

THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXVII.—No. 29

[REGISTERED AT THE GENERAL
POST OFFICE AS A NEWSPAPER]

Price Threepence

VIEWS AND OPINIONS

The God Who Never Helped

RECENTLY the King of England ordered, or he was asked to order, or he was ordered to order that July 6 should be devoted to a thanksgiving day of prayer. No explanation was given as to what we had to thank God for, and looking at things as they are, it looks as though we had, and have, to trust on our own efforts to put things straight again. But it will be remembered when the war began God was invited to take a hand. People wished it, and the clergy prayed to God to help us settle his German children. The first dose of prayer was sharp and soon over. But nothing happened. Then a longer and stronger appeal was tried—still no answer. Several doses of prayers were tried, and an attempt to try a week's appeal to God. Still silence, and people were saying "things." The Germans were going ahead and increasing in their brutality. God was again called on, and this time the "prayer-bust" was for a full week and to run day and night without a break. Nothing like it had ever been tried. What the recording angels said, or did, no one knows. If they had better pay for greater work, as in England, they must have had diamond-studded trumpets! But in England the prayer was dropped, and our people went on fighting, and what they had to say was not reported—at least in the religious papers. It may be, as Hitler claimed, that God had gone over to him, but we do not believe it.

Then peace, of a kind, came in this country. And a day of prayer appointed. Naturally, all the religious papers and all the churches and chapels were thankful for this advertisement of God and his followers. The "Church Times" gave the world notice that "the Christian Church alone," could save us and assured us that "the problems of Europe are not to be solved on a worldly basis." The Roman Church endorsed this, but for the Roman Catholic Church only. It is to be hoped that the recording angels have not confused all these different prayers.

But the most amusing item came from the "Sunday Chronicle." It gave the largest advertisement of the day of prayer, and reminded us that our soldiers went on their knees at Agincourt—a long, long time ago—and, therefore, we should go on our knees in 1947. The "Chronicle" got a little mixed, for it discovered that the "Demagogues" in power are ruining the country, which makes one wonder what on earth God and his have been doing by way of guiding his children along the right road. And to make the matter complete, the notice taken of the Royal family going to Church was the poorest show there has been for some time. If the recording angels bring this neglect before the supreme authority in heaven, there will be the very devil to pay.

Let us look at the matter from a more serious point of view. At the root of the practice of prayer, and the only justification for it, lies the conviction that God will help man in times of trouble. God helps, God comforts, God protects, that is the customary chant of the believer in God. The Christian has indeed a very good eye on his profit and loss account. He is not, as a Christian, concerned with some power that keeps the world going. He praises God for what he has done and looks for things to come. He counts on getting a good return on his investment. In an ethical sense, the Christian is the most materialistic of believers. He is in cordial agreement with St. Paul that if there is no next world in which he may get rewarded or punished, then it doesn't matter what a man does, so long as he enjoys himself. For enduring what he calls "moral restraint" he demands compensation.

So it goes on. "Let us pray" cries the Christian, the Jew, the Mohammedan. "Let us pray," cries the follower of any and every God. As a non-believer in deity, I am inclined to endorse the device. If prayer is any good to any one, let us all have a try. Of course, any Christian will admit that all prayers are not answered. On the other hand, if a man takes to backing horses, all he backs do not win. But he keeps on backing in the hope that one day he will spot a winner. And he is all the time cheered by the published information that some one has netted a substantial sum of money. So the Christian who does not get an answer to a prayer today hopes that he may get one tomorrow. And as the advertising tipster informs his patrons of the glorious success he has had in the past, so the advertising spiritual tipster tells of the wonderful results that have followed the carrying out of his advice. Naturally, neither tipster tells you of his failures; both are cautious enough never to hint at the proportion of wins and losses. The shrewd old Greek, when showed the tablets of such as had returned from a voyage, after praying to the god for protection, asked, "Where are the tablets of those who have never returned?" No doubt the questioner was promptly sat on, although as the question was not asked in a Christian Church, he may have escaped. No proper theological system would tolerate questions of that character.

The only reason I have for not praying is that I cannot see what good will follow from it. I am told that the only way to find out is to test the matter by praying. But if I pray and do not get the expected answer, I am then informed that I must believe before I can hope to be answered. So that while I must pray in order to believe, I must also believe in order to pray with success. It is, to say the least of it, confusing. Even then I should have no objection to testing the power of prayer, if some really decisive test could be devised. The prayer should be so simple that God Almighty would not misunderstand, and

so definite that none of us could mistake the answer when it came. The answer should be clear and precise. It ought not to be beyond the wit of man to supply the first condition; it certainly should not be beyond the power of God Almighty to supply the second.

At present the prayers that are offered are so vague, so mixed, the alleged replies are so ambiguous, that no one can be quite sure of anything connected with it. On behalf of God it might be urged that the form in which prayers are cast makes it difficult to see precisely what is required. When, for instance, prayers are offered for a good harvest, what is meant by it? If the Lord replies by giving us a bumper harvest, the farmers grumble because prices go down. If the harvest is only moderately good, prices rise and the consumers complain. And if it is very bad, his orthodox representatives on earth thank him for what he has done or not done, and the Lord may be forgiven thinking that everyone is satisfied. In fact, the only instance in which the Lord is helped in deciding what to do is given us in the Prayer Book. Here, when praying for rain, the Lord is advised to send "such moderate rain and showers, that we may receive the fruits of the earth to our comfort." The compilers of that prayer evidently had the Flood in their minds, and so reminded the Lord that, whilst rain was required, it was well not to overdo it! And, indeed, another prayer for rain in the same book explicitly calls to his attention the fact that he did drown the world once upon a time; so he is asked to keep the downpour within moderate dimensions. As the character in "Alf's Button" said to the Genie, "Don't be too blooming wholesale."

Consider the difficulties there are in the way of forming a clear judgment on the matter. It is common to offer prayers for the recovery of the sick, and at the same time to call in a doctor. If the king were taken seriously ill tomorrow, all the court physicians would be in attendance, and all the parsons would be offering up prayers. If it was suggested that the doctors should leave the job to the parsons, the King would object. If it was suggested that the task should be left to the doctors, the parsons would object. So the medicines get mixed; and if the King died or got well, no one would know who was responsible, the parsons or the doctors. How can one tell when the medicines are mixed in this manner? It is a matter of common experience that some people get better without the parson, and some get better without the doctor, and some get better in spite of both. On the other hand, some die in either set of circumstances. Do what we will, we can never get a clean test case.

I do not deny for a moment that if there is an Almighty God, he ought to be able to win a war or cure a disease. But as things are fixed at present it is always open to evil disposed people to hint that God only cures when he has a doctor to help, and only wins a war when he has a superiority of guns and men on his side. The real question is, of course, can he do these things alone? If he requires the help of man to do them, then it would seem that God has as much cause to thank man as man has to thank God. If man is helpless without God, God is equally helpless without man. The effort is mutual and the thanks and praise should be equitably distributed. Thanksgiving services in church should be accompanied by thanksgiving services in heaven to man for the help that he has given Omnipotence. If God and man are partners in the work

of betterment, then there should be a fair distribution of both praise and profit. It reminds one of the reply of the old lady when the doctor complained of her giving her sick husband a patent medicine. "I told you," he complained, "not to give him anything of that kind." "Yes," replied the old lady, "but I said to him, you take what the doctor gives you in the morning, then take what I give you in the afternoon, and we will see which cures you first."

Of course, a Christian will remind us that the proper prayer is "Not my will, but thy will be done." That is what the Chinese call a face saver, but it does not help very much. To ask God to do something and then add "Of course, you will do as you like," reduces the whole position to an absurdity. God, we may presume, knows what is best, and does not need us to tell him what he ought to do. At least that is the proper attitude for a sincere and honest believer of God. It is time that someone made a clear case as to whether God does anything at all.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

MODERN HUSBANDRY AND ITS ANTECEDENTS

MAN is a land animal and with the exception of the fish he derives from the seas and streams he is dependent for his sustenance upon the crops grown on his cultivated soil. In England in the 18th, and on the Continent and in the United States in the 19th, century a revolutionary reconstruction of agriculture was necessitated by their constantly increasing populations.

At the close of the 18th century, the peasantry of Central and Eastern Europe mainly consisted of serfs closely bound to the soil. In France, if, in theory, little serfdom remained in 1789, the land labourer was so burdened by taxation and feudal dues that he was perhaps more a slave of the soil than ever.

Under the agrarian system in operation throughout Europe in mediæval centuries—a system still in force on the Continent in the 18th century—the soil on an estate was separated into three parts: arable, meadow and waste. This was a markedly uneconomic method of cultivation. There was no rotation of crops and the plough land lay in fallow a year to recover after a single crop had been grown.

Primitive as it was, this system survived until the 19th century from France to Russia, and has persisted to our day in Balkan lands. One reason for its continuance was the fact that the oxen which pulled the plough had to be fed in winter, if they were to be available for preparing the soil for the coming harvest. The hay, roots, and grain now consumed by stall-fed cattle were then unobtainable. As the late Professor L. C. A. Knowles notes in her "Economic Development of the Nineteenth Century" (Routledge, 1945): "Up to the 18th century artificial pastures did not exist in any of the great continental countries. The hay grew in meadows near streams and there was very little of it. Roots were not grown, and the result was a great shortage of winter food. Grain was too scarce for human beings for it to be allowed to cattle. In the spring and summer, when the hay and corn were coming on the animals had to be pastured on the wastes. . . . Even then it was hopeless to keep a large proportion of animals over the winter. They were thus killed in autumn when fat and salted for human consumption."

The estate of the lord of the manor was divided into the domain, and the acres allotted to the serfs who farmed their own portion as well as the lord's domain. In fact, the lord's very existence depended on the toil of the serfs tied to the estate. Also, the taxation, so onerous to the peasants in France, Prussia and Russia, was constantly evaded by their masters. Indeed, the greater part of the taxation raised in Continental Europe

until 1789 was furnished by the peasantry. Thus, while the towns and middle classes contributed, the nobles escaped. Also, as local administrator and preserver of the peace, the lord adjudicated in the manorial courts both in civil and criminal cases in which serfs were involved.

As the years rolled on, the services which the peasants rendered their overlords in France and England were gradually superseded by money payments made by tenants to whom the estate owners let their land. Thus, the copyholders came into existence in the 17th century who virtually possessed security of tenure so long as they maintained their payments. And not only did the landholder let his land, but he sometimes sold it, the purchaser thus becoming a freeholder. In this way in the course of centuries, the relations between lords and serfs were alleviated, although in France the serf remained so oppressed that his sufferings made him a zealous adherent of the Revolution of 1789.

While the manorial system was in operation, the serf laboured several days each week for his superior. As long as these services were duly rendered, and those customary at the hay and corn gatherings, as well as local requirements satisfied, the serf was safe from ejection. And it was to the lord's interest that he let his helots considerably, as rural labour was in constant demand all over Europe in the 18th century.

By the beginning of the 16th century estate management had largely superseded manorial farming in England. At this period, yeomen who were mostly freeholders had appeared. But in the 18th century these small cultivators receded, as large-scale husbandry increased. In Scotland serfdom was unknown, while the Irish serfs were freed at the end of the 16th century when the authority of their clan chiefs was removed. Indeed, while the mass of the rural inhabitants of Continental Europe remained in bondage so late as the 18th century, the British peasantry had been emancipated for nearly 300 years.

Free from serfdom themselves, the European colonists in the Southern States of North America and the West Indies imported slave labour from Africa in the 17th century. Degrading and inhuman as negro slavery became, the wide prevalence of serfdom in Christian States with its many obvious evils made plantation slavery appear less repugnant, if not justifiable to comparatively humane people. In any case, the negro slave of the States did not obtain the modicum of freedom he now possesses until a long and bloody civil conflict terminated.

Manumission was completed in British Dominions in 1833, and the French freed their colonial slaves in 1848. But, it is regrettable that quite inadequate compensation was awarded the slaveholders. "The West Indian planters were partially ruined by loss of control over their labour supply, and the methods of emancipation led to friction with the Cape Dutch which sowed the seed of a bitter racial struggle."

Important changes in manners and customs and modes of administration resulted from the supersession of the manorial system of husbandry and jurisdiction in several Western and Central European States. The emancipated peasant, as Dr. Knowles states, was now "able to buy, sell or mortgage his property. He could cultivate as he chose, while he only paid a fair share of the taxation that was borne by all. He did not require protection from his lord as the new governments with their military forces and police kept order, but he could no longer look to his lord to tide him over bad times. He had to rely on himself with such help as the state could afford."

But the farmer became more independent and self-reliant than ever before, and he now possessed a choice of occupation completely denied him while the settlement laws remained unmodified and the guilds exerted their authority to prevent the admission of any stranger into their privileged preserves. These considerations concerning changes in Western Europe did not extend to Russia for, although its serfs were emancipated in the sixties of the last century, "the full implications of this freedom—freedom of movement, free choice of occupation, individual ownership and

use of land—were only being realised after the revolution of 1905."

The departure from compulsory labour dues to wage paid employment heralded a transformation in agricultural procedure in Western and Central Europe. New methods of production were evolved to meet the ever-increasing requirements of an expanding population. Cultivation of the soil became more intensive, as the area available for husbandry was restricted, especially in France where edible commodities were insufficient to sustain the needs of her 18th century population. In England, likewise, its rapidly growing industrial community required ampler supplies of corn, cattle, sheep and pigs. So, far-seeing cultivators introduced scientific methods into husbandry. In England, turnips and other succulent roots furnished winter provender with corn and hay for livestock, which need no longer be slaughtered at the fall of the year. Fresh meat and milk were now procurable in the winter season.

As our economist reminds us: "The winter fodder was reinforced by clover and artificial grass lands increased the pastures. Turnips cleared the ground for the next cereal crop, while clover stored up nitrates in its roots which formed a valuable food for grain when sown after clover. Thus clover and turnips served the double purpose of augmenting the winter food supply for cattle and increasing the grain yields. As they improved the soil, both clover and turnips could be planted in the fallow year and thus they increased the cultivated area as no land need lie vacant to recover. Thus they became the basis of larger grain yields and new scientific cattle breeding."

These improvements were made in 18th century Britain and, in the succeeding century, France and Germany were driven by pressure of population to adopt intensive soil culture. There, as already in England, wastes and commons were enclosed, irrigated or drained, and the old strip system abrogated. Still, the conversion of the peasantry to modernised farming proved an onerous task to the French and German authorities throughout the 19th century and, at its close, the transition was still incomplete.

Amidst the complexities of the transition period of peasant emancipation and the introduction of scientific husbandry, the surplus meat and grain products of the United States entered European ports and created a serious agricultural depression, for these imports from America had widespread effects. They hastened the adoption of intensive tillage in Germany and promoted agricultural co-operation both in that country and in France.

The American invasion also intensified agrarian difficulties in Russia and led to radical changes in British agriculture. In truth, the arrival of low-priced American cereals and other food-stuffs affected every European State. It encouraged the adoption of tariff devices throughout Europe and stimulated State assistance to husbandry in France, Central Europe and Great Britain.

Yet, in more recent decades, with the rapid increase of population in the U.S., and the exhaustion of its once virgin soil, Northern America itself is now constrained to turn to intensive tillage, thus leaving a smaller surplus food supply for export to other lands.

T. F. PALMER.

TOLSTOY

Weary of being a progenitor,
Tolstoy found children were against God's law:
Fatigued with courts, he found his God agrarian:
Bored epicure, he found God vegetarian:
Author and teacher for a whole life long,
He found that God thought novel-writing wrong:
Sated with love, when his old reins grew slack,
The Devil was an aphrodisiac:
The vainest egotist for centuries
Mistook his ennui for the world's disease.

VICTOR B. NEUBERG.

CASSELS VINDICATED

II

WE may recall in outline the history of the work at which our ardent but insufficiently-informed Catholic advocate sneers. In 1874 appeared the first volume of a work entitled "Supernatural Religion: An Inquiry into the Reality of Divine Revelation." It was anonymous, but attracted attention by reason both of the drastic nature of its criticisms and also of the wide learning displayed, not only in the way it analysed works of the old Greek Fathers of the Church, but in the extent of the then anonymous author's acquaintance with German and Dutch modern critics, whom he quoted extensively in notes. A rumour got about that the work was by Bishop Thirlwall, a noted scholar who also had great knowledge of continental criticism; but the success of "S.R." was a result essentially of the work's own merits. Bitter hostility was aroused among orthodox circles—which in those days were less acclimatised to scepticism than—as results of Makeceinism and clerical Higher Criticis—they have since become. In the "Contemporary Review" for January, 1875, Canon Lightfoot published an elaborate article in criticism of it. His tone was that of lofty disdain. He endeavoured to show that the anonymous author's knowledge of Greek was defective; that his annotations were even deceptive; and that his arguments were erroneous. The author of S.R. replied in an immediately succeeding issue of the "Fortnightly Review," but Lightfoot's article was followed by others in the "Contemporary" during several months. The author of S.R. replied to these in detail in the sixth and the complete (three-volumed) editions of his work. In 1889, however (he then being Bishop of Durham), Lightfoot republished his Essays as a book: "Essays on the Work Entitled 'Supernatural Religion.'" It was simply an almost verbatim reprint of the Review articles. The author of S.R. immediately met this with a volume, "Reply to Dr. Lightfoot's Essays" (Longmans, 1889). The controversy remained in that position until the then newly-established Rationalist Press Association, in 1902, published a "new edition, thoroughly revised," in one volume, of S.R. Its author (who soon afterwards was acknowledged as Walter R. Cassels, an Indian civil servant and poet of much merit) re-affirmed, "with unhesitating conviction," all the conclusions of his famous book.

That all the positions upheld in Cassels' *Supernatural Religion* were correct it is of course needless to maintain. While Mr. Cassels reasserted every one of his essential conclusions, he nevertheless (even during the course of the appearance of successive editions of his work) gave up some subsidiary issues—for example, having at first argued that the heretic Marcion did not make use of the book of the *Acts of the Apostles*, he was afterwards convinced (to a great extent, it was frankly owned by himself by arguments of the eminent Anglican scholar Sanday) that Marcion did so; and he candidly admitted the fact. On the whole, however, there can be little doubt that, as against Lightfoot, Cassels had by far the better of the argument. Indeed, after reading the latter's *Essays* and Cassels' *Reply*, there can be little hesitation in asserting that (to use Mr. Lunn's word) Cassels "routed" Lightfoot.

On page 144 of his *Reply*, Cassels says: "Really, Dr. Lightfoot betrays that he has not understood the argument, which merely turns upon the insufficiency of the evidence to prove the use of particular documents, whilst others existed which possibly, or probably, did contain similar passages to those in debate." This is a basic feature of the controversy; but, before dwelling on it, let us glance at some other matters on which Cassels replied to his vigorous critic.

Lightfoot had made elaborate criticisms of the "footnotes and references" with which (again to employ a word of Mr. Lunn's) S.R. "bristled." The *gravamen* of Lightfoot's attack was that in many cases these elaborate notes were inaccurate, and that,

in short, they pretended to a learning which was to a considerable extent unreal. To this accusation Cassels replied in detail, and concluded this (*Reply*, pages 77-8): "Now what has been the result of this minute and prejudiced attack upon my notes! Out of nearly seventy critics and writers in connection with what is admitted to be one of the most intricate questions of Christian literature [i.e., the genuineness or otherwise of the "Epistles of Ignatius of Antioch," the early Christian martyr-bishop], it appears that—much to my regret—I have inserted one name totally by accident, overlooked that the doubts of another had been removed by the subsequent publication of the Short Recension and consequently erroneously classed him, and I withdrew a third whose doubts I consider I have over-rated. Mistakes to this extent in dealing with such a mass of references, or a difference of a shade more or less in the representation of critical opinions, not always clearly expressed, may, I hope, be excusable, and I can truly say that I am only too glad to correct such errors. On the other hand, a critic who attacks such references, in such a tone, and with such wholesale accusations of 'misstatement' and 'misrepresentation,' was bound to be accurate, and I have shown that Dr. Lightfoot is not only inaccurate in matters of fact, but unfair in his statements of my purpose. I am happy, however, to be able to make use of his own words and say: 'I may perhaps have fallen into some errors of detail, though I have endeavoured to avoid them, but the main conclusions are, I believe, irrefutable.'" S.R. replied to Lightfoot on "the silence of Eusebius"; the testimony of Irenaeus; the evidence of the "Ignatian Letters"; the value of the general quotations from the Gospels alleged to be found in Justin Martyr and other early Christian writers; and on other matters; and anyone reading the *Essays* and the *Reply* side by side can have little doubt as to which had the better of it.

It may be asked, however: Why bring up again this controversy of two generations ago? There are good reasons for so doing. First of all, the work of W. R. Cassels has been persistently misrepresented as having been "exploded by Lightfoot," and Cassels' *Reply to the Essays* has been perpetually ignored by ecclesiastical opponents—so a false "legend" has been built up. It needs to be dissipated. Secondly, we come to the work of Dom Dix, which, at the beginning of these articles, we called "remarkable." Why that word? Because Dom Dix (as to facts) *practically adopted the essential position of "S.R."*—the position which Cassels (in words already quoted) said Lightfoot "really had not understood." What was that position?

It was, in brief, this: That in the earliest Christian age a mass of miscellaneous writing by Christians existed, partly anonymous and partly under false (often Apostolic) names; that our present four Gospels were selected from this mass at a comparatively late date and, therefore, cannot be sufficient evidence for the stupendous miracles they describe. That argument is quite simple. We do not say that Dom Dix would adopt S.R.'s "conclusion," but he states the facts almost as in S.R. itself. Probably he would rely, for his belief in the miracles, on "the living voice of the Church" (much, perhaps, as advocated by the late W. H. Mallock, at the beginning of this century, in his book, *Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption*), but "that is another question." Suffice it here that, after many years of depreciation, the main position of S.R. is adopted (almost as a commonplace!) by a learned Anglican lecturer: "The four Gospels were established as such at a late date out of a mass of floating literature. The conclusion drawn by S.R. (and which Lightfoot "really had not understood") from this was (*Reply*, p. 166): "There is no reason given, or even conceivable, why allegations such as these (the Gospel miracles) and dogmas affecting the religion and even the salvation of the human race, should be accepted upon evidence which would be declared totally insufficient in the case of any common question of property or title before a legal tribunal." Whether or not this scepticism can be over-riden by "the living voice of the Church" (as to which Cassels says—*Reply*, p. 170—that

every great advance that has been made towards enlightenment has been achieved in spite of the protest or the anathema of the Church") is, as already remarked, a separate problem.

Note.—On the appearance (April 26, 1947) of a review of *The Rise of Christianity*, by Dr. Barnes, Bishop of Birmingham, the following letter was sent to the editor of the "Times" Literary Supplement: "May it be permissible to mention what seems a striking literary and critical coincidence in connection with the Bishop of Birmingham's remarkable book? In the early 70's of last century an anonymous work (afterwards acknowledged as by Walter R. Cassels) appeared entitled *Supernatural Religion: An Inquiry into the Reality of Divine Revelation*. It dealt with the philosophical problem of the credibility or otherwise of miracles, and then went on to an elaborate analysis of the evidence of the New Testament. The work attained a wide circulation and provoked much controversy. It was subjected to learned criticism by Westcott, Lightfoot and others: more particularly by Lightfoot (afterwards Bishop of Durham) in the *Contemporary Review* (articles republished 1899—in a volume: *Essays on "Supernatural Religion"*). Cassels replied in the *Fortnightly Review*, in subsequent editions of *S.R.*, and, on the issue of Lightfoot's book, in a volume entitled *Reply to Dr. Lightfoot's Essays*. *S.R.* appeared in a new volume edition, revised up to its date, in 1902. The coincidence is that a great deal of Dr. Barnes' book seems an echo of *S.R.* One exception is that Dr. Barnes thinks Justin Martyr quoted our Gospels: which was questioned (on the basis of an elaborate examination) by *S.R.* In other respects the coincidence is remarkable. For example, one of the great points in *S.R.* was that the author of the Book of Acts used Josephus; this is also Dr. Barnes' opinion. The treatment of the Fourth Gospel by *S.R.* and by Dr. Barnes is also very similar. A similar remark applies to the evidence of the Apostle Paul for the Resurrection. Other points might be mentioned; but suffice it that the statement of Cassels (*Reply to Lightfoot*, p. 170) that we may emphatically assert, however, that whatever beneficial effect Christianity has produced has been due, not to its supernatural dogmas, but to its simple morality,' is almost identical with Dr. Barnes' opinion as given on p. 67 of his book. The object of this letter is not to attack that book—the ability and sincerity of which are obvious, even if its arguments seem strange in a bishop (though less so in an Anglican bishop than they would be in an official of a less 'divided' Church). The object is simply literary: to indicate a curious coincidence which, however, is probably explicable on the grounds that the arguments of *S.R.* affected biblical studies very widely." The editor of the *Supplement* replied that the coincidences were such as were bound to occur; so he thought it needless to insert the letter. This comment and decision were quite correct, and no complaint of them is made; but the facts show the case upheld by *S.R.* has prevailed. We see, then, how the main facts upheld by *S.R.* are now accepted even in many clerical circles, and a work, so long maligned in some circles, is vindicated. Even if its general conclusions be not accepted ("if"), it yet merits gratefully to be recognised on account of its contribution to radical inquiry and to the dissipation of prejudice.

J. W. POYNTER.

CAUSATION

THERE was much to appreciate in Ridley's article on Atheism. But also much to disagree with. To begin with, his "positive assertion" that the Universe exists is a mere tautology. For the Universe is, by definition, the sum of all existence, so that it reads 'Existence exists. His application of "the assumption of causality" is equally absurd, for if everything has a cause, so also has the Universe. Using his mathematical idea of causation, we see that, just as four is the sum of two and two, so also is the Universe the sum of all things. If two and two, put together,

is the cause of four, so also is everything, put together, the cause of the Universe. The Universe is just as hypothetical as mathematical infinity. His "self caused" Universe, like his "self sufficiency" and "self determination," is as absurd as the Christian self caused Cause. It amounts to nothing more than the assertion one equals one, and it identifies multiplicity with unity.

It will not do to assert that "atheism is simply determinism"; both determinism and causality are there in both religion and philosophy, e.g., in the Calvinistic pre-destination of both the Catholic Augustine and the Puritanical Jonathan Edwards; and also in Leibnitz' pre-established harmony. As Chapman Cohen has said, determinism is a condition of thought. Determinism is not based upon "the assumption of causality" but upon observable and calculable sequential consequence. "The assumption of causality," on the other hand, has been inherited from the past, from the gods. At one time the gods were the causes of all things. There were a multitude of causes for our primitive ancestors and for the early ancients; curse and blessing and magic incantation. But, like the gods, they diminish in number throughout their history.

These, one by one, have gone the way of all flesh. The first to go was the formal cause. Not only did it come to be realised that the Platonic philosophy of Forms merely duplicated everything, but also that the form of a thing is a composition of its parts. Also, the theory of ideas was put forward by Democritus to explain vision, and the new theory of Leonardo da Vinci, and the science of optics, made such a theory of vision obsolete. The application of the logic of determinism and the development of science led to the demise of the first cause. The idea of continuous change, of evolution, not only made the first cause an absurdity, but also the final cause, the "end" of the Machiavellian power politician. For to evolution there is neither beginning nor end. Ridley's "efficient cause" also went, when scientists realised the absurdity of the search for the secret of perpetual motion; that is, of hundred per cent. efficiency. Modern science strives to reduce the margin of error, in attaining a closer and closer approximation. It is this margin of error that necessitates more accurate observation, the development of instruments of greater precision, and more elaborate and systematic methods.

Modern science is not based upon "the assumption of causality." As Einstein said, science aims at an explanation with a minimum of assumption. That is, science has no use for assumptions. It is for this reason that science has scrapped Euclidian geometry and now uses that of Lobatchewski and Riemann; for Euclid was based upon assumption. Ridley makes an amusing slip when he says that the astronomer "assumes that the moon will act in a rational manner." The moon is not a rational being. What the astronomers have been doing is finding more accurate ways of stating how the moon does act; that is, finding more precise ways of describing the moon's movement. In carrying out an experiment the scientist does not assume that such and such will happen, the purpose of the experiment is to find out what does happen under given conditions. Any scientific theory used is a part of the method of calculation and is used for its utility. An accurate statement of the conditions and the result is a description of an event in space-time. In establishing the relationship between the conditions and the consequences, the scientist is applying the principle of determinism without "the assumption of causality."

In the history of the idea of causation, we not only see a process of elimination, but also a change in its conception. The change is from the theological to the metaphysical. But not only was there the persistence of teleological and metaphysical assumptions in physics, but also, in the confusion of personalities, in the identification of the self with the not-self in the association of social organisation. There is still the assumption of motives, in the projection of personality in classifications. What

(Continued on page 263)

ACID DROPS

In sober truth there is no other subject in the world that carries so much intellectual insincerity as does religion. In society to introduce religion is considered very bad taste. Such expressions as "thank God" or "by God's help" may be passed, but much of it is not good form. Expressions such as "thank God," "by God's help," or "my God"—to express something unpleasant, may be permitted, but there must not be much of it. Yet the clergy say that to think of God is the best way of spending the time. So the matter runs thus—Every man should have a religion of some sort, but if they talk about it among people there is certain to be trouble.

For sheer untruthfulness, give us a good Roman Catholic priest. Here is Canon Matthew, who declares it all nonsense to talk of empty churches. He declares that in their churches there is nothing but people standing for want of room. What should have been told is that the R.C.'s watch their members night and day, with threats of what will happen to them in the next world if they forsake their Church. He does not explain that their churches are nothing in comparison to those belonging to the other Churches. Moreover, the Catholic gives no account of those who leave the Church. They are still on the roll. Once an R.C., always an R.C. The other Churches are more honest as to their losses. The R.C. counts them all the time—members or no members!

We get hold of all sorts of people. Some write to tell us that they will never look at the paper again. In that case we may take it that it has impressed them. Otherwise they would not have taken the trouble to write. They must have been impressed. Others write why did they not get hold of "The Freethinker" earlier. We cannot answer that question, but it balances letter number one. Both, unconsciously, tell a story. One tells us that religion does not make for fair play or a desire to know things. He may grow wiser, or he may go to heaven or think he is enjoying himself. He may grow up before he dies. The other may have been very careless, and so, as he says, he will try and make up for what he has missed. Yes, there is something interesting in everything—if we have enough wit to realise it.

For many years the defenders of the Roman Church have lied and lied, in both action and word to defend their Church. Turning over some of the copies of the R.C. "Universe" we find the following:—

"In the Middle Ages heresy was not a civil crime. Hence the State had not the right to punish it. The Church of the time certainly condoned such civil punishment, but she never put anyone to death."

The poor innocent Catholic Church! That is to hide the facts. But to make the situation clear, we must remember that the Church had control over morals, marriage and religion. It did not claim the secular part of life. That belonged to the secular State. So the Church handed the wicked person over to the secular power to carry out the punishment "without the shedding of blood." In that way, the Church gave the signal of burning the ill-doer. The Church never shed blood. But the burning of the offender to death was right enough. There is no wonder that the Church always used such a term as "Christian truth." It is quite different from ordinary, everyday truth. The Churches have their own way of lying.

From one kind of Christian truth and justice we turn to a current example. It comes from the headmaster of Clifton College, Bristol. He has issued a notice that he will "not be able to keep boys if he does not get co-operation from their homes." Co-operation with parents is good, but there are not many efficient teachers who would express that, unless the children were excessively bad. But there are not many head teachers who would so openly express their character in that way. They would prefer to show their strength and fitness.

But it turns out to be a question of religion. He says he wishes "to produce God-fearing gentlemen," to turn them out

well educated and well behaved is not enough. He says, with fine inaccuracy and almost insulting language to parents:—

"Pagan (that is non-Christian) homes distract the attempt to give religious education and fail to co-operate in the aim of education. During and since the war, there has been a widespread lowering of moral standards. In some homes the old English strict views on honesty and right-dealing have gone by the board. Transactions under the counter and in black or grey markets are referred to by some parents in front of their boys."

First of all we may reasonably ask "What is the value of a teacher who cannot exercise on his pupils sufficient control, unless the parents give their help? One of the commonest of difficulties with children is that they are not getting the home influence they might have? But, on the other hand, we also know from teachers, and parents, that a good teacher is not to be beaten because the parents are not as good as they might be. Capable teachers are not so easily beaten.

And by what right—moral right—has a teacher to demand religion, not merely in the school, but outside? Remember it is not the study of normal subjects that troubles this teacher, it is the fact that the parents may not be religious. It is also true that every teacher welcomes the help of parents, but they do not indict themselves by crying out that the parents are not religious, and without that nothing good can be done with the pupil. More than ever, religion is a personal matter of opinion, and it is disgraceful for boys to be refused their place in a public school because the parents do not please the teacher. To say that people cannot co-operate without religion—well, we leave readers to give it a proper name.

Finally, we have put down to non-belief of religion the lowering of social life during and since one of the most murderous wars modern—and probably ancient—life has seen. If our headmaster is sufficiently well read, he will know that there never has been a war of any extent that has not lowered the level of social life. In this last war, the drop has been greater than usual because the war has been longer and more bloodthirsty than usual. But we would like this headmaster to sit down and try to find whether any great war which has ever taken place has ever served as an increase of decency. A war may be inevitable, but that does not do away with its innate characteristics. Warfare means always a step downward. Nor do we believe that our headmaster is likely to be a powerful agent in securing goodness on earth.

We know nothing of the character of the Rev. R. A. Hook, of St. Andrews Church, Luton. He is certainly not the ordinary priest. He is evidently tired of the rubbish that has been written and spoken concerning the recent parade of the churches, etc. Mr. Hook says, "God is not a clockwork doll to be set in motion by the dropping of a penny. It was false propaganda to lead the people to believe that God was one of our weapons and helps to win the war . . ." Now that seems rather sensible. Certainly he will never get on if he talks in that sensible way. Certainly the principal preachers will not be fond of the Rev. Hook. We wonder whether Mr. Hook has listened to what his brother had had to say in the B.B.C.? He will certainly smile!

The Vicar of Fulwood, Sheffield, is disappointed with the people around him. He says that "God wanted mankind to treat Sunday as a sacred day." But we have only his authority for that. The Jews—who knew about God before Christianity was in existence—and the Mohammedans both have another sacred day, and so the story goes on. But people tried keeping the English Christian Sunday, and found that it was a very dull day of rest, and they found that going for a walk, or a drive, or an excursion, was much healthier and more satisfactory. In the long run the Christian Sunday became a disgrace to a civilised people. And in every way, health, behaviour, and temper is better without religion ruling the day. And once having made that discovery the people are not likely to go back to an unhealthy day of rest. There is no rest in doing nothing, and still less in attending religious sermons.

"THE FREETHINKER"

41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.
Telephone No. : Holborn 2601.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

Benevolent Fund N.S.S.—The General Secretary N.S.S. gratefully acknowledges a donation of 3s. from Mr. G. M. Faulkner to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

The General Secretary N.S.S. will be away from the office for a short holiday from July 30. Details received before that date will receive attention but during his absence only matters of pressing importance will be dealt with.

For "The Freethinker": J. W., £1.

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.

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

SUGAR PLUMS

The Archbishop of York does not seem very confident as to the result of the great National Day of Prayer. "It would be," he said recently, with the air of one who was expounding a difficult problem so as to be easily understood, "a fatal mistake to imagine that when the Day of Prayer was over, they could confidently leave it to God to do all that was needful to put everything right." We could not have put this better ourselves.

There is going to be a World Conference of Christian Youth at the end of this month, and it appears that young people from all over the world are going to attend. Americans will jostle Japanese, Chinese, and even negroes, to say nothing of Koreans and other Asiatics. Every one of them calls himself a Christian, but we should like to find out if any of them really understands anything whatever about Christianity, except what parsons and priests tell them. And even then, these young "Christians" are bound to differ. As a matter of fact, could they or anybody else give us one historical period in which Christians were unanimously as to what Christianity really is?

To give the Churches their credit, there was one matter with which they did agree. That was between the publicans and the Pharisees regarding Sunday, and that arrangement continues till this day. When the Church opened, the public houses closed, when the public houses opened the Church closed. Neither ran in the way of the other. It was truly a spiritual agreement, but in no sense a modification the Church came second.

Mr. C. Howell is a Jesuit, and he therefore ought to know the disastrous consequence of different religions in marriage. In a recent address, he begged Catholic girls not to fall in love with non-Catholic men—however decent they may be otherwise. Of course, works in strange ways and it is obvious that different religions in a marriage, especially if strongly held, are bound to lead to disaster. But what we should like to know is, what religion is all that it is boosted to be, something revealed by the Almighty himself, why should it not lead to the most ideal of marriages? And even a Jesuit can't answer that one.

The Catholic Church is making the most of Fatima, that little Spot where the Virgin appeared to some Portuguese

children after making the sun chase the stars all over heaven in a delightful game of "touch." According to Cardinal Tisserant, Fatima, with Mary's help, is about to play a big part in the wholesale conversion of Russia to Roman Catholicism. The Cardinal is quite sure of this, for "the Ikona of the Blessed Virgin still holds a place of honour" in Russian homes. We have an idea that Cardinals have talked like this for a thousand years, and they at least should know the truth; but they have to encourage their dupes somehow, and the coming conversion of Russia is as good as blind as anything else. What a hope!

Last September, compulsory Church Parades in the Armies were abolished. But with the foolish "Day of Prayer" that we have had, the rights of the men have been trodden on, and on the Eastern Command the soldiers were all told that they had to attend. The explanation given by the G.O.C. is that "ceremonial occasions of National importance" do not come within that law. We do not believe it, and some members of Parliament should ask a question and probe to some extent what sense of justice our rulers have. "National importance" to march soldiers to church? And with not a third of the population caring whether people go to Church or not? The matter should not end with the fantastic reason given.

It was a French writer who said that the greatest tyrants humanity has known have always been the memories of its dead. That is a melancholy truth, sadder because this posthumous tyranny tends to be greater in proportion to the goodness of the man while living. The rule of the bad man ceases with death. Its evil is patent, its remedy obvious. But love and admiration for the good man blinds us to the evil of accepting his wishes or his ideas as inflexible rules for succeeding generations. It may be urged in defence that if the past dominates, it also guides. The same channel that transmits evil tendencies gives us good ones. And that is true enough; only it is also true that the cupidity and ignorance of man acts with greatest power on the side of mere slavish imitation. Let us do what we will, the influence of the dead will remain great. Every generation adds to its power, and at any time the reformer has this to fight. But when to this necessary obstacle there is added a consciously organised movement as represented by wills, institutions, and ceremonies to keep past ideas alive, we are saddling the living with a weight that may well become crushing. The great lesson we have to learn, and the one that most people seem to find most difficult to master, is the one that, while the past is valuable for guidance, it is very largely evil when we seek to fashion our lives by its decrees. Each generation presents its own problems in its own way, and they are to be successfully dealt with only by the aid of considerations that rest upon contemporary knowledge and necessities.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

Fiction and Fact

II

CYRANO DE BERGERAC, that is, the character created by actual life and not by M. Rostand, was a Utopian satirist and novelist, whose "Voyages to the Sun and Moon" belong to a class of literature very popular, just then, in that dawning age of applied science, the 17th century. To be sure, his learned English contemporary, Bishop Wilkins of Chester, afterwards the first secretary of the newly-founded "Royal Society," was shortly to enrich English literature with a similar satiric jeu d'esprit: "A Journey to the Moon." And, in the generation after De Bergerac had terminated his brief and stormy existence, another English ecclesiastic, a far greater writer than either the English Bishop or the French soldier, Jonathan Swift, was to give to the world "Gulliver's Travels," that incomparable masterpiece of social satire, the savage irony of which has only been surpassed by History, more ironic even than Swift, which has turned the most ferocious of adult satires into the most harmless of children's fairy tales! And a little later came Voltaire, the penetrating shafts of whose all-embracing satire literally embraced the Universe.

In this illustrious succession Cyrano de Bergerac takes his place. True that, dead already at the early age of 35, an age when his greatest literary contemporary, Molière, had, as yet, hardly made any vivid impression on French letters, he has bequeathed us only literary work of the second rank; work which was certainly equal, and perhaps superior, to that of the learned Wilkins, but which bears no comparison with the classic masterpieces of Swift and Voltaire. Notwithstanding, De Bergerac has his authentic place both as a creative writer and as a literary influence upon subsequent writers. This status in the Republic of Letters is thus summarised by an English historian:—

“Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac, from whom Molière did not scruple to steal written goods, to whose wit Fontenelle perhaps owed something when he wrote his ‘Mondes,’ Voltaire something when he wrote his ‘Micromegas,’ Swift something when he wrote his ‘Gulliver.’”

Five complete works survive of the literary output of Cyrano de Bergerac: the two “Voyages,” respectively, to the Sun and the Moon, to which reference has already been made, and which were published posthumously by his former schoolmate and later biographer, Henri Le Bret. In 1657, two years after Cyrano’s untimely death, the “Voyage to the Moon” appeared. That to the Sun followed in 1661. In his own lifetime Cyrano de Bergerac published only two plays and a volume of letters: a tragedy, “The Death of Agrippina” (“La Mort d’Agrippine”), and a comedy, “Puzzling a Pedant” (“Le pedant joué”). It is, we may add, in his plays rather than in his Utopian novels that our author indulges in those so pronounced anti-clerical gibes and boldly expressed rationalist opinions which testify even more strikingly than his extraordinary physical courage to the outstanding moral calibre of our Gascon soldier-author.

It is true that in his outspoken denunciations of priestcraft and ecclesiastical dogma Cyrano was not alone. For Bruno and his like had not died in vain. “The blood of the martyrs” is not only “the seed of the Church,” as the famous epigram of the early Christian Father, Tertullian, runs, but is equally potent as a fertiliser of more rational ideas. For, in the era of which we are writing, the era of Spinoza, Bacon and Descartes, the Middle Ages were now over at long last. The split in the ranks of a formerly united Christendom which the Reformation movement of the previous (16th) century had set in motion, was now producing its inevitable sequel. And soon the eloquent Bossuet was to “point the moral” and to indict the Protestant Reformers as the unwilling, perhaps, but all the more effectual parents, not only of “heresy and schism,” but of their still more diabolical offspring, scepticism and atheism. And in 1620, the very year in which our author first saw the light, the Reverend Father Mersenne wrote a diatribe against the still numerous followers of the martyred Giordano Bruno (1600), in the course of which the irate theologian asserted that there were no less than 40,000 atheists in Paris alone. So that Cyrano de Bergerac had company though not, perhaps, good company! (Among his fellow-atheists may probably be included the great Molière, born in the same year as Cyrano, and obviously no friend of priest-craft.) Those accustomed to clerical methods of controversy will not be surprised to learn that accusations of sexual vice, along with the—in clerical eyes—even more mortal sin of “heresy”—the unpardonable crime of thinking for oneself!—figured in the attacks on the daring author of “The Death of Agrippina” by his orthodox critics.

A few words may be usefully added upon the extant literary works of Cyrano de Bergerac.

The two “Voyages” are not Utopian fiction of the modern type. They, indeed, contain a good deal of effective satire, chiefly on religion. But they do not offer us any finished social structure as an ideal model to be followed by our faulty social orders in this mundane world below, as in, say, the modern sociological Utopias of Edward Bellamy and H. G. Wells. Reaching the Moon by the ingenious device of cloaking himself in marrow which was sucked up by the moon’s rays, the earthly im-

migrant found himself taken for a bird and, as such, taught to whistle! The Moon he found to be inhabited by men who walked on all fours: perhaps a sly allusion to the mental prostration of the French people under the “totalitarian” rule of “The Sun King” and the Jesuits? In time, however, he learnt the lunar language, and after an amusing satirical account of the lunar inhabitants, whose ways did not always conform to the France of Louis XIV, the intrepid explorer eventually found his way safely back to Earth. His arrival, however, proved nearly fatal, for, upon landing the prodigal was nearly torn to pieces by dogs, who were so used to “baying the moon” that they instinctively discerned by smell that their visitor came from the lunar world.

Some of the numerous strokes of wit that enlivened our author’s peregrinations throughout space are worthy, even now, of remembrance. De Bergerac was not afraid of the wrath of Holy Church, because “there can be no harm in offending the Pope, he is so full of indulgences.”

And a holy father recounts to Cyrano a theory of the earth’s motion round the sun, for, however, a somewhat different reason than that advanced by Copernicus and Galileo:—

“Because hell-fire being shut up in the centre of the earth, the damned, who make a great bustle to avoid its flames, scramble up to the vault as far as they can from them, and so make the earth to turn, as a turnspit makes the wheel go round when he runs about.”

Ecclesiastical astronomy with a vengeance!

Lack of space forbids any description of the sequential “Voyage to the Sun,” except to remark that in both the solar and lunar worlds Cyrano effectively “debunked” the scholastic pseudo-Aristotelian philosophy still taught by the Church in this terrestrial world below, and the fortunate dwellers on these higher worlds were taught the rationalistic philosophy of Descartes and Gassendi, and the scientific astronomy of Copernicus and Galileo long before most of the people of this world, or even of France, had been fortunate enough to hear of them! Both these “novels”—if that is the right word for them—have been translated into English by Mr. Richard Aldington and have been published in Messrs. Routledge’s “Broadway Translations.”

Cyrano, however, reserved his boldest attacks upon religion for his play, “The Death of Agrippina,” whose mise-en-scène is the court of the Roman Emperor Tiberius, who, incidentally, saved the human race, according to Christian belief, by a single atoning crime when his deputy, Pontius Pilate, ordered the crucifixion of Christ! In this play the author gives free play to his anti-religious sentiments. The proud Minister, Sejanus, exclaims:—

“Whoso fears the gods fears nothing. Wraiths, fancies that we adore we know not why, floaters upon the blood of beasts that we strike dead, gods that we make, and not gods that make us, phantom supporters of our firm estate. Who fears them, fears nothing. Did they exist, could I unscathed stand here?”

So much for “the existence of God.” Nor does immortality fare any better at the court of Tiberius, as interpreted by the daring playwright. For Sejanus continues:—

“It is but death which moves me not at all. Could I be wretched, ceasing to exist? An hour after my death the vanished soul is what it was an hour before my birth.”

And there follows the typical Epicurean apostrophe:—

“Why with regret say farewell to the day
That we cannot regret when gone away?
By no death-stroke is good or evil bought,
For while we live, we live; Dead, we are nought.”

And then followed the crowning blasphemy of all: “Let us strike,” says Bergerac’s Sejanus, “Voilà Phostie!” (“There’s the Host!”). But this was still the France of Louis XIV and

July 20, 1947

Boswell: whether intentional or not, this open blasphemy of the most sacred rite of the Catholic religion was more than any French audience in the mid-17th century would stand, or sit out. With a unanimous cry of "atheist," the audience rose to a man, and the daring author barely escaped with his life.

Cyrano de Bergerac died penniless, like so many other men of genius, at the early age of 35, under circumstances that were decidedly mysterious. He died of injuries caused by a falling beam, but how propelled we do not know for certain. Suicide, from what we know of him, seems out of the question. Was it a terrestrial version of the thunderbolt of an angry god, here manipulated by the clerical agents of an outraged orthodoxy? The Jesuits, we know, preached and practised assassination as a legitimate device of ridding the world of the enemies of the Church: did not "the means justify the end," according to the casuistry taught, in effect if not in black and white, by the famous Order? And Cyrano's invincible prowess with the sword would make direct attack virtually impossible—was he not, as he said himself, "the (duelling) second of the entire world?" It looks very much as if this early French Freethinker is to be ranked among the martyrs, as well as among the advocates of Freethought. And there we must leave him.

Thanks to M. Rostand, the name of Cyrano de Bergerac has gone the round of the world. But we hope to have adequately demonstrated in the above paragraphs that the finest and most socially valuable qualities of the historic Cyrano have not accompanied him on his career before the footlights.

F. A. RIDLEY.

THE REVEREND WALTER WYNN REPLIES TO PROFESSOR HALDANE

I HAVE just heard (June 17) Professor Haldane (on the wireless) tell the world that he is an atheist. I certainly have no prejudice against Professor Haldane, but rather entertain a high opinion of his achievements.

I never before, however, experienced such utter disappointment. I had heard it all before! Everything the Professor said has been fully answered a thousand times. Cromwell listened with joy to the great Puritan preachers. Dr. Johnson did the same; and it can be truly said that in every age of the world's history men have faced the same problems as those that agitate the mind of Professor Haldane, and have arrived at totally different conclusions from his.

The Bible carries us back over 5,000 years. All its writers believed in the existence of God. The Greeks and Romans seemed to need many and all sorts of gods to give expression to their deepest thoughts. The author of the "Prometheus" must have done some thinking! And every race of man and every nation has found it necessary to build shrines for worship! Is this phenomenon an accident, a delusion? Ask Plato and Aristotle. Is evolution purposeless, aimless, empty of ultimate meaning? Nay!

The hypothesis is, to my mind, unthinkable. If judged by modern psychic evidence now proven, it is a *reductio ad absurdum*, for it inferentially affirms that Mind was the product of No-Mind. This is obviously unthinkable. Yet Professor Haldane bravely announces that he is an atheist. We admire his candour and honesty, but cannot agree with his conclusions. One has only to stand and stare to see that Mind is behind everything in the Universe. Design is everywhere.

Kindly do not suppose that I despise a man because he is an atheist. Some of the best men I have ever met were atheists. Mr. Watts of the Rationalist Press, in Johnson's Court, was a gifted gentleman. Some years ago I was asked to hold a debate at the Marble Arch with the President of the Secularist Society. Atheists gathered from all parts of London. I never spoke to

a more respectful and serious audience. What was wrong with them? Their hearts? No: their reasoning. The great galaxy of deep thinkers shining like meteors in history, affirming the existence of a Creator, does not influence them.

Professor Huxley waves his hand to all the stars and calmly announces the non-existence of all spirits, as if he had just returned from a tour round the Universe! Such an attitude towards proven evidence is surely unscientific? Yet Professor Haldane calls upon us to trust only in science. We will. We will trust Sir Oliver Lodge and 20 other gifted scientists in Europe who all affirm that the visible Universe is not all. There is an invisible Universe. This world is not all. It supplies another world with inhabitants. Into that world we shall all pass, and in which the dark problems of this life will be solved. The proofs of this can be found in that remarkable paper "The Psychic News," edited by that gifted man Austen. Let him get on with his work!

Professor Haldane's omissions are arrestive. Not a word about Christ or His beliefs! No; what the Professor believes is of more importance than the unqualified affirmations of Christ. We must turn from Jesus ("the greatest Man who ever lived" according to Sir Oliver Lodge), and find refuge in Pasteur and Karl Marx. Everything we know and see came out of the womb of Absolute Nothingness! I won't comment. I will only add that if Professor Haldane can seriously believe this he should see a doctor.

The Professor believes that the Universe always has been. Professor Jeans definitely affirms that every star in space had a beginning and will have an end. Professor Haldane has got as far as Noah's Ark in his study of the Bible. I have studied it for 65 years and pronounce it the greatest book in the world. Even Shakespeare read the Bible and got a little further than Noah's Ark. He did! He built up his finest passages by means of Biblical thought. Even Darwin found it necessary to use the word "Creator" in his "Origin of Species," and when in my book "Man and the Universe" I maintained that Sir James Jeans was really an atheist he wrote me a strong denial, while the "Times Supplement" reviewer called me names for daring to make such a suggestion. Hence there is hope for Professor Haldane.

I dare to challenge any atheist to prove that any star had no beginning. If he cannot it follows that the Universe as we know it had a beginning. The first three words in "Genesis" are "in the beginning," Jesus and the Apostle John used the same phrase.

Professor Haldane should read a shilling booklet entitled: "Spirit Return of W. T. Stead," by Estelle Stead. It is a masterly statement of fact, and gives another view of the creation than that announced as his belief by Professor Haldane.

WALTER WYNN.

THE TREE OF TOLERANCE

In the Garden of Experience,
Where Man must walk alone,
There stands the Tree of Tolerance—
By Seeds of Kindness sown.
Throughout each year its branches bear
A million leaves—each leaf a tear
For Man's intolerance towards his own.
Unchain the Slave of Ignorance
From Superstition's hold,
And seek not worldly eminence
With Honour bought and sold.
Put Greed aside and bare the shelf—
The Man who learns to humble Self
Will to his heart the richest gems enfold.

W. H. WOOD.

HAS THE CHURCH FAILED ?

THE above phrase constitutes a question frequently asked. The answer given by the majority of people, more in sorrow than in anger, is that it has. Before an answer can be given, however, the question should be more fully considered than is usual, and some definitions proposed. What, for instance, are the aims and purpose of the Church? What, indeed, is meant by the "Church"? Let the "Church" be defined as "the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth," whether the gospel Jesus would have liked it or not, and be considered as the organised attempt to impose Christianity upon the world as a system of belief, and of guidance in every sphere of human life.

The aims of the Church are more difficult to define. They are apt to vary in different parts of the world and for the many different sects of the Church; they have varied in the course of its history. This diversity of purpose shows itself in the very early history of Christianity, when its following (it could hardly then be called a "Church") was split into two main camps; the Messianists, who wanted revolutionary action and a material Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and the Gnostic, or Pauline faction, who wished to tone down the too forceful propaganda of their brothers-in-Christ, to placate the Roman rulers, and whose Kingdom of Heaven was the spiritual one so familiar to us. All, however, were waiting for the "second coming" and the Day of Judgment, then believed to be imminent, with eternal bliss (for the faithful only) to follow. As time passed and these happy events failed to materialize, there appeared what has been the Church's most consistent aim throughout its long history; the desire for power—power over men's minds, their bodies, and their pockets!

This purpose has been coupled with, and supported by, the prevention, or failing that, the suppression of discovery and development in any sphere of useful knowledge, or any advancement in learning. Christianity has always been, and still is, opposed to education in its more useful forms. It must be said that in both these directions the Church has had a very considerable degree of success, in fact, for many centuries almost complete success. Almost, but not quite. Perhaps its biggest coup was the conversion of Constantine (for his own particular ends) which led to the imposition of Christianity upon the whole of the Roman Empire, which at that time meant nearly all the civilized world. Quick to realize its opportunity, the Church ousted all competing religions, such as Mithraism, and established itself securely. Then followed, for nearly a thousand years, the period when the Church was really successful, the "Ages of Faith," the period known to historians as the "Dark Ages." When popes and prelates commanded kings and emperors; when the Church held undisputed sway over men's souls, and put out the lamp of learning wherever its vast influence predominated.

Fortunately, a large part of the world remained outside the priestly dominance, including those lands where the ancient learning was preserved and augmented by Jews and Arabs, to return to Europe at the Renaissance via the Arab civilizations of Sicily and Spain. Since that time the development of the sciences and the spread of education are evidence that in the direction of suppression of knowledge the Church has failed.

So far as power is concerned, the Church has been steadily losing for many centuries, yet when we consider the activities of the largest branch of it, the Roman Catholic, we see that it is yet early to speak of failure. The infinity of suffering during the last few years, and the dangers which now exist from the combination of the forces of religion and reaction, should make us wary of treating lightly political interference by the Church.

The aims of the Church have been so many and varied that it is possible in a short essay to touch on only a few. Sometimes the Church's aims are mutually contradictory. Thus we gather from repeated pronouncements that, in spite of the Biblical

injunction to be fruitful and multiply, one of these aims is to extinguish the human race. The gospel Jesus repudiates family ties, yet clearly no children are to be born outside the limits of the family. The ideal of St. Paul was continence. He had the utmost contempt for the man who was subject to normal human feelings and desires. If we open the Prayer Book, we read of the "sinful lusts of the flesh," "the filth of the flesh," and that "all men are conceived and born in sin." At baptism one must swear, through one's god-parents in the case of an infant, to renounce "the carnal desires of the flesh," and the priest prays "that all carnal affections may die in him." One of the "causes for which matrimony is ordained" is that "such persons as have not the gift of continence might marry," because according to the Prayer Book if they do not marry they will fornicate, and as St. Paul said: "It is better to marry than to burn."

I do not see what meaning can be read into the foregoing, other than that an unnatural, celibate sterility is the only way of keeping out of sin and much better than the sinful, filthy, lustful, carnal business of becoming a parent. Yet the aim of the Roman Church also appears to be to produce as many children as is humanly possible, regardless of circumstances, and here again we must record failure.

There has never been any doubt as to the Church's attitude towards war. The teaching of Jesus is very simple and very clear in his charge to soldiers and others to do violence to no man: Love your enemies, resist not evil, turn the other cheek and so on. The Church has never pretended to follow this teaching. There is no instance in history of the prevention of war on grounds of Christian motive as distinct from expediency, or of a war not caused or at least encouraged by the Church, usually on both sides. Our fighting men are always accompanied by priests, in khaki or blue, yet if one of them were caught advising his men to fire over the heads of the enemy, or to drop bombs unfused, he would find himself in very serious trouble, both lay and clerical. In the matter of encouragement of war, we must grant the Church a very large measure of success and, as I have mentioned above, we should be on our guard against future successes.

In spite of its constant preaching on the blessed state of poverty and the spiritual dangers inseparable from the possession of riches, one of the aims of the Church has been to amass wealth and property. One rarely hears of a parson who does not feel a "call" to a living bearing a higher stipend. Yet if we are to judge by the utterances of bishops and lesser clerics, the Church's finances are not in too healthy a condition. Doubtless the Roman Church, however, is still making ends meet.

Other failures of the Church which come to mind are in its efforts to obstruct any form of social progress, such as the improvement of education, working conditions, abolition of slums, penal reform, the abolition of slavery and many other particulars.

What, then, are the aims of the Church to-day? The object of the Roman Church is, as ever, the age-old one of absolute power over every aspect of the life of man, in family, municipal, national, and international affairs. Its taboo on sex education, especially on birth control, its fight for Catholic schools at the expense of the general public, and its efforts to gain influence in municipal and parliamentary affairs are plain for all with eyes to see.

The Protestant Churches, if one may judge by the daily desperate appeals for financial aid and for more worshippers to augment the meagre congregations, the struggle to wet blanket Sunday enjoyment, desperate measures such as cinemas in Church, religious discussions in pubs and the like, have one main and all-embracing purpose; to "keep the shop open" at any price.

This, at the moment, they are managing to do, but their future looks black indeed.

STANLEY HUNT.

CAUSATION—(continued from page 257)

we call the self is a psycho-physiological complexus, tied up, not only in the inter-relatedness of the physical and psychological, but also in the social interdependence. The terms "self-existence," "self-sufficiency," and "self-determination" express a confusion of multiplicity in unity; the unity being an assumption. In view of the social interdependence, these terms are mystical if the "self" refers to a social group, and are ludicrous if the "self" refers to an individual human being.

To the scientist a classification is not a mystical unity. He clearly recognises that his classifications are hypothetical, but they are part of a utilitarian theory; of a method of dealing with continuous diversity and continuous change. To talk of "ends" in "human social evolution"; in a process of continuous change, is unscientific. In view of diversity, to consider "ends" as desirable is a doubtful assumption; there are a diversity of opinions as to the desirability, and diversity dispels the illusion of unity. Thus, the psychological aspect of causation still appears in the teleological idea of "ends" in "human society."

It is a ghost of the Final Cause. It does not arise in application of determinism, but in a maze of metaphysical assumptions. "The existence of cause and effect" like the "existence" of the Universe, is based upon "the assumption of causality." The gods never were anything more than "the assumption of causality." But if they have no physical consequences, the gods are social products, and they have social consequences.

It is contrary to the principle of determinism to assert that their existence as ideas in the minds of men has no consequence. Even the ghost of a god is of consequence, both personally and socially. All of which should show that although "a scientist is necessarily an atheist" an atheist is not necessarily a scientist. But there is one thing common to both atheism and science, the principle of utility. Atheism is a positive philosophy, but it is not a positive assertion, it is a positive attitude towards life. It is a negation of the gods, not of their existence, which is theoretical. It is their utility, which is practical. It is true that god as a "thesis" is "unnecessary." But the problem is not historical but psychological and social, for the use even of an unnecessary hypothesis has its consequences.

H. H. PREECE.

LUCRETIUS**I**

IN energy, perspicuity, variety of illustration, knowledge of the external world, and elevation and dignity of moral feeling, Lucretius had hardly ever an equal." So says Lord Macaulay, "himself possessed an almost unequalled knowledge of life and manners," ancient and modern. And whoever wishes to see the extraordinary influence which Lucretius' poem "On Nature" had on subsequent thought and literature, should read Macaulay's famous Belfast address, delivered in 1874. Immanuel Kant was a close student of the Roman poet and was led to "discover the nebular hypothesis from the latter's description of atoms falling eternally through space," while Bruno is simply identified with the astronomical and philosophical views of Lucretius. The fearless Italian, "taking Lucretius as his model" "revived the notion of the infinity of worlds." A full account of this great poet and his work may be instructive. In the life of Titus Lucretius Carus we have little trustworthy information, as being essentially a student and not a man of the world, he is scarcely mentioned by contemporary writers. Jerome (A.D. 340-420), purporting to translate from the "Chronicle" of Eusebius (A.D. 264-340), gives the date of the poet's birth as 95 B.C., and adds that he "committed suicide in his forty-fourth year of his age, having been driven frantic by a love-potion; that he composed his works in his lucid intervals;

and that these works were revised by Cicero." According to this his death took place in 51 B.C. But Donatus, referring to Lucretius in his "Life of Virgil," says nothing about the suicide or the love-potion, and affirms that he died on the very day on which Virgil assumed the garb of manhood. This would fix the death of Lucretius at 55 B.C. Both these writers are considered by some scholars to represent Suetonius; but there is no real evidence that this is the case. Stampini, the eminent Italian scholar, accepts the suicide story, which he says is confirmed by the pessimistic vein which pervades the poem "On Nature." But it is very questionable whether this view would present itself without previous suggestion. "Indeed, compared with most of the extant Greek tragedies and with much of Catullus and even Virgil, "On Nature" is singularly free from the burden of "all the weary weight of this unintelligible world," and if the few sombre passages in the poem are to be regarded as confirmatory of the suicide story it would be difficult to characterise some of the poetry of De Musset, Baudelaire, Gautier, and Leconte de Lisle; not one of whom sought refuge by a voluntary and violent solution of the "great problem." The truth is probably this: as no record whatever of the life of Lucretius existed, his death had to be accounted for in some way, and orthodox belief could only attribute a gloomy end to an Epicurean and an "Atheist." Jerome frequently displays a partisan spirit and besides this the calmness with which the Christian faces death was a somewhat favourite theme with him. Even St. Augustine, who was much more self-restrained in his denunciations, speaks of the "maddening and deadly disease of infidelity (*impietas*)" with which the Epicurean materialists are afflicted. For another Epicurean heretic, Lucian, the witty author of "Dialogues of the Gods," a similarly untoward end was invented—he was said to have been torn to pieces by dogs. But it will be more profitable to pass on to the poem itself.

A. D. McLAREN.

(To be continued)

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES. ETC.**LONDON—OUTDOOR**

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY; (Highbury Corner) Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

West London Branch (Hyde Park).—Sunday, 6 p.m.: Messrs. F. PAGE, JAMES HART (Mythology), C. E. WOOD, E. C. SAPHIN. Thursday, 7 p.m.: Messrs. F. PAGE, JAMES HART (Mythology), C. E. WOOD, E. C. SAPHIN.

LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11-30 a.m.: "Prelude to Modern History" (2) "The French Revolution," Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (The Mound).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m., Mr. A. REILLY.

Halifax Branch, Lister Lane (bottom).—Mr. COLIN McCALL, 7 p.m. Hapton.—Monday, July 21, Mr. J. CLAYTON, 7-30 p.m.

Kingston Branch N.S.S. (Castle Street).—Sunday 7 p.m., Mr. J. BARKER.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields).—Sunday, 3 p.m., Messrs. KAY, TAYLOR, McCALL.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Blitzed Site, Ranelagh Street, Liverpool).—7 p.m., a lecture.

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m., Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

Preston (facing G.P.O.).—July 20, 3-15 p.m. and 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barkers Pool).—Sunday, 7-30 p.m., Messrs. G. GREAVES, A. SAMMS.

Worsthorne.—Friday, July 18, Mr. J. CLAYTON, 7-30 p.m.

★ FOR YOUR BOOKSHELF ★

- AN ATHEIST'S APPROACH TO CHRISTIANITY.** A Survey of Positions. By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.
- THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH?** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL.** By Chapman Cohen. An Appreciation of two great Reformers. Price 3s.; postage 3½d.
- THE CHALLENGE OF HUMANISM.** Report of the Public Conference in London on the World Union of Freethinkers. 64 pages. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 1½d.
- CHALLENGE TO RELIGION** (a re-issue of four lectures delivered in the Secular Hall, Leicester). By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.
- CHRISTIANITY—WHAT IS IT?** By Chapman Cohen. A criticism of Christianity from a not common point of view. Price 2s.; postage 1½d.
- THE CRUCIFIXION AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.** By W. A. Campbell. With a Preface by the Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson. Price 2s.; postage 2d.
- DETERMINISM OR FREEWILL?** By Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 2s. 6d., paper cover 2s. Postage 2d.
- ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING.** By Chapman Cohen. First, second, third and fourth series. Price 2s. 6d. each; postage 2½d.
- THE FAULTS AND FAILINGS OF JESUS CHRIST.** By C. G. L. Du Cann. (Second Edition.) Price 4d.; postage 1d.
- FOOTSTEPS OF THE PAST.** By J. M. Wheeler. Essays on Human Evolution. Price 5s.; postage 4d.
- THE FOUNDATIONS OF RELIGION.** By Chapman Cohen. New Edition. Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- GENERAL INFORMATION FOR FREETHINKERS.** Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- GOD AND EVOLUTION.** By Chapman Cohen. Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- GOD AND THE CO-OP.** Will Religion Split the People's Movement? By F. J. Corina. Price 2d.; postage 1d. 12 copies 2s.; post free.
- GOD AND ME** (revised edition of "Letters to the Lord"). By Chapman Cohen. Price, cloth 2s. 6d., postage 2d.; paper 1s. 3d., postage 1d.
- GOD AND THE UNIVERSE.** By Chapman Cohen. A Criticism of Professors Huxley, Eddington, Jeans and Einstein. Price: Cloth 3s. 6d., postage 2d.; Paper 2s., postage 2d.
- A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT.** By Chapman Cohen. An outline of the philosophy of Freethinking. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 4d.
- THE HISTORICAL JESUS AND THE MYTHICAL CHRIST.** By Gerald Massey. What Christianity owes to Ancient Egypt. Price 9d.; postage 1d.
- HOW THE CHURCHES BETRAY THEIR CHRIST.** An Examination of British Christianity. By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 9d.; postage 1d.
- HENRY HETHERINGTON.** By A. G. Barker. A Pioneer in the Freethought and Working-class Struggle of a Hundred Years Ago. Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- INFIDEL DEATHBEDS.** By G. W. Foote. Revised and enlarged by A. D. McLaren. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.
- MATERIALISM RESTATED.** By Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.
- MISTAKES OF MOSES.** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 3d.; postage 1d.
- THE MORAL LANDSLIDE.** An Inquiry into the Behaviour of Modern Youth. By F. J. Corina. Price 6d.; postage 1d.
- THE MOTHER OF GOD.** By G. W. Foote. Price 3d.; postage 1d.
- THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH.** By Chapman Cohen. An examination of the belief in a future life, and a study of Spiritualism. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.
- PAGANISM IN CHRISTIAN FESTIVALS.** By I. M. Wheeler. Price 2s.; postage 2d.
- PETER ANNET, 1693—1769.** By Ella Twynam. Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS IN MODERN THOUGHT.** By Chapman Cohen. Price 3s.; postage 3d.
- REVENUES OF RELIGION.** By Alan Handsacre. Price 3s.; postage 2d.
- ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day.** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; postage 1d.
- THE RUINS, OR A SURVEY OF THE REVOLUTIONS OF EMPIRES, to which is added THE LAW OF NATURE.** By C. F. Volney. A Revision of the Translation of 1795, with an introduction. Price, post free, 3s. 2d.
- SHAKESPEARE AND OTHER ESSAYS.** By G. W. Foote. Price, cloth 3s.; postage 3d.
- SPAIN AND THE CHURCH.** By Chapman Cohen. A chapter from "Creed and Character," by Chapman Cohen. Price 1d.; postage 1d.
- SPEAKING FOR MYSELF.** By Lady (Robert) Simon. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2d.
- THOMAS PAINE, A Pioneer of Two Worlds.** By Chapman Cohen. Price 1s. 4d.; postage 1d.
- THOMAS PAINE AND THETFORD.** Six postcards illustrating Paine's birth-town, including a portrait of the great reformer. Price 9d., post free.
- THEISM OR ATHEISM.** The Great Alternative. By Chapman Cohen. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 2½d.
- THERE ARE NO CHRISTIANS.** By C. G. L. Du Cann. Price 4d.; postage 1d.
- THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHURCH.** By Colonel Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- VATICAN POLICY IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR.** By L. H. Lehmann. An exposure of the Roman Catholic influence on politics and war. Price 1s. 3d.; postage 1½d.
- WHAT IS RELIGION?** By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.
- WILL YOU RISE FROM THE DEAD?** By C. G. L. Du Cann. An inquiry into the evidence of resurrection. Price 6d.; postage 1d.

You are cordially invited to inspect our stock of books at the
Publishing Office, First Floor: 41, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.1

Pamphlets for the People

By CHAPMAN COHEN

What is the Use of Prayer? Did Jesus Christ Exist? The
shall not Suffer a Witch to Live. The Devil. Deity and
Design. Agnosticism or . . . ? Atheism. What is Freethought?
Must we have a Religion? The Church's Fight for the Child.
Giving 'em Hell. Freethought and the Child. Morality without
God. Christianity and Slavery. Gods and their Makers.
Woman and Christianity. What is the use of a Future Life?
Price 2d. each. Postage 1d. each.

THE PIONEER PRESS 41, GRAY'S INN ROAD,
LONDON, W.C.1