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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### On Lying

PLAIN, unimaginative liars are very common, but they neither awaken interest nor provide entertainment. Also they indicate a dull brain and an attachment for obviously impossible happenings. With this, crass stupidity and dullness seem to increase with the passing of the moons. Usually they mistake clowning for wit. Consistent liars are plentiful, but there is a moderate quantity always on hand. Speaking generally, would-be consistent liars should have a good memory, and they must select time and place to exhibit their skill. It would not do, for example, to tell certain racy stories to a Bishop with other people than carshot. The consistent liar must treasure his lies as a mother does her first baby, and see to it that they appear in the proper time and place. His lies may be either grave or humorous—all will depend on time or place. Other things and a solemn lie will be as good as a humorous one. The comic liar is rare, and when discovered should be treated with all respect. There is about him—or her, for women come in this matter quite as well as men—a delicacy that demands attention. Political liars may go with religious liars, inasmuch as both hold promise of many things to come.

Finally and generally, the would-be successful liar must have a good memory. He must not contradict to-day what he said yesterday. Consistency must be observed, even more than solid truth. It was one of our great Prime Ministers who said to his Cabinet, "Gentlemen, I do not know how many lies you all tell, so long as you all tell the same lie." As for young children, I do not believe that they tell lies or even steal. Parents should be on their guard against reading themselves into their offspring. Good parents may learn much from children if they will realise where the lesson is. Moreover, parents—and teachers—should realise that children, to a considerable extent, live in fairyland. Those who have not discovered this should come under a special act which punishes adults for misunderstanding children.

There are one or two other rather important things to consider before we come to other matters. We must be prepared for liars, and have some knowledge from whence they come, and of their varied characters. I would not, for instance, look for liars in the company of artists. There is a tradition runs high. Royalty also comes under the same

category. The artist sees clearly what ordinary folk never see; and Royalty is fated to put truth on ice for the benefit of the common people. To these we may not say, with Socrates, "Speak that I may know thee." Indeed, if we were here he would probably say, "Speak not, for I know by your dress and mannerisms that you have not the simple ideas of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood

which we humble folk are familiar with." Yes, really great liars are scarce, common ones drive us to distraction. And in spite of the blowing of trumpets and the shooting of guns, (Kings are not usually of the first class. Their education is not of their own choice. All is usually determined for them before they are born, and most of them died before they came to know themselves.

Just in passing, we may point out that kingship is a very old and decidedly primitive thing, and has its origin in the kingship that we saw in our own Westminster Abbey when our King was transformed into a God incarnate. The Emperor of Japan offered a similar transformation, from man to semi-god. In each case, the man becomes an incarnate god with the aid of the ruling priesthoods. The Emperor of Japan and the King of England for some time were really brother gods incarnate, although one of them did not seem to be aware of it. But those who would wish to follow up this very interesting study, will find it in A. M. Hocart's "Kingship" issued in 1927. Frazer's "Golden Bough," gives us miles of information.

Truth and understanding are curious things. It was Ingersoll who said truly, "Truth is mighty and will prevail," but a lie will go all round the town while truth is putting its boots on. Lies go on year after year while truth sits wondering when she will be at the top. More people will laugh approvingly over a lie than they will over a common truth. And there are all the lies of the religions of the world. Certainly we have a very fine stock of lies of our own. Consider the stock we can show. We have a God who created the world with a "Let there be"—and the world was. Then we have the story of his son being born of a woman without the service of a man. Of the Son of God who came down to earth with the express purpose of being killed so that the father might pardon all who believed in the story. Of this person from heaven bringing a dead man to life again, of a live one who regains his sight by another miracle, of the feeding of thousands of hungry men with a few loaves and fishes and wound up by having more food at the end of the banquet than they had at the beginning, of how a god was put to death, and then came to life again, and went straight back to heaven, and so on, and so on. All this might be passed with just a smile and a recognition of man's blunders on the way to understanding. It is put before the unwary, and the foolish, as absolute truth. Left alone and put in their proper place as part of the folk-lore of our remote ancestors, all these stories might be read with pleasure and profit.

There is no mistake as to the "profit." There is the profit of the priesthoods, and of those who use it for other and different purposes. It was a saying in ancient Rome that one priest could not meet another without winking an eye. Our priesthood have much greater control over their features. It is highly significant that we have in common use "religion's truth," plainly to mark *religious* truth as

being different in nature to the truth that springs from the everyday life of mankind.

I wonder whether it ever occurs to people that while religion has a "truth" of its own, non-religion, all over the world, is content with truth and falsehood to remain themselves the same thing on every non-religious occasion. To a non-religious man, and even to a religious man when he is not concerned with religious subjects, truth remains truth, nothing more nor less. It is only with religion that we have a truth according to this or that religious belief. And then consider the fantastic doctrines of this or that creed, that truth has more than one significance.

All things considered it is probable that no other religion in the world has lied so steadily and so lustily as Christianity. In ancient times—the further back the clearer the fact—men had their gods and their culture was low enough to sustain the belief in religion. Each group had its gods, and the religious side of their lives was not so glaringly ridiculous as religion was with the growth of knowledge and understanding. Gods were plentiful, and some gods were quite hospitable. More than that, the people who had one set of gods, as in ancient Rome, were not above being courteous to a strange deity. In a more advanced stage, when Rome conquered a country she gave their gods a place side by side with the other gods. Their religions were sprinkled with decency—so far as god worship could be.

It was the Bible God that lacked decency, and fathered brutality. God did not say there were no other gods but him, he simply said that his people should not worship them. On the whole we are inclined to favour the pagan gods on the grounds of their greater manliness, less opposition to learning and more hospitability to "strange" gods. Like Hitler and his greed for world conquest, the Bible God wished to destroy other gods and leave him, or it, in sole command.

To-day things are looking better. Never in the history of Christianity has it been so threatened with destruction. Its champions are shouting from the house-tops that "the lie on the lip of the priest" is fading in strength. In front of me lies a recently issued book with the interesting title "Has the Church Failed?" It is written by a number of leading clergymen, and for that question to be asked is equal to an admission of failure and decay. Of course, the authors hope for a great revival of the Christian creed. They can lose nothing by hoping, but as the conditions are they cannot bring any decent hope of recovery. We prefer the plain confession of the late Rev. Dr. Forsyth who headed a lecture with "When they find out," and he rightly looked for trouble when the rank and file of Christians really appreciate the degree to which historic Christianity—and there is no other that is of any vital use to believers—has fallen. The foundation of all the Old Testament is steadily sinking to its proper level. It is interesting, and useful as indicative of primitive superstition. The Bible helps us to understand much, but present conditions indicate the steady destruction of the Christian creed. The other day we came across the phrase, "You cannot get children born as atheists." We agree, but it must be remembered that no child can be born a "Godite." The human mind is very pliable, and in that rests the greatness of man's power. Hitler gave the world the example of what could be done in a single generation using the young as a beginning. We

can, if we will, keep our children from the claws of the priest and use the young to travel the road that leads to a greater and more useful life. The future lies in our hands.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## THE BIBLE IN THE SCHOOLS OF WALES

(Concluded from page 275)

DR. EDWARDS goes on to substantiate the statements quoted. He states: "The religion of the earliest period, that of the patriarchal age, is represented by the magnificent traditions of the Book of Genesis." ["Traditions," be it noted.] "When it is remembered that we are dealing with nomadic tribes who lived about four thousand years ago on the threshold of history, it need hardly be added that all was exceedingly primitive and that it had close affinities with the culture and religion of other Semitic tribes. The individual hardly counted at all, the clan is the unit, and 'custom is king' (2 Sam. xiii, 12)." [The verse referred to in the Book of Samuel reads as follows: "And she answered him, 'Nay, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing ought to be done in Israel: do not thou this folly.' But why did not Dr. Edwards refer to the next verse which is equally to the point?: "And I, whither shall I carry my shame? and as for thee, thou shalt be as one of the fools in Israel. Now, therefore, I pray thee, speak unto the king; for he will not withhold me from Thee." Further; it was tactful to give a reference instead of quoting the verse and its context: some smart lad or an inquisitive lass might get hold of a copy of the Syllabus.] Dr. Edwards proceeds: "There is very little morality in the strict sense and even less spiritual insight. For instance, is largely a case of breaking the taboo and becoming unclean. Belief in Animism prevailed: stores and trees were sacred, because a 'spirit' dwelt in them (Genesis xxviii, 18; Joshua xxiv, 27). There were many 'gods' (elim), one of whom in time became the God of the whole tribe. Anthropomorphic conceptions dominated men's thinking and material ideas of the deity were current, as may be seen in an ancient phrase such as that about 'the Lord smelling the savour of a sacrifice' (Genesis viii, 21). . . The general level was that of primitive people all over the world, but the dawning of higher insights is seen in occasional exceptions like Abraham."

Of Moses, Dr. Edwards writes: "If Abraham may stand as the symbol of the earliest period at its highest, the outstanding figure in the next is Moses, one of the greatest figures in the religious history of mankind. His greatness is reflected in the various portraits of him in the Old Testament—legislator, national leader, prophet and religious genius." [He might have added that Moses also organised the first national strike on record. And to show his perspicacity in that direction, Moses saw to it that the children of Israel had a jolly good meal of roast lamb with mint sauce before they started on their journey towards the "Promised Land." But perhaps it would have been indiscreet to emphasise that trait in his character in these days of labour unrest. So Dr. Edwards describes him as national "leader," and lets it go at that.] Dr. Edwards proceeds: "He [Moses] did not write the Pentateuch nor did he believe that Jehovah was the only God in existence (monotheism), but he decreed that only Jehovah was to be worshipped by the Hebrew people (monolatry), and he linked his worship with ethical demands (not merely ritual ones) which stamped the religion of Israel as superior to those of its neighbours."

Of the period from the entry of the Israelites into Canaan to the days of Elijah, Dr. Edwards states: "In this period we witness a conflict of two civilisations, that of the higher, more settled, agricultural life of the Canaanites against the more nomadic life of the Israelites."

primitive and nomadic life of Israel, and it was a conflict fraught with great dangers to the religion of Israel." He admits that the Hebrews often "succumbed to these temptations," and quotes Jeremiah as complaining that "according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah." Then came Elijah, the supreme example of the standpoint of this early type of prophet; in Israel, he declared, Jehovah alone is to be worshipped; it is not a case of Jehovah and Baal (as Ahab and Jezebel desired), but Jehovah or Baal (1 Kings xviii, 21). It is about time that something approaching fair play was shown towards Jezebel. Her chief failing was a fondness for cosmetics. On the other hand, she stood resolutely by "the faith of her fathers," and in her death showed the utmost contempt for the murderous upstart Jehu, the protégé of Elijah's successor, Elisha.

About the Old Testament prophets, Dr. Edwards has this, among other things to say: "Once they were read and studied because they were regarded mainly as predictors of future events, prophets' in the literal sense of foretellers, but this is now to be a secondary aspect of their ministry. They are more fully described as reformers, moral and spiritual leaders dedicated to the service of Jehovah and resolved to interpret His will for their contemporaries rather than peer into the distant future." So the fortune-telling business of a prophet was only a secondary or a subsidiary occupation.

Of the "Work of the Wise Men" (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job), Dr. Edwards has this to say: "The Book of Proverbs contains two basic principles—the knowledge of God is the beginning of wisdom and prosperity follows goodness. The latter statement is doubted by Ecclesiastes, and the author of Job raises the difficult problem of the suffering of the righteous. They are interesting books coming to us from an age of criticism, and I was inclined to doubt some ancient solutions." He does not quote from any of these three books. To quote Ecclesiastes iii, 19, 20: "For that which befalleth the sons of man befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as they die, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; and man hath no pre-eminence above the beasts: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all shall return to dust again," would have given the whole game away.

Dr. Edwards deals much more gingerly with the New Testament. But he does admit that "three major influences were at work before and at the time of our Lord's advent: they are suggested to us by the three languages on His Cross." He sums up the effects of these "influences" as follows: "If Judaism provided Christianity with its foundation ('salvation for the Jews'), and Hellenism with its language and intellectual forms (e.g., the Creeds), it was Rome that gave us the opportunity to expand."

So much for the "Introduction." I wonder what the average class teacher thinks of it. My contact with teachers has confirmed my opinion that as a class (or profession, if that description pleases them better) they are as orthodox and fundamentalist as a milestone, and as immobile as a gate-post. A Frenchman is reputed to have declared that he did not believe in ghosts because he had seen too many of them. By the same token, I may say that from the Freethought point of view I don't believe in teachers—I've seen too many of them. It would also be interesting to know what the ordinary chapel-going Welsh Nonconformist parent (there are few still left) thinks of the way the "Old Book" is treated (or maltreated), and that by the principal of a theological college—where future ministers are trained.

There is no space left to deal with the Syllabus itself; it consists mainly of references to certain parts of the scriptures. There are a few rather interesting items. For instance:—

(1) In the lessons for Third Year Seniors, aged 13-14, in the Grammar School type of school there are these entries: "The story of Holy Week; The Discourse in the Temple;

Questions and Answers; Denunciation of Scribes and Pharisees: Matthew xxi—xxiii. (The Apocalyptic discourse in xxiv, 1—40, may be omitted.) Parables of the Ten Virgins, Talents, and the Last Judgment: Matthew xxv." Note, specially, the sentence in parenthesis. Some parts of the New Testament are now found to be rather awkward and not to be emphasised.

(2) In the lessons for Fourth Year Seniors in a Technical School and Modern School type we find these items:—

"The Hebrew Universe (see "Teachers Commentary," p. 406).

- (a) The Story of the Creation as told in Genesis: its purpose and value.
- (b) Other Creation stories.
- (c) How the world came into being—the answer of Modern Science."

The items under (2) above are not to be found at all in the section referring to the Grammar School type of school. The compilers of the Syllabus think, apparently, that they can fool the scholars of the Grammar Schools all the time, but that certain precautions should be taken in the case of scholars in Technical and Modern Schools; therefore, they are inoculated with a little safe science—in case they are tempted to imitate Anona Winn in "Twenty Questions," and ask "Fact or Fiction?" THOS. OWEN.

### A PUZZLE

IN sorting out a collection of newspaper cuttings, I found the following one, and stuck it to the margin below Hannah More's portrait in Chambers' "Cyclopædia of English Literature," Edinburgh, 1844, Vol. II, p. 578, col. 1.

The following appeared in "The Times" of September 2, 1801:—

#### EPIGRAM

On the recent MARRIAGE of Miss

HANNAH MORE

Spotless she lived till past three score;  
But now poor HANNAH is no MORE!

At the date of this alleged marriage, and for years before it, Hannah More, the authoress, was thoroughly known to the public by her innumerable contributions to religious literature in the form of cheap booklets with enormous sale. Her birth occurred on February 2, 1745, and, therefore, on September 2, 1801, she would be at least three years and four months younger than the genial Epigrammist affirmed her to be. But he might only guess her age, or perhaps he used what is called "poetic licence" to make a rhyme. There is not a single clue to indicate the source of the above cutting. Did the Epigram really appear in "The Times"; or is it the invention of some jester who attributed it to "The Times" many years after the alleged date of its publication in that venerable fulcrum of Church and State? A visit to the British Museum might decide this question. But, if the quotation is genuine, the point of the Epigram has still to be explained. For, neither Chambers in his "Cyclopædia," nor R. F. Sharp in his "Dictionary of English Authors," London, 1897, mentions that Hannah More, the authoress, was ever married! If the Epigram related to someone else thus named, the writer would appear to have poked fun at an obscurity to deride a celebrity of the same name.

This good lady flourished at a time when the workers were most cruelly oppressed, and when their leaders were denouncing this oppression. At that grave crisis she made it the purpose of her life to reconcile the poor with their lot by assuring them that if they bore it patiently they would have a great reward in heaven, whilst those who were persuading them to seek improved conditions upon earth would be sent to hell. There is no doubt that her efforts were successful in assisting to defer remedial measures, and thus detaining a vast number of men, women and children in preventable misery.

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

## ACID DROPS

It seems to be a general plan that when a speaker feels hard up for matter, to fall back upon pious sentences. Here is a sample from a certain speaker associated with the B.B.C. who, after saying little that was much good, and much merely compressed nothingnesses, that we need the unity of action and aims and we must have a return to "Practical Christianity." The speaker is Mr. Dunning, Broadcaster for the B.B.C.

As a mouthpiece of the B.B.C., we should not expect much that is straight or useful, but we are offered "practical Christianity" to make "a better world." What exactly is that? There have been hundreds of meanings of Christianity, and there have been many millions of peoples who have accepted them. "Practical Christianity"—it was a practical Christianity that hurled to destruction the ancient civilisations; it was that same religion that in the Dark Ages declared the teaching of Science to be a deadly sin. It was the followers of Christianity who, in terms of religion, tried to prevent the developing of science. Is it not time that this religious cant was swept out of the civilised world? "The Freethinker" is almost the only paper that would speak in these plain words, but if we are to make the world worth living in, plain speech is an invaluable weapon.

"The Record," a high Church journal, we believe, says, "We are living to-day in the midst of a generation whose minds have been almost entirely formed by purely Secular interest, to whom, therefore, the traditional classic vocabulary of Christian theology and worship is double Dutch, indeed treble Dutch." We agree that is a very good description of the state of even the new generation, where religion is concerned. But the real problem that faces all the Churches is, "How can the youth of the country be brought back to the religious outlook of their elders?" The answer is that it simply cannot be done. To again quote the very telling saying that "You may fool some of the people all the time; you may also fool all the people some time, but you simply cannot fool all the people all the time." The cat is out of the bag, and nothing will get it in again.

We have often pointed out in these columns that the supply of priests and parsons seems to be drying up, so we are not surprised to find Cardinal Griffin giving examples of the kind of thing most favoured in heaven. He cited the other day the case of the mother of Cardinal Vaughan. "Of her 13 children," he said, "six sons became priests, three becoming bishops, and five daughters became nuns." That is, six men and five women became absolutely useless to society which had in some way to support them. We are further told that Mrs. Vaughan is now in Heaven where she "probably has the prerogative to intercede for priestly and religious vocations." If it was not a priest speaking we should say that the whole was just a tissue of lies.

Some people imagine that Bernadette of Lourdes is the only young lady to whom the Virgin made a personal appearance. "Our Lady" came three times to "Blessed" Catherine Laboure in 1830—her way of showing that she wanted her "Immaculate Conception" to be properly defined by the Church. This was done at last in 1854, and so "Our Lady" came back to Bernadette at Lourdes to say "Thank you." Every Catholic is now implored to wear the "Miraculous Medal," and Mary will not only pray for them but bring relief to this sore-troubled world of ours. If any ordinary man tried the same game the police would be busy.

The British and Foreign Bible Society is sending one million Bibles to Germany. The object is to supply the German people with "spiritual" food. But the problem that is puzzling the men in charge, and the Germans in particular, is trying to get more food. Why do not the Catholics induce one of their performing angels to drop some food from heaven? It would do much to make people more content and would make them rush to join the Church.

We see that women Church workers are seriously alarmed by the difficulty that exists to find women to work on behalf of Christianity. One of these ladies said that the Bible is a closed book to most. We do not believe it. The truth is that the

people know more about the Bible than they ever did. The difference to-day is that the Bible is better understood than ever it was, and that tends to make the traditional Bible look very, very small.

Dr. Fisher is a clergyman of high standing, and as a highly placed cleric, he does his best to hold up the tottering Church of England. But that is a very hard job to-day. To try to regain losses, or even to hold what is left, so far as Christianity is concerned, is hopeless. That will account for the switching over from religion to politics. It is a rather artful policy and it may gain a few people here and there. But to most there will be driven home the fact that it is only one or two here and there that will be affected. Christianity, real Christianity, is steadily declining in status.

Take this from the Archbishop of Canterbury:—

"Every day proves more conclusively that the only ultimate safeguard of human dignity, personal freedom and social order is to be found in the principles of the Christian faith. The defence of these principles rests upon those who accept the belief in the personal God and in Jesus Christ the Son of God . . . without which man can only dig his own grave."

The impudence of it all is supreme, the philosophy of it is fit only for the B.B.C. daily preachers. Any decently trained man could make a more reasonable plea for the Christian Church. After all, the common feelings and actions cannot be monopolised by any particular religion, particularly a religion that is crumbling to its end. For men such as our parsons and bishops to tell us that honesty, kindness, truthfulness, etc., depend upon a superstition that was conceived in the fear and ignorance of primitive man, is an insult to decency.

"Spare the rod and spoil the child." That, and the other advice to obey your parents, are about all the rules for the young that the Bible gives us. For the moment we are concerned with the first, and that is just about the worst advice one can give and in practice it is just nonsense. It is admired by fools and practised by brutes. The teacher who takes that advice seriously should leave his job and take to labour that does not require much brain activity. Teachers of understanding will, we fancy, agree with us.

In a recent issue of "Reynolds News" we learn that the superintendent of the "Dadaya Mission" has been charged with brutal beatings, with a rhinoceros stick, of girls from 10 to 15 years of age. The scientific reader will know at once what this signifies. The Christian gentleman is also a member of the Rhodesia Parliament. A witness, Dr. Millerick, declares that the native girls had bruises, cuts and weals. And one of the girls said that she was thrown over a table, her dress was turned back and she was beaten six times with a sjambok. The case is not yet settled, but it is a matter worth noting, for its religion, brutality and the need for things being altered. Perhaps if our leading princess visits South Africa again she will insist on seeing the real South Africa, which may open her eyes a little.

There was a terrible railway accident in Switzerland a few days ago. A train, heavily laden with men, women and children, was bound for the shrine of the Black Madonna. But there was an accident, the train crashed and the deaths were heavy. The saints had promised the travellers much, but numbers died and others were injured just the same. We have no doubt that the priests will tell the sufferers that they will find comfort from the knowledge that the saints and God will look after the killed. That is just one of "the lies of the priest." Nothing can take away the grief that follows death, save time and understanding. We have many reasons for disliking the priesthood. But we think that the best and strongest is that of their telling a lie in the interests of the Church. Death is death, it brings sorrows, but it should bring no fears, and with a clean mind the memory of our dead is the greatest and the dearest of memories. But the priest foists almost everything that he touches.

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## SUPERSTITION

ALTHOUGH the word "superstition" is usually associated with recognised religious beliefs, it is not sufficiently appreciated that it is equally applicable to the excessive credulity so often displayed in connection with whatever else remains mysterious and unexplained. In a consideration of the subject of superstition, one is strongly reminded of the laws relating to the conservation of energy and the indestructibility of matter, and tempted to conclude that it also is a constant quantity which, when it disappears in one form, immediately reappears in another. There can be no doubt that, as a people, we are becoming less religious, but this gives us no grounds for supposing that we are, on that account, getting less superstitious. Though religious beliefs are on the wane, there has been a marked increase in the interest manifested in astrology, necromancy, ghosts, prophecies, miracles, charms, lucky and unlucky actions, the interpretation of dreams, and other superstitious beliefs and practices at which the 19th century was learning to laugh. Many who are sufficiently wide-awake not to be caught by the undisguised revived superstitious beliefs of the Middle Ages are then deceived when the same beliefs are disguised and presented in a pseudo-scientific garb. Nowhere is this more apparent than in many of the modern psychological doctrines which have been palmed off on the unsuspecting as science most profound. Many who would repudiate with scorn any suggestion that they believed in demoniacal possession and the casting out of devils as taught in the Bible, have no hesitation in accepting a similar belief when it is presented to them under the name of Psycho-analysis: when the little demons who were formerly believed to enter the body and cause disease, frenzy, ravings, and convulsions, are reintroduced under the pseudo-scientific names of the Libido, the Id, the Censor, etc., and when the role of the exorcist is played by the psycho-analyst.

There is nothing which renders modern psychological theories more deceptive than the general lack of precision, and the inconsistency, in the use of the terms employed. We find ambiguous words used first in one sense, and then in another, as the course of the argument requires: and words of widely varying import used to represent the same idea. Thus we find "psychical" and "mental" used as interchangeable terms to represent the idea of an immaterial constituent of our being. The word "psychical," derived from the Greek *psyche*, which originally meant nothing more substantial than *breath*, may very well be used to represent such an idea; as may also the word "spiritual," derived from the Latin *spiritus* which likewise meant *breath*. But the word "mental" has an entirely different import, being derived from the Latin *mens*, and etymologically connected with the "memory"—and with the intellect,

the understanding, that is dependent thereon. As we use the word "vital" to describe the general form of organic activity, so may we quite legitimately use the word "mental" to describe the activities, the functions, of the highest and most complex form of the vital structure.

Instead of seeking in the organism the conditions of organic activity, the psycho-analyst, preferring the fictions of his own fertile imagination, seeks them in a mystic "Unconscious," a spiritual Van Diemen's Land, to which ideas, thoughts, and emotions are banished, and from which they make more or less successful attempts to escape. In a scientific treatise or discussion it is essential that the terms used should have definite meanings, and express ideas with precision. The use of the term "Unconscious" does not fulfil these conditions. The word "unconscious" is an adjective and, as such, is meaningless unless it refers to a noun, expressed, or understood. If the noun is not expressed it may be understood to refer either to the unconscious psychic factors of the psycho-analyst, or to the unconscious organic processes of the physiologist. This distinction requires to be noted, for although there may be little doubt as to what the psycho-analyst intends when he uses the word "Unconscious," the word itself, when used alone, remains sufficiently ambiguous to lead the unwary astray, and incidentally to maintain the intellectual fog in which Psycho-analysis thrives.

By a mere juggling with words, and the introduction of an elaborate terminology to give a learned air to a discussion of the common incidents of everyday life, people have been led to believe that mental lapses, forgettings, mislaying of objects, putting socks on inside out, the choice of a tie, or a cigarette holder, etc., have all a special significance, and a *meaning* for the individual concerned. To ascribe such events to the spontaneous activities of a mysterious indwelling *psyche* is an appeal to the unknown; and the assumption that they are of special significance, and have a *meaning* for the individual concerned, has no higher warrant than the astrologer's assumption that the movements of the heavenly bodies have some special bearing upon the individual actions and fate of man. If we are to attach so much importance to every action and event in our daily lives, it would seem preferable to go back to the days when, as one writer has expressed it, "every little action was looked upon as an omen, every event a foreboding of good or ill, and even bits of physiological behaviour, from sneezing to cars burning, or limbs falling asleep, were 'explained' on the fanciful principle of a magical determinism." (Joseph Jastrow, "The House that Freud Built.")

Neither psycho-analysis nor its kindred doctrines can produce any kind of scientific evidence in justification of their extravagant pretensions. We are presented with nothing more than individual opinions which differ according to the nature of the desired result. Evidence of this is furnished in the news from time to time. At the trial, in 1924, of Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold, for the murder of Bobbie Franks, five reputable Chicago physicians, acting for the prosecution, examined the prisoners and, according to their testimony, both were found to be legally sane. The attorneys for the defence produced five equally reputable psychiatrists who unanimously decided that both prisoners were legally insane. Subsequent medico-legal battles have invariably ended in a similar result. In the recent case of Neville Heath, one psychiatrist declared him to be sane, while another was equally positive that he was mentally deranged. The strange thing is that no one seems particularly impressed by the fact that the testimony of the psychiatrists is always favourable to the side by which they are employed. People continue to take them at their own exaggerated valuation, and their most glaring inconsistencies are passed over with little or no comment.

When the psychiatrists found Rudolph Hess to be insane, and when he subsequently declared that he had been shamming all the time, those unacquainted with psychological methods may have thought that for once he was telling the truth, and that the

psychiatrists had been deceived. But as the reputation of the psychiatrists was at stake, such a conclusion could not be entertained. The statement of Hess was declared to be a symptom of his particular complaint. Everyone was satisfied, and the situation was saved. The infallibility of the Pope is as nothing compared with that of the "new psychologists," and the blind, unquestioning faith reposed in them constitutes a "superstition" as degrading as any engendered by religion.

F. KENYON.

## LUCRETIIUS

(Concluded from page 279)

IN v., 855-861, he hints at a struggle for existence resulting in the elimination of the unfit:—

"And many races of living things must then have died out and been unable to beget and continue their breed. For in the case of all things which you see breathing the breath of life, either craft or courage or else speed has from the beginning of its existence protected and preserved each particular race. And there are many things which, recommended to us by their useful services, continue to exist consigned to our protection" (Munro).

But those monstrosities which people have believed in from time to time, such as Centaurs, Scyllas, Griffins, etc., have never existed and never can exist, for it is impossible for an animal to consist of "two-fold nature and double body formed into one frame out of limbs of alien kinds." The most dull-witted ought to see that a Centaur or man-horse has never existed, for the "maturity of the horse coincides with the infancy of man and the maturity of man with the old age of the horse." (On this point even the special-creationists who, forty years ago, denounced the "slime-theory" would not have opposed Lucretius.)

In v., 1,028-1090, he deals with the origin and development of language. Men were impelled by nature to utter various sounds to indicate their wants, just as children spontaneously use gestures and point with the finger to various objects. Different sensations compel even the dumb animals to utter different sounds. "To suppose that some one man apportioned names to things and that others learnt their first words from him is sheer folly, for why should this particular man be able to shape words with his tongue, and yet at the same time others be unable to do so?"

Lucretius most earnestly desires to impress us with the fact that there has been a constant striving towards improved and refined conditions of social and individual life, that there has been a slow but sure progress from the time of the first appearance of mankind upon earth. The desire for social intercourse, the due observance of compacts, the inventions, and the fine arts are the great factors in the upward march:—

"Ships and tillage, walls, laws, arms, roads, dress, and all such like things, all the prizes, all the elegancies too of life without exception, poems, pictures, and the chiselling of fine-wrought statues, all these things practice, together with the acquired knowledge of the untiring mind, taught men by slow degrees as they advanced on the way step by step. Thus time by degrees brings each several thing forth before men's eyes and reason raises it up into the borders of light; for things must be brought to light one after the other and in due order in the different arts, until these have reached their highest point of development" (v., 1448-1457, Munro).

A considerable portion of the sixth and last book is devoted to the investigation of such phenomena as thunder, tempests, flashes of lightning, thunderbolts, earthquakes, clouds, rain, etc. Here, as in his account of the heavenly bodies and their motions,

"Lucretius often gives the right explanation together with a variety of wrong ones." Thus, lightning is "struck out by the collision of clouds: the flash is seen before the clap is heard, because light travels faster than sound." Earthquakes have many causes: underneath the earth are caverns and rocks and rivers; sometimes the walls of these caverns collapse, and mountains then fall and shake the earth. Again, sometimes wind from without enters the caverns, eddying about in them till the crust of the earth gives way, and then whole towns may be swallowed up. But his explanation of the cause of disease (vi., 1090-1137) seems to indicate a belief—in a somewhat crude form, perhaps, but far from unscientific—in the germ-theory. He had previously shown that there are "seeds of things" helpful to life, and here he shows that, on the other hand, there are "seeds of things" harmful to life. The atmosphere becomes tainted by these vicious germs and men inhale the infection.

When we pass from the physical science of Lucretius' system to his psychology, we are confronted by several difficulties and various interpretations. Having set out with the doctrine that atoms and void constitute the sum of things, the All, and that "nothing comes from nothing," he makes this doctrine account for all mental phenomena. Whence arose human consciousness, and, in particular, human volition? The answer is, From the atoms. If the atoms moved eternally in one perpendicular direction, an unbroken sameness would continue for ever. But we see acts of various kinds as a result of human consciousness. This is because the atoms have the power of swerving from the perpendicular direction ("atomic declination"), and this swerving is the origin of our volition. At any rate, this seems to be the gist of the various passages in the second book in which Lucretius discusses the origin of human *voluntas*. Perhaps some confusion has been added to the voluminous comments on these passages by the very frequent translation of the Latin *voluntas* by the English compound "freewill," instead of by the single word "will" or "volition." The poet says that in addition to the actions going on round us, "each individual performs voluntary actions which put all the limbs of the body in motion." But he nowhere says that each individual creates his own motives. In an interesting article on "Lucretius' Arguments for Free-Will" in the "Journal of Philology" for 1883, Mr. John Masson considers that one passage (ii., 284-7) implies that "there exists in all atoms and therefore in the atoms of his [man's] soul," a power "to decline at will"—in other words, that Lucretius believed that volition existed in an infinitesimal degree even in what is called unconscious matter. He draws a parallel between this theory and Professor W. K. Clifford's doctrine of Mind-Stuff:—

"Professor Clifford, in order to explain the evolution of Mind from atoms, asserts that every atom of matter corresponds to an atom of Mind-Stuff, that is of something analogous to Mind. He thus builds up Mind, out of a multitude of mind atoms, that is to say of elementary feelings which can exist by themselves as 'individuals,' *simpliciter*, as much as can the Lucretian atoms, but which are almost as small in comparison with the consciousness of any one human being as Lucretius' atoms are in comparison with a human body. Lucretius again who believes in Free-will, can only explain it by assigning Free-will to the atoms. The reasoning of both, starting from a similar standpoint, is substantially the same, and the two theories of 'Mind-Stuff' and of 'Atomic Declination' deserve to be placed side by side."

Only passages containing some specific reference to the Lucretian philosophy have been quoted in this brief outline; and of those passages only the parts touching the cardinal points of the system have been commented upon. But, apart altogether from speculative theories, "On Nature" abounds in poetical flights of the highest order. The following is a neat and faithful rendering by Mr. W. H. Mallock of a *locus classicus* (book iii., 894-902), and with this we take our leave of the old Roman:—

"Thou not again shalt see they dear home's door,  
Nor thy dear wife and children come to throw  
Their arms round thee, and ask for kisses more,  
And through thy heart make quiet comfort go:  
Out of thy hands hath slipped the precious store  
Thou hoarded for 'thine own,' men say, 'and lo,  
All thou desired is gone!' but never say,  
'All the desire as well hath passed away.'"

A. D. McLAREN.

## BELIEF AND DISBELIEF

"WHAT I believe," the radio series which might with equal justification have been entitled "What I disbelieve," has not, I feel sure, escaped your notice.

These programmes have appealed to me as an enlightened attempt by the B.B.C. to represent all kinds of opinion on religion, life and the universe without giving disproportionate emphasis to the non-conventional views of the heretics. Prevalence of broadcasts has gone to the undoubting, God-believing Christians; considerably less to those who have tried really these beliefs to a questioning, rationalistic approach; and the Spiritualists, Agnostics and out-and-out Atheists have shared the remainder.

The broadcast by the Very Rev. W. R. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's, was typical of the first attitude. Feeling, I should imagine, that opinion is hardening against the body of beliefs which he represents, he seemed to set out with the intention of saying as much as possible in the time available, and he maintained such a cracking pace that I remember only little of the resultant spate of words.

Moreover, the basic cornerstone of his faith seems to rest in religious superstition (in which the Churches claim a vested interest), and though sceptics might deny beliefs for which evidence exists, the Dean of St. Paul's thinks—rather wrongly, I think—that people with an open mind, or people with a leaning towards superstition, will accept the Christian religion in a particular relation to the God-belief it implies.

Lord Dowding's contribution in this series was disappointing. His discourse, as a Spiritualist, was evasive and unconvincing.

B. S. Haldane gave a much better performance. As a scientific Atheist he explained his faith—or rather, his lack of faith—with disarming simplicity. Like Shaw's "Black Girl" he routed the conventional theists in surprisingly few observations, and he went on to make his strongest point—terrible responsibility which an Atheist must carry. Unable to evade himself with formal confession and easy absolution of his misdeeds, the Atheist is face to face with the reality of his code of conduct and his actions are things which are his own responsibility, things which he cannot escape.

Ivor Brown gave the tenth talk in the series, and he was excellent when quoting Bertrand Russell's earlier contribution, but still logical and sensible when propounding his own theories.

But Earl Russell, as might have been expected, provided the real highlight; his exposition of the agnostic viewpoint was soberly and convincing. With amazing lucidity he made the point that if this earth is only a small part of an infinitely larger universe, itself only a minute part of a similarly larger conglomeration, and so on "ad infinitum," then God went to an exceedingly great deal of trouble in creation for the purpose of becoming a personal deity for the benefit of the human inhabitants of this earth.

"Even within the life of our own planet," said Bertrand Russell, "man is only a brief interlude. Non-human life existed for countless ages before man was evolved. Man, even if he does not commit scientific suicide, will perish ultimately through failure of water or air or warmth. It is difficult to

believe that Omnipotence needed so vast a setting for so small and transitory a result."

All our theories about gods are man-made theories, and exist only in our imaginations; they reflect only credulous superstition, and fear of the unknown. To believe in a supernatural lord of all creation who has singled out for special attention human life, a totally insignificant part of that creation; to believe that this supreme deity became incarnate on this earth in the person of Jesus Christ, who, remember, is only one of many prophets who have claimed divine inspiration, and at the reported circumstances of whose birth we should broadly smile if the mother were anyone else but Mary and the son anyone else but Jesus; and to whom we ascribe human shape, human morals, and sufficient human interest and weakness that he can be invoked by prayer or anthem, individually or nationally, to intervene in our affairs (of which, presumably, he already has total control) either by indulging our selfishness, routing the King's enemies and confounding their politics, or, in fact (for the best of all possible good reasons) even winning our imperialist wars for us is to believe, I think, in a concept which any intelligent person would disdainfully toss aside.

The B.B.C., however, is to be congratulated on this series; for the usual run of their religious broadcasts always conform so closely to the generally accepted views of the Christian religion that this series, with its heretical, unorthodox, irrepressible and outspoken minority, has been unusually refreshing. Each broadcast has helped to clarify ideas and wash out stagnant water from our minds. And this is surely the highest purpose to which radio can aspire—more than this it cannot do.

ALLAN MARSHALL.

## 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.

### COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. H. DAY.

Burdley Market.—Sunday, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Crawshawbooth.—Friday, August 8, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

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

Hapton.—Wednesday, August 13, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Higham.—Monday, August 11, 7-30 p.m.: Mr. J. CLAYTON.

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

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

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

Nottingham (Old Market Square).—Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. T. M. MOSLEY.

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

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## REVERENT RATIONALISM

## I

ONE of the charges levelled against me is that I am often very unfair in calling some Rationalists "reverent." Perhaps as a generalisation it is too sweeping, yet I am constantly coming across Rationalists whom it would be very unfair to call anything else. Indeed, when I look back upon some very eminent names in the movement I sometimes wonder why they even went so far as Rationalism.

Where can one place George Eliot, for example? She was perhaps the greatest—if not the most intellectual—of all women writers, and she lived many years with George Henry Lewes who certainly had no use whatever for religion. Brought up in a very evangelistic home, she must have received some very severe shocks to her orthodoxy when she became acquainted with the Brays and the Hennells. They never relinquished, it is true, a kind of vague Theism to which she appears also to have clung most of her life; and their influence can be seen when she tackled the difficult task of translating Strauss's "Life of Jesus." This work should have put her on the road to definite and even aggressive Freethought, but as far as I can see she seems to have been most uncertain, never clearly declaring on which side of the gate she was.

Even when writing to Harriet Beecher Stowe admitting that she had not returned to "dogmatic Christianity," she felt obliged to add that she saw in Christianity "the highest experience of the religious sentiment that has yet found place in the history of mankind." And she had "the profoundest interest in the inward life of sincere Christians in all ages." So much so in fact that when Renan published his "Life of Jesus," the work "compelled" her to give up the high estimate she had formed of Renan's mind. She became to believe that all the great religions, "historically considered, are rightly the objects of deep reverence and sympathy."

George Eliot always had a great liking for the Bible. Mr. Lewes, she once wrote, "is not fond of reading the Bible himself, but sees no harm in my reading it." And so we need not be surprised to find that "the Bible was a very precious and sacred Book to her," and that she and her husband, J. W. Cross, read it aloud together every day. What with one thing and another, I do not think it very unfair to call George Eliot a reverent Rationalist, and it would be quite an easy task to give her many comrades, some of them eminent, in the same boat.

Let me, however, come to a much later example—to the book published in 1945, "The Philosophy of Jesus" by Lord Horder and Dr. Harry Roberts. Lord Horder is a distinguished physician, and, I believe, a Vice-President of the Rationalist Press Association; and Dr. Roberts has written a number of medical and other works. A more shining example of Reverence one could not hope for than this book.

In their own profession I am sure they exercise the keenest intellect, and why they should get out of that and sail on, for them, obviously unknown waters, with ordinary equipment, is quite beyond me.

At the very outset they ask the reader to "accept the fact" that "a man whom we speak of as Jesus" lived for about thirty years in Western Asia. Of course, by accepting the fact they can get on with their book, for it would be little use to write about the philosophy of Jesus for people who no more believe that Jesus existed than they do Osiris existed or even the Virgin Mary. All the same, it is as well to point out that even here there are some exceptions. We have as an instance Gerald Bullett, who says in "Problems of Religion," even "if it could be established beyond possibility of doubt that Jesus had never existed, the shock to Christendom and the distress

of individual Christian believers would be great; but the vital core of Christianity would be unimpaired." Here, as Dr. Joad would say—it all depends on what is meant by "the vital core." To the reverent Rationalist the "vital core" may be something quite different from what it is to the all-believing Christian. Personally, I have an idea that if Jesus were shown to be a myth it would cause almost as much pain to the reverent Rationalist as to the all-believing Christian.

Lord Horder, however, makes a special point in not discussing the "divinity" of Jesus. He was, for him and Dr. Roberts, "the child of man and woman." But why? Well, "it would be absurd to speak of him as the Son of Man." But I still feel, even if Jesus was the child of man and woman, that it is absurd to speak of him as the Son of Man. The usual way would be, the son of his parents. What have the capitals to do with it? The truth is that, when speaking of Jesus, both all-believing Christians and reverent Rationalists prefer to use capital letters. Whatever else Jesus may have been he really was something "different." And capital letters are very necessary to point this out.

But even if Jesus was the child of man and woman, he still was the "son of God" in the sense of the first chapter of St. John, says Lord Horder. And here Dean Rashdall is dragged in as if he were an authority. His opinion may well be worth listening to, but it is only an opinion. He is no more an authority on the divinity of Jesus or his non-divinity than the humblest reader of this journal. The dean points out that "Never is there in any critically well-attested sayings anything which suggests that his (Jesus's) conscious relation to God was other than that of a man towards God—the attitude which he wished that all men should adopt towards God." Here I should very much like to know which are these "critically well-attested sayings." Who has decided which is what? Would the dean's idea of what is or is not critically well-attested coincide with that of the Pope or the head of the Salvation Army or the editor of the "Church Times"?

Moreover, look at the way in which Lord Horder drags in "God." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was called God." This is the same God as the Jewish one, the God who said "Let there be light," who "created" with the Word. But whether Lord Horder really believes in such a God residing, as he is confidently told, in the sky or in "heaven," I do not know. He considers any discussion on the divinity of Jesus "in the generally accepted sense" as "irrelevant." The mission of Jesus was to show how men could live "the perfect life" and there is "nothing in the teaching of Jesus beyond the power of man to perform." In fact, he lived right up to his own precepts "to show that it is possible." If the writers of "The Philosophy of Jesus" really believe all this I could give no better example of self-delusion.

Jesus distinctly declared that in his name the people who believe in him shall "cast out devils." Can Lord Horder or Dr. Roberts cast out devils? Jesus said that if believers "drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them." Would Lord Horder or Dr. Roberts be prepared to swallow a pint of sulphuric acid? Jesus said that if believers "lay hands on the sick, they shall recover." Would the hands of Dr. Roberts or Lord Horder immediately cure a fatal cancer case? Perhaps, however, the two authors are only concerned with Jesus going about "doing good," one of the favourite ways reverent Rationalists have of describing the Son of Man.

I agree with the two authors in one thing—the "enormous literature accumulated about the person and character of Jesus"—and it is a pity that some of these books were not read before writing about "The Philosophy of Jesus." Even the books published by the R.P.A. might have saved them many blunders.

H. CUTNER