

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LX.—No. 8

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 1940

PRICE THREEPENCE

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Views and Opinions

War and Religion

THERE is a dispute between anthropologists as to whether war always existed between human communities or whether it came into existence as a consequence of certain social changes. Whichever of these views is right the certain thing is that war has always been associated with religion. There are a number of reasons for this. It has been suggested that the early custom of blood revenge, which demanded for every unexplained death a sacrifice to the ghost of the murdered man, together with the practice of human sacrifice, which resulted in raids upon neighbouring tribes for the purpose of securing victims, contributed to making war a kind of religious exercise. But it is beyond question that in all wars religion has played a great part, either ceremonial, when the appeal is made to the tribal god to help one side against the other, or with a direct reference to godism as in the case of religious crusades. Religion and war have always been good friends.

One circumstance that may help towards an explanation of this phenomenon is that war is always a step backward in civilization, and it may be counted as a small item on the credit side that in the present war this is very generally recognized. Even the two Fascist States, Italy and Germany, after loudly declaring that war was the life-blood of a nation, and that one of the chief functions of woman is to bear "cannon fodder," have been forced to pretend that their aim is peace. And it seems only the other day that there existed in this country a body of people who praised war and militarism as the school of the manly virtues. The old school tie still has its power, and a fool from a public school has an advantage that a genius from an elementary one lacks; but the fact that the men who were working in offices or behind counters, are now carrying on the work of our Air Force, the courage of the men of the fishing-fleet—who have not the slightest claim to have sprung from "noble" families—has reduced the implied belief of men having "fighting in

their blood" to the level of a claim that a man may have an hereditary fondness for apple-dumplings.

One other point that is just a little of a digression. If it may be placed to the credit side of the account that there is now a strong conviction of the evil of war, as such, it must be noted that this conclusion has been reached, largely on the wrong, or on inadequate, grounds. In essentials the present war is like every other war. Essentially it is neither better nor worse than other wars. It may have intensified certain dangers, but it is still only war. The danger of this war, the cost of this war, the destructiveness of this war, are very slightly material to the real issue. When men fought battles with clubs they killed or maimed as many as they could. When they used the bow and arrow, or the gun, they did exactly the same. If the men of the Stone Age had possessed machine-guns they would have used them. If we had no better weapons than clubs, we should do all the damage we could; we can go no further with our present weapons. If we look at the essentials of war we shall see that it has not altered very much so far as the combatants are concerned. The real lesson of war was always there if we had possessed the courage to read it. The true picture of war is that of a duellist vindicating his "honour" by establishing his superiority with sword or pistol.

* * *

The Help of God

But the close association of religion and war is unmistakable, perhaps because war is a step backward and lower in the scale of civilization. When a savage tribe goes to war there is a religio-magical preparation for it. The assistance of the tribal gods is invoked, ceremonial visits are made to some "sacred" spot where the gods can be more effectively got at, and prayers for victory are said. The chief distinction is that the primitive form of the practice is less artful but more honest. The savage prays he may kill many of his enemies. The "civilized" Christian knows that victory will mean the killing of many "enemies," but he does not mention it. It is as taboo as were ladies' legs in a Victorian drawing-room. He just asks for victory and leaves it at that. If victory is gained he pays another visit to the sacred place and thanks God for what he has done. There is only one distinction that may be noted here. If the savage loses the battle he may throw his god overboard. In the case of the Christian he grovels a little lower, thanks God for having "rebuked" him, and promises more godly behaviour in the future—for more favourable results. Christians and camels take their burdens kneeling.

But the association of war and religion is there. It will be remembered that when the situation looked serious, owing to Hitler's threat to Czechoslovakia we had a number of days of prayer for peace. In Westminster Abbey there was a twenty-four-hour non-stop prayer, extending over several days, praying God for

peace, and to give his inspiration to the British Cabinet. "To move their hearts" is the formal phrase, although it seems more urgent to move their heads. As the result of that orgy of prayer we had—Munich. Heaven seemed to have mixed things. The British prayer was—in fact—for God, to weaken Hitler, to make him more amenable to decency, and to induce him to pause in his career of rapine, robbery and slaughter. What happened was that God moved Hitler to go forward, to grab more, to torture more, to rob more. The prayers of Westminster left the situation worse than it found it. Did that confound British Christians? Not in the least. The explanation for the September 1938 fiasco was that we had departed from God, when we were rather more attentive to God than usual. The Roman Church, the English Church, the lesser Churches, all have been drumming this into our heads ever since. And undeterred by the consequences of the pre-Munich prayer orgy we had united prayers for peace all through August, 1939, until the next month when the answer to the prayers came. War was declared. Did that prove the uselessness of prayer? Not at all. According to the Churches it meant that we had not all got right with God.

And God could so easily have done something spectacular. He could have saved the religious nation of Poland. Working on the lines of the fall of the walls of Jericho, he could have caused the Siegfried fortifications to crumble. He could have sabotaged the German supply columns. Every time a German fighting plane came to England he could have repeated the trick he played in old Egypt and brought about a complete blackout over the country, instead of leaving it to our own Government to kill with its blackout a far larger number than have been killed in five months of war. Cardinal Hinsley would ask, "Who are we to judge the actions of God?" But we are not judging, we are only suggesting; and that is what prayer does. It suggests things to God. It politely calls his attention to the fact that we are getting the wrong kind of weather, or the King is ill and needs curing, or there is an epidemic, or there will be a war if He does not do something. But all he does is to move the Prime Minister to discharge the competent Belisha and appoint the thrice-proven incompetent Oliver Stanley. We might well revive the question of the last war—slightly altered, "What did God do in the World War?" That, however, is not very likely. Religiously the more the Christian is oppressed the lower he grovels—as a Christian. But it is not well to count on what he may do as an ordinary man.

* * *

Piety and Parliament

I may put at the end of these notes an item of news that led me to make a beginning. It happened in the House of Commons on February 17. Dr. Little (Conservative) solemnly asked Mr. Chamberlain "whether he would take steps to set apart a day when the whole nation would be called to prayer for the Divine help to enable us to overcome the enemy and restore a just and enduring peace to the world?" Now I do not know of any law that can prevent every man and woman in the country praying when they like, as often as they like and as long as they like. And if they do so pray, God ought to be aware of the fact. On the other hand calling the "whole nation to prayer" will not secure the whole nation responding; and, again, God ought to be aware that when, say 25 or even 50 per cent of the people join in prayers for peace that it is not the *whole* of the nation that is praying, but that at least half the nation doesn't care a damn whether the other half prays or not. It really looks as if the praying part of the nation is trying to fool God

by making a noise loud enough to persuade him that all the nation is praying to him.

Very solemnly, probably he agrees with days of prayer, Mr. Chamberlain replied that it would be necessary to consult the leaders of the Christian Churches, but at an appropriate time consideration will be given to the suggestion. That seems quite proper and in order. If our Government wishes to approach another Government with a suggestion it naturally approaches the Ambassador of that nation. (The functioning of a Prime Minister as message carrier for Hitler was not an unqualified success). And in the case of dealing with God his ambassadors are the heads of the Churches. But here another difficulty presents itself. These Ambassadors all claim to be appointed representatives of the same person, and each brings his message which he says is from the same party. But they all differ, some more, some less, about this message. When Cardinal Hinsley prays for the peace of England, he has in view an England with the Roman Church in control. He would certainly not count it a peace worth having if it meant a complete rejection of Roman Catholic Christianity. The Archbishop of Canterbury must mean the establishment of a religious belief that maintains the supremacy of the religion of the prayer book and the thirty-nine articles. Readers can fill up the list with the other creeds. But the result is that if the miracle was achieved of getting all of the religious people into church on a particular day, to pray for a "just and enduring peace," they would be using the same terms but meaning different things. These pious people don't appear capable of acting with intellectual honesty even when they are dealing with God. Perhaps they think that if they all make a noise together God will be so pleased by the storm of flattery that he will not bother to decide whether it is genuine or not, reasonable or not. There is a passage in the New Testament "Be not deceived God is not mocked." Mr. Chamberlain and Dr. Little may agree that God is not mocked, but they evidently think he may be fooled.

Mr. Davidson (Socialist) asked the Prime Minister to "keep in mind that Germany is also asking for Divine help." Mr. Chamberlain made no reply, but it surely cannot have escaped him. But there never is an occasion when people do not pray for opposite results, or when each party in a war does not pray for victory. If agriculturists pray for rain, boarding-house keepers at the sea-side pray for continued sunshine. If the farmers pray for good crops, market speculators are as likely to pray for a shortage and higher prices. The Kaiser in the last war kept the Bible at his bedside and prayed as heartily as anyone for victory. There is nothing new in different groups of believers praying for irreconcilable ends. That is one of the beauties of prayer. Every kind of result may be prayed for with equal earnestness, and whatever happens someone is able to assert that prayers really are answered. Even if the prayers of all Christians were full of contradictory requests, there is always the safeguarding clause "Nevertheless not my will but thy will be done," which being interpreted means, "We have told you what we wish done. Others will be telling you what they wish done. But just do as you please. We shall praise you for answering prayer whatever happens." I think "tails I win, heads you lose" must have originated in heaven.

Curiously, a grain of solid truth came from a most unexpected quarter. Lady Astor is reported as interjecting in reply to Mr. Davidson's question, "They (the Germans) are praying to a myth." Strange how the truth will crop up in spite of what one may do to prevent it. I agree with Lady Astor, the Germans are praying to a myth, the same myth, to which we shall

be praying when that day of national prayer comes along. And we are also willing to wager that Germany will get as much help from its God as the British people will get from theirs. But there is no place in the country where a religious absurdity can be staged with the solemnity that can be brought into play in the British House of Commons. One might be persuaded even to believe that Lady Astor and the Prime Minister take the absurdity of a day of national prayer seriously.

CHAPMAN COHEN

The Bravura of Byron

I claim no place in the world of letters; I am, and will be alone.—*Landor*.

The like will never come again; he is inimitable.—*Goethe*.

BYRON is not only one of the most fascinating figures in a thousand years of English literature, but a big personality in European culture. He flashed through his brief life with a disastrous glory. An aristocrat, a man of illustrious descent, he championed the cause of the people. He was the Napoleon of poetry and passion, and not only England, but all Europe admired him. When he died a soldier's death at Missolonghi, Byronism became a fashion, almost a craze. From Madrid to Moscow armies of young men lengthened their hair, shortened their collars, and were in love with poetry and their neighbours' wives. Both supremacy in genius and personality belong to Byron. Astonishing, perhaps, but what a man, what a poet!

There was nothing narrow or insular in Byron. His genius crossed all frontiers. He roused attention throughout Europe. He moved the aged Goethe and the youthful Victor Hugo. What, said Castelar, does Spain not owe to Byron? Mazzini sounds the same note for Italy, Sainte-Beuve, Stendhal, and Taine speak of his power in France. He was the intellectual parent of Pushkin and other Russian writers, and the revival of Polish literature dates from Byron. Eckermann, and others in Germany, help to complete the verdict of the Continent. Why is this? Byron was a great poet, and he was easy to understand. He deals rhetorically with elemental emotions, and he enjoyed the fame of being a rebel, an aristocrat in exile, a champion of the Democracy. Eloquence makes the widest appeal, for it expresses with vigour the simple feeling of men. "Give me liberty, or give me death!" That is the kind of thing; a sonorous and impassioned phrase flung out to thrill the hearts of thousands. Byron's verse has this rhetorical quality. Verse after verse of his poetry reads like oratory, grandiose and sweeping—

Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!
Ten thousand fleets roll over thee in vain.

You can almost see the outstretched arm, hear the resonant voice. The effect is enormous. "The Isles of Greece," and "Ode to Napoleon," and "Lines on Completing my Thirty-Sixth Year," and other poems, have this oratorical note and ring. Listen:—

The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glory and Greece, around me see,
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free.

There is music in it; the trumpets sing to battle. Nor is this all, for Byron had a Voltairean gift of wit and satire, a command of mocking phrase and rhyme. There he was no poseur, but all that was sincere in him became triumphant, and the writer of "Don Juan" is a deathless delight. At least he was a man.

Like one of the Greek heroes he was youthful and resplendent. Compared with his rivals his voice was as the roar of the hurricane above the whisper of the ocean-foam. His burning words roused men like a tempest-blast. This man sang of Freedom, took up arms in her cause, and died in her defence. What would you have? Even his stolid countrymen were captivated, whilst his heroic attitude fascinated a continent.

Byron was a rebel. His sympathy with the revolutionary spirit showed his Freethought, and he tells us that all forms of faith are of equal uselessness:—

Foul superstition, howsoever disguised—
Idol, saint, virgin, prophet, crescent, cross,
For whatsoever symbol thou art prized—
Thou sacerdotal gain, but general loss,
What from true worship's gold can separate
thy dress?

"The Vision of Judgment," in which Byron's genius for satire has full force, is startling in its blasphemy. From its saucy opening, with the angels singing out of tune, to its close, with old King George the Third practising a hymn, it is full of mordant satire of the Christian Religion. Every epithet hits, every line that does not convulse with laughter, stings. In the preface to "Cain," a poem as full of profanity as an egg is full of meat, Byron remarks sardonically that it is difficult to make the Devil "talk like a clergyman," and that he had endeavoured to restrain Satan within the bounds of "spiritual politeness."

"Childe Harold" is saturated with the nature-worship of Rousseau—the same Jean Jacques whose books were condemned by the Archbishop of Paris. In this rare atmosphere the petty religions of man all dwindle and disappear, "like snow upon the desert's dusty face":—

Even gods must yield; religions take their
turn,
'Twas Jove's, 'tis Mahomet's, and other creeds,
Will rise with other years, till man shall
learn
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds—
Poor child of doubt and death, whose hope is
built on reeds."

Byron may have dreamt, like so many poets, of immortality, he certainly did not believe in it. How finely he apostrophises this longing:—

Still wilt thou dream on future joy and woe,
Regard and weigh yon dust before it flies,
That little word saith more than thousand
homilies.

He uttered a predominant mood when he wrote:—

My altars are the mountains and the ocean,
Earth, sea, stars, all that springs from the
great whole
Who hath produced, and will receive my soul.

Leigh Hunt, his friend, says Byron was "an infidel by reading." Thomas Moore, who knew him well and wrote his life, admits that the poet was "to the last a sceptic." Apparent as his heresies are in his poetry, his letters, particularly to his friend Hobhouse, show he was no Christian. In his correspondence with the Rev. Francis Hodgson he is even more emphatic.

Byron's letters contain much more than gossip and polemic, for they are among the best in the language. His humour is infectious. Jokes about mothers-in-law are common, but Byron is quite original. He writes: "My mother-in-law has been dangerously ill, but is now dangerously well again." His love of Shakespeare appears frequently in his letters. He writes from Venice: "Last night there was such a crush at the opera that I almost struck a Venetian and traduced

the State," a happy inspiration taken from "Othello." But Byron's letters deserve an article devoted to that one fascinating subject.

Few men so impressed themselves upon their own and the succeeding generation. Tennyson has told us that, when Byron died, it was as though the firmament had lost some mighty star, in whose vanishing the world was left to the blackest night. Swinburne said: "he passed through the doorway of no ignoble death out of reach of time, out of sight of love, out of hearing of hatred, beyond the blame of England and the praise of Greece. He had seen and borne and achieved more than most men on record." These tributes were well and happily made, for Byron remains one of the select few English writers who have influenced foreigners with the magic of their dreams.

MIMNERMUS

The State Religion of Japan

WITH the supersession of the Shogunate and the restoration of Imperial authority in Japan in 1868, Shinto was established as the national cult. Buddhism and the philosophy of Confucius had profoundly impressed Japanese thought, and to China much, if not most, of Nippon's earlier culture was deeply indebted. Even now, the ethical teachings associated by the administration with official Shinto are largely dependent on the moral counsels of Confucius, while the State cult itself may be fairly regarded as the reverence and worship of ancestors and, above all, the veneration and esteem of the Emperor and his Imperial predecessors, who in a long line of unbroken descent, trace their inception to the divine creators of the Japanese people.

The governments of the Meiji period, when the Mikado's supreme authority was restored, surveyed the religious problem with considerable uncertainty. But the authorities had no alternative to Shinto, the ancient national faith deeply imbedded in the popular psychology. As Dr. Holtom notes in his fine scholarly work, *The National Faith of Japan* (Kegan Paul, 1938): "Buddhism, was decadent and was further weakened by the bitter criticism of the Confucian loyalists as the religion favoured by the deposed Tokugawa authorities, it was politically dangerous. Confucianism, while strong in its hold on upper-class ethics was practically without organisation or cult, Christianity was outlawed by the government, despised and feared by the masses and persecuted, almost to the point of extinction. Only Shinto was left." Also, in its appeals to patriotism and the glories of the golden past, Shinto was easily adaptable as an aid in strengthening and sustaining the restored Imperial rule.

Shinto is the earliest known cult of Japan. Its folklore and ceremonies were dear to the hearts of the populace, while its central doctrine of the divine descent of the Royal family served to promote loyalty and reverence towards the throne. These considerations weighed heavily with the Restoration authorities, and in 1868 a Department of Shinto was instituted and every precaution was taken against antagonism to the official faith. The Government also appointed propagandists to proclaim the "Great Teaching" to the people.

The so-called religion of Shinto—for many educated Japanese refuse to regard it as a religion—was, and is deliberately utilized by the administration to instil patriotic sentiments in the minds of the masses and train subjects in complete submission to Imperial authority.

Opposition to Buddhism, apparently with the assent of the authorities, became more aggressive than at

any other period, before or since, in Japan. The anti-Buddhist movement found violent expression and the sentiments expressed by a loyalist scholar who had renounced his earlier faith in Gautama is significant. "Originally, we, the people of the Land of the Gods," this writer declares, "were a clean people, but we went astray and became slaves to Buddhism and preached compromise with dirt. But now we cast ye off, ye Buddhas! And be ye not angered, for we are a clean people of the Land of the Gods." Utterances of this character became common, especially in official circles, while Confucians and Shintoists co-operated in the overthrow of the Shogun system.

Antagonism to Buddhism was so pronounced that the Imperial Government compelled its priests who officiated at Shinto shrines to surrender their ministry, while Buddhist paintings, images and other sacred treasures were forcibly removed from the shrines. Innumerable Buddhist temples, with their priceless works of art were ruthlessly destroyed. In fact, almost everything identified with Buddhism was demolished in the popular frenzy that prevailed.

The onslaught on the now unpopular faith was less severe where Buddhist influences were still powerful. But Dr. Holtom concludes that: "On the whole, however, the provinces present a sorry spectacle of the forced dissolution of the Buddhist temples and the seizure of their properties, of the spoiling, demolition and burning of their buildings, of the suppression of Buddhist funerals and the enforcing of an order that all such ceremonies should be strictly under Shinto auspices, of the confiscation, burning or sale of Buddhist books and art treasures." Temples were converted into schools and Buddhist priests were either to join the army or return to agricultural labour, while those of maturer age and better education were to serve as instructors in the seminaries.

Iconoclasm ran riot and in many provinces the devastation was appalling. In Oki every Buddhist fane was demolished and its population was called upon to sign and seal declarations in their very blood which attested their complete conversion to the Shinto faith. And then to make certain the ruin of the persecuted cult, the rich landed properties that provided the temple revenues were in many instances confiscated by the administration.

All this and more is admitted by Japanese historians, and a recognized authority, Professor Kono Shozo, terms this fanatical outbreak, "a mad rush to abolish all traces of Buddhism." But when its overthrow appeared complete, the government found itself confronted with a problem it had overlooked. The deeply cherished traditions and beliefs of the people were then, as they yet are, an amalgam of Buddhist and Shinto teachings. The ingredients of the blend were all sacrosanct and the high-handed proceedings of the State aroused resentment. Nor did the Buddhists themselves patiently endure the destruction of their sacred edifices. They protested most bitterly against the indignities accorded them, and open resistance became common. The authorities now realised that in a turbulent time, such as this, tranquillity, rather than turmoil, was desirable. In this connexion, Professor Kono is cited as stating: "In a situation in which feudal military authority had just been displaced by imperial rule, in a land where seclusion and conservatism were just giving place to foreign intercourse and progress, it was imperative that the government adopted towards the nation a steadying policy and programme. To precipitate a struggle between Buddhism and Shinto at a time when the whole nation was in a fever of new adjustments might spell disaster."

Faced with this dilemma the State suddenly reversed its persecuting policy and in 1872 the Shinto Depart-

ment previously established to superintend anti-Buddhist activities was abolished. This body was then replaced by a Department of Religion in which the interests of the two conflicting creeds were considered. The jurisdiction entrusted to the new Department was extensive, and its rules and regulations embraced doctrines and sects; the removal or establishment of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples; the determination of their utility, and the appointment of both Shinto and Buddhist priests. So long as the priests in their ministrations and teachings inculcated lowly reverence towards the divinities, undying love for one's native land, respect for veracity and humanitarian sentiment; to venerate the sacred, divine-descended Emperor and render ready obedience to his behests, the administration little cared whether these injunctions came from Buddhist or Shinto sources. Also in addition to the priesthood the authorities enlisted the services of story tellers, actors and others to secure "a united programme of cultural education and nationalistic centralization."

Those selected to conduct this system were to carry out the foregoing instructions without fail. On an ornate and ambitious scale, institutes were founded to further these and kindred objectives. This experiment, which was undertaken in order to establish a State cult, continued until 1875, when the co-operation of Buddhism and Shinto was terminated. In 1877 the Department of Religion was alrogated and in 1882 restrictions were imposed on Shinto priests. In 1884, more changes were made and the appointment of ordinary priests, both Buddhist and Shinto, as well as their dismissal, was transferred to the superintendent clerics of the sects concerned. This was claimed as a virtual separation of religion and politics.

At this period Japanese statesmen were greatly influenced by the reports of their emissaries studying abroad concerning the measures adopted in European and American countries in relation to religion. As early as 1872 Mori Arinori, later Minister of Education, warned his Government that the attempt to blend Buddhism with Shinto was certain to fail, while recommending complete freedom of religious belief. Another astute observer counselled the home authorities against any union of Church and State, and when he returned to Japan, official restrictions were relaxed.

By 1875 the fanaticism which had inflamed Japan five years earlier had subsided, and in the calmer atmosphere a more rational policy was pursued. Dr. Holtom remarks that: "The initial steps in the rehabilitation of Japan as a modern state had now been successfully taken. Feudalism as a political force had been overthrown. . . . The danger that the religious system might get out of hand had passed and there was little likelihood that the drastic iconoclasm of the first few years of the Meiji régime would ever be revived."

Another factor which influenced the State was the open rivalry and jealousy displayed by the different sects. The Buddhists were usually much superior to their adversaries, even as expositors of Shinto doctrine, and they were apt to employ their cultural advantages so as to indoctrinate the people with their own special beliefs. This was deeply resented by Shinto devotees, especially as the powerful Buddhist Shin sect disdainfully refused to co-operate with them.

So the State decided to depend on Shinto alone. The Buddhists were left in peace, but Shinto became the national cult, and it has been used ever since to foster the spirit of loyalty and patriotism in the Japanese people.

In the conflict that raged between the rival religions immense injury was inflicted. As Dr. Holtom mournfully states: "A wiser Japan learned later that it

had destroyed or sold for a song some of its finest treasures of art. Some of the most magnificent temples of Buddhism, which by the strange favour of fortune had escaped demolition, had passed permanently into the hands of Shinto."

T. F. PALMER

Gregory the Great

As is well known, this early Christian champion (about 540-604), who did so much to develop the temporal as well as the "spiritual" power of the Papacy, is commonly regarded as the greatest man of his day. And if he had not been so deeply submerged in the newer mythology he might have done something to help on civilization—say, by working to preserving the remnants of Greek and Roman learning and rationality—instead of doing so much to rivet ignorance and organized superstition on the western world.

Born in Rome, inheriting great wealth, and doubtless receiving what education persisted at the time, he became a monk, and then Pope Gregory I. He was evidently a man of much general ability and energy. And he is credited with "sound sense" in at least one respect; and documentary evidence of that appears in the following instructions to the missionaries, he sent to convert England to Christianity:—

. . . the temples in that nation ought not to be destroyed, but let the idols in them be destroyed; let holy water be sprinkled in the said temples; let altars be erected and relics placed. For if those temples are well built, it is requisite that they should be converted from the worship of devils to the service of the true God; that the nation, seeing that their temples are not destroyed, may remove error from their hearts, and knowing and adoring the true God, may the more familiarly resort to the places to which they have been accustomed. . . .

And because they have been accustomed to slaughter many animals in their sacrifice to devils, some solemnity must be substituted for them on this account; as, for instance, on the day of dedication, or of the nativities of the holy martyrs whose relics are there deposited, they may build themselves huts of the boughs of trees about these churches which have been turned to that use from temples, and celebrate the solemnity with religious feasting, no more offering beasts to the devil, but killing cattle to the praise of God in their eating, and returning thanks to the giver of all things for their sustenance, to the end that, while some outward gratifications are permitted them, they may the more easily consent to the inward consolation of the grace of God. . . .

For there is no doubt that it is impossible to efface everything at once from their obdurate minds, because he who endeavours to ascend to the highest place rises by degrees and steps and not by leaps. Thus, the Lord made himself known to the people of Israel in Egypt; and yet he allowed them to use sacrifices which they were wont to offer to the devil in his own worship, commanding them in his sacrifice to kill beasts to the end that, changing their hearts, they might lay aside one part of the sacrifice whilst they retained another; that whilst they offered the same beasts they were wont to offer, they should offer them to God and not to idols, and thus they would no longer be the same sacrifices.

I think I have previously mentioned Gregory's *Dialogues*, and quoted the story of the attempt of the Devil in the form of a serpent to drive a "holy hermit" from his cave, and, failing, threw itself over a precipice, and emitted such a flame as to burn all the trees in the vicinity. Another story is as follows:—

There was in my monastery a certain monk, Justus by name, skilled in medicinal arts. . . . When he

knew that his end was at hand, he made known to Copiosus, his brother in the flesh, how that he had three gold pieces hidden away. Copiosus, of course, could not conceal this from the brethren. He sought carefully, and examined all his brother's drugs, until he found the three gold pieces hidden away among the medicines. When he told me of this calamity that concerned a brother who had lived in common with us, I could hardly hear it with calmness. For the rule of this monastery was that the brothers should live in common and own nothing individually.

Then, stricken with great grief, I began to think what I could do to cleanse the dying man, and how I should make his sins a warning to his living brethren. Accordingly, having summoned Pretiosus, the superintendent of the monastery, I commanded him to see that none of the brothers visited the dying man, who was not to hear any words of consolation. If in the hour of his death he asked for the brethren, then his own brother in the flesh was to tell him how he was hated by the brethren because he concealed money; so that at death remorse might pierce his heart and cleanse him from the sin he had committed.

When he was dead his body was not placed with the bodies of the brethren, but a grave was dug in the dung pit, and his body was flung down into it, and the three pieces of gold he had left were cast upon him, while all together cried: "Thy money perish with thee!" . . .

When thirty days had passed after his death, my heart began to have compassion on my dead brother, and to ponder prayers with deep grief, and to seek what remedy there might be for him. Then I called before me Pretiosus, superintendent of the monastery, and said sadly: "It is a long time that our brother who died has been tormented by fire, and we ought to have charity toward him, and aid him so far as we can, that he may be delivered. Go, therefore, and for thirty successive days from this day offer sacrifices for him. See to it that no day is allowed to pass on which the salvation-bringing mass (*hostia*) is not offered up for his absolution." . . . But lo! the brother who had died appeared by night to a certain brother, even to Copiosus, his brother in the flesh. When Copiosus saw him he asked him, saying, "What is it brother? How art thou?" To which he answered: "Up to this time I have been in torment; but now all is well with me, because to-day I have received the communion."

Then the brethren carefully reckoned the days, and it was the very day on which the thirtieth oblation was made for him. Copiosus did not know what the brethren were doing for his brother, and the brethren did not know that Copiosus had seen him; yet at one and the same time he learned what they had done and they learned what he had seen, and the vision and the sacrifice were harmonised. So the fact was plainly shown forth how that the brother who had died had escaped punishment through the salvation-giving mass.

Gregory also wrote a commentary on the Book of Job (*Moralia*), and his comments (in the "allegorical" manner) on the alleged possession by Job of five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred she asses form interesting reading:—

We have said that by the number fifty, which is completed by seven weeks and the addition of an unit, rest is signified, and by the number ten perfection is set forth. Now, forasmuch as the perfection of rest is promised to the faithful, by multiplying ten fifty times, we arrive at five hundred. But in Sacred Writ the title of oxen sometimes represents the dullness of the foolish sort, and sometimes the life of well doers. For because the stupidity of the fool is represented by the title of an ox, Solomon says rightly: "He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter." Again, that the life of every labourer is set forth by the title of oxen, the precepts of the law are a testimony, which enjoined through Moses, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." And this again is declared

in plain words: "The labourer is worthy of his hire." . . .

By the title of asses, too, we have represented sometimes the unrestrained indulgence of the wanton, sometimes the simple-mindedness of the Gentiles, for the inertness of fools is imaged by the designation of asses, as where it is said through Moses: "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together." As though he said: "Do not associate fools and wise men together in preaching, lest by means of him who has no power to accomplish the work you hinder him who has abundant power." The unrestrained indulgence of the wanton is likewise set forth by the appellation of asses, as the prophet testifies when he says: "whose flesh is as the flesh of asses." . . . The Gentile peoples [are represented] by an ass, when it is said by the prophet: "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." For who appears as the ass saving the Jewish people, whose neck was worn by the yoke of the law? And who was the ass but the Gentile world, which was like a brute animal readily seduced by every deceiver, for he did not resist by exercise of reason.

Rational Greek and Roman medical like other science was swamped by superstition as Christianity developed. Dr. Charles Singer, however, informs us that as late as Gregory's time there were imitators and abstractors of the work of the great medical writer, Galen—including Alexander of Tralles (525—605) and Paul of Aegina (625—690) (*Greek Biology and Greek Medicine*). But if Gregory knew of this it would have had no significance for a person in his mental condition. His attitude towards sickness and its cure is well indicated by a short passage in Professor J. H. Robinson's *Medieval and Modern Times*: "Just as Gregory assumed office [of Pope] a great plague was raging in the city [Rome]. In true medieval fashion he arranged a solemn procession in order to obtain from heaven a cessation of the pest. 'Then the archangel Michael was seen over the tomb of Hadrian sheathing his fiery sword as a sign that the wrath of the Lord had been turned away.'"

The passages quoted from Gregory's writings are taken from Robinson's *Readings in European History*.

J. REEVES

Mince-pie in the Sky

Hark! the herald angel sings

To us who live upon crusts and clouts—

"What you lose on the earthly swings

"You gain on the heavenly roundabouts.

"Comfort yourselves when the dinner-bell rings

"And your mentors sit down to their oysters and stouts,

"For what you gain on the earthly swings

"You lose on the heavenly roundabouts."

Yet precious poor comfort this messenger brings;

His warning involves us in queries and doubts,

For why should not gains on the earthly swings

Be invested in heavenly roundabouts?

How do we know but, beneath his wings,

A hidden horde of morality-touts

Are converting our loss on the earthly swings

Into shares in the heavenly roundabouts?

No: hark to the bird in the hand who sings

That the two in the bush are elusive louts,

Let us gain, here and now, on the earthly swings,

In case there're no heavenly roundabouts.

JOHN GRIMM

Acid Drops

Melton Mowbray is in the throes of a Sunday Cinema agitation. The military authority of that area is anxious to open cinemas on Sunday, and has asked the local Urban Council to assist. But the parsonry and their supporters are not inclined to plunge the town into such an orgy of dissipation. The Vicar of Melton explained to the Council that there are canteens and recreation rooms, and similar centres of rollicking dissipation, and he noted that during the last war when cinemas were opened during the war they remained open after the war was over. The Council itself was divided. One of the members thought they might be opened for community singing. Another one said he was opposed to Sunday Cinemas, he didn't want them, so why should anyone else? That is a very good argument for a Sabbatarian, for he is only really happy when he is interfering with the liberty of other people. The chairman of the Council said the main thing to remember was that the Church was open in the evening. The Vicar—generous man—hoped that if the cinemas were opened they would be closed during church hours. On that professional note the matter was referred to a committee for further consideration.

Grimsby is also bothered about Sunday Entertainments. Permission has been given for Sunday amusements, but the *Grimsby News*, playing for safety, thinks it best that "Sunday should retain its Sabbatarian aspect." That is a fine piece of real religious humbug. How can we retain the Sabbatarian aspect of Sunday with cinemas in full swing? Does it mean that we must pretend that cinemas are not open, admit the public through the back door, insist on each visitor carrying a Bible with him, and open each film with a hymn? It is the Sabbatarian aspect of Sunday that needs destroying if we are to have a liberal and genuine day of rest.

Mr. Maurice Reckitt, in a speech at the Annual Meeting of the Church Literature Association, claims he is not surprised at the war—"It is just the kind of thing one would expect in the present world order." The reason he gives is that "a world that has turned its back on God is experiencing the wrath of man." And therefore "there can be no lasting peace without the return to God." Mr. Reckitt would, of course, mean a return to *his* God, for any return to the Jewish Jehovah, pure and simple, or to Allah, or to any God of any other race, would, in his opinion, bring no result. His God alone can do the trick. Still, in spite of Hitler, the Germans on the whole have exactly the same God as Mr. Reckitt, and they pray for a victory for themselves quite as fervently as he prays for one for England. And the only response to all the prayers from God Almighty is—silence. Not a word to the English, or to the Germans, or even to the Poles or Finns. And what is the good of a God who says nothing, and does nothing?

The Roman Catholic Church is beginning to show its teeth, which is an indication that it believes its influence in the country, particularly in high places, is increasing. The Archdeacon of Birmingham (R.C.) after saying the war we are engaged in is to restore "Christian civilization," by which he means the return to power of the Roman Church, says that:—

The paganization of the nation began and has made great progress through the elementary and secondary schools of the State. The result is that in recent years hundreds of thousands of children have been turned out from these schools, who know nothing of Christ and care still less for His teaching: children without any fixed moral principles to guide them through life: children who, as they grow up, will be fruitful soil for the seeds of any subversive propaganda which may come along.

Of course it is a lie that we are fighting for Christian civilization, but lies in connection with Church teaching

offer nothing new. The use of the word "Paganism" as a synonym for all that is bad, is another typical Christian falsehood, when, in truth many fine elements in our modern civilization come to us direct from the ancient pagan world. But what we specially wish to draw attention to is the slander on the schools. Every educationalist knows that one of the great influences in teaching children cleanliness, and better conduct (not to touch your hat, or never speak unless you are spoken to, or children should be seen and not heard varieties) is that of the teachers and the modern schools. We say without hesitation that the modern child when it leaves school is cleaner in body and mind than it ever was when the schools were under the control of the Churches, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant.

What we should much like to know is the reaction of one of the most powerful Trades Unions in the country, the National Union of Teachers, to an accusation of the description noted? Unless the teachers wish to find themselves once again under the control of the Churches, it is high time they made a strong and public protest against the slanders of a large section of the Christian clergy. It is the teachers who must act. Recent Governments have shown that in this matter they are not to be trusted. It is the pressure from the outside that really counts. The type of Government that one gets will always depend upon criticism from without. It was Paine who said that Governments were the badge of lost innocence. Current events go far to show that in the absence of an alert public opinion they very easily, even naturally, become the realization of present tyranny.

A holy, or unholy, row on the question of religious education is being waged—this time in Blackburn. The Local Education Committee has refused to provide any religious instruction in connexion with the Blackamoor open-air school and has decreed that the school need not open till 10.15 each day, thus allowing any child plenty of time to go to its particular church for instruction there. This does not suit the Roman Catholics who insist on their brand of religion being taught to their children at the ratepayers' expense. The result is, of course, a deadlock, and the managers of the schools are now at loggerheads with the L.E.A. The pity is that this sort of thing does not happen everywhere—for unless the various parties can be made very often to disagree, the cause of Secular Education can gain ground only very slowly. We hope that those in power in Blackburn on the L.E.A. will fight to the utmost. The scandal of these religious quarrels must cease.

The Rev. H. G. Doel says that "the man who knows that God cares for him need have no care about himself." That may be so, but we have not noticed that any of this kidney are less prepared than others with gas-masks, less ready to "take cover" in the event of a raid, or less inclined to bolt from home and take refuge in a safe spot. Of course, they do trust in God; they know that God is looking after them. But in case . . . !

It is very good news to learn from a report prepared for a White House Conference on Children in Democracy, that about 16,000,000 children and youth of America—that is about one half—receive no formal religious instruction. The best way to teach religion is, according to the same report, "an unsolved problem." The report admits that there has been great progress made in scientific discovery, technology, and material achievement, but in art, morals, and religion, there is "a great cultural lag"—which conclusion one would expect, as those responsible for the report seem to be entirely religious. In any case, it appears that as the result of several factors religious teaching has been watered down in elementary schools—and we hope that the same factors will always operate, and be extended to the higher schools as well.

We wonder, however, how many who read this report will enquire how it happens that while progress can be made in teaching the younger generation there should be difficulty in teaching religion. We fancy that art and morals are thrown in so that religion shall not be left conspicuous as the only subject that presents difficulties. That youth may be taught with success both art and morals is undeniable. The success will depend entirely upon the capacity for teaching possessed by the teacher and the capacity for understanding possessed by the child. The difficulty with religious instruction is that the younger generation is losing interest in it.

The rascalities of the British Government cannot be denied, but we have at least retained the right to advertise them, to protest against them and to agitate for their removal. But there has been so much foolish talk aiming at the identifications of conditions in Britain with those existing under the Dictators that the following from *The Left News* for January seems worth reprinting:—

It is the denial of the value of independent thought, the contempt for intellectual honesty, the spitting on mental integrity, that are among the most vile of the marks of Fascism. The view that finds in Fascism "simply" "the monopoly capitalism of the armament manufacturers" is a most dangerous half-truth: and I for one have never ceased to protest against it during the last three or four years. It is the monopoly capitalism of the armament manufacturers (though even this half of the truth is an over-simplification; in view of the various controls, and the doubt whether the whole of the ultimate power was ever in the hands of the monopoly capitalists); but it is also, among other things, a state of society in which men and women are conditioned to give up the struggle to be men and women, and become degraded to the level not merely of slaves but of animals.

It is necessary in passing to insist on this characteristic of Fascism, because not only is there a horribly dishonest tendency growing up—at present a very minor tendency only—to say that there is "really no difference" between our capitalist "democracy" and Fascism, but I even see the beginning of a tendency to say that Fascism is positively better than our capitalist "democracy." Let me tell this story. The other night there was a little private meeting of about twenty or thirty young men and women who were arguing about this question, and almost without exception saying that "liberty" and "individual freedom" were bogus, didn't exist in our society, meant nothing anyhow, and that really there was very little difference between the position of a working man in England and the position of a working man in Germany. The conversation went on from eight till nearly midnight, and just before midnight they turned to a German refugee who happened to be present and said: "What do you think?" He made a very simple reply. He took off his coat, and then his waistcoat, and then his shirt, and showed them his back scarred from top to bottom with horrible wounds. "That's the difference," he said. "That happened to me in a German concentration camp because I advocated Socialism at a private house at which a Gestapo spy was present. In Germany every one of you would be in a concentration camp to-morrow, and most of you would have a back like mine."

God knows that I am the last person to under-estimate the evils of our Capitalist society: I loathe the poverty, the unemployment, the hypocrisy, the vile oppression of subject races, and the rest. Nor would I in the smallest degree approve of any toning down of our struggle against these evils, on the plea that we are at war: on the contrary, I would sharpen the struggle, just because it is in world capitalism that the origins of the war are ultimately to be found.

Least of all would I weaken in our opposition to the National Government; again, I would intensify it. But it is time, and long past time, that a halt were called to this dishonest pretence that we haven't immensely valuable liberties—liberties that we must use in order to force the complete freedom for all that can come only from Socialism, and liberties the extermination of which would mean the end of any possibility of fighting for that full freedom.

The writer of the article is Victor Gollancz.

The Rev. Herbert Farmer says:—

One gets the feeling in the presence of some people that the best thing that could happen to them would be for them to cease to be religious altogether, for then they would undergo a glorious expansion of being.

It must be stated that Dr. Farmer thinks that what the people referred to really need is "a different vision of God," but the essence of the passage cited remains untouched. Putting the two statements together it amounts to just this. Human nature is well able to look after itself. The belief in God merely serves either to hide the nature of human motive, or to give sanction to whatever impulses man has, irrespective of their quality. We have been preaching this ever since the far-away days of our youth.

There is a bother going on in Brighton over the alleged profiteering of Churches in letting church halls and rooms for evacuated children and other purposes arising out of the war. The charges have been vigorously denounced by certain members of the Council. On the other hand, the defence of the Church authorities is that Church Halls are "finance-producing places," and the Churches depend upon them. But the question at issue is not whether a charge should be made, but that the charges are extortionate. Some sort of an enquiry is promised, but enquiries about Churches are apt to end in the same hushing-up as meets enquiries into the action of the Government. The Churches are accused of making a considerable sum of money out of the situation.

Meanwhile it must be remembered that while the State makes the Churches a present of the rates and taxes, which others have to pay, these buildings must not be used for secular purposes. We hope those interested will see whether the Churches are behaving as some other churches and chapels behave—that is, secure the remission of rates and taxes, and still use them for purposes which would properly make them liable to the taxes that others have to pay.

Once again we point out how cleverly and regularly Catholics get into the news. In the recent celebrations of the centenary of the incorporation of New Zealand as a British colony, they managed to come into the limelight with the broadcasting of a message to the National Eucharistic Congress at Wellington by Cardinal Hinsley. He sent the "congratulations of the Motherland" in the name of the "Hierarchy of England and Wales," and, of course, he referred to the Maoris as "the ancient and noble race." When it comes to "Publicity" the Roman Church has nothing to learn from the finest advertising agents living. It has them all beaten to a frazzle.

God Almighty was very earnestly asked to "intercede" the other day, to help the Finns. St. Paul's Cathedral was filled with members of many Christian sects who sank their theological differences for once, and did their best to impress upon the Lord that it was time for him to interfere in the war. The way the people sang the hymns, we are told, called to mind the ancient prayer:—

Hear Thou in Heaven Thy dwelling-place,
And when Thou hearest forgive.
O Lord, hearken and do; defer not for
Thine own sake, O my God,
For Thy people are called by Thy Name.

The capital letters make the prayer much more impressive, and if God can, after listening to it, still do nothing it only means that his ways are not our ways, and everything in the sight of the Lord must be good. All the same we are pretty certain that the Finns would prefer at this juncture a few aeroplanes rather than a million prayers. Religious they may be, but they seem to put their trust in their own good swords rather than in the efficacy of prayer. One can only wonder that so many people can be found agreeing with the snug, unctuous, self-satisfaction shown by the religious "interceders." Do these people really feel that they have helped the Finns?

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

For Distributing and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—H. Johnston (Durban), 5s.; Peter Cotes, 7s. 3d.; J. Cronin, 10s.

A. G. BARRINGTON.—As you will see the main points in your letter have been covered by others.

D. DALE.—Thanks for cuttings. We have already expressed our opinion of the quality of the Rev. Whale's addresses on "Facing the Facts." The Directorate of the B.B.C. must have a very poor opinion of the critical quality of listeners to inflict so much sheer verbiage on them.

J. HOWES.—Pleased to know that the *Freethinker* has been of so much benefit to you. Hope we deserve some of the good things you say.

The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

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Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

Sugar Plums

To-day (February 25) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, on "Dictators and Democracy." The subject should prove interesting. The chair will be taken at 3 o'clock. Admission will be free. It strikes us that the subject should serve as a good opportunity for bringing a newcomer to the hall. We hope friends will utilize the meeting to that end. The Leicester Society deserves, and needs, all the help that can be given it.

Overseas war-time post is certain to be irregular, and in any case transmission is certain to take longer. This will explain the receipt for £6 from Messrs. Jones, Stark and Hayman, of Buenos Ayres, for the Jubilee *Freethinker Fund*, which was formerly closed some time back. The contribution is very welcome, and still more is the very warm terms in these far-away friends speak of the "One and only." Mr. Jones, who transmits the money on behalf of himself and friends adds:—

My friends associate themselves with me in appreciation of your wonderful 50 years work for the equally wonderful *Freethinker*. We desire to say that the sum of money we send in no way represents our opinion of the value of the work, which we hope you will be able to continue for many more years.

Just one word of correction. My regular weekly work on the *Freethinker* extends to over forty-two years, it is my platform work that has turned the fifty year mark. For the rest, we, both on our own behalf and on behalf of others, thank Mr. Jones and his friends for his appreciation of what has been done, and which could not have been done but for the loyalty of so many friends scattered all over the globe. No paper ever had better friends, or worked for a better cause.

We have received a letter from Mr. C. S. Fraser, in which he argues that our comment on his letter, which appeared in the *Freethinker* (Feb. 11) our alternative of "War or worse than war," was not a real alternative, since the latter (submission to the domination of Europe by Hitlerism) was a mere speculation. We have no desire to reopen the controversy; we wish to point out only that alternatives are not, very seldom are, composed of each "leg" being a certainty. Thus we have the choice between an immediate surgical operation and *probable* blindness or death within a year. Or a sea voyage which must be taken and the choice of routes in terms of risk of being torpedoed. In this case our judgment of both the need for the voyage and the risk may be wrong, and the danger of being torpedoed quite imaginary. In the same way the alternative we state is a true one, whether our judgment was sound or unsound.

The new Portsmouth Branch is making a gallant struggle to establish itself firmly, and we bespeak for them the aid of all Freethinkers in the district. To-day (February 25) Mr. A. W. Scott will lecture on "Do We Need Religion." The meeting will be held in the Kit-Kat Cafe, Albert Road, opposite the King's Theatre. We hope to hear of a good attendance.

Mr. Cohen asks the patience of his correspondents with regard to delay in replying to their letters. But he has been very busy of late, and letters which call for a private reply have been numerous. The arrears will be wiped off in time. But while he can talk, and either write or listen at the same time, he has not yet achieved the skill to write two letters at once.

Most of our readers will be familiar with the lines:—

How odd of God
To choose the Jews

Here is an answering one sent us by a friend:—

But still more odd
Are those who choose
The Jewish God
And spurn the Jews.

BYRON ON THE TURKS

In all money transactions with the Moslems, I ever found the strictest honour, the highest disinterestedness. In transacting business with them, there are none of those dirty peculations, under the names of interest, differences of exchange, commission, etc., etc., uniformly found in applying to a Greek consul to cash bills, even on the first houses in Pera.

In the capital and at court the citizens and courtiers are formed in the same school with those of Christianity; but there does not exist a more honourable, friendly, and high-spirited character than the true Turkish provincial Aga, or Moslem country gentleman. It is not meant here to designate the governors of towns, but those Agas who by a kind of feudal tenure, possess lands and houses, of more or less extent, in Greece and Asia Minor.

The lower orders are in as tolerable discipline as the rabble in countries with greater pretensions to civilization. A Moslem, in walking the streets of our country towns, would be more incommoded in England than a Frank in a similar situation in Turkey.

If it be difficult to pronounce what they are, we can at least say what they are *not*, they are *not* treacherous, they are *not* cowardly, they do *not* burn heretics, they are *not* assassins, nor has an enemy advanced to their capital. They are faithful to their Sultan till he becomes unfit to govern and devout to their God without an Inquisition. Were they driven from St. Sophia (Constantinople) to-morrow, and the French or Russians enthroned in their stead, it would become a question whether Europe would gain by the exchange. England would certainly be the loser.

Byron "Notes to Childe Harold"

Friendship

To have the friendship of some worthy soul—some admirable man or woman—is an experience which few of us enjoy, the reason being, if we are intellectually honest with ourselves, is either that we do not deserve it, or are incapable of establishing it.

For what, after all, is friendship—real friendship, that is? Obviously not that kind of relationship which governments sometimes boast of to their peoples as existing between themselves and some foreign country when they are, all the while, secretly plotting against each other; nor the kind of understanding which exists between two individuals—known to each other and their associates as “friends”—neither of whom would hesitate to belittle or even to betray the other for self-aggrandisement. No; the relationship referred to here is that kind which occasionally exists between two people who admire and respect each other, and who would unhesitatingly sacrifice themselves rather than hurt the other's feelings, much less do a mean or unworthy trick.

This attitude between two people is not possible at a moment's notice, but is of slow growth—and must necessarily be so. It is quite impossible to get to know anyone intimately and to measure them accurately in a week or a month, or even a year. Indeed, we may be acquainted with a man for many years without getting to know very much about him, about his real and inward character, simply because in many respects, which we fail to appreciate, we may be as far apart as the poles and therefore never meet on common ground, try as we may.

Mentally, a crowd of people may be likened to a field of corn—in that they all spring from the same kind of seed, yet some die at birth or soon afterwards, some remain stunted in growth and are of little if any use, the others varying in size and usefulness according to their nature and nurture.

And such being the case, any number of people are bound to differ from each other in form and content. No two of us is exactly alike—or ever can be, from the very nature of things, from the effects of our birth and upbringing. We, too, commence our life as a seed, and as seedlings we are subjected to the calm, the stress and the storm of home and social life, growing to maturity or not, as the case may be, not through our own volition, as we sometimes proudly tell ourselves—or others, if we are inclined to superiority, but largely as the result of the surrounding circumstances and the influences that are brought to bear on us.

For that reason we rarely meet with anyone with whom we can associate in the fullest sense of the word, and become fast friends. We just don't fit in with their scheme of things, no matter how we try. We may admire them in many ways, but—well we are not “in tune,” so to speak, so cannot mix successfully and get on together. Their path of progress through life has been different from ours, and the result is we do not meet on the same plane.

Life is, of course, the play of a variety of interacting forces, the result of which is that when they are delicate and complementary things go smoothly and well, but when they are violent and opposing things go all awry. Hence it is that on occasion a relationship that bids fair to ripen into a deep and lasting friendship suddenly breaks asunder, as it were, and the parties drift apart—perhaps thereafter to be deadly enemies. The human mind is a curious thing—speaking figuratively: a curious and delicate piece of mechanism—capable of expressing itself in numerous ways, and of being influenced this way or

that according to the prevailing social or economic wind.

But when—as sometimes, but only very occasionally happens—two people come together and, over a period, find that they have much in common—are as near alike as can be—then an attachment forms between them and ripens into a friendship which is one of the most delightful and enduring experiences known to human beings.

GEO. B. LISSENDER

Yeast

HUNGRY and helpless and ready to die!—dying in the midst of plenty, while the world foisons in abundance with physical and mental sustenance—is the lot of many people, to-day. Why are people hungry, and ignorant?

“Ignorance,” Shakespeare tells us, “is the curse of God, knowledge the wing wherewith we fly to heaven.” So:—

To die, to decompose, and by decomposing to ferment; ay, there's the rub; but in so fermenting to dream that we shall rise again, that this lump of ignorance shall be dissolved, to suffer wisdom's feeble wings to waft our wasted bodies up to heaven. May be, to Fermentarians, a consummation devoutly to be wished, but to the thinker, no! He'll none of it! To him—“We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep”—“The rest is silence.”

A handyman, in this age of specialists, is a rarity. Before the Industrial Revolution, when man was his own master, handymen were common. A man could mend his own shoes, knit his own stockings, do his own joinering, plumbing, etc., etc. He was a free man then, un moulded by state influence and education. He could catch his hare and make his own soup long before Mrs. Beeton visited the glimpses of the Moon! He may have been, in all he did, a rough and ready creature, but he was, none the less, an unpolished gem. Few men to-day can do aught but earn a living at a special job—when they can find one!

The war had made rationing necessary, and now a snowstorm has severely rationed the distribution of rations. And here, on the moor edge, many miles from town, our helplessness is appalling. In the absence of the familiar things ready-made we know not what to do. This morning on going into a confectioner's I found the baker sat idle. He had exhausted his store of technical knowledge in making things. He had plenty flour, he said, “but I cannot bake without yeast.” He had no fresh meat, and so he could not make pies, etc.

And every objection he raised could be easily surmounted.

During the Great War I remember an old woman who kept a little bread shop making pies when meat was scarce, of sliced onions and potatoes, which became so popular as nearly to entirely displace the meat ones. They were larger and one penny cheaper. From a food value point they were certainly better than the meat ones.

And for how many centuries was bread made without yeast?

The muddy scum arising during fermentation, in the 17th century became known as yeast. In my boyhood we got all our brewers' yeast, from a brewery, in bottles. In 1703 Leeuwenhoeck discovered that this muddy scum was a substance made up of an enormous number of minute germs floating in the liquid; and in 1836 Cagniard de la Tour discovered that these bodies grew to a certain size, then budded, and from

the buds the plant multiplied, and thus that yeast was a mass of living animals. 'The study of yeast is interesting. It interests one in so many side issues like Professor Huxley's *Theory of Protoplasm as the Physical Basis of Life*, etc.

Bread can be raised by mechanically mixing carbonic acid gas alone with the dough. Then there is aerated bread, water bread, milk bread, egg digestive bread, unfermented griddle bread, American gems, finger rolls, whisks, boiled bread, unfermented bread, scones, and cakes, and others, and all of them baked without yeast. And, 'tis hard to credit that a professional baker, in this enlightened (!) age had never heard of these.

Then there is stale bread. How many know that it can be lightened equal to new by dipping the loaf into boiling water for a minute, and then standing it on a wire and drying it off in the oven. It should then be used immediately and only as much as is required for the time should be done.

The ancients knew that sugar under the influence of yeast ferments. Many total abstainers are very fond of alcohol, and even get badly under its influence at times. One intimate friend of mine, like many more of his class turns his stomach into a brewer's vat. He doesn't know what a sinner he is, whilst denouncing others. But his liver will tell him one of these days.

I am of opinion that yeast should not be used, not to prevent teetotal drunkenness alone, but in the interests of the general health. Yeast is a lazy method of baking. It saves "time and money," and if anything can be found for doing that it will be adopted, regardless of health considerations.

My point in all these questions—Butter, Baking, Bacon and other eatables—is a health one. The great question we ought, each of us, to study and try to find an answer to is—What keeps our Infirmarys and Hospitals, etc., permanently full of patients?

GEORGE WALLACE

Ye Have the Poor with you Always

THIS is what the Simple Gospel tells us. It is the word of Jesus himself, and when Jesus said *always*, it is to be presumed he meant *always*. It is hardly an encouraging message for social reformers. Writers like Dr. J. L. Hammond, Barbara Hammond, and Leonard Woolf, have pointed out how it has acted as a cold douche upon those who hoped to banish poverty from the earth. Rich and Poor there would always be; the God Man had spoken. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hannah More, a pious and kind-hearted dame, brought forth the encomiums of the Bishops by harping on this string, in a thousand and one little tracts which were left by the million in the houses of the workers. The Bishop of London of her time commended her "diffusion among the lower orders of the people" of these tracts and thought they were invaluable in counteracting "the poison of those impious and immoral pamphlets" which went on another line to that of poverty in perpetuity. "Fear God; Honour the King," was Hannah's theme, and she made it quite clear that the question as to whether a King was good or bad was quite irrelevant. "Whoever resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God."

And Hannah went on amidst salvos of pious praise to make "the lower classes" thankful that they had jobs to do such as scaring crows and weeding gardens and that the wealthy spent money freely, for when they spent money freely, when they "threw it about,"

there were more gardens to weed. Rich and Poor even unto the end of the world! To do the Gospel Jesus justice it must be stated that he thought the end of the world was only the day after to-morrow.

Jesus was God, says the theologian. He was also Man, says the theologian. In as much as the man Jesus was God his example may of course remain for what it was worth, but any credit due to the man Jesus was *ipso facto* minimised. For God as the Greatest Mathematician, the greatest Philosopher, the greatest Scientist, the Greatest Humanitarian, the Greatest Spiritualist, the Greatest Statesman, the Greatest Fisherman, counts for nothing. God can be anything without causing him the flicker of an eyebrow. Even when he himself had said it, it wasn't anything to his credit. But a God should at least know what he is talking about, and Hannah More agreed with this when she divided mankind into Rich and Poor, and said that such a division was divinely ordained.

There were people who had a sneaking weakness for the Poor even in the early years of the Christian era and when a woman spilt three-hundred-pence-worth of ointment of spikenard over the head of Jesus, such people cried, in the hardness of their hearts: "Waste, shocking waste!" And they went on, in their unspiritual way: "It might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and given to the poor."

This was an interesting situation. If there had been a *Gethsemane Gazette* in those days they would at once have sensed the situation to be what they termed NEWS. What did Jesus say on this important occasion? We are told that he opened his mouth and said:

"Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she has come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

It was the part of Jesus that was God that undoubtedly spoke here. Jesus was not every inch a God, but a diluted God. And the part of Jesus that was God responded as a God ought. He spoke as his Father, the first person in the Trinity, would have spoken; for his Father was admittedly a jealous God and possessed of a proper pride. He spoke and acted as papa did when Cain and Abel brought him offerings. Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. But Cain brought him a couple of bananas, four apples, three potatoes and a spring onion. "And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. But unto Cain and unto his offering he had not respect." Jesus was the worthy son of a worthy sire.

Jesus knew his ancestry was good up to a point. He knew his place, but what pleased him most was that the woman with the alabaster box of ointment knew it too. Gods came First; the Poor came second. So Jesus was willingly smeared with an expensive perfumed ointment; he glowed, and knew that the woman "had done what she could."

If the woman with the box of ointment had been, on the other hand, so misguided as to realize on it, and to spend the proceeds on improving the worldly condition of a few of the poor people she happened to know then she would not have done "what she could." She would have chosen the lesser part. Unlike President Roosevelt she would have failed to put God first and because of that she would have failed to make her mark on History and gone down to the grave, unwept, unhonoured and unsung. The woman with the alabaster box of ointment gained a human immor-

knew, intuitively, after the manner of women, what a pukka God liked most—the best of everything. So the Gods got the Goods and the Poor had to wait. The Poor were used to it. They were always there at the end of the queue; time marched on, and there at the end of the queue they would always be. First come the Gods; then those who represent the Gods; then those wealthy enough to bring their wealth to the Gods and erect tabernacles to the Gods. Then further down the queue, came those not only poor in the things of this world, but poor in spirit (poor indeed!)—they came next. And at the tail of the queue, an excessively long tail, came the poor. The poor, the plain poor. Let them wait, there is no hurry. Even if they are cold through lack of raiment, and hungry through lack of food, there is no hurry. They have immortal souls (God has seen to it) and if they should die in their poverty whilst waiting, what of it? They will have their long reward. *Place aux Dieux!*

Tom, Dick, and Harry in their search for the Simple Gospel may be excused for thinking that Jesus here missed his chance. A little more of a Man and a little less of a God and the opportunity would have been seized! The Gods, alas, always have the defects of their qualities. They have done nothing to resist temptation, they have done nothing to educate themselves; they have consumed no midnight oil to make themselves worthy Gods, and deserving respect. They just *are*. And the poor just are. And because of what they are they are embittered and their development is hindered and a hundred ills other than physical fall their way. But with Man to think of his brother, to sympathise with him, to help him, to widen his opportunities and change his environment, it may be possible in time to believe with some justification that the poor will not be with us always.

T. H. ELSTON

Jews under the Cross and the Crescent

EVER since the destruction of the city of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D., the Jews have been a persecuted race. They had to suffer inhuman persecution at the hands of their masters. If under the pagan rulers their condition was bad, under the Cross it was worse. "From the moment," says Lecky, "the Church obtained civil power under Constantine, the general principle of coercion was admitted and acted on, both against the Jews, the heretics and pagans." The Jews were marked out as a distinct race. They had no civic rights, and it was enough if they could keep body and soul together. The Law did not allow them to own lands. Even to exercise their religion was forbidden. The Roman Emperors of the eighth century forcibly converted them. Jewish massacres were a matter of common occurrence. "It is said that 50,000 Jews were slain by the Romish Christians while 10,000 were slaughtered at Damascus. Leaving women and children aside, more than 1,200 Jews were imprisoned and made captives by the Romans. Smith Williams tells in his *History of the World* that the number of slaughtered Jews must have amounted to 40,000 at this time." (K. B. Ahsanullah in *History of the Muslim World*, pages 533-544.)

In this savagery, it was not the Romish Christians alone that indulged, but all Christian nations. In France, in England, in Poland, in Russia, nay, in all countries where the Cross reigned, the Jews were the underdogs. The detestable and inhuman pogroms and

Ghettos speak for themselves. "The few Jews who had made their homes in England," says Ramsay Muir, "were expelled from the country by Edward I. in 1290; the much more numerous Jews of France were expelled by a series of edicts during the fourteenth century." Under the Tsarist régime, they were subjected to systematic persecution and humiliation. In 1882 there was a wholesale massacre of Jews in Nijni Novgorod.

Even in the twentieth century, the Jews are not allowed an honourable existence. Under the Christians, modern or medieval, the Jews seem destined to suffer persecution. Before and after the Great War the Jews suffered very much. "Early in 1923 there were reported to be 100,000 homeless Jewish orphans in the Ukraine, and in Odessa the Jewish death rate in 1922 is said to have reached 200 per 1,000. (*Encyclopædia Britannica*, Vol. II, 13th Edition, page 606.) The accession of Hitler has renewed Jewish persecution. The Nazis are trying to rid Germany of Jews. Their children are even denied education. All the barbarous methods employed by the medieval Christians are being used against the Jews by the Nazis. "Jews are not allowed to bathe in the public bathing places on the days when Germans bathe there." The famous scientist—Professor Einstein, the musician—Bruno Walter, the painter—Max Liebermann, and the author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, besides a host of other Jews have been exiled because they happened to be Jews.

To those who contend that laying the blame at the door of the Christians for Nazi excesses is not fair, the writer can only quote Plato: "The State is the citizen writ large." And as long as the citizens remain Christians, my conclusion is valid. Moreover, dictatorship is a transitory phenomenon, and simply because dictators have succeeded in making the masses politically "hypersensitive," we cannot conclude that age-long beliefs and prejudices have been cast away. We cannot explain why this tide of anti-Semitism has swept over the whole Continent. Italy has begun to ape Hitler. Rumania and mutilated Czechoslovakia, nay, all countries vie with one another in persecuting the Jews. The capture of Austria by Hitler has been the signal for Jewish persecution, and Jewish suicides were frequent with the fall of Austria. . . .

If, under the Cross, the Jews were hewers of wood and drawers of water, under the Crescent, they were the equals of their Muslim conquerors. Perfect even-handed justice was meted out to them in matters political, religious and economic. Why this radical difference in the attitude of the Cross and the Crescent? Every action has a definite philosophical and psychological background. Therefore, the beliefs of a community, and the personality of the character which the community adores, reflect and influence its action. Thus it is evident that the tolerance showed by the Crescent to the Jews was inspired by the Qur-ân and the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him!).

And the Prophet, whose life was a commentary on the Qur-ân, showed by his personal example, how non-Muslims should be treated. All who have any knowledge of the Prophet's life, will bear testimony to the fact that he was the most tolerant of men. His own life was in danger at the hands of the Jews, and yet he did not bear any malice towards them. They would use abusive terms against him: but he would meekly bear the insults without wreaking vengeance on them. Once he was invited to a repast by a Jewess. He gladly accepted. But the Jewess poisoned him and his followers. As a result, one of his followers died fatally by knowing a God when she saw one. She

instantaneously. The Prophet himself suffered much owing to the poison, and eventually it proved the cause of his death. With all this, he magnanimously forgave the woman, and she was allowed to live unharmed. Such was the noble example given to his followers by Muhammad Mustafa. His Charter to the Jews is a standing testimony to his statesmanship and tolerance. It runs thus: "... The Jews who attach themselves to our Commonwealth shall be protected from all insults and vexations; they shall have an equal right with our own people to our assistance and good offices: the Jews of the various branches of Auf, Najjar, Harith, Jashm, Thalaba, Aus, and all others domiciled in Yathrib, shall form with the Muslims one composite nation; they shall practise their religion as freely as the Muslims; the clients and allies of the Jews shall enjoy the same security and freedom; the guilty shall be pursued and punished; the Jews shall join the Muslims in defending Yathrib (Medina) against all enemies; the interior of Yathrib shall be a sacred place for all those who accept this Charter; the clients and allies of the Muslims and Jews shall be as respected as the patrons. . . ." Has any democratic government given to its minorities, especially to the Jews, such freedom in all walks of life? And yet people accuse Islam of intolerance! A strange irony of fate indeed!

The Holy Prophet, no doubt, dealt severely with some Jewish tribes. But it was in retribution for the arch-treachery of the Jews. They did not find any scruples in breaking the Covenant into which they had entered with the Muslims. And if there were a people to show mercy to whom was a sin, then without a shadow of doubt they were the very Jews whom the Prophet dealt with severely. Moreover, such measures were perfectly justifiable in view of the fact that Islam was in its embryo then, and it was the duty of the Prophet to see that it was not nipped in the bud. So long as the Jews attacked his person, he forgave; but when the community was threatened with extermination, he had no alternative but to fight the enemy.

The noble example of the Chosen One was continued by his followers. In 637 A.D. when Caliph Omar captured Jerusalem, the Jews and the Christians inhabiting the city were granted full personal and religious liberty. But, when some six hundred years later, the same city fell into the hands of the Crusaders, it was converted into a pool of blood. The Jews were herded into their synagogues and there burnt. A world of difference indeed! The capture of Alexandria by Amru also shows how the Jews were treated by the Muslims. "No doubt, when the tide of Moslemite conquest spread along the shores of Africa, the Jews exulted, rather than deplored, the change of masters; forty thousand of their race were found by Amron in Alexandria, at the conquest of that city, and suffered no further oppression than the payment of tribute." (H. H. Milman in *History of the Jews*, Vol. II., page 251.)

An incident during the Caliphate of Ali shows not only the real democratic nature of the government of Islam, but also how fairly the Jews (and for that matter all non-Muslims) were treated by the Muslims. The Caliph had purchased some armour from a certain Jew, and had paid the amount due there and then. But the Jew began to dun him for the supposed debt. The Caliph told the Jew that he had already paid the sum claimed. Nevertheless, a suit was filed against Ali, and he had to appear before the Qadi. The Caliph pleaded his innocence. So he was required to bring witnesses. Ali told the Qadi that his son and his slave were his only two witnesses. But this the Jew would not accept. In short, Ali was made to pay the sum twice to the Jew. Thereupon the Jew declared in the open Court that he had tried the trick merely to see

to what extent one could expect justice at the hands of the Caliph and the Qadi, and that he was perfectly satisfied with the even-handed justice which others obtained under the Caliph. The Jew embraced Islam afterwards. Such was the liberty the Jews enjoyed under the Crescent. They could even file a suit against the Commander of the Faithful and get justice meted out to them. Can the Jews ever dream of such justice at the hands of the Christians? Let the author of the *Spirit of Islam* answer that question: "The non-Christians—Jews, heretics, or pagans—enjoyed, under Christian domination, a fitful existence. It was a matter of chance whether they would be massacred or reduced to slavery. Rights, they had none; enough if they were suffered to exist." And even now, in countries like Nazi Germany, the Jews have no rights at all. Everywhere the Muslims were hailed as the liberators of the downtrodden. The Muslim Empire was a refuge for the oppressed. In fact, Muslim sovereigns were actually invited by the common people to relieve them of the oppression of the Church and the nobles. It was not the lust for power, but the instigation and entreaties of the oppressed Spanish Jews, that made the Saracens the conquerors of Spain. The Jews "held secret correspondence," to use H. H. Milman's words, "with their free brethren in Africa, to accelerate the march of the victorious deliverer." And the prayers of the Jews were effective, for they returned "to the enjoyment of all rights and privileges of freedom—not indeed under Christian kings, but under the dominion of the Moorish Caliphs, who established their rule over almost the whole of Spain. . . . At all events, when Toledo opened her gates to the Moorish conquerors (whether the Jews were openly or secretly active in the fall of the city) with what infinite satisfaction must they have beheld the capital of the persecuting Visigothic kings, of Recared, and Siselmt, and Ervig, and the seat of those remorseless councils which had forcibly baptized, or exiled their devoted ancestors, or deprived them of their children, now become the palace of kings, if not kindred in lineage, yet Monotheists like themselves, under whose rule they knew that their brethren in the East and in Africa were permitted to enjoy their lives and their religion undisturbed, under whom they found equal justice, rose to high honour, or at least laboured under no proscription, dreaded no persecution!" (*History of the Jews*, Vol. II, pages 261-262). And when in 1492 Granada fell, the Jews again became the object of persecution. Ferdinand and Isabella mercilessly expelled the Jews from Spain while those who escaped expulsion were forcibly converted. Thus, the moment the protecting wing of the Crescent was taken away, the Jews fell on evil days. And with the setting of the Crescent on the horizon of Spain, the country again reverted to barbarism.

Naturally, as a result of such complete tolerance enjoyed by the Jews, we find that they enriched art and literature. It is only in a free and tolerant atmosphere that literature and art flourish. And the fact that the Jews have contributed valuable treasures to Arabic literature, speaks volumes for Arab tolerance. Indeed, it is difficult to say, in the case of this Arabic culture, "where the Jew ends and the Arab begins, so important and essential were its Jewish factors." From the tenth to the fifteenth centuries, that is, as long as the Crescent ruled in Spain, the Spanish Jews were foremost in art and literature. And, as Sir Ramsay Muir points out, the revival of learning and literature, which began in the thirteenth century in Europe, was due to the influence of the cultivated Jews of Spain.

O. V. ABDULLAH

(Reprinted from the *Islamic Review*)

Correspondence

THE DICTATORS

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—To be effective, all Dictatorships must be ruthless. However it must be admitted that the power obtained and wielded by the Dictators in a relative short space of time is evidence enough of the terrible efficiency of their methods. It is also evident that Machiavelli has been the inspiration as regards method. Machiavelli maintained that the end being great, the means is a matter of indifference. Remorseless terrorism and limitless deceit must be practised without the slightest hesitation—which means, in effect, the divorce of politics from ethics.

Your article terminates with a plea for a *real* Democracy. If by "real" you imply purity, then this latter state would be unstable. The "ideal" State would combine and harmonize the different forms of State in a balanced unity, i.e., an adjustment of conflicting forces. The foregoing is based on the doctrines of Polybius, who lived over 2,000 years ago. Despite this, his views are particularly apt to-day, and indicate that speculation on the different forms of State have agitated the minds of political theorists for thousands of years.

S. GORDON HOGG

[We have been compelled to delete a little of Mr. Hogg's letter, but nothing material has been eliminated.—ED.]

FASCISM

SIR,—My attention has been drawn to an item in your last issue of February 11, in which you state that "the Fascist movement in this country was very largely subsidized and—to a large extent—directed from Germany."

Allegations of the receipt of funds from abroad have been made from time to time by political opposition, but Sir Oswald Mosley's challenge that he was prepared to submit the accounts of British Union to accountants if the other political parties would do the same, has never been taken up.

Your further allegations that "The beginning of the Anti-Semitic campaign in this country was obviously directed from Berlin," has at least the virtue of originality, but here again the evidence is perfectly clear. In the first two years British Union forbade all reference to Jews, but following brutal attacks on our Members by Jews, the Jewish challenge was taken up in the autumn of 1934, and an investigation of Jewish activities was undertaken, which revealed the anti-British tendencies of their racial policy.

British Union is therefore anti-Jewish, not on account of anything that may have happened in Germany, but because of experience of the Jewish question in this country.

A. RAVEN THOMSON

Y.V. (LYND) AND THE B.B.C.

SIR,—I was very pleased to read a good but mild letter probably emanating from the R.P.A. in *John O'London's Weekly*, the week after Lynd's "clotted bosh." It was good to read that the editor received so many protests from thinkers. I have been told that the editor of *John O'London's Weekly* was once the editor of the *Church Times*. If this be true, it would possibly help to explain why Lynd was not pulled up in his ignorance and offensiveness. When I got my *Freethinker* this morning, I was very pleased to read Mr. William Kent's letter. Not only is he a Pepysian and a Freethinker, the same as I am; but I believe he came in contact with my late Uncle, Edwin Chappell, the Pewys Scholar, who was an Atheist.

When I read Lynd's article in the Cambridge Public Library, attracted by the title like so many others, I was so annoyed that I sent his editor the following brief communication:—

"I have read a 'foolish and impudent' statement by Mr. Robert Lynd in an essentially feeble and thoughtless article in your paper that Atheists and Freethinkers should not be allowed to speak on the wireless. May I point out to this writer that he appears to know very

little about the true nature of Freethought and Atheism, and he should therefore have the tact, even if he has not the manners, to refrain from writing unjust, stupid, misleading and wild statements about them? The mere fact that Atheists and Freethinkers pay for their yearly wireless licences in the same way as so-called Christians do, would appear to indicate to reasonably intelligent persons, that it would be only elementary justice that they should be allowed to express their views freely on the air in company with their less intellectually developed "brothers." This should be obvious to anybody—but a Christian. Judging by his "toleration," or rather the lack of it, I should imagine Mr. Lynd to be a believer in this particular form of Oriental superstition.

If you should, out of interest, wish me to explain clearly and concisely in an article, why the abolition of Christianity would be in the interests of the civilization of the World, I should be most pleased to oblige. My chief claim to write on this point is that I have confined myself more or less to three subjects (Pepys, Locks, Religion) for the last 15 years. Consequently I do not churn out tripe like the professional journalists who imagine that they can write on any subject at a few minutes' notice.

The next time I wrote to him it was on a minute Pepysian point. That letter was not inserted.

D. DONALD DALE

Letters from Messrs. R. B. Kerr, J. W. Poynter, A. W. Davis and Edgar Syers are held over till next week.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond. Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. L. Lewis.

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INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cricketers' Arms, Inverness Street, near Camden Town Underground Station): 7.30, Mr. Alick West—"The Social Basis of Freethought."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel opposite Clapham Common Underground Station): 7.30. Last Lecture of the Season! Mr. F. A. Ridley—"New Religions."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, J. McCabe—"Mr. Wells's New World Order."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Lamb and Flag, James Street, Oxford Street, opposite Bond Street Station): 7.0, Mr. J. Arnott (Attorney from Calcutta)—"India's Religions and their Blockade on Progress."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (WIRRAL) BRANCH, N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, Mr. J. V. Short—"Children."

BURNLEY (Borden House Social Club, Colne Road): 11.0, Mr. Norman Charlton N.S.S.—"Jesus Christ."

BURNLEY ESPERANTO SOCIETY (Westgate): 7.0, Lecture in Esperanto. Mr. J. Clayton—"La Krepuski de la Dioj."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Our Modern Bureaucracy." Questions and Discussion.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Clarion Rooms, Wellington Street): 7.0. Open Discussion. Members only. Literature on sale.

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