

THE

FREETHINKER

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Mutual Aid

PASSING outside a London bookshop recently, we observed a new biography which bore the rather intriguing title of *The Anarchist Prince*. The hero and subject of this biography was Peter Kropotkin, Russian prince, anarchist philosopher, nihilist conspirator against his imperial relative, the then Tsar, and a sociologist perhaps second only to Darwin in importance as an interpreter of evolution in its impact upon human society. Peter Kropotkin was, upon any showing, one of the most remarkable men of his epoch (1840-1920), even if the Bolshevik revolution and the current victory in Russia of the rival Marxist-Leninist philosophy have caused his name and fame to fall into temporary oblivion—at least, we hope that his eclipse will prove only temporary. Along with two other anarchists, both like his master, Michael Bakunin, and his later contemporary, the great novelist and pacifist philosopher, Count Leo Tolstoy, Russian aristocrat Kropotkin advanced a social philosophy which profoundly influenced the civilised world of his day.

In the case of Kropotkin, his social contribution lay, first and foremost, in his insistence upon "mutual aid," upon social co-operation, as contraposed to the alleged "law" of competition, which last may be said to have dominated, indeed almost monopolised so many aspects of Victorian thinking about social and biological science, and economics. In a series of masterly sociological works, amongst which his little classic *Mutual Aid* is the best known to the general non-anarchist reader, Kropotkin drew attention to the then largely forgotten factor of social co-operation as a factor in evolution, both human and animal. Writing as a qualified scientist who, in the Siberian wilderness, had observed both primitive man and "nature in the raw" at first hand, Kropotkin drew up a powerful indictment of those contemporary (to early twentieth-century) scientists—and there were many such!—who habitually assumed that the Darwinian "struggle for existence" conformed without any qualification whatsoever to the then contemporary savage economic struggles in an age of practically unlimited *laissez-faire*. In a subsequent massive work on *Ethics* Kropotkin, as it were, dotted the i's and crossed the t's of the argument of *Mutual Aid*.

In all this there was, of course, nothing that was absolutely new. Long before Kropotkin wrote *Mutual Aid*, Darwin and even that prince of Victorian individualists, Herbert Spencer—whose brand of "anarchism" was at the opposite pole to Kropotkin's own variety of "Anarchist-Communism"—had noticed and even emphasised the formative rôle of the co-operative factor in social and biological evolution. However, these great Victorian thinkers, on the whole, tended to emphasise the alternative competitive side, when popularised by disciples without the genius of Darwin, Huxley, and Spencer, "the survival of the fittest" soon degenerated

into "nature red in tooth and claw." One can, we think, relevantly add, without importing political prejudice into our argument, that the highly competitive character of current Victorian society appeared to lend support to this biological tendency which, incidentally, was exposed long before Darwin in the famous aphorism of the old Greek philosopher, Heraclitus of Ephesus, "strife is the begetter of everything" ("polemos pater panton").

There have, however, been other social orders than that which originated in the Industrial Revolution and which attained its zenith in the Victorian—and Darwinian—era in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the primitive societies of the Arctic wilderness, those human fossils left by the Ice Age, our Russian author observed how co-operation—and co-operation alone—enabled mankind, not to mention other more primitive animals, to survive in the teeth of a hostile nature. It is well known how after his return from Siberia Kropotkin devoted the rest of his long life to the promulgation of a libertarian Communism in which voluntary ethical sanctions based on a non-religious variation of "The Golden Rule" would succeed and finally supplant altogether the dictatorial sway of authority in the State and in the courts of positive law.

A noble dream! But is it more? Kropotkin and his disciples at least thought so. They pointed proudly to the free communes of classical Greece and of medieval Italy, so prolific in human genius and where constraint was reduced to a minimum, in proof of their contention. Moreover, as our anarchist philosopher powerfully argued, is not human civilisation itself both a proof and a triumph of the efficacy of the co-operative principle?

In the limited field of revolutionary socialism the libertarian theories of Kropotkin found, as is common knowledge, a powerful adversary in the authoritarian socialism of Karl Marx and, in our own day, of Lenin and Stalin. This is hardly the place to consider this aspect of social ideology. But in the more general field of social science the optimistic theories of Kropotkin encountered other opponents, the most formidable of whom was Malthus, whom anarchism has always regarded as a kind of social "antichrist." For if one accepts the Malthusian theory, it is certain that mankind will never be perfect and, or so it would seem, certain that, at any rate, the vast majority of man (and woman) kind will never be happy.

The famous "Malthusian" doctrine is thus summarised by a modern American authority. "Malthus' entire social and economic thought may be held to centre about the theory of population. According to this theory population when unchecked increases at a rate so much more rapid than it is possible to increase food supply that numbers are constantly pressing on means of subsistence." (cf. *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 10, article, Malthus.)

Robert Malthus, the author of this pessimistic theory, was a clergyman of the then predominantly Calvinistic Church

of England and may himself, we think, be relevantly described as a sociological Calvinist, perhaps as Calvin's most eminent disciple! For the famous Malthusian "Law" is surely a secularised version of Calvinism. What is the *real* difference between saying that mankind, however much he may strive, is in Calvinistic language, "a child of wrath" doomed, willy-nilly, to predestined damnation, and the doctrine of Malthus that mankind must always be at the mercy of his uncontrollable environment; except that here theology has been transformed into economics? Without necessarily endorsing the anarchist dream of ultimately arriving at universal happiness—which may quite possibly be too good to be true!—the attraction which Malthus' gloomy version of Calvin's grim theology seems to have for many bona fide Freethinkers has always seemed to the present writer to be one of the most curious phenomena in modern thought.

As and when considered, not as a social aspiration but as a would-be scientific generalisation, there was, and still is, no doubt, something to be said for the Rev. Robert. In his own day, in the early days of the Industrial Revolution, and even in our own day, human technical productivity is too often unequal to human needs. But it is surely very rash to assume that this will always be so; particularly as man is precisely that animal the distinctive characteristic of whom is his power, so often demonstrated hitherto, to modify his environment. Why, the anarchists argue against Malthus, very cogently in our opinion, should we assume that this power will cease in the future, that mankind will always be helpless against a hostile nature?

However this may be, and whether the vision of anarchism is, or is not realised in its integrity, it represents a noble conception and a challenge to the totalitarian philosophies of our own day, the beginnings of which darkened Kropotkin's last days. In particular, it has always seemed to the present writer that every genuine Freethinker must have something of the anarchist in his mental composition. To think for oneself, to refuse to bow to authority, whether of names or of numbers, to refuse to swim with the stream or to march with the big battalions, these qualities pre-eminently distinguish both Freethought and Anarchism. We can, at least, agree that the world would be a poor place without them.

F. A. RIDLEY.

DIVERSITIES IN FREETHOUGHT

THERE are—and there ought to be, in my opinion—as many kinds of Freethought as there are kinds of religion. But just as Christians say in their Creed, "I believe in One God" (which is the Father Almighty), so many Freethinkers say, "I believe in One Freethought" (which is Atheism).

Atheists, indeed, are apt to despise fellow-Freethinkers who do not boldly proclaim themselves Atheists. Indeed, the Atheist—very naturally and excusably—thinks himself the very devil of a fellow, remembering, as he does, that in religious eyes he is the wickedest of all the wicked; deliberate and wilful disbelief being the most heinous of sins. And the Atheist often believes that other Freethinkers do not profess Atheism merely from lack of courage, "to go the whole hog," as people say. Sometimes, indeed, it does look as if Agnostics and other fellow-travellers have not the courage of their convictions (or lack of them) and are Atheists in all, except the honest and plain avowal of complete disbelief.

But the truth is that a mind may be an honest and freethinking mind without subscribing to 100 per cent. Atheism, or even 1 per cent. Atheism, at all.

For while one person *knows*: "There is no God or gods," another person may merely know: "I suspect there is no God or gods," and yet another: "I don't know whether there is a God or gods and I have no opinion on that subject, because the evidence seems conflicting and not conclusive." So a Christian may say: "I know there is a God," or "I think there is," or "I doubt, but I try to believe." As mental states these are all quite understandable and sensible enough. A jury in a law court realises this perfectly well for the verdict may be guilty, not guilty, or non-proven (which ranks as not guilty, but is really not the same).

This being so, it is as wrong for Atheism to be intolerant as for religion to be intolerant. Atheism should not plume itself on orthodoxy. An Atheist who is narrow and bigoted in his Atheism is as bad as a religionist who is the same. For my part, my conception of freethought is so wide that I regard a Deist like Voltaire, or the late Bernard Shaw, or a modernist-religionist like Bishop Barnes or Dean Inge, as excellent Freethinkers as much as any professed Agnostic or Atheist.

And why not? A Freethinker is a strong, free spirit, which thinks freely, not a hide-bound mind whose thought having led him in one settled direction no longer functions save in that direction. An Atheist who will not doubt or question his own Atheism is no more a true Freethinker than the religionist who will not doubt or question his own religion.

To my mind, the very prince of Freethinkers was Voltaire, when he declared: "I detest your principles, but I would die for your right to express them." Humanity has not even learned that lesson yet as you may see by the idiotic persecution of the Communists and suspected Communists in modern England, America and Australia to-day, or by the lack of toleration towards Atheism by the complaints of the Church of Scotland about the B.B.C.

So evil and low is the intellectual atmosphere of our day that if one merely were to say (as I say here): "Communism and Atheism should be tolerated or allowed to express themselves freely without hindrance, that would expose the speaker to a charge of himself being a Communist or an Atheist, or at the very least, a fellow-traveller. No one would believe that a stern and unbending Tory" or a devout and pious believer in God and Jesus could talk like that! Yet why not? Even Satan has not yet been silenced by the Almighty in Christian theological teaching, and if the very Devil can be tolerated by God, why should man not tolerate the talk of his fellow-man?

Nay, worse. To-day so degraded is our mentality and morality that if a man urges Peace on Earth, he is a disguised Communist at the best in the popular mind, and in the Prime Minister's words, "an enemy in the midst." The reasoning seems to be: "The Communists want peace. So do you. Ergo you must be a Communist or one of their fellow-travellers." Is this logic and sense, or utter rubbish?

Yet to this pass have we come. To such squalid depths has a lack of toleration brought the mass of us.

I could quote a dozen instances of this fashionable popular imbecility in current politics, economics and religion. One more will suffice. Notice how European politicians chatter of Human Rights, and amongst them they always include "Freedom of Worship," but leave out "Freedom of Non-Worship." Even freedom itself

must not be free. Worship what God you will but not No-God.

Let not freethought imitate the bad example of religion in this intolerant respect. What does it matter if Mr. Cutner's freethinking leads him to the opinion that Jesus is a myth and that my freethinking leads me to the opinion that he is partially and another to the opinion that he is historical? Or that Mr. Rosetti remains an unshaken Atheist while Mr. John Rowlands moves towards Deism? All these surely may be as veritable Freethinkers as Catholics, Protestants and Jehovah's Witnesses are veritable religionists.

Nor ought freethought to concern itself merely with religion. For religion is not the whole of life. A freethinker in religion should not be a hide-bound thinker in politics, economics, philosophy, literature, art or any other field. The mental habit of doubt, questioning, and criticism, should, and naturally does tend to, spill over the whole of one's mental outlook. The freethought attitude ought not to be confined to one sphere, namely conventional, organised religion, as it, too often, is.

Generally speaking, few people think freely and without constraint or inhibitions over the whole of the mental field. They have neither the impulse, the desire nor the courage to follow their thought wherever it may lead:

"As Far as Thought Can Reach." It was one of the most admirable characteristics of writers like Shaw and Wells, that they never feared to follow their brains even though the following sometimes lost them allegiances and disconcerted their most faithful disciples. If we think for ourselves we think best for others. For my part I will not use other minds to do my thinking for me, not even the best minds. Still less will I stuff my mind full of other men's thoughts, half-thoughts, and no-thoughts, by over-reading, as most moderns do, until the mind becomes incapable of originating any thought, even the feeblest, that is its own.

What does it matter whether my thought is right or wrong? What matters is that it is mine. Sixpence of a man's own is more to him than a pound in another's pocket, as Sancho Panza sensibly said.

We live by the laws of our own being. After all, each inevitably cares more for himself than any other, however he may strive to the contrary. Selflessness itself is selfish in spite of itself.

In short: let me be a Freethinker in the widest sense of the word and let me acknowledge myself as worthy of that proud description so well translated as an *esprit fort*.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

RELIGION AND REASON

ADEQUATE definition of Rationalism is a matter which has always caused a certain amount of discussion. Most members of the R.P.A. would say, I think, that Rationalism is more in the nature of an attitude of mind than of a system of belief, or even a method of thought. And there is a good deal to be said on behalf of that idea. On the other hand, there are some people who are firm believers in some school or other of religious thought who would hold themselves to be Rationalists, since their theology does not at any point come into conflict with reason. Among the latter is certainly Dr. W. R. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul's, who delivered the Essex Hall Lecture earlier this year. That lecture has been published under the title *Reason in Religion* (Lindsey Press, 1s. 6d.), and it deserves a wide audience, both among those who would agree with the Dean's general attitude, and those who would most fervently disagree.

Dr. Matthew's main concern, indeed, is to show that there is a very definite rôle for reason in the formulation of theologies, and that such modern dogmatists as Karl Barth, who would restrict reason within very narrow limits, are wholly mistaken in their attitude, which (if generally adopted) would not lead to an increase in religious belief but to an increase in scepticism. With that, I think, the majority of the readers of these columns would most cordially agree. An irrational emphasis on dogmas which are impossible to prove or to justify intellectually tends, I am sure, to alienate many who might otherwise remain in some sense religious believers.

Of course, a lecture lasting an hour or so—a lecture which, in printed form, occupies only 26 pages—cannot hope to deal exhaustively with a question that has occupied many a weighty tome in its time. But at the same time I think that Dr. Matthews has contributed some worth-while thoughts to the discussion, and his booklet is a stimulating contribution, which will help to clarify the minds of many people of all schools of thought.

J. R.

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ACID DROPS

Is religion getting a new lease of life in Russia or slowly but surely dying out? According to the journal *Bolshevik*, "religious prejudices are in individual instances getting stronger" in Russia—though in the Russian journal *Culture and Life*, it is pointed out that though "religion is merely a legacy of bourgeois society," it still had to be fought. And a writer in *Bolshevik* is obliged to admit that where Soviet pressure against religion is relaxed, "religious prejudices are getting stronger." Needless to say, this writer goes a long way further. He says that "the instigators of a new war employ religion in their propaganda." The Red Dean really ought to reply to that one.

The Bishop of Blackburn, who does not like the way "implicit Atheism has been creeping in among our people"—we note that he calls it Atheism and not Agnosticism—complains that it is not enough merely to talk about his religion. He says that "the truth of the Gospel must be demonstrated." Now that is what we Freethinkers have always said, so why do not our bishops set to work and demonstrate it for us? Once the Gospel has been shown to be true—and, hey presto! Atheism will vanish for ever off the face of this happy Christian land. What is holding them back? We wish the Bishop of Blackburn would tell us.

However, there is still another way to oust Atheism discovered by Canon Peter Green for the *Church Times*. It is his belief that "daily services in every church in England would do more to bring the nation to God than anything else that man could do." It must be heart-breaking to find so few other Christians will agree—especially those who have to conduct the services. In any case, the point to note is that reason would be completely ignored—all that is necessary is faith, faith, and more faith. Canon Green should go over to Rome.

The terrible death of 51 Holy Year pilgrims and seven others in an aeroplane is notable, once again, for the fact so hard to explain that God is no respecter of persons. It is much more easy to understand if the aeroplane is returning from a football match, but how can the Pope account to his sheep for such a dreadful tragedy? All he could say—it seems to us in mock irony—that the victims had in their Holy Year pilgrimage gained "grace and the plenary indulgence" thus "opening the way for themselves into heaven." For sheer fudge this would be hard to beat.

Something appears to have gone wrong with the excavations "around" the traditional site of St. Peter's tomb, for the Vatican has postponed, for the time being, publication of their result. At least that is what is put out for newspapers to say, but the real reason may be that no tomb has been discovered which could in any way be St. Peter's. Which only goes to confirm what some of us have long suspected, that the whole New Testament story of Peter is as much a myth as that of Jesus. No trace of Peter has ever been discovered outside the New Testament.

But there are compensations—it seems that the site of "our Lady's" house at Ephesus has been found. After the angels carried her up to Heaven, the house was turned into a chapel "containing her statue" which, we are assured, was "adapted" from "an earlier pagan statue." We suspect that there is just as much truth

in this beautiful religious yarn as there is in all that the Vatican put out about other New Testament heroes and heroines. How true it is that, to support one little lie, requires another thousand big lies.

Miss Dorothy L. Sayers can write an absorbing detective story, but as a theologian she really is funny. She is very angry at Mr. Fred Hoyle who, in his recent B.B.C. lectures, ridiculed the "Immortality" nonsense believed in by Christians. Miss Sayers now tells us—and of course she knows—that immortality "does not consist of endless prolonged time of the kind we know." The two things "eternity in terms of time" are really "incommensurable." In fact, immortality means something like what we mean when we say that Hamlet is "immortal." When Miss Sayers tries to theologise, she joins the company of the late Mr. G. K. Chesterton—she writes incomprehensible twaddle.

More discussion on the Virgin Birth is taking place in the columns of the *The Christian World*, and pious readers will soon be in a howling muddle as to what to believe. Sir Angus Watson wants to know, if you give it up, what must be done with all the other authentic miracles in the Gospels? While the President of the Union of Modern Free Churchmen, the Rev. A. Clifford Hall, wants to reject it as "there is no evidence for it whether biblical or scientific." Freethought may be doing its work slowly but—how surely!

Then there is the perennial question of the "Incarnation" which is just as big nonsense as the Virgin Birth. The Rev. Mr. Philpot, who is the secretary of the Cornwall Branch of the Modern Churchman's Union, believes in it of course, but his "understanding" of it differs from somebody else "partly through using undefined terms and especially in his criterion of what is true." This delightful fog of words can mean only that he does believe in the Incarnation or that he does not—and the Lord only knows what he really believes. But certainly not what a good Roman Catholic convert means.

It will come as a surprise that a town with a reputation like Swansea's should not have told the Sabbatarian bigots to mind their own business and voted for Sunday cinemas long ago. We are glad to note that, at long last, it has come into line with almost all the large towns in the country, and by a majority of nearly 3,000 in a 50 per cent. poll has sent the Misery Mongers howling with anger. The Rev. Iltyd Jenkins complains that the apathy of the electors let his "Christ and Life Committee" badly, down; but it is much more possible that it was those in favour of Sunday cinemas who did not vote as they should have done. Had they done so the majority would have been overwhelming.

"Desertions" are a sore point with the Churches, and with none more than with the Church of Rome which discreetly says as little as possible about them. In fact, in many cases, the "deserters" are included among the faithful to make a better show of numbers. The R.C. Bishop Rudderham painfully referred to the deserters in Cornwall—of all places!—when he said that if there had been no deserters in the past 100 years, instead of only 5 per cent. Catholics there would have been between 25 to 30 per cent. It must be very hard to realise that in most cases deserters from Rome become Freethinkers—though perhaps some of its bishops would prefer that to their becoming Protestants.

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Lecture Notices should reach the Office by Friday morning. When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, John Seibert, giving as long notice as possible.

The following periodicals are being received regularly, and can be consulted at "The Freethinker" office: THE TRUTH SEEKER (U.S.A.), COMMON SENSE (U.S.A.), THE LIBERAL (U.S.A.), THE VOICE OF FREEDOM (U.S.A., German and English), PROGRESSIVE WORLD (U.S.A.), THE NEW ZEALAND RATIONALIST, THE RATIONALIST (Australia), DER FRIEDENKER (Switzerland), DON BASILIO (Italy).

Will correspondents please write on one side of the paper, and keep their letters brief. This will give everybody a chance.

SUGAR PLUMS

Mr. F. A. Ridley will be in Glasgow to-day (December 3) on behalf of The Glasgow Secular Society. His lecture on "Religion, Freethought, and the Future of Civilisation," will be given in the McLellan Galleries, 270, Sauchiehall Street, at 7 p.m., and should attract a full house. A lot of work behind the scenes has been put in by the local saints, and we wish them the success they deserve. Admission is free, with some Donation Tickets.

We can still supply the special greeting card for Freethinkers and their friends. The paragraph in last week's paper brought a good response, also many appreciations of the dignity of the design and wording. The price is 6d. each, plus 1d. postage, from the Pioneer Press or The National Secular Society, 41, Gray's Inn Road, London, W.C. 1.

Applications are coming in well for the Annual Dinner on Saturday, January 13 next, in The Charing Cross Hotel, Strand, London. Tickets 15s. each, cash with order, with special mention if vegetarian menu is required. The occasion is an excellent medium for meeting well-known Freethinkers and for introductions to new friends and workers in the movement.

We have remarked more than once that Roman Catholicism in England is a special brand; to taste its rank intolerance, one must go to other countries where it flourishes if possible by trampling down all opposition. In the current number of the *Journal of Sex Education*, Dr. Norman Haire, its editor, recounts the struggle he had with the Roman Church in Australia during the war when he tried, in a series of articles in a woman's paper, to solve sexual problems. There appears to have been nothing too mean, underhand, or cowardly, which the "hierarchy" did not attempt in their determination to stop Dr. Haire. All who are interested in the work of *Sex Education* should support this frankly written *Journal*.

MIXED MARRIAGE

IT must not be thought, said Alec M'Conkey, that because Father Snuffagin is deaf that he is stupid. Indeed, he is a wise and kindly old man and now that he has been fitted with one of those hearing gadgets, conversation with him can be carried on without strain. Like so many other elderly priests in Ireland—particularly in the rural districts—he is a real father to his people, and his opinion and advice are always eagerly sought.

Now, Molly Flynn who married Tom Foster two years ago had, as a baby, been christened by Father Snuffagin, and he had seen the little girl grow to womanhood. Molly was a rosy-cheeked country girl, and now, at twenty-five, she was the mother of another rosy-cheeked girl. Molly's marriage had been a love match, and her husband had a good job in the neighbouring parish of Drumsallagh where they lived. But there was the inevitable bone of contention, for Tom was a Protestant, while, of course, Molly was a Catholic.

Well, even as a child, Molly had shown that she was the possessor of an ungovernable temper. Ordinarily good humoured and agreeable, if crossed, she seemed to lose all sense of proportion, and gave way to what ordinary people call tantrums. Unfortunately, parents and teachers had not checked this tendency, and although as she grew up the "scenes" became almost forgotten, she was still liable to "flare up" if unduly excited. Tom was a peace-loving chap, but he was no soft mark, and on occasion when Molly had "gone off at the deep end" he had retaliated in the same manner. The silly arguments, whatever they started about, always ended on the religious question, abuse being dominant, and something near to physical violence the final note. Neighbours, who were not at all bigoted, for Ballygoeasy is very tolerant, deplored this disharmony, and Father Snuffagin's good offices were sought as peacemaker. He visited Drumsallagh, and, of course, received a welcome.

"Now Molly, me child," said the priest, "I want to put this matter right between you and your husband. I'm not saying there aren't faults on both sides, for it takes two to make a quarrel. But Tom is a man in a million, and you tell me you always pray for his conversion. But 'tis not the right way to be bringing him to the Faith, to be insulting the beliefs he was reared in. I'm blaming you, Molly, for the sad state of matters that compelled Protestant and Catholic neighbours to speak to me about your conduct. Sure, didn't Tom get married in the Church without a word of protest, and hasn't wee Katie been christened, and don't we all hope you'll both be spared to give Holy Mother Church many more childer . . ."

Molly was profoundly moved. She assured Father Snuffagin that Tom was the dearest, kindest, most considerate man in the world.

"We live in great comfort, here, Father, and there's nothing I want but to live at peace—but when this ould temper comes over me, God alone knows what I'll say or do. Oh, Father, surely there must be some way you can think of that will keep our home happy?"

"There is, me child," replied the old man in his finest paternal manner. "If you'll just be guided by your spiritual adviser, you will have a real Christian home, and most likely it will please Almighty God to guide poor Tom to the One True Faith."

Briefly, the priest outlined his plan. Molly was to put away in a cupboard all holy pictures, statues, relics, rosaries, prayer books and other reminders of the Catholic Faith and keep them under lock and key for a month. Of course, when going to Mass or Benediction, she would

have to take out her prayer book and beads, but they must be returned unostentatiously after service. Nothing must be shown in the home that would give the atmosphere of Catholicism, and consequently Tom could then have no excuse for commencing the offensive. Yes, yes, assented Molly, but isn't that denying the Faith, and giving in to the Protestants? By no means, Molly, for that's only half of my plan. You must tell Tom, with true humility, what you propose, but you must get the promise that on his part he will meet you on equal terms. He will be required to do the same with all his Protestant and Orange emblems. I feel that he will see reason in my plan, and that all may, with God's Holy Will, be well in your Christian home.

Promising to return in a month, Father Snuffagin left Molly to the good work of conciliating her husband.

The end of the trial period saw the priest again in Drumsallagh. From the window Molly saw him coming, and ran out to meet him with outstretched hands. The old prelate could see that all seemed well with her household.

"I needn't ask you—" he began, but the joyful young mother interrupted him.

"Oh, Father, God put it into your heart to save our home, for your plan has worked a miracle. Tom, like the good man he always was, fell in with my wishes at once, and we both put away all our holy pictures and reminders of our different religions. Since then we have never had a single argument; he comes home regular every night, never a drop of drink, and he bought me a new hat . . ."

"Well, well, isn't that lovely?" said Father Snuffagin from the depths of his comfortable chair. He glanced round the cosy parlour, and then his eye concentrated on the mantelpiece on a china ornament of a white horse and rider. But, tell me now, me child," he continued, "didn't I hear you say that you both agreed that everything would be put away?"

"Of course, Father, we had to keep nothing back, that was the bargain."

"Well, then, tell me why you have left this white horse idol in the place of honour? Don't you know that's William of Orange crossing the Boyne?"

As she gazed at the ornament, Molly's face was a study in changing expression from carefree happiness to diabolical vindictiveness. The blood rushed to her head, and she clenched her fists in a paroxysm of uncontrollable rage.

"And that's King Billy, is it?" she screamed. "Hell slap it into Tom Foster. I'll break the bloody thing over his head the minute he sets foot over the dure. The dirty, rotten-hearted twister; the low, double-crossing Orangeman! The black nosed Prod, God curse him for a liar. King Billy, is it, Father? He told me it was Gordon Richards!"

J. EFFEL.

THE IMAGINARY UNIVERSE

FROM time to time books are published dealing with the Universe and with those problems of space and time which have so great a fascination for thinkers of all ages. It is my belief, however, that as far as the Universe is concerned we have two sides presented to us. First of all the real and, secondly, the imaginary, and it is particularly with the latter that I propose to deal.

It is a commonplace that ever since the advent of man, as a thinking animal he has conjured up a host of fictitious "personalities" to account for what happens

in the way of natural phenomena. It will be understood that what we call "natural phenomena" with our greater knowledge was once ascribed to these imaginary beings.

Probably it would be better to say that these are comprised under the heading of spirits of the air, woods and sea. Man would ascribe his survival in a hostile environment to friendly forces, just as he recognised (or thought he recognised) the forces which were antagonistic. One of the plays of Shakespeare particularly gives us the ideas behind these legendary characters.

Reading a travel book about the Himalayas and the journeys of the Hindoos to this tremendous range, I was particularly struck by the awe with which the great mountains and rivers are regarded. Pilgrimages are made there in order to gain the favour of the gods and laugh as we may do at the weird figures of their imaginary gods, we must realise that to the pilgrims themselves these spirits are very real and that their whole lives are regulated by their belief. The same remarks apply to all religions and no less to the Christians whether they turn their faces to Rome or not.

When I wrote of imaginary characters I was thinking of all the spirits of the air, land and sea which the imagination of man has created, including fairies, ghosts, angels, saviours, gods, apostles, virgins; all the supernatural characters in the "Arabian Nights" and other stories. For some of the cleverest stories embodying these weird creations I would refer the reader to Anatole France and his, "At the Sign of the Reine Pedaque," "The Revolt of the Angels," and "Penguin Island."

To what extent the priests who cater for these religious fantasies believe in them I cannot, of course, say, but I know that when younger it was said, "The nearer the Church the further from God," and "familiarity breeds contempt." Anyhow, we may be sure that the highest ranks of the clergy are not so susceptible as the humble worshippers.

Naturally this belief in an imaginary world of good and bad spirits is confined to the ignorant who form the greatest portion of the human race, and as mankind improves his environment so these imaginary forces play an ever-lessening role. For instance, reading about the old sailors of Cardigan Bay, I noticed with the coming of a great storm the terror which it inspired in the family left at home, the result being a very strong religious community. On the other hand, people living in inland towns and whose living takes them into factories cease to become subject to these elemental fears and their prayers are stereotyped instead of being deep and sincere cries for help to someone beyond their ken for protection.

As I have said, these imaginary characters are and have been legion. Some have personified the stars and astrologers see in the movements of these a friendly or hostile attitude to people.

I was particularly struck in a book dealing with the East that some of the natives believed in Satan, thinking that he was the stronger of the two—God and Satan. One cannot be surprised at this and I can well remember the phrase that, "The devil looks after his own." Considering the destructive character of the elements, this belief shows a reasonable desire to be on the right side.

The belief in this imaginary world has strewn all countries with the wrecks of temples raised in older times as a result of sincere belief. Behind every temple has been the social administration of the priesthood to maintain the belief and to live as a result of the imagination of the devotee. The gods of these primitive

religions have a multitude of arms, legs and even heads to indicate their superiority over normal mankind. Belief can be so fanatical that people will die fighting in the belief that they will go straight to their heaven. Such is the power of imagination.

The advance of mankind, particularly in the sphere of medicine, has gradually swept away the older ideas. As Robert Blatchford once wrote: "At the time of the Plague they had a religious procession. Now they look to the drains."

One can understand that with the spread of Christianity from Western Europe to the tropics how familiar most of their religious ceremonies would be to the natives who for so long had their gods, witch doctors, etc.

Life for mankind until the coming of Freethought found all on their knees bowing to the hazards of life. People who thought in advance of their village life were either driven out or killed, so it is not at all surprising that intelligence was conspicuous by its absence. Even to-day discrimination is being shown against thinkers.

Finally, I say that I do not believe in any of these imaginary people of an imaginary universe, whether called gods or spirits. There is no more evidence of their reality than there is of a personality behind the moaning of the wind. They are children of the imagination. There never has been nor could be any personality behind natural phenomena.

T. D. SMITH.

CORRESPONDENCE

KOREA AND COMMUNISM

Sir,—After reading W. Keane's letter (*The Freethinker*, November 19) an unbiased impartial observer will conjure up visions of nasty aggressive United Nations forces mercilessly bombing poor peace-loving Korean families who are minding their own business in their own quiet villages. Mr. Keane describes it as "... cowardly terrorism directed against harmless villagers." Never have facts been so distorted since Joe Louis wrote his account of his fight with Tommy Farr.

The erroneous impressions given in Mr. Keane's letter must be dispelled. Aggressors must be taught that aggression does not pay; if we ignore their advances this will be a Communist dominated world in a very short time. Mr. Cutner's statement that the whole world, with the exception of Russia and her satellites, has applauded the United Nations dropping bombs in Korea, is correct.

Mr. Keane says that there is plenty of evidence to support the view that the American conduct is cowardly terrorism—but he does not give any!

Mr. Keane says vaguely, "... other millions in Asia and some millions in Europe" are against the United Nations action in dealing with the North Koreans, but he omits to say that these "millions" are Communists.

And finally, during one of the most anti-UNO, pro-Communist letters one is ever likely to see, Mr. Keane has the temerity to say "Non-Communists like myself..."

Well, well, well!—Yours, etc.,

J. G. BELLAMY.

ESPERANTO OR—?

Sir,—J. S. Roy made me laff. To parafrase Churchill, never were so many wurdz uzed for so fu thawts! In a paper famin he takes 1,100 wurdz to say that:

Esperanto iz based on Latin and a fu German roots but no Chinese; it haz an akuzativ case; its adjectiv agreez with its noun; it haz five letterz with aksents; "Basic Latin" is better; but English (spelt simply) best of awl. Le Roy le Vuelt.

When the world States consider the adopsion of Esperanto, their filologist eksperts will deside whether it iz to be adopted or modified. They could cut owt the akuzativ and plooral endingz, tho simplissity may thereby gane at the ekspens of clearness.

There iz a good reezon for the aksented letters. They represent soundz in the Cyrillic alfabet, which to P. G. Roy is a good thing.

Az for Basic Latin, how wood he say: "I'm fed up, let's go to the pikehers or the dogz"?

Mind you, English is awl rite, but thoz foriners do get in a mess with it, and duzzent simplified English look funny?

J. S. Roy shud go to Munich next Awgust to the World Esperanto Congress there, where they are preparing to reseev up to 7,000 Esperantists from awl over the world. He mite be converted. Verb. sap.—Yours, etc.,

A. HENRY.

OBITUARY

I regret to report the death of one of the oldest Freethinkers in the North, John George Straughan, who for 60 years had been actively associated with the National Secular Society and Freethought. He commenced his activities when Charles Bradlaugh was in his prime, when it was not so easy to take part in such movements. Later, when I commenced to work in the Sunderland area, he came forward, with his two sons, and rendered very valuable assistance. Right up till his last illness he continued to work for the cause. He was a kindly and loyal friend to all. Our sympathy goes out to his widow and family in their loss. In accordance with his wish, a secular service was read by Mr. Rowe.

JOHN T. BRIGHTON.

The death took place at Shotts, Lanarkshire, of an old member of Shotts Branch, N.S.S., Pipe Major John Macfarlane, who was an active advocate of Freethought. His broad, cultured mind, his courtesy, his clarity and honesty in discussion, made his house a Mecca which attracted Freethinkers, Socialists, Communists, and even those who differed on such subjects. He was 76 years of age and an ex-miner. To his widow and family we offer our condolences. A lament, "Lochaber no more," was played on the pipes by one of his pupils.

P. M. Hamilton conducted a Secular Service.

P. M. H.

LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

OUTDOOR

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (St. Mary's Gate, Blitzed Site).—Lunch-hour Lectures every weekday, 1 p.m.: Mr. G. WOODCOCK.

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

Sheffield Branch N.S.S. (Barker's Pool).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. A. SAMMS.

INDOOR

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Science Room, Mechanics' Institute).—Sunday, 6-45 p.m.: Coun. J. BACKHOUSE, "A Forgotten Philosopher—Joseph Dietzgen."

Conway Discussion Circle (Conway Hall Library, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Tuesday, December 5, 7 p.m.: HECTOR HAWTON, "Humanism as a New World-View."

Glasgow Branch (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street).—Sunday, 7 p.m.: Mr. F. RIDLEY (N.S.S. Lon.), "Religion, Freethought, and the Future of Civilisation."

Merseyside Branch N.S.S. (Coopers' Hall, 12, Shaw Street, Liverpool, 6).—Sunday, December 3, 7 p.m.: Rev. FRANCIS J. RIPLEY (Liverpool), "The Fundamentals of Catholicism."

Nottingham Cosmopolitan Debating Society (Technical College, Shakespeare Street).—Sunday, 2-30 p.m.: Mr. FENNER BROCKWAY, M.P., "Black and White."

South London Branch N.S.S. (The London and Brighton Hotel, 139, Queens Road, Peckham, S.E. 15).—Sunday, 7-15 p.m.: C. H. CLEAVER (N.S.S.), "Freethought, Present and Future."

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1).—Sunday, 11 a.m.: JOSEPH McCABE, "The Philosophy of Epicurus."

It is only the God of theology whose vengeance never sleeps or ends with any generation; whose wrath is fresh every day, and his Hell eternal. Only when man has had his human heart dexterously removed, and has become the changeling of some vampire phantasm he coweringly adores, could he be the instrument of the crimes Christianity has committed against humanity.—M. D. CONWAY.

SCIENCE, RELIGION AND MORALS

VII.—METAPHYSICAL JESUS

(1) In the previous section the more strictly historical aspects of the life of Jesus and Christian origins were considered.

(2) An enquirer will soon perceive that there was another stream of thought running through early Christianity.

(3) The former may be termed the Jewish stream, definite, objective, historical, involving the Jewish Parousia.

(4) The latter may be termed the Gnostic stream, indefinite, metaphysical, historical only in its basis.

(5) Approximately the former is represented by the Synoptic Gospels; the latter by John's Gospel and Paul's Epistles.

(6) This latter aspect of early Christianity did not originate with Paul, but it was he who popularised it.

(7) He emphatically and disdainfully stated that he had not received his knowledge of Christ from human sources. (Gal. 1, 11-12.)

(8) He said he had received his knowledge of Christ directly by divine revelation; his authority was therefore theopneustic.

(9) He hardly refers to the ministerial life of Jesus; for Paul all that matters is the Resurrection of Jesus.

(10) For Paul, Christianity consists not in history or ethics or in a way of life, but in the metaphysical Atonement.

(11) From the evidence now available Paul seems to have been an epileptic paranoiac of a not unusual type.

(12) He was, however, unusually energetic, fanatical and intolerant and it is not surprising that he often quarrelled.

(13) The original church at Jerusalem, under Peter and John, was waiting for the expected Jewish Parousia.

(14) Paul, however, had wider views and a more all-embracing system and Paulinism finally predominated.

(15) These interesting Biblical origins of Christianity and their confluence many years later are matters of history.

(16) The only historical event that Paul emphasised or seemed to consider of much importance was the Resurrection.

(17) For this objective event in the reputed life of Jesus he referred to certain evidence, but somewhat casually.

(18) For Paul it was not the objective event of the resurrection of a dead man which was important; that had happened before.

(19) What was important was all that was involved in this particular resurrection, i.e., the Atonement and Redemption.

(20) It was not the risen historical Jesus that Paul worshipped but his own idea of the metaphysical Christ.

(21) What was this idea, this phantasm, in which Paul and his followers, down to the present, so fanatically believed?

(22) It was a divine emanation, a deliverer, a saviour who could redeem the world from its sins.

(23) It was very much more than the, generally, gentle prophet Jesus of the Synoptics, preaching a way of life.

(24) To Paul his new Faith was one to be fought and struggled for, without compromise or surrender.

(25) It was based on an alleged historical event, but it was much more than that; it was a divine call to action.

(26) These two rather antagonistic streams of Christian thought effected a necessary reconciliation years later.

(27) By then the Jewish Parousia, stated by Jesus to be imminent, had proved, by the efflux of time, to be an illusion.

(28) After three centuries it had not come to pass and a different outlook and standpoint were necessary.

(29) This reconciliation, or rather compromise, may be approximately dated around the Council of Nicæa in 325.

(30) The arguments and discussion of this and contiguous Councils are well known history and need not be detailed.

(31) All that is necessary is to note the general attitude which was subsequently adopted as Christianity.

(32) The alleged historical Jesus was accepted dogmatically with little scientific historical study till modern times.

(33) From that period of the fourth century till the present one most Christians assumed this history to be veridical.

(34) The majority of Christian believers during these centuries seem to have been as little interested in history as was Paul.

(35) For them, as for him, what did interest them was the metaphysical explanation of the riddle of the Universe.

(36) To Paul life seems to have been a mystery and he grasped at a solution of it which seemed to him adequate.

(37) Paul apparently considered he had found the key to the riddle in his religion and he grasped it with vigour.

(38) The theological aspects came to him suddenly and he seems not to have bothered about their implications.

(39) It was left to later theologians, such as Arius and Athanasius at Nicæa, to quarrel about these.

(40) Long after that series of Church Councils and much discussion the subject reached maturity in Thomas Aquinas.

(41) What is of importance for present purposes is not the details of Christian history but present-day Christianity.

(42) An ordinary observer can judge of this only to the best of his ability from the increasingly contradictory teaching presented.

(43) There is the picture of the gentle kindly Historical Jesus trying to lead humans into the way of peace.

(44) This picture, in its historical and ethical setting seems to be the one generally visualised by believers.

(45) But behind that there is the rather esoteric Metaphysical Christ which is by them but dimly outlined.

(46) The idea of the Historical Jesus was at least mentally comprehensible; the Metaphysical Christ was not so.

(47) The combination of the two was, and still is, a sufficient explanation of the mystery of life for millions.

(48) Paul seems to have been a man with a passionate obsession in which he himself was the leader.

(49) He fulfilled his own needs for a great cause to live and die for and his example was followed by others.

(50) It is this combination of the Historical Jesus and the Metaphysical Christ which forms Christianity to-day.

W. EDWARD MEADS.

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