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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

God Help Us

TWO men were out in a small boat during a storm. They had almost made land, but the chances of getting through the breakers safely seemed small. "O God," prayed one, "carry us safely to the shore, and we will never forget thy kindness." "Hold on," said the other, as the boat's keel struck the beach; "hold on, don't be under an obligation to anyone—we're ashore." This story puts the philosophy of "God help us!" in a nutshell. It expresses to a nicety both the occasion and the helplessness of the exclamation. No man, be he ever so religious, invokes God while there is a prospect of help in other directions. No one trusts in Providence who can get credit elsewhere. No one drags in the name of God as an explanation, until human knowledge has reached its limits.

"God help you!" says one when the time for calling in an undertaker has arrived; "God only knows!" says another when human knowledge is at fault; always and everywhere, in civilised and in uncivilised times, the term "God" stands as an asylum for ignorance, the phrase with which hopeless ignorance or despairing helplessness seeks to narrow the consciousness of its own weakness.

What knowledge does the term "God" convey to anyone? Absolutely none. No one gains anything by its presence. No one loses anything by its absence. To say that God produced a thing tells us nothing. It explains nothing. It is a mere phrase, a collection of words, "sound and fury, signifying nothing." An explanation only exists when the thing to be explained is linked to other aspects or objects of human experience: when it is shown to be a necessary link in the chain of universal causation. But God is a term that has no logical connection with anything that has gone before, or with anything that is to come after; it is like the Irishman's footless stocking without a leg, a mark of the absence of knowledge rather than an indication of its presence.

Why should we believe that God will help us? Certainly not because experience justifies the belief. Under all the varying circumstances of life people have trusted to God to help, and have been disappointed. In times of shipwreck, and in seasons of famine, when disease has laid its grisly hand on the face of society, or when fire has threatened the safety of life and property by its ravages, the same appeals have been made, the same trust exhibited, and always with the one result. During the times when plagues swept over Europe with desolating frequency, prayers were said, processions were formed, whole nations prostrated themselves before God, and with what result? The God to whom they prayed was as dumb and as unresponsive as the plague itself was pitiless. It was not the help of God that diminished any of these evils. It was the non-godly methods of science

which, by studying the conditions of health, paved the way for the extinction of disease; and, by developing the intellect of man, taught him to become the arbiter of his own fate. When, some years ago a deputation approached Lord Aberdeen and asked that the Government should appoint a day of national prayer and humiliation in order to get rid of smallpox, Aberdeen's reply was: "Look after your drains." It was a vivid contrast of the old method and the new—the old method regarding all disease as the expression of God's anger, and its removal a matter of his grace; and the new tracing all disease to purely natural conditions, and the condition of its removal to improved sanitation and more cleanly living.

Why should we, even from the Christian point of view, expect God to help us? To overcome the difficulties of life, we are told. Yes; but who created the difficulties? Where did they come from? Clearly, if there be a God, the difficulties are his creation; and why should we expect him to remove difficulties he has been at the trouble to create? If God really wished to help us, would he not have helped us better by refraining from bringing into existence the very difficulties he is now being implored to remove? And if he did not, or would not do so at the beginning why should we believe that he will act otherwise now? Is the world merely the scene of a huge theatrical performance, at which an almighty conjurer displays his skill?

But if the clergy show by their conduct that they have no faith in God's help, are the laity any more convinced on this subject? I have seen plenty of houses with the motto, "The Lord watches over this house," liberally displayed, and have found the occupiers equally liberal in the attention they bestowed on burglar alarms and watch-dogs. The lesson of experience tells on them more even than on the clergy. They turn to the doctor, the statesman, the scientist, for assistance or advice on all occasions of distress or difficulty; God is never invoked except with a sinking of the heart and a moral conviction that all is over. And when success crowns his efforts, the layman is far less ready to give the credit to God than is the parson. He feels that, after all, his own perseverance and intelligence have had something to do with the production of the result, and often says so. "Providence was very good to you, Donald," said a minister to one who had managed to swim ashore from a lake after his boat had been capsized. "Yes," said Donald, "Providence was very good, but I was very clever, too."

Of course, if God did help, it would not be a bad thing and just now there is a splendid opportunity for him to exert his influence. What with political disturbances all over the Continent, one could hardly conceive a more opportune occasion for God Almighty lending a hand. He might conveniently protect his faithful followers, or induce people to be good neighbours who also are his children. Such a lot might be done, and we might be the better for it.

An example of the persistence of this essential type of mind, which prides itself on being free from superstition, is provided by a writer in one of our religious papers. The writer is dealing with the question of reform, and quite properly he points out that reformers are not those who hold their beliefs easily or cheaply, and that one who held old beliefs cheaply will be unlikely to set a greater value upon new ones. But with the essential irrationality that is characteristic of the religious mind, he lays down the law that the only people who can reform religion are those who believe in it. That is, his reform consists in a mere difference in the way religious belief is expressed, leaving the belief itself fundamentally intact. Now, to me it seems of little consequence, if a man believes in Deity, whether he believes in one or more, whether his God approximates to that of a hard east Presbyterian or to that of a New Theologian. The difference is one of degree at most, and while it may be interesting to allocate to different people the various quantities of absurdity manifested by them, it is not a supremely important occupation. The vital thing is that the work for reform should rest upon an essentially sound foundation. Then only can we be at all sure of safe and orderly progress. I am not at all convinced that the world gained by the creation and establishment of Protestantism; in fact, I incline to the contrary view. Nor am I convinced that liberal theologians contribute anything important to the march of progress. Both Protestantism and the many modernisms, I believe, merely make superstition more tolerable to a certain number of people, leaving the real work of emancipation to be done by those who believe in neither.

Now, I quite agree that the reformer, to be of value, must be a man of strong beliefs. Men do not risk discomfort and disfavour unless they believe strongly; but some show their own limitations in treating disbelief in religion as purely negative, and belief in it as purely positive. The truth is, that in intellectual matters, negative and positive are not opposite and mutually exclusive terms, but complementary expressions. Every negation of a religious doctrine has been based upon a positive expression of knowledge. It was the knowledge of the composite nature of the Bible that gave the foundation for a denial of its trustworthiness and generally accepted authorship. The negation of miracles was based upon the affirmation of natural law; the negation of the idea of God upon a knowledge of its inherently unreasonable character and of its historic development. And on the other hand, every religious doctrine is a negation of some fact or principle in natural science, or of some portion of accessible knowledge. When therefore we are told the criticism was a negative, the reply is that a negation may express a greater knowledge of religion than ninety-nine clergymen out of a hundred bring to their work. One might safely challenge anyone to show in what respect "advanced" religious opinions are more scientific than those of the orthodox type. In a sense, the loss of definite religious beliefs by a religious type of mind aggravates the obstruction. For one at least knows where such a person stands. But, minus these beliefs, we let loose in the political and social world a species of intelligence that is apt to work greater harm than in its native sphere. It may well be questioned whether the conception of a country having a divinely appointed destiny to do this or that in relation to other nations—which is nothing more than the religious idea transported into the political world—

is not one of the most dangerous delusions under which a people may labour.

Above all it is too often overlooked that with the disintegration of formal religious beliefs, there is left behind a vague, unformed, superstitious mind that forms the happy hunting ground of charlatans and reactionists of all descriptions. Such an intelligence is easily led astray on false issues and quickly captured by mere phrases. Examples of this kind are too numerous to require detailed mention. It is enough to note that the reformer's best efforts are sometimes reduced to failure by the existence of this type of mind. It may be inevitable that such a state of things should be, but to bear in mind the fact of their existence, saves one from pessimism by forbidding one to expect too much. Evolution is naturally a slow process, and if we can feel assured that its course is in the right direction, we have an incentive to renewed effort and a reward for past labour.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A POPULAR EXPOSITION OF SCIENTIFIC PRINCIPLES

IN papers reprinted from the "New Statesman," "Nature," and the "Daily Worker," Professor J. B. S. Haldane surveys recent discoveries in science. This volume, entitled "Science Advances" (Allen and Unwin, 1947; 10s. 6d.), opens with 11 brief sketches of outstanding scientists, both ancient and modern and includes Archimedes, Copernicus, Newton, Bragg and Eddington and, quaintly enough, Karl Marx. As an historical influence, Marx is ranked far higher than Gladstone and Disraeli "or philosophers such as Herbert Spencer, Cardinal Newman, Auguste Comte, who seemed so great in their own time." That Newman should ever be classed a philosopher seems strange. Carlyle scornfully said that he had the intellect of a little rabbit. Still, as a man of letters, and as a theological exponent and apologist, Newman occupies an exalted position.

According to Haldane, much as Darwin approached the problem of human ancestry and Pasteur that of man's diseases, Marx applied scientific principles to the study of social sciences, economics and history. These three departures proved distasteful to popular prejudice and, as our author justly observes: "It was pleasanter to believe that we were made in God's image than that we were descended from monkeys; to regard an epidemic as a punishment from God rather than as a result of a faulty water supply. So it hurt human pride to be told that history was determined by economic causes rather than by the ideas of great men, the judgments of God or the racial soul rooted in blood and soil."

Much of this is indisputable, yet the discoveries and inventions of outstanding men have played a very far-reaching part in human progress. This is virtually admitted by Haldane himself and is conceded in his article on Marx. For if it be true, as Haldane claims that: "By studying the laws of change in their most general form, Marx and his friend and colleague, Engels, not only illuminated history, but science," then their influence on later generations surely moulded men's opinions and conduct.

Moreover, Haldane asserts, by no means untruly, that Marx's teachings are now more widely accepted than ever before. Indeed, he is spoken of in some circles as if he were a deity. Haldane himself asserts: "We celebrate the anniversary of the great teacher who has shown us the way out of our present distresses, who has demonstrated that there are no limitations to the applications of science. We can best honour his memory by doing all that we can to hasten the day when Marxism will

be the guiding principle in the government of the country in which Marx spent most of his immensely fruitful life."

The section of Haldane's work dealing with plants and animals is very instructive. Apparently the study of natural history in Soviet Russia is very popular and far more extensive than in ours. Haldane estimates our cat population at approximately five millions, in addition to kittens. Evidently, cats are most numerous in slum districts where rats and mice can live and breed in security in holes and crevices of tumble down dwellings, whereas the houses of the more prosperous classes are more or less vermin proof with little need for cats.

Haldane notes that not only birds, but butterflies migrate as winter approaches, to more genial climes, for the Painted Lady and Clouded Yellow butterflies fly from our island to the South of Europe. Some species migrate in flocks like birds. Also, the American Monarch or Milk-weed butterfly regularly flies north from the Southern United States as far as Canada in the spring."

The causes of bird migration are fairly obvious, but the sense of direction they evidently possess is still undiscovered. This sense is apparently hereditary, for young birds, quite untaught, fly in the same direction as their parents. Haldane justly observes that an unsolved problem such as this "is commonly called a mystery. I don't like this word. It is taken from the vocabulary of religion, where it means either something not to be disclosed to the general public, or something that human reason cannot understand. This is just one of the uncounted problems awaiting scientific solution."

We know that in England, that invaluable bird, the owl has been sadly maligned by gamekeepers. Now, Haldane devotes a chapter to another useful bird, the starling. Why enormous flocks of starlings never leave our shores, however severe the weather, is unknown. Still, others migrate in March to the Continent and return in early autumn and starlings have been suspected as the carriers of the germs of foot and mouth disease in cattle. Dr. Bulloagh suggests that overcrowding on their roosts, where as many as 50,000 may be congregated, may cause the birds to infect one another with the microbes of this malady and thus spread it. It is true that starlings hunt for ticks in the living sheep's wool and frequently perch on the backs of cattle. Still, some authorities are extremely sceptical of Bulloagh's hypothesis and more scientific research is essential to prove the starling's responsibility.

Haldane stresses the utility of nature study and urges that the London Zoo could easily be converted into a centre for biological instruction without diminishing its entertainment attractions. It is a promising sign that three of the keepers recently published a fascinating description of the birth and childhood of the chimpanzee. "One mother," it appears, "brought up her baby without help; another abandoned it when it was born . . . though later she took some care of it." Facts such as these are both instructive and suggestive, and as Haldane intimates, study of animal classification alone is important from several standpoints. "If any one thinks this unimportant," he remarks, "please remember that Stalin was sacked from a theological seminary for reading Darwin."

Those who reject Haldane's Communism can read his chapters dealing with Physiology and Evolution with pleasure and profit. When he deals with purely scientific problem his impartiality is beyond all praise, for his anxiety to obtain undiluted truth is everywhere evident.

As Haldane points out, proofs of evolution are far more numerous than they were when Darwin published the "Descent of Man." In addition to the innumerable fossils that have been discovered since Darwin's day a flood of light has been thrown on the subject by the experimental researches on our fauna and flora. Men of science are all evolutionists now and Haldane concludes that: "Our immediate ancestors were climbers, like our existing monkeys, but our structure has not changed much in the last half-million years. Since our ancestors discovered

fire and began to co-operate in production, our main evolution has been social."

Java, where *Pithecanthropus erectus* came to light, has recently yielded human or semi-human remains of a remarkable character. These discoveries were made from 1939 to 1941—and a preliminary notice of them has been published in "Science."

Haldane's summary of these discoveries runs as follows: "In the volcanic ash beds of Trinil, in Central Java, Dr. von Koenigswald . . . found a series of skulls and lower jaws which are definitely human, though primitive, and some of which are enormously larger than those of any living or previously described fossil men. The most complete skull, for example, had room for a brain larger than any ape's, though a small one by modern human standards. . . . This form has been called *Pithecanthropus robustus*."

Dr. von Koenigswald purchased fossil molar teeth in Hong Kong which apparently came from prehistoric cave dwellings. These teeth were of enormous size, but distinctly human in structure. They presumably were those of long extinct giants and the largest of these fossil remains are the most primitive. Yet they appear in the line of modern man's ancestry. May we therefore conclude that, in the course of human development, those of our species who became progressively smaller proved victorious in the battle of life?

T. F. PALMER.

JONAH

THE outlines of Jonah's story are as follows. He was told by the Lord to go to Nineveh and to reproach the inhabitants for their sins. Disliking this task, he went to Joppa, and took ship for Tarshish. A great storm arose, and the sailors, thinking it was sent to punish someone on board, cast lots to discover the person. The lot fell upon Jonah. He told them to throw him overboard. They hesitated for a while but at last consented. On reaching the sea, Jonah was swallowed by "a great fish" which the Lord had "prepared" for the purpose. After spending "three days and three nights" inside the animal, Jonah was "vomited" by it upon the land. Here be it noted that, as the word "prepared" implies that the creature was not a natural but a supernatural "fish", the alleged event is not liable to objections based upon the known constitution of fishes and of human beings. The external form might be that of a fish, but the interior parts could have been so arranged that Jonah was provided with every comfort, and many luxuries, though to be sure his state of mind would tend to diminish his enjoyment of these advantages.

Upon his being emitted by the fish, Jonah was again bidden by the Lord to go unto Nineveh, and to deliver his previously entrusted message. We are not told whence he started, or what road he took, but we learn that the city was of vast dimensions, and that before he had got through a third part of it he began to cry out: "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." This prediction is not said to have formed part of his original commission, but its effect upon the Ninevites renders the piscatory miracle almost insignificant. For, upon hearing those words all the people of Nineveh from the King downwards began to act as though they were mad. The monarch discarded his royal robes, garbed himself in sack, and throned upon ashes. A fast from food and water was ordained, not only for human beings, but also for horses and cattle. Both men and beasts were clothed in sack cloth, and told to mend their ways, imploring the Lord for mercy. What caused all this commotion? It is unlikely that Jonah knew the Assyrian tongue, and if he got to know it by inspiration, what made his testimony believed? If the hearts of his hearers were miraculously inclined to accept it, the same effect would more decorously have been produced by a compatriot. Jonah was a stranger belonging to a race of

little influence, and if his manner and appearance resembled that of the prophets in his native land, it must have been apt to repel a cultured people like the Assyrians. Be all this as it may, the Lord accepted the repentance of the Ninevites, and their city was saved. Jonah, however, became vexed and wrathful over its salvation. He told the Lord that the foresight of such a turn of events was the very thing which had made him try to avoid bringing the Ninevites the threat of destruction. Whilst Jonah sat sulking in a scorching sun, the Lord, to give him shelter, caused a large plant to grow, but, on the next day, destroyed it by a worm. The loss of his screen made Jonah still more angry, whereupon the Lord reproached him for pitying the plant, and for not pitying Nineveh. But, it is obvious that Jonah pitied neither the plant nor Nineveh, but only himself. Thus, lamely, does the tale end!

Between the last verse of the first chapter and the last verse of the second chapter, there is an obvious interpolation, for the one chapter ends by saying: "and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights"; whilst the other begins: "and the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon the dry land." The intervening verses, nine in number, contain a prayer in the form of a Psalm, which is attributed to Jonah, and consists of scraps taken from other authors of the Old Testament. It spoils the harmony of the present work, which is elsewhere concisely and forcefully written. Dr. Cheyne (*Ency. Bib. art. Jonah*) states that the book of this prophet was indubitably composed after the return of the Jews from their exile in Babylon. Haydon's Dictionary of Dates, 1889, says that the Edict of Cyrus permitting this return was issued in B.C. 536. The Greek poet, Lycophron (B.C. 285-247) tells a tale about Hercules delivering a princess from a sea monster, in which operation, according to the ancient commentators, he jumped into the animal and, after hacking at it for three days, came out with the loss of his hair. Hercules is referred to by Homer (B.C. 962-927). Many stories are told of him by later authors of antiquity, but it seems impossible to trace the development of his legend with accuracy. The story of Jonah is naive and ludicrous, but the writer knew how to make his nonsense interesting by life-like touches not unworthy of comparison with those in "Gulliver's Travels."

Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, who was born in A.D. 37 at Jerusalem, relates the story of Jonah from what he describes as "the Hebrew Books." The best way of comparing the Biblical account with the Josephan account is to divide the story into two parts. Part first Jonah's experience before he reached Nineveh, and part second his experience at Nineveh. Part 1: Here the two accounts differ about the divine message to the Ninevites. The earlier gives this as a call for their repentance; but the later gives it as a prediction of their losing "Asia." The earlier has the Psalm above mentioned, whilst the later omits it, and states briefly that Jonah prayed. This couple of differences excepted, the two accounts closely agree in the numerous details occurring in the present section. * Part 2: Here the divergence between our authorities is amazing. For the Josephan narrative makes no reference whatever to the consternation and humiliation which the previous account declares to have been exhibited by the Ninevites upon hearing the prediction of their ruin. Instead of this, the later account merely says, that Jonah, having predicted to the Ninevites their loss of Asia, then made his return.

Why did Josephus give a false representation of Jonah's prophecy? In the Scriptural work, Jonah is introduced as the

son of Amittai, and a prophet of this name and parentage figures in II Kings XIV, 25, as flourishing under Jeroboam II, King of Israel, whose reign began in B.C. 825. But nothing is there said about that prophet visiting Nineveh. In B.C. 605, however, the Medes subdued Assyria and destroyed Nineveh. Josephus, knowing these facts, would think it a masterstroke to make Jeroboam's Jonah foretell the Assyrian loss of "Asia" two centuries before this happened. It is only seventy or eighty years since philological and other considerations determined critics to date the book of Jonah at least 289 years later than the beginning of Jeroboam the Second's reign. It is worthy of mention that Josephus, when speaking of the Hebrew Scriptures in his book against Apion (I 8) says, "During so many ages as have passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, or to take anything from them, or to make any change in them; but it becomes natural to all Jews immediately and from their very birth to esteem these books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and if occasion be, even to die for them."

What should we say to such a person as this famous author? The Book of Jonah had been accepted by the Jewish leaders long before Josephus was born! The writer of that interesting work be whom he might, was evidently a religious Freethinker. He firmly believed in God, but the fact that he does not present Jonah as teaching the Ninevites the religious system of the Jews proves that he did not regard this system as necessary to salvation. It is well known that upon their return from the Exile many of the Jews were found to have heathen wives, and that Ezra and Nehemiah took measures to dissolve those marriages. These remarks also hold good for the modern theory that in the original of the present "Jonah", the Jerahmeelites and not the Ninevites, were the people to whom the prophet was sent. For both those peoples were heathens; and "in both its forms the story is presumably post-exilic." (*Ency. Bib. art. Prophetic Literature, S.S. 43,44*).

C. CLAYTON DOVE

THE WISDOM OF THE AGES

J. W. POYNTER writes on the "uses of philosophy," and we agree with him that it is not merely "an amusing pastime." We have often heard it called foolosophy, and we recalled many assertions we have recently heard, e.g., in a B.B.C. broadcast, that all generalisations are untrue. Its simplicity equals its absurdity. There is an elementary rule in logic that of the two propositions in a syllogism at least one must contain a generalisation. All scientific laws are generalisations. It seems that generalisation is the essence of reason, yet here is a generalisation that denies generalisation.

One might multiply examples, e.g., there is an exception to every rule; a little knowledge is dangerous; we cannot foretell the future. They boast uncertainty, deery knowledge, and make belief the essence of wisdom; with the implication that ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise. Such types of argument in more elaborate form are to be found in philosophy. In its counter-assertions and contradictions historic philosophical controversy is by no means exempt from the charge of rationalisation, the negative aspect of reason.

Philosophers have not been unaware of this. Descartes once said that he could produce twelve arguments against any accepted truth and a dozen in proof of any accepted falsity. Schopenhauer wrote quite a volume on the various types of dialectical argumentation, with comments on their pitfalls and how to get round them. We have known public speakers carry such a book, just as Thomas Cromwell is reputed to have carried a pocket edition of Machiavelli. In classifying all available types of argument, Aristotle used a scientific method in formulating his rules of logic. One way of deerying this is to call it the dismal science.

* I should, however, add that Josephus here takes Tarshish to mean Tarsus in Cilicia; and adds that the fish vomited out Jonah "upon the Euxine Sea." The insistence wherewith he repeats that his relation is derived from "books" seems to imply either a doubt in his own mind, or the anticipation of doubt in the minds of his readers.

Mr. Poynter's survey was too broad to notice the different character of types of philosophy. Sophist, idealist, sceptic, cynic, as with academic, epicure and stoic; the very terms are synonyms for psychological as well as intellectual aptitudes. These terms are useful because the philosophies are part of our social heritage. We are, in fact, echoing the old philosophers. Many characteristic phrases and types of argument are clearly recognisable, and it seems absurd to question the usefulness of what we actually use. The trouble seems to be, rather, that we are unconscious of the fact.

J. W. Poynter, like Hamilton Fyfe, seems to think of philosophy as something found in books; and in advocating logic as if it were the essence of philosophy, fails to see that logic is a science. In the same way, in his remarks on metaphysics and the need for a philosophical check on science, he fails to see that science is a philosophical development. The idea that science and philosophy are separate is quite a recent notion. In the days of Isaac Newton, and even as late as Michael Faraday, the word "philosopher" was used where we would say "scientist". Science was part of philosophy.

The development was a long and painful struggle with superstition. Science is a Greek word but the basic concept of scientific law was marred by numerical and geometrical magic of Pythagoras from which Plato was not exempt. The idea of calculable necessity came from Democritus. The need for definition is seen in the Socratic question. The inductive method and logic came from Aristotle. But such equipment was insufficient. *Phusis* was confused with *Natura*, and that with *Psyche*. Science was confused with Gnosis, divine knowledge, and logic with the Logos, divine reason.

After the dark ages, with the pedantic confusion of the scholastics came Occam's razor, the systematic exclusion of unessentials. Together with a realisation of the limitations of logic, a more practical attitude came with Galileo's test and Descartes' demonstration; and the call for a wider experience came with Bacon's experiment. To the criticism and counter-criticism of logic is added the check and counter-check of test and experiment. And the idea of limitation, seen in definition, logical criticism and exclusion, finds a practical expression in conscious trial and error.

This evolution involved much metaphysical controversy. Nominalism and realism, intuitionism and voluntarism, empiricism and rationalism, materialism and idealism. Whether general or abstract ideas exist except as names or words; or universal concepts have objective existence; whether reason gives principles not derived from experience; or if truths are intuitive. From picturesque imagery and simple, even crude, analogy, has developed a highly involved and technical terminology. With the development of ideas from visions, and the development of the idea of existence or being from breath or air, teleology and ontology was followed by epistemology. It also involves psychology.

Plotinus has been called the greatest thinker for a thousand years, from Aristotle to Descartes. A psychological philosophy, neo-Platonic mysticism seems to derive logically from Plato; with eastern or Egyptian influence. But more important is the mysticism of Dionysius the areopagite. The development of mysticism in the middle-ages is shown in the anonymous "Cloud of Unknowing," a handbook of mystical practice, also in the astrology and alchemy of the Cabalists and Rosicrucians. In the 16th Century mysticism became simplified and systematised, as in the "Rule of Perfection," by Father Benet; with further simplification in the doctrines of Pierre de Berulle. All of which involves philosophical systematisation.

The mystical ideas of Paracelsus, a quaint mixture of science and superstition, included astrology and alchemy. His bedside manner and magnetic analogy led to the cult of animal magnetism that followed the cult of mysticism; to Mesmer's magnetic fluid. The "Ultimate Reality" of Plotinus became an equally mysterious "Influence." The study of hypnotism, the term used

by James Braid, and its use in abnormal psychology by Charcot and Janet, led to Freudian psycho-analysis and dream psychology, as well as the suggestion and auto-suggestion of Cone and the New Nancy school. Progressive simplification arose from violent controversy with recrimination of quacks and cranks in the philosophic development and the application of scientific method in psychology.

It is absurd to separate philosophy and science. In so differentiating, we equate philosophy with ignorance; with the unknown; with whatever science has not explained. By the same logic the philosophic method must be unscientific; put logic aside, to square the ideas of infinite, eternal, with ultimate, with ends and beginnings. There is ignorance of metaphysics among scientists and of science among metaphysicians. Science is a limiting device, a practical extension of logical definition, and we might echo Socrates and say that knowledge of the limitation of our knowledge is the essence of wisdom.

With the scientific method of limitation, the ever-widening circle of knowledge impinges upon an illimitable sea of ignorance. Ultimate reality, like the horizon, recedes as we approach it.

H. H. PREECE.

SOME WOULD-BE KINGS

THOSE of us who believe that the institution of monarchy is in some respects a hangover from an earlier age, destined in the long run to be outgrown by humanity, will find a considerable degree of interest in the study of those remarkable people who, in the past, have aimed at becoming kings. And when a study of a group of these people is written by one who has already made a name as a novelist of special ability, the book will be eagerly read by many readers not normally interested in such writing.

Mr. Michael Harrison's "They Would be King" (Somers; 10s. 6d.) is such a book. Mr. Harrison is already well known to the general reading public for such volumes as "The House in Fishergate" and "Treadmill," and he is a serious student of history, with his own ideas of the way in which the events of the past should be interpreted in terms of the present. His latest book is a study of "Lambert Simnel," the mysterious protege of an Oxford priest, Theodore von Neuhoff, son of a German nobleman and a shopkeeper's daughter; Jean Baptiste Bernadotte, son of the town bailiff of Pau; and Henry Christophe, the Black Emperor, son of a negro slave. What all these men, totally diverse in upbringing, have had in common is that they all tried to gain a throne.

There may seem, superficially, little about the book which is likely to appeal to Freethinkers as such; but there is much of interest to all students of human nature. Mr. Harrison writes so fascinatingly that everyone who has a taste for humanity will find his historical studies interesting. And the political background which he sketches in with genuine artistry, is something which must be of value to all who are interested in the events of the past generations of humanity. I do not know what novelist, except perhaps Miss Marjorie Bowen and Mr. Philip Lindsay, could write an historical work at once so accurate and so reliable. And that is why I hope that it will not escape the attention of the percipient reader.

JOHN ROWLAND.

THE BIBLE: WHAT IS IT WORTH? By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

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ACID DROPS

Sir Stafford Cripps is a Christian. That is entirely his business. But Sir Stafford is a Member of Parliament, and then what he does—in certain directions—is every citizen's business.

Stafford Cripps might never have been heard of, save in a very small area. But he becomes a Member of Parliament, and so may effect a large number of people. Instead of his voice being heard by a few, he is noticed by many. In short he is using his Parliamentary status in a way that cannot be considered first-class. Here is a sample from "Public Opinion," just as it appears:—

"CHANCELLOR ON VALUE OF PRAYER"

Sir Stafford Cripps, Chancellor of the Exchequer, writes, in the February issue of the Moorfields, Bristol, Parish Magazine, on "Prayer:"

"We cannot act," he writes, "unless we have refreshed and strengthened ourselves by prayer. We are often inclined to repeat prayer with very little intention to play our part in carrying it into effect.

"Our repetition becomes not unlike the turning of the 'Prayer Wheel.'"

Moorfields is in Sir Stafford's Bristol East constituency.

And in another paper he has a full four columns of childish religion insisting that we shall be helpless if we have not the prayers of Christianity. We wonder what would happen if one of the Atheist Members ventured to say that in his opinion it is time that someone set religion aside?

For a long time the Church of England has been doing the thing that God wishes them to do, in fact, the English Church professes to be the only one that does so. True, other Churches put forward the same claim, but the Church of England thinks they are mistaken. This is one of the main wonders of Christianity. God came direct from Heaven to earth in order that no mistakes could be made. All Christians are quite certain that God, in the person of His Son gave the correct procedure, and the correct method by which his followers could secure a good place in Heaven. In short, everything was arranged, and yet . . . We think it would have been better if God had selected some well-known human being to tell people exactly what He wanted.

And so we have "great arguments about it," and all are as far from Heaven as ever before. Nor is there the slightest indication that God will take the matter in hand within reasonable time, but the "Church Times" bids us not to be uneasy, and points out that "There is no need to despair. God will perform His perfect work in the world, and a thousand years in His sight are but as yesterday. It was not until the Apostles had suffered the emptiness of Good Friday and Holy Saturday that they were commissioned to preach the Gospel to the world." It can be imagined how sore the Apostles felt when they came, expecting a great show, and saw—nothing. Incidentally, it is not very cheerful to be told that to God "a thousand years are as nothing." With all respect, God is not likely to satisfy Man who is told to trust Him, to find that after thousands of years God still does nothing. It really will not do. God will have to alter His ways if He is going to satisfy "His children." We cannot wait so long. The "Church Times" should find something more cheerful to write about.

The Vicar of Bolton says that "the world at its worst, needs the Church at its best." We think there is a mistake here. We fancy that the saying should run: "The Church at its worst, will always grab the best." These common sayings get badly mixed now and again.

We have often wondered where on earth, or elsewhere, the "Kingdom of God" might be? Now one of our Bishops helps us and explains it all at Westminster Abbey. The worst of it is, the Bishop's "solution" is like the "Crossword" Competitors Journals which give you every possible alternative and leave you, in the end, to guess it for yourself. Even then the Bishop is bound to say: "Now each one of these explanations has some measure of truth, but none contains the full truth."

He suggests that the Kingdom of God "is no concrete thing." We guessed as much. But it exists "where love is the ruling principle of human life." It is unfortunate that Jesus rather crabbed the Bishop's ideal by declaring emphatically: "My Kingdom is not of this world." And after all *Human* love is not a bad ideal for human beings; any Kingdom of any God is a poor substitute.

We feel certain that some of our readers will enjoy this item from the North:—

"A Reward for Sabbath Breaking.
People taken safely and swiftly to

HELL

next Lord's Day,
by
The Carlisle Railway
for 7s. 6d.

It is a Pleasure Trip!

Mad Sinners! will you put a knife into your own Bowels: Ye that have Shares in this Iniquity, your profits will be a Share of **JEHOVAH'S WRATH.**

The Devil is murdering Sinners wholesale in Newcastle and *professed* Christians are helping him!

In the Name of God,

Wm. C. Burns.

We are asked what is real blasphemy. We could say that it is something of which an Atheist is incapable. He does not believe in "God" and therefore cannot praise him, throw bricks, nor deny him. To the Atheist, he is just "nothing." We, therefore, give another explanation of blasphemy. The real blasphemers are those who believe in God and blacken his character; who credit him with less knowledge than a child, and less intelligence than an idiot; who make him quibble, deceive, and lie, who represent him as indecent, cruel, and revengeful, who give him the heart of a savage and the brain of a fool. These are the blasphemers. When the priest steps between husband and wife, with the name of God on his lips, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he resists education and science, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he opposes freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he robs, tortures, and kills those who differ from him, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he opposes the equal rights of all, he blasphemes. When, in the name of God, he preaches content to the poor and oppressed, flatters the rich and powerful, and makes religious tyranny the handmaiden of political revenge, he blasphemes. And when he takes the Bible in his hand, and says it was written by the inspiration of God, he blasphemes almost beyond forgiveness. Who are the blasphemers? Not we who preach freedom and progress for all men; but those who try to bind the world with chains of dogma, and to burden it, in God's name, with all the foul superstitions of their ignorant past.

The newspapers are pretty well full with the cry for the "Conversion of England." Now that has been done more than once. It was done when the Roman Catholic God got rid of the non-Christians. Then God—or someone—cleared out the Roman Church and another lot appeared. So it went on time after time, each one being God's choice—for a little time only, just in the way that an overcoat is sold as a lasting article, falls to pieces after a season. So that just puzzles us. God keeps finding new servants, they look well enough, their looks are clean, and their clothes are different from other people. And yet after a little time the lot break down.

The Bishop of Ely is terribly impressed on what doubtful kinds of people God has to depend. He has always told us how he has worked to send people to heaven, and then he finds they are very, very poor stuff. So, says the Bishop of Ely, "We must start with ourselves." Well, honestly, that seems rather hard on He who sits on the throne. We can imagine seeing His army crumble to pieces. It is really not fair to have this class of people for his Saviours. Really what heaven is in need of are three kinds. The men who can learn something, the God who can do something, and the looker-on who will not laugh at the performance.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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Telephone No. : Holborn 2601. London, W.C. 1.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

Mr. J. L. MASHITER.—The General Secretary acknowledges 5s. subscription to the N.S.S.

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SUGAR PLUMS

Mr. Cohen has many friends in Leicester and has spent happy and interesting hours before Leicester audiences in the Secular Hall. It was particularly pleasing to him to receive the message of fraternal greetings and goodwill passed at the meeting last Sunday and conveyed by Mr. R. H. Rosetti who was the speaker on that occasion. Naturally, the severe weather interfered with the attendance, but Mr. Rosetti's lecture was appreciated by all present.

We hear good reports of the growing strength of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S., and that the determination and activity of secretary, C. H. Smith, has played no small part in that growth. To-day (Sunday) at 7 p.m., Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak on "From Jesus to Atom Bombs," at 38 John Bright Street, Birmingham. The speaker is well known to Birmingham saints and always receives a hearty welcome.

Mr. T. M. Mosley will meet Dr. Heywood in debate at the Mechanics' Debating Society, Nottingham, on March 3rd, the subject of debate being "Have the Clergy Failed in their Mission?" and on March 8th at the Breaston Literary and Debating Society he will take the negative side in a debate on "That the Present Belief in Humanism is a Delusion and a Danger," with the Rev. W. Chivers. Breaston is between Derby and Nottingham, and the debate begins at 7-45 p.m. The Free-thought position is in safe hands with Mr. Mosley.

Mr. J. T. Brighton reports a very successful meeting last week on the occasion of Mr. Rosetti's visit to the Newcastle Branch N.S.S. The subject, "Nature, Man and God," was very well received by the large audience. Questions and discussion were of the usual high level, and the interest of the audience was held to the end.

"The Church Times" brings the information from Yugoslavia that they need priests. We have a suggestion. We lack Christian members. They want Christian preachers. Why not offer Yugoslavia to send them two parsons for every man or woman sent here. That seems quite a good thing.

At the recent meeting of the Church of England there were opinions expressed as to whether the newspapers are inclined to "push" Church interests now as they once were. We should say that, while there is still plenty of "pushing up" religion it certainly is not as "pushing" as it was. We are not surprised. The papers never had a real interest in religion, and experience is showing them that "there are others". And when people recognise that as applicable to religion, it was bound to lose interest.

HUMAN ODDITIES

FOR those interested in the strange, the queer, the out-of-the-way in humankind, Dr. E. J. Dingwall's "Some Human Oddities" (Home and Van Thal Ltd., 15s.) will provide some entertaining pages. He tells us all about, for example, St. Joseph of Copertino, a friar who actually—it is claimed—managed to fly in the air. The accounts are well substantiated and are often, I believe, depended upon by the Roman Catholic Church to prove the reality of miracles.

Joseph Desa was born in 1603 in Italy and soon began to attract attention because of his very queer behaviour. He was always torturing himself, ate as little as he could and even then the poorest of food, and the rough hair shirt he wore next to his skin was a particularly prickly one.

He was, through this extreme piety, eventually received into the order of St. Francis, and became a fully-fledged priest in 1628. This enabled him to continue his insane practices in asceticism, and these eventually led him to violent religious ecstasies, resulting as the Pope would say, in various authentic miracles. However, the authorities were not altogether convinced that in his case God Almighty suspended the order of nature, and he was brought before the Inquisition. He was there thrice exonerated, and it was after the last time that Joseph went to a chapel to pray and, as Dr. Dingwall reports, "suddenly rose up into the air and with a cry, flew in the upright position to the altar with his hands outstretched as on a cross, and alighted upon it in the middle of the flowers and candles." The nuns present thought he would catch fire, but Joseph appears to have forestalled the flames, for he flew back into the church and, whirling round upon his knees "with a joy of exultation," exclaimed, "Oh! most Blessed Virgin, most Blessed Virgin!"

The evidence for this miracle was so powerful that Joseph was sent to kiss the feet of Pope Urban VIII and he developed such rapturous ecstasies that he gave a repeat performance, rising in the air, and remaining suspended till asked to come down. Urban seems to have been duly, but not too unduly impressed, but was ready to testify to the truth of the levitation.

Nobody, however, appears to have been very much surprised, for in the 17th century miracles were as common as daisies and would be now if the heavy hand of Freethought hadn't been too much for them; but a year or so later, Joseph flew up to a picture of the Virgin which was about 15 yards from the ground; and after that the accounts are too numerous to go into more detail. He managed even to fly out of doors a number of times, and he could even transport other people through the air.

Whether an exhibition of flying on the part of Joseph was responsible for the conversion of the Duke of Brunswick is not clear, but it is said that the Duke gave up his Lutherism as soon as he saw the remarkable powers of levitation possessed by the friar—though Leibnitz, who was his librarian, apparently knows nothing of this. All he has left on record is that the Duke went to Assisi and "was there converted by the wonder-working Father Joseph." And it is interesting to note that two other "noble" visitors anxious to see the remarkable powers of Joseph, the Duke of Bouillon and Isabella of Austria, both failed to note any levitation when writing their accounts.

On the other hand, many famous people like the Infanta Maria, the Duke of Medina, Prince Leopold of Tuscany, and a number of others, all appear to have seen Joseph flying in the air, and he performed many other miracles as well, such as clairvoyance, prevision, healing the sick, and multiplying food. He even had battles with devils, one of whom must have been very frightening, for his horns were two feet long. Needless to add also that the Saint, after dealing without mercy with the demons, had no difficulty in seeing angels "ascending and descending." In fact, it is obvious with such a holy man that the miraculous was as commonplace as riding in a bus is with

us. I have often wondered why defenders of miracles—like Mr. Arnold Lunn—concentrate so much on the miracles of Lourdes when people like Fr. Joseph can provide them with so many far more striking manifestations of Divine Power.

Remember, also, that before anybody is canonised his whole career is carefully gone into; and, in the case of Joseph "eye-witnesses of unexceptional integrity", says Pope Benedict XIV, "reported on the celebrated levitations and remarkable flights of this servant of God when in a condition of ecstatic rapture." A man must be a perfect idiot after such confirmation from a representative of God Almighty not to believe in Fr. Joseph's aerial flights.

Dr. Dingwall rightly points out that the Catholic authorities have always to guard themselves on the difficult point of determining whether the phenomena come from God or the Devil. "This was always," he comments, "the pitfall into which the unwary were accustomed to be trapped." It must always remain an awful dilemma for the faithful, and my heart goes out to the difficulties it creates for all true believers. After all, it may have been the Devil who caused Joseph to fly just as he did Jesus on the famous aerial journey they took together so vividly described in the Gospel. And Dr. Dingwall comes sadly to the conclusion that "it has to be admitted that it is possible for Catholics to be totally unable to distinguish the divine from the diabolic in a number of instances."

But did St. Joseph of Copertino really fly—the agency question, that is, was God or the Devil responsible is irrelevant—as witnessed by so many people of the highest integrity? "Saints do not seem to fly as they used to do," is Dr. Dingwall's observation, and unless one can study feats of levitation coldly and methodically as befits science, how can one say? The reader must decide for himself.

So is the difficulty in the case of Berbiguier the Scourge of Demons—a Frenchman born about 1764, whose speciality seems to have been bottling the spirits up. It used to be done very effectively by King Solomon who never had the slightest difficulty, by the use of magical formulas, in persuading evil demons attenuating themselves sufficiently nebulous to get easily into a narrow necked urn; and though it has been claimed for a number of eminent occultists that they also excel in such laudable feats, Berbiguier appears to have easily outshone the lot. He even wrote a book, "Les Farfadets, ou tous les demons ne sont pas de l'autre monde", which Dr. Dingwall describes as "a veritable encyclopedia of demonology." Berbiguier's curious story is fully described in "Some Human Oddities", to which I refer the reader if he shares my curiosity regarding the bottling up of spirits, and whether they can, or cannot, be let out now and then—like Asmodeus who, some may remember, was the hero of Lesage's "Devil on Two Sticks."

But it is Daniel Dunglass Home who takes up most of Dr. Dingwall's space, and he has some new things to say about the man who was certainly the greatest of all mediums. Even if we are convinced that Home was a humbug and charlatan there is no doubt that he had immense influence in the spiritualist world and he has certainly caused more discussion than any other medium. He was, insists Dr. Dingwall, "one of the most odd and the most interesting" of the puzzling personalities of the nineteenth century. I shall deal with him in my next article.

H. CUTNER.

NEWSPAPER RELIGION

ONCE a week "The Times" prints an anonymous Saturday sermon, maintaining no doubt a tradition from the days when the majority of newspaper readers regarded such contributions as badges of respectability for the journals permitted in their homes. In my search for light I regularly glance at this religious column in "The Times," but generally I have found its arguments too nebulous to take hold of, and I have often regretted seeing so much space filled with so little meaning. A recent article, however, gave me the following extracts, whose intention cannot be mistaken:—

"Denial of God tends, in the long run, to undermine conviction that obligation and responsibility are binding."

"Some standard of morals would be necessary for health, and to hold the community together, in a world in which none believed in God or in anything of eternal value; but it is extremely doubtful whether the finer graces of moral life would flourish and increase in such a secularised society."

"There is much in the modern world to confirm the judgment that, when religious faith and vision decay, ethical demands are less keenly felt and less widely recognised."

Buried though they are in a mass of most meaningless verbiage, these three passages can only be intended to convey that men and women who deny the truth of theistic dogmas are not to be trusted as other citizens are, that the extension of such disbelief to all mankind would result in lower moral standards than at present obtain, and that to-day, as a result of the decay of religious belief, the people are ethically worse than in the past. These conclusions the Editor of "The Times" must know to be entirely unwarrantable. Every day he gives us an extract from his paper dated a hundred years ago, and his files must contain abundant evidence of the steady improvement in the public conscience which has proceeded while religious beliefs have become less and less regarded. That there are still many selfish, dishonest and thoughtless members in the community cannot be used to hide the general growth of sympathy towards the aged, the sick, the unfortunate, and dumb animals. That many national and racial prejudices still persist should not blind anyone to the spirit of understanding now existing between nations that a century ago had nothing in common, and the increasing willingness of progressive countries to concede self-government to erstwhile subject peoples. These facts mean moral progress, as do pensions in the place of charity, family allowances in the place of poor-relief, remedial treatment of criminals in place of vindictiveness, a National Health Service in place of callous indifference to the needs of the mass of the people, social insurance in place of destitution. Why, then, does "The Times" publish what is no less than a slander on the great body of its readers whose religious faith, if it exists at all, is on the wane?

Of course, it is always possible that "The Times" does not share the view that a nation concerned about peace in international affairs and justice and decent standards for all at home is "morally" better than the jingoistic, brutal and ruthless society of a hundred years ago. The same issue that gives the sermon from which I have quoted also includes a report of the last day of a special session of the Convocation of Canterbury when the Archbishop of Canterbury moved that two existing Canons of Church Law should be combined in the following one:—

"The Lord's Day, commonly called Sunday, is ever to be celebrated and kept in the Church of England according to God's Holy Will and pleasure, particularly by attendance at Divine Service and abstaining from all unnecessary labour and business. The Table of Feasts which are to be observed are contained in the Book of Common Prayer, whereof the greater are Christmas Day, Epiphany, Easter Day, Ascension Day, Whit Sunday, and Trinity Sunday

FOOTSTEPS OF THE PAST. By J. M. Wheeler. Essays on Human Evolution. Price 5s.; postage 4d.

MATERIALISM RESTATED. Fourth edition. By Chapman Cohen. Price 4s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

ROME OR REASON? A Question for To-day. By Colonel R. G. Ingersoll. Price 4d.; postage 1d.

The days of fasting and vigils and days of abstinence which are to be observed in the Church of England are set out in the Book of Common Prayer whereof the 40 days of Lent, Ash Wednesday, and the Monday to Saturday before Easter ought specially to be observed.

"Good Friday is ever to be observed by self-discipline, by prayer, and by attendance at Divine Service. It is lawful for the Convocations of Canterbury and York to approve Holy Days to be observed provincially, and for the ordinary to approve Holy Days to be observed locally subject to any direction that may be given by the Convocation of the Province."

There's real ethics for you! Now we know what "the finer graces of moral life" mean. What a world it would be if there were no people left with the strong moral fibre to uphold these paramount duties of modern life! As "The Times" religious correspondent says: "It is as it comes home to them in sincere religion that men feel most strongly the constraint of the moral law."

Since reading this dictum, I have come across a perfect example of it in action. The Christian ministers of Kilmarnock are scandalised because council houses are being allotted to unmarried parents who need homes where they and their children can live. They say it is encouraging immorality, and they want it stopped. Somehow I do not think they will be successful. The average Scot to-day has a broad humanity totally at variance with Scottish religion. An evil effect no doubt of the decay of faith and vision, which I present to "The Times" sermon-writer as a subject for a future contribution.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

IS SECULARISM THE TRUE GOSPEL FOR MANKIND?

Introductory speech by G. W. Foote in Town Hall, Batley, June, 1877, at a debate with George Sexton.

IS Secularism the True Gospel for Mankind? To-night I have to maintain the affirmative of that question. I daresay it may seem strange to some that the word "Gospel" should be associated with Secularism. The ordinary Christian world has been so long accustomed to speak of *the* Gospel, that it has come to regard Gospel and Christianity as synonymous terms, but in reality they are not. All good tidings or good news constitute a "gospel." The word gospel is derived from the Anglo-Saxon "god" and "spell" which means good news or tidings, so that gospel means a good "spell" or good tidings. If Secularism has good tidings for mankind it is as much entitled to claim the word gospel as any of the various supernatural systems of the world. Secularism has a gospel, and I am here to-night to claim that it is the true gospel for mankind. I think it must be evident to all that a gospel may be true or false in two respects, intellectually and morally.

We sometimes find that systems have intellectual truth without much moral truth, while there are some with moral truth without intellectual truth. And occasionally we find a system that originated in times when its intellectual part was really true to those who held it, and when the moral part also was true. But in course of time the intellectual basis has been undermined, and the system contains a good deal of moral truth without any intellectual truth, such, I hold to be the position of the great Christian system to-day. It has an amount of moral truth in it, but its intellectual base has been undermined, and the moral part can only be retained by assimilation into some other system which is suited to the intellectual requirements of the time. Secularism may be true intellectually and morally, I hold it is both. It is not only true because it is in harmony with the latest results of science, but it is morally

true also because it is in harmony with the moral voice of mankind in all ages of the world's history.

During the last three centuries in Europe a remarkable intellectual revolution has occurred. The intellectual atmosphere of to-day is vastly different from that of three centuries ago, and the cause of all this is the immense progress of science. When new truths are discovered they cannot long flit about in the vague, they will be assimilated into the philosophical or religious systems, for, although we may map out the human mind into various departments, our constitution is really one and indivisible, and when new truth is communicated to the human mind it goes on its way irresistibly driving out error before it until it has taken its proper position in subordination to other truths, or in supremacy over them. Now, during this scientific revolution the conception of man's position in the universe, and of the general laws under which the universe is governed, has entirely changed. Man is no longer regarded as the centre of the universe nor is he regarded as the only object for which the universe subsists. This earth of ours is perceived to be comparatively insignificant in Nature's economy, and the actual position of its inhabitants can never again be supposed of those who held it to be that this earth was a special creation designed in particular for God's creatures of the human family.

Something else also has resulted from this intellectual revolution, the great principle of Nature's uniformity has been established; what we call the reign of law has been demonstrated. That law means that everywhere in the known universe things do not happen haphazard, that they are not subject to arbitrary caprice or casual fluctuation, but on the contrary, they always happen in definite order, and from particular causes; particular effects always flow, and this great principle of the stability of nature, of the reign of law, lies now at the basis of all scientific speculation, and no man of science thinks of questioning it.

Now such a principle must surely work its way through the whole of our philosophy. It must drive out error, and one misconception that is driven out by this principle is, that human supplication can alter the natural course of things. The laws of nature are altogether impervious to praise or blame, and man is as much subject to law as is the external universe around him. While he can ascertain the character of these laws which regulate him and his surroundings, he cannot change them, he can only guide his conduct in subordination to them. Another great principle has resulted from this revolution—the sovereignty of reason. In former ages Faith was held to be superior to reason, now faith is placed in subordination to reason. Even the most perverted advocates of supernatural religion are so affected by this principle that they endeavour to show their faith to be based not on merely supernatural grounds, but on the grounds of reason and experience.

Thirdly, we have the principle that morality is altogether natural—a purely human development, having no necessary connection whatever with theological beliefs—that our opinions respecting a life beyond the grave, or the question of God's existence, are independent of morality, that morality is an outgrowth of human nature, the consequence of man being a social animal, and would have existed even if man had never speculated as to a future life, or tried to solve the infinite mystery of the universe.

These, then, I hold are the three great principles which are the outgrowth of this intellectual revolution, and Secularism is true because it recognises and assimilates them. No other system with which I am acquainted does so. The great system by which Secularism is surrounded does not recognise them. It does not recognise the sovereignty of reason, but the supremacy of faith. It does not recognise the stability of nature, but believes in the efficacy of prayer, it does not recognise the naturalism of morals, but is constantly asserting that human morality is of no effect without divine sanctions, and that without belief in the divinity of Christ's person, it is utterly impos-

sible for men to have a sufficient guide for their conduct in this life, or any consolation when they have to leave it.

And now I shall have to maintain that Secularism is morally true. First, then, it is morally true because without any reference to opinions, it recognises the great principle of the brotherhood of man. I know my opponents will urge that Christianity recognises this too, yet the doctrine of the brotherhood of man existed in the world before Christianity was heard of. It is not unique to Christianity. It was only accepted and assimilated by Christianity. Secularism may exercise the same right to accept and assimilate and because Secularism does so, it is morally true.

I urge that this doctrine of Secularism is not a mere abstract one, that it is not inoperative, but immensely operative, for everywhere you will find Secularist lovers of peace and concord. You never hear of a professed Secularist rave about that absurd patriotism which would send one nation to fight against another for a mere national idea, which has no root in the nature of things. Secularists are always foremost in promoting peace, they recognise the truth of the great saying of the Roman Emperor and philosopher: "What is not good for the hive, is not good for the single bee."

Secularism recognises the truth that the interests and happiness of the whole of us are inseparably bound up together. No man can pursue his welfare in the long run at the expense of others—of the collective humanity of which each one of us forms a part.

"NOW IS THE HOUR . . ."

HOW heartening it was to read of Mr. Wheal's success in getting "The Freethinker" accepted in the Reading Room of the Mexborough Library—an effort deserving the congratulations and thanks of all Freethinkers. Knowing the difficulties to be overcome when dealing with Library Committees and Urban District Councillors it would seem the Librarian himself is also to be congratulated!

Anyway, this really is a step in the right direction and it is to be hoped that other Freethinkers will now approach their own Public Libraries in the same cause. Should their efforts be unsuccessful and they find themselves pitched out on their ears they could always leave their own weekly copy on the reading table when they have done with it. It would not for long lack a reader!

The Freethought Movement badly needs Publicity—with a capital "P." We must learn to bang the drum if we are to make ourselves heard above the din of this Loud-Speaking Age. The Salvationists and the Four-Square godites certainly appreciate this even if the Orthodox Church does not. But the latter's empty pews surely denote who are the Wise and who are the Foolish Virgins. After all, it is merely a question of good salesmanship. If you have something to sell you must tell the people about it, not just wait for them to find it out for themselves.

We know that the medium of Broadcasting is barred to the ungodly. The recent series of radio talks so ably "stage-managed" by the B.B.C. proves once again how heavily the dice are loaded against us when we come up against the defenders of the State religion. They certainly know how to "pull a fast one" and tip the scales to their own advantage.

I cannot help thinking it is always a mistake to choose the scholastic type of speaker if one really wants to impress and convince the average listener. It is the plain-speaking, hard-hitting man they want to hear rather than scientist-philosophers, even though their names may be famous—or better still—someone with a strong sense of humour. A caustic wit can penetrate deeper and more quickly than the heavy, ponderous and too serious speaker. Make the people laugh, show them the funny side and guy your opponents good and plenty—it will

be far more effective than any long-winded, high-brow discourse. Make a thing look utterly foolish and absurd and you have practically destroyed it.

Another point one cannot over-stress is the necessity for a dynamic figure-head. Every Cause, if it is to stand any chance of success, must have an outstanding personality at the helm. It is unfortunately true that the legacy inherited from our animal ancestors still requires us to follow a leader. So long as we are led we will follow meekly like sheep; but without a leader our courage fails us and we refuse to budge an inch. Every religion must have its supreme Authority—whether living, dead or purely imaginary it does not matter at all. If Atheism is to make any sort of rapid progress it must put forward one acknowledged head. It is no use telling people that Professor Finckelstein is an Atheist, that Lord Blathering is a Rationalist—they are not interested. Neither is it sufficient for writers to send articles like this to the Freethought press. These papers unfortunately seldom reach the general public owing to the prejudice, narrowness or temerity of booksellers and agents in this Church-ridden State. Public speakers definitely do a good work, especially at open-air meetings, but even that is not enough.

To organise the movement on a really big scale would require unlimited financial backing. Is not there *one* who would be willing to stand behind us with a substantial amount of capital to further the cause of Truth versus Lies, Reason versus un-Reason and Fact versus Fiction? Must we still sigh for the day when the Albert Hall will be packed with eager thousands waiting to hear some Master-Voice bid them wake from their Church-doped slumbers, shake off the shackles of their priesthood-jailers and witness the Light of Reason banish for ever the dark shadows of religious gloom and pagan superstition?

Yes—Atheism must be taken to the people in a big way. And *now is the hour!* Christianity is still the creaking gate that hangs longest on its hinges, but it can be demolished quickly and decisively if the blow is strong enough. To wait for its eventual decay by natural causes may take many generations for it is still supported by the twin props of Falschood and Fear.

And why, too, shouldn't we have our own Theme Song to be sung at all public meetings? Organised Christianity has its hymns, ancient and modern, and Politics has its "Red Flag" or "Land of Hope and Glory" according to taste! One of the most tuneful and popular airs of the day is that simple four-lined verse beginning—"Now is the hour for me to say 'Good-bye.'" I suggest the lines might well be re-written to constitute the Atheists' Anthem, as follows:—

"Now is the hour for us to say 'Goodbye'
To all foolish stories of God up in the sky.
When Reason wakes we proudly face the Dawn—
Dead is Religion when Freethought is born!"

W. H. WOOD.

RELIGIOUS SYMBOLS

THE VIRGIN AND HER DOVE.

Corn in one form or another was the first planned subsidy of man. Together with the experience that it must be buried and mystically die in order to thrive, the idea of "resurrection" arose. This is the "mystery" of Jesus, embodied in the consecrated Bread (Wafer). Hence the origin of the bread-symbol. Wine, on the other hand, gives the drinker the feeling of "enthusiasm", to have the God (theos) IN (en) himself. Spirits, therefore, originally were restricted to the cult.

The sky as the paramount deity is represented by Sun and Moon. Zeus, Jovis, Jupiter, etc., is derived from Sanskrit DYAU—Heaven, pitar=Father, hence: the Heavenly Father.

Frequently the mild moon is thought of as the Heavenly Virgin and, at the same time, Mother-Goddess. The Sun on which the crop depends, is the Saviour, sacrificing himself as corn for the benefit of mankind. The Wafer (Hostia), lying in the "lunula", thus rests in the womb of his mother, the Moon. The womb-symbol is attached to all vessels—baskets, buckets and particularly water jars in which the rain clouds are conceived. As corn, the Old Egyptian God "Osiris" lies in the Mystical Basket (Cista Mystica) from which he will resurrect. Moses—in Asia Minor "Mesa"—Moon—is found in a basket, etc. The two horns of the Bull being the symbol of the half-moon, the famous Moses by Michelangelo is horned. Horn-shaped is the horn of abundance of Fortune (fr. lat. fors, fortis, derived from Fero—to bear, literally meaning, that which is produced). St. Mary as the Moon-Queen sometimes is represented as standing on the half-moon. As such she is Virgo-Venus, the Virgin and at the same time Goddess of Love and eternal Youth. She is connected with water (and fish) and birds, the representatives of the lofty sky.

In the Christian Trinity her place is taken up by the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Immaculate Conception is rather simple with the identity of Virgin and the Holy Ghost who is responsible for "that which is conceived in her" (St. Matth. 1, 20). Among the birds connected with the Love Deities the Dove particularly is the symbol of true love; thus, the Dove comes to represent the Holy Spirit, God's Wisdom, as well.

Viewing everything from high above, birds must collect a lot of wisdom and to him who understands their language—as King Solomon was supposed to—many secrets are revealed. Therefore, certain categories of Roman diviners—such as the Augurs—foretold events by observing the flight or cries of birds.

Kama, the Indian Eros, is thought of as mounted on a parrot or sparrow. With folk fairies being, so to say, the underground disguise of former pagan myths, Cinderella—a persecuted virgin of the Revelation (c. XII)—is helped by doves. The subject of the tiny shoe is already brought up with Strabon in the story of Rhodopis. The shoe—especially the pointed shoe—is, like the horn of abundance, another womb-symbol, and frequently children expect to find their presents in their shoes or stockings. A widow whose brother-in-law refuses to accept her as wife, "looses his shoe from off his foot" (Deut. XXV, 7-10; Ruth IV) thus "unbinding" him from his sexual duty. This explains why an old shoe is tied to the ear of the bride.

EGG AND EASTER.

Birds and their eggs play an important part in various ceremonies connected with weddings and the following night.

Life springs from the egg. There is many a myth—such as in India—according to which the world was created by the splitting (=cutting in half) of a mystical egg. Liturgically, Easter is a new creation, hence its connection with the egg; yet the name of that old spring festival is derived from that of a Spring Goddess, Eastre (Ostara) whose holy animal was the prolific hare. This explains the silly connection of egg, chicken and hare on many Easter cards.

The Jews correspondingly celebrate "Passah" (Passover) with everything new, and the mythical cutting of the Water Demon is symbolised by the division of the Waters of the Red Sea. The Easter Lamb is eaten in communion, for it is the time of the Spring Equinox when the Sun (Jesus is named Sol Invectus—the Invincible Sun) has entered the constellation of "aries"—in Hebrew "tolèh"—Lamb. Accordingly it is at the Passover meal that Jesus, the Lamb, tells the disciples to "divide" bread and wine in his remembrance (Luke XXII).

The "rolling" sun was symbolised by the rolling of eggs at Easter time and ball games originally had a similar mystical meaning (for instance, in Ancient Mexico).

Fruits in general are considered symbols of fruitfulness, particularly so if they resemble the egg. One such is the lemon,

a species of which must be contained—along with crack-willows—in the liturgical "lulab-bunch" for the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles. Another is the blooming catkin, but the foremost substitute was the almond. When Moses went into the tabernacle he noticed that the rod of Aaron "was budded . . . and yielded almonds" (Num. XVII, 8). By the way, "Aaron"—perhaps connected with cuneiform Irin (the cedar)—means nothing but "The Ark of the Covenant" the Cista Mystica or Receptacle of the Corn-God. According to Ex. XXV, 33f. also the bowls in the Temple were made "like unto almonds" etc. And the ancient Church artists—painters, sculptors, masons—still were cognizant with the esoteric meaning of the Bible, and on the wall of many an old church one can find the Christ inside an oval, the so-called "Mandorla". This in Italian means "the Almond".

PERCY G. ROY.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

LONDON—INDOOR

Anarchist Federation (London Group) (The National Trade Union Club, 12, Gt. Newport Street, W.C., Room 7).—"The Roman Catholic Church and Socialism." Miss NAN HANSON.

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Tuesday, March 2, 7 p.m.: "The Probation Service", W. G. MINN, M.A. (Secretary, Probation Service Board).

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: "The True and False in Christianity", Mr. ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON, M.A.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.1).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: "Socialism and Religion," Mr. TONY TURNER. (S.P.G.B.)

COUNTRY—INDOOR

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (38, John Bright Street, Room 13).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "From Jesus to Atom Bombs," Mr. R. H. ROSETTI (Gen. Sec., N.S.S.).

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics Institute).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "The Goddess One Should Not Deny," Mr. R. J. DAY.

Glasgow Secular Society (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "Is Russia a Menace to Peace?" Mr. HORACE HENDERSON.

Halifax Branch N.S.S. (Boar's Head Hotel, Southgate).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Stream of Life," Mr. G. THOMPSON.

Leicester Secular Society (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: "Nationalism and After—The Problem in Indonesia," OLIVE RENTER.

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Stork Hotel, Queen Square, Liverpool, 1).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: "The Child and Religious Instruction," Miss A. M. PARRY.

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street). Sunday, 2-30 p.m., Jubilee Sunday of Cosmo: "Freedom of Speech," Prof. HAROLD TARKI.

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