorities differ in their classification of the races of man: Linné, for example, distinguishes four; Blumenbach, five; Topinard, three; Huxley, four; Muller, two; Retzius, four; Kollman, six; Pritchard, seven; St. Vincent, fifteen; while Morton found twenty-two. Coudenhove asks:—

"How are we now going to fit in the different Semites after all these classifications and principles of classification? The black Abyssinians, the dark and white Jews, the hook-nosed and flat-nosed, the fair-haired and dark-haired, the handsomely developed and big Spanish, and the puny and weakly Polish Jews, the lean Arabian and the obese Moroccan Hebrews. I maintain and substantiate my assertion that whether on grounds of the shape of the skull, of colour, growth of hair or of geographical settlement, it is practically impossible to establish an exact and strictly scientific classification and separation of the Semites. Later on I shall try to prove that not only the Semites in general but even the Jews themselves cannot be considered as a uniform race or as a branch of a race."

The Jews are a mixed people, united perhaps only in one thing—their religion, and even that is rapidly becoming disintegrated. Certainly the white European Jew is not descended from the brown Arab-like Israelites of the Bible story—if that can be trusted in any way as history.

In any case, as there never was a "Shem," the son of Noah, there never were any "Semites," though if we use the word as a convenient expression, it is only to distinguish the various Semitic languages, like Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew, and so on. Coudenhove aptly quotes an expression from the ethnologist, Friedrich Muller: "Race is an empty phrase, an utter swindle." I suspect that in Nazi Germany, Muller must have been put on the Hitler Index.

H. CUTNER.

"The Northern Daily Telegraph" says, through one of its regular contributors, it "is amusing to find Mr. Churchill upholding the Christian religion against attacks." Well, it would certainly look very curious to see him with a big cigar in one hand and a glass of whisky in the other, defending Christianity. But perhaps it was just a joke.

THE FOUNDATION OF SECURITY

THE American war of independence against the German despot, George III of England, lasted, in the opinion of an early American historian, eight times as long as it need have done because the 13 colonies fought as sovereign states. In Fiske's words: "Had there been such a government that the whole power of the 13 states could have been swiftly and vigorously wielded as a unit, the British might have been driven to their ships in less than a year."

In 1777, two years after the outbreak of the war, the colonies banded themselves into what they described in the Covenant as a "League of Friendship" for the more efficient prosecution of the war and in the hope that their self-styled "perpetual Union" would enable them to win the peace. They gave themselves the misleading title of "The United States," which, like "The United Nations," indicated good intentions if little else.

Their constitution provided for a law-and-equity tribunal, an international armed force, an international currency system, free migration and various other measures which in certain quarters today would be mistakenly described as a definite abrogation of state sovereignty. The "Union" was, however, a confederation—a league with the same booby-traps but more elaborately camouflaged. This self-deception sufficed, after six more years of struggle and muddle, to bring them what optimists call "Victory," in a war which their manifest disunity had provoked.

Scarcely three years after the treaty of peace with England, signed in Versailles on September 3, 1783, the hapless 13 were already in bondage to their dearly-bought "independence."

The States were conducting bitter interstate trade and currency wars. Inter-state currency notes (Congress money) were derisively used as wallpaper, five states were mobilising against each other; the Pennsylvanian army was committing atrocities against settlers from Connecticut. Massachusetts would not even allow League troops to enter its territory to guard the League's own arsenal against Shay's rebels. Eighty armed men intimidated Congress at Philadelphia, whilst the militia of the State of Pennsylvania raised not a finger to prevent it. The representatives therefore fled by night and became fugitives.

Respected thinkers of the time were in despair. Washington wrote to Jay: "I am uneasy and apprehensive, more so than during the war"; to James Warren: "We are descending into the vale of confusion and darkness"; and to George Mason:

"I have beheld no day since the commencement of hostilities that I thought our liberties in such imminent danger as at present. . . . We are verging fast to destruction."

What had gone wrong? A painstaking diagnosis of the cause of the trouble led to the discovery of a completely new principle of government, which we now know as federation, and which has since been successfully applied in Switzerland, Canada, Australia and the U.S.S.R. as a basic principle of inter-state government. Professor W. J. Ashley sums up the conclusions in his introduction to "The Federalist" (Everyman's Library):

"A very few years had shown the utterly unworkable character of the principle upon which that first American constitution, like those of its European exemplars, rested; the principle of legislation for states in their corporate capacities and as contradistinguished from the individuals of which they consist." (Federalist No. 15—Hamilton.)

Madison, writing in the "New York Packet" on Tuesday, December 11, 1787, asserted: "A sovereignty over sovereigns, a government over governments, a legislation for communities as contradistinguished from individuals, is subversive of the order and ends of civil policy by substituting *violence* in place of *law*, or the destructive *coercion* of the *sword* in place of the mild and salutary *coercion* of the *magistracy*." A more modern way of describing the difference between a league and a federation is to say that the idea of "government of States, by States and

for States" is not only incompatible with Lincoln's ideal; it is unworkable.

Appeal was made to General Washington to "use his influence," but Washington hit the nail on the head when he pointed out that influence was not government. This idea germinated, and bore fruit at the constitutional convention which, at his suggestion, was held in the summer of 1787, at Philadelphia. But even those who believed in the need for a genuine inter-State government responsible as to common affairs, to the citizens of the entire territory voiced their pessimism in words which are still echoed by the faint-hearted today when they contemplate the "United Nations":—

"I have grave doubts whether a more energetic government can pervade this wide and extensive country." (Alexander Hamilton.)

"Can it be supposed that this vast country, including the western territory, will 150 years hence remain one nation?" (Nathaniel Gorham.)

Outside the Convention, too, similar fears were expressed:—

"If there is a country in the world where concord would be least expected, it is America. Made up as it is of people from different nations, accustomed to different forms and habits of Government, speaking different languages, and more different in their modes of worship, it would appear that the union of such a people was impracticable." (Thomas Paine.)

"The mutual antipathies and clashing interests of the Americans, their differences of governments, habitudes and manners, indicate that they will have no centre of union and no common interest. They never can be united under any species of government whatever; a disunited people till the end of time . . ." (Josiah Tucker, Dean of Gloucester.)

It is important to bear in mind that this pessimism was well-founded. The citizens of each colony lived in a world separate and different from the rest, with almost impassable wildernesses between them, bridged only by occasional wagon roads, post-tracks and bridle-paths beset by frequently hostile Indians.

Nevertheless, under the leadership of their old General, these stalwart pioneers doggedly set themselves the task of finding out what should be done, and trusted in Providence to show them how to do it. As Washington told the Convention:—

"It is too probable that no plan that we propose will be adopted. Perhaps another dreadful conflict is to be sustained. If, to please the people, we offer what we ourselves disapprove, how can we afterward defend our work? Let us raise a standard to which the wise and just can repair. The event is in the hand of God."

Benjamin Franklin put it this way:—

"I have lived a long time, and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth: That God governs in the affairs of men. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without His notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without His aid? We have been assured in the sacred writings that 'except the Lord build the House they labour in vain that build it.' Without His aid we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel."

What exactly was the fundamental difference between the confederation or "League of Friendship" and the federal constitution drafted by the Convention of 1787, a constitution which exists to this day and embraces nearly four times as many states and 40 times as many people? A paraphrase of an article by Hamilton in the "New York Packet" of December 4, 1787, may make this clear. A federal government to look after affairs of common concern to all participants must be founded upon the reverse of the league principle. It must carry its agency to the persons of the citizens. It must stand in need of no

intermediate legislation, but must itself have power to employ the arm of the magistrate to execute its laws. The majesty of the common will must be manifested through the medium of the courts of justice, as this cannot be done through the haggling of numerous Foreign Offices. The government of the Union—of the United Nation—like the government of each State, must be able to address itself directly to the hopes and fears of individuals and to derive its support from those passions which have the strongest influence upon the human heart. It must be elected by the citizens whom it is to govern. It must in short possess all the means and be able to resort to all the methods of executing the powers with which it is entrusted that are possessed and exercised in their allotted spheres by the governments of the various States.

Hamilton and his friends were firmly convinced by their penetrating analysis that the league principle had never worked well and never would. Writing in the "Independent Journal" he declared that if the measures of the central authority could not be executed without the intervention of the separate State governments, there would be little prospect of their being executed at all. "The execution of the plans framed by the councils of the whole will always fluctuate on the discretion of the ill-informed and prejudiced opinion of every part."

Would that his advice had been heeded in 1919 and subsequently! Were these early federalists alive today they would be at pains to recite verbatim their ironical denunciations of those who wished to put more force behind an intrinsically brittle instrument, and who wished to bestow, on a body lacking the vital characteristics of a government, the ornament of an inter State "police" force and more elaborate courts of "law," backed by "forces national, or international—or both!" They would say again that influence is not government and would ask, amongst many other questions, whether it is intended that each national force is to be strong enough to overwhelm any international force which may oppose it, or whether the contrary is to be the case, and if the latter, who will control the power which controls the international force and ensures that government of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the Earth.

HAROLD S. BIDMEAD.

(A)GNOSTIC HERESY

RATIONALISING a natural aversion to being known as an Atheist may well be the verdict of most of those who read this. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity, let me set it down. For if they are right, it is not beyond probability that someone (possibly Mr. Gould) will prevail on the editor forthwith for the necessary very short space in which to administer the due corrective, and I shall at least know where I am. I hope, however, I shall be spared the hoary one about the "Atheist in a tall silk hat," which in any case is grotesquely out of date in these days of coupons and trilllys.

I believe the usual argument against the honourable designation "Agnostic" with its accent on honest doubt and a frank humility, runs something like this: There are and have been many gods. No one believes in them all—ergo, the man who believes in no god at all is therefore an Atheist. But to this I must take exception. For, for instance, as readers of a recent issue of "The Freethinker" may remember, the present writer is more than willing to examine the still somewhat unsatisfactory hypothesis of Bernard Shaw—the Life Force. And using the Atheist's most common assertion that gods are as numerous and as various as weeds in the average garden, throughout the whole range of a vast Pantheon from the Jewish Jehovah to the mathematical abstraction of Eddington and Jeans, it can fairly follow that the amoral and irresistible "Deity" which satisfies Shaw can by no great concession share the name. Thus until someone presents me with a suitably devastating disclaimer to the

tentative plea I made in the article on this subject, at least, I am more than justified in calling myself an Agnostic.

Further. The faintly possible Creator who is unknown, unknowable, sees nothing and does nothing, and who may or may not stand alone somewhere "outside time" has assuredly as much right to the name God as any of the more intimate and articulate Deities of the great religions. Of him there is no imaginable "gnosis" though he may exist. Thus towards Him or It, I am surely to be described with as much accuracy as any language provides; simply Agnostic.

Neither do I overlook the subtle and only too often deceptive influence of an early Christian training through the unconscious. I have tried honestly to face this issue. Mr. Cohen's "Ghost of a God" in fact. A very real and persistent ghost no doubt and widely entertained.

A few days ago two witnesses in a recent County Court case asked permission to affirm instead of taking the customary oath. One was a Quaker, whose religion forbade him to swear any oath by his God, and the other an Atheist. I could not help wondering whether they got together after the trial, and if so, what passed between them. When the Atheist entered the box he was asked by the magistrate why he would not swear. He replied that he was an Atheist, and, pointing to a testament, said, "There is nothing in that book which I would regard as binding." The magistrate seemed interested, and remarked with some surprise, that "He knew there were very few Atheists in this country but a great many Agnostics." And in this he was speaking the literal truth. For few men care to use the term for one reason or another, and it is my submission that the reason does not lie alone in the prejudice and odium with which the term is still surrounded, though that can by no means be altogether discounted.

Even Freethinkers are human—subject only too generally to the powerful influences of suggestion and propaganda however coldly objective they believe themselves to be. So to anticipate a likely illustration let us imagine that the question at issue is the "Man in the Moon."

Now quite clearly almost everyone, Christian and Freethinker alike, would not hesitate a moment on that issue to accept his unconditional Atheism, and as a reasonable man be only too proud of it. But would he be quite so ready to do so if in every village there stood an ancient or modern building lifting its spire to Heaven in the Lunar Deity's honour? If for the first twenty or so years of his life he had been taught to kneel down and pray to him? If throughout the country there were thousands of university-educated priests ready not only to proclaim Him but to devote their whole lives to His worship and service? If every marriage and burial, even amongst the most modern community, were carried out under His blessing? If, as no one will deny, there are still arguments for His existence sufficiently subtle and convincing to satisfy such men as Thomas Aquinas, Oliver Lodge, Dean Inge and Middleton Murray?

If, therefore, in the face of such a galaxy, and the vast ramifications both of material and intellectual witness one still finds on all sides, from the books of the Theologians to the regular notes of the Country Church Bells, one still prefers the humble and sincere term "Agnostic" it is hardly to be wondered.

That none of these, nor even the more subtle and pervading influences inseparable from living in a nominally Christian country have since early years been sufficient to convince me, is of course apparent from my now long association with the Freethought Movement. That I hope goes without saying. For all that, in a Universe the known frontiers of which increase only in proportion to the increase in the unknown, it is seemly to some extent to reserve judgment, to admit the "not proven." And though, if one holds this position, one's immediate reactions in terms of conduct must be those of the Atheist, as a last concession to inner feelings, intellectual integrity, and above all a becoming humility, it seems safer and slightly more honest

to describe oneself as Agnostic. For what in the last resort did Thomas Huxley mean when he hit upon that term? In plain language, and as at any rate it applies to me: Is there a God? Any sort of a God? Has there ever been a God? Could any metaphysical abstraction, either known or imaginable, be thus described?

I do not know. I am impressed by the large number of able minds who seem to accept the arguments in favour of his existence, but so far they have failed to convince me. I have never known Him personally, and I have no reason to believe the Mystics who avow that they have done so. If he exists, I have yet to meet Him, and as a true Freethinker I am willing up to the last moment of my life to examine any reasonable evidence for his existence, or to meet Him by invitation of anyone in a position to effect an introduction. As the years go by He grows a less and less possible proposition. In any of His orthodox forms he is quite unacceptable, and by now I feel little profit in even examining his credentials in any but the most attenuated metaphysical form.

That, briefly, I submit is an attitude most accurately described by the term specially devised to cover it, Agnosticism.

J. STURGE-WHITING.

THE RIGHT TO AFFIRM

INSTRUCTIONS TO WITNESSES, JURORS, AND OTHERS

THE following is the exact text of the Oaths Act, 1888:—

"AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAW AS TO OATHS

Be it enacted by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

1. Every person upon objecting to being sworn, and stating as the ground of such objection, either that he has no religious belief, or that the taking of an oath is contrary to his religious belief, shall be permitted to make his solemn affirmation instead of taking an oath in all places and for all purposes where an oath is or shall be required by law, which affirmation shall be of the same force and effect as if he had taken the oath; and if any person making such affirmation shall wilfully, falsely, and corruptly affirm any matter or thing which, if deposed on oath, would have amounted to wilful and corrupt perjury, he shall be liable to prosecution, indictment, sentence, and punishment in all respects as if he had committed wilful and corrupt perjury.

2. Every such affirmation shall be as follows—
'I, A. B., do solemnly, sincerely, and truly declare and affirm, and then proceed with the words of the oath prescribed by law omitting any words of imprecation or calling to witness.'

3. When an oath has been duly administered and taken, the fact that the person to whom the same was administered had, at the time of taking such oath, no religious belief, shall not for any purpose affect the validity of such oath.

4. Every affirmation in writing shall commence, 'I, —, of —, do solemnly and sincerely affirm,' and the form in lieu of jurat shall be 'Affirmed at —, this — day of —, 18—. Before me.'

5. If any person to whom an oath is administered desires to swear with uplifted hand, in the form and manner in which an oath is usually administered in Scotland, he shall be permitted so to do, and the oath shall be administered to him in such form and manner without further question.

6. The Acts mentioned in the Schedule to this Act are hereby repealed to the extent in the third column of the schedule mentioned.

7. This Act may be cited as the Oaths Act, 1888."

FOR SALE.—Second-hand Freethought books; list on application to Box 101, 41, Gray's Inn Road. Also a few bound volumes of "The Freethinker," 1945 and 1944.

CORRESPONDENCE

HELPING CHURCHILL

SIR,—Doubtless many of your readers have been deeply touched by Churchill's declaration that the slightly reanimated Tory Party will defend Christianity to its last bad breath. Your readers may be interested in a heartfelt prayer which I have composed for the use of all good Tories, as follows:—

"Our Extensive Oil Interests which are in the Middle East and sundry other places, thy kingdom come when thy will shall be done all over the shop even as it will be in England (if 'Winnie' gets his way), give us this day our daily dividends, and deal swiftly with trespassers against thee even as we shall deal with any who object to our trespassings, lead us not into nationalisation but deliver us from the lower orders, for thine is the pool spirit, the power and all that's gory, for ever and ever (we hope). Amen!"—Yours, etc.,
E. F. RUSSELL.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting held October 24, 1946

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

Also present: Messrs. Rosetti (A.C.), Griffiths, Seibert, Ebury, Lupton, Silvester, Horowitz, Page, Barker, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. The Financial Statement presented.

New members were admitted to Bradford, Manchester, Halifax, West London Branches and the Parent Society.

The Secretary reported final details connected with the Special Meeting called for October 27. A report of the Executive Meeting of the World Union of Freethinkers held recently in Brussels was before the meeting and discussed. A question of fuller representation on the Executive of some areas was raised, discussed, and adjourned for further consideration. Lecture reports and future arrangements were noted.

The next Executive Meeting was fixed for November 28, 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).—12 noon: Mr. L. EBURY.

LONDON—INDOOR

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—7 p.m., Mr. C. T. SMITH: "Rationalism and the Arts."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—11 a.m.: "Christian Civilisation and After," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

West London Branch N.S.S. (The National Trade Union Club, Gt. Newport St., W.C.1).—6-30 p.m.: "Has Defeatism Crept into the Freethought Camp?" Miss E. MILLARD, M.A.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—7-30 p.m.: A lecture.

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—6-30 p.m.: "Soviet Morality and Family Life," HELEN B. GORDON, B.A.

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (I.L.P. Rooms, St. James Street).—3 p.m.: "The Social Origins of Christianity," Mr. F. A. RIDLEY.

Leicester Secular Society (Humberstone Gate, Secular Hall).—6-30 p.m.: "Shakespeare and Religion," Mr. E. H. HASSALL.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool).—7 p.m.: "Is There an Alternative to Religion?" Mr. J. ASHBY.

Newcastle Branch N.S.S. (Socialist Hall, Royal Arcade, Pilgrim Street).—7 p.m.: "Do We Live When We Die?" Mr. R. H. ROSETTI, General Secretary, N.S.S.

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