

# THE FREETHINKER

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## Views and Opinions

### Isolation or Collective Action?

LAST week I dealt with one of the most scientifically foolish questions that is at present before the public. If I used Mr. Duff Cooper as a chopping-block, it was simply because he happens to be a prominent politician, and I daresay represents in his mental outlook the majority of the members of the British House of Commons. In that sense one may assume that the House represents fairly the majority of the electorate; and both Parliament and that section of the public find expression in the "national" press. Yet, as the authors of the Athanasian creed would say, there are not three muddleheads, but only one muddlehead. The three are one, the one is three. Three aspects of the same thing—the worship of obscurantism.

This week I wish to deal with a related, but not necessarily connected subject, that of "Isolation" versus "Collective Action." And, again, the subject has come to the front in connexion with war, although it has no necessary connexion with war. But I think the agitation carried on by certain organs of the yellow press indicates also the play of unavowed powers and interests. The general public obviously have no interest in being fooled, but they do offer a tempting bait to those who for various reasons wish to fool them. But the cry of "Let us mind our own business" is a very tempting one, and they who are taken in by it offer easy meat for anyone with a plausible tongue or a smooth pen. It is surprising how many there are who will exclaim, "I have no time to study this or that question," but who are quite ready to make decisions concerning it.

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### Isolation

The cry that we must adopt a policy of "Isolation" against one of "Collective Action" was in great vogue before it was made clear that war was "inevitable." It was the favourite cry of Hitler's Fifth Column, which had members in the House of Commons, in fashionable social circles, with whom Rib-

bentrop was quite a pet, and Goering a delightful companion for hunting parties. In several largely circulated newspapers the cry was that our business was to steer clear of collective action—Mr. Chamberlain, a little over a year ago, laughed at that as sheer midsummer madness—we had to cultivate relations between the members of the British Empire and mind our own business by forming a closer alliance with all our colonies and dominions, meanwhile building up an armed force that would secure the Empire from any attack whatsoever.

Now I do not want to argue whether this is a wise practice or a foolish one. To do so would be to play into the hands of the Isolationists. But it is clear that what is called Isolation will not do away with the possibility of world war; it will rather make it—excuse the phrase—more inevitable. We cannot go on for ever making the British Empire stronger than any possible combination against it, with the nations outside the Empire arming to be stronger than us. Somewhere and somehow the breaking point must come, and that means—war. All I now wish to point out is that this is the significance of the policy of minding our own business, otherwise "Isolation."

The first comment I have to make is that whatever minding our own business may be, it is certainly not Isolation. It is demonstrably collective action between a number of semi-independent and subordinate States numbering altogether about four hundred million people. Granting the case of the "Isolationists" we should then have one part of the world linked together in *collective* action against another part, but a collective action that was certain to lead to war because there were no other purpose in the existence of these two threatening coalitions. That so many of the public could be fooled by such a cry as "Isolation," and that leading figures in political and other circles could use it with such confidence that they would not be found out, is enough to justify the gloomy prophecy of Mr. H. G. Wells that civilization is in grave danger of a complete collapse. We cannot have an intelligence test applied to professional politicians, but it almost looks as though it ought to be one of the conditions of obtaining a vote.

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### Some Fundamentals

Now I am not going to argue whether Isolation is better than Collective Action or vice versa. To me it is quite plain that no such alternative exists. The real situation, in my judgment, is that collective action is the only possible practice with all peoples who are in any kind of contact with one another. And the only choice that lies within our power is that of collective action for war or collective action for peace. We have collective action for war with France, New Zealand, India, Australia, South Africa, etc., etc., and collective action for conditional peace with Russia, Turkey, United States, China, Japan,

and so forth. We have Isolation with —? I can only think of some very remote tribes of uncivilized people with whom we have hardly any contact whatever, and with Mars, the Moon, Jupiter, the Sun, and so forth—except so far as purely physical, and perhaps chemical relations are concerned with these heavenly bodies.

What I have said should be self-evident, but I suppose I must make it quite plain so that some of our prominent people in the political and newspaper world may realize it, for one must not adopt the only alternative that they are deliberately fooling the people with phrases. Let me take the case of, say, Italy and Germany. Only the other day we were crying out—I believe wrongly—that we were absolutely unprepared for war, and so had to close our eyes to much that both these countries were doing and might do. To-day we are satisfied, not that Italy has no desire to attack us, but that she will not attack us because she feels that it will not pay her to do so. We are at war with Germany, because it has become clear, so clear that even the fifth column dare not longer contradict the statement—in public—that to avoid it spells a greater disaster.

Now take any of the examples I have given. (I really must here interject with the reflection that in writing as I am doing, I feel as though I were conducting a kindergarten class, but it is evidently necessary). Will anyone be good enough to tell me just where the conditions of collective action do not exist? Collective action must mean action which is determined in conjunction with the circumstances that prevail between ourselves and others. Suppose that to get to the local railway station I am compelled to pass the houses of one or two people who will at any moment rush out and assault me. In getting to the station I either go a long way round so as to avoid these people, or I join company with others so that we are too strong for them to assault, or I go armed, feeling that in some way I can protect myself. In circumstances that now exist I know that no possibility of assault is likely, and I go without any preparation whatever. But in each case what I do is determined by what the other fellow does, and what he does is determined by what I do. If I am likely to throw stones at the window, or steal the flowers from his front garden, or do something of a benevolent description, he also will mould his conduct to mine.

In existing conditions we say that the huge armaments we have created, the dislocation of our social and business life, is determined by what Germany now is. Germany says the same thing of us. But what is all this save collective action? Two men playing chess are aiming at breaking down the other's defence and compelling the practical surrender of the King. Are they acting in isolation or are they acting collectively, the move of each one being determined by the other? A football eleven plays another eleven, each aiming at the defeat of the other—so far as that game is concerned. Are they playing in Isolation or are they playing collectively? Isolation cannot possibly mean acting alone, in the deeper sense that is impossible wherever relations exist between people. Whether they are friendly or unfriendly relations, collective action is an inevitable consequence. The choice is never isolation *v.* collective action, but always one of action and reaction. This is what I call the dynamics of social action. We cannot mind our own business in the sense of not bothering what the fellow across the road is doing; we are only minding our own business in an intelligent manner when we recognize that the behaviour of our neighbours is our business, even though we may have different opinions as to the best way of conducting and improving our relations.

We have to recognize that the fields of what is my business and what is your business are always interlocked.

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#### The Story of Life

If I were writing a biological and sociological history of life, I think I should point out that this interlocking of fields of interest (that seems an awfully pompous formula for what has always been to me a simple fact) is exemplified through the whole history of life. If we go down to the lowest forms of living things I think we have a fairly complete picture of Isolation. A single cell divides into two, and each for a time minds its own business for the simple reason there is none other it can find. But when we get among the multi-celled animals we find that this game of each cell minding its own business is not possible. There comes a differentiation of parts, one part having a definite task to perform, and depending for its performance on the other parts. There takes place what in the days of my boyhood I learned to call a division of labour or differentiation of parts, which is another way of saying a differentiation of function. But at the same time I also learned that differentiation of function was of no use whatever unless there also took place an interdependence of parts—that is unless the parts played, so to speak, into each other's hands. The muscular strength of any animal is dependent upon the co-operation of the digestive system.

In social life there is exactly the same process at work. The value of a man spending all his time in making boots depends upon other people working to give him food and shelter. But this division of labour in human society does not depend upon each minding his own business, but upon a substantially collective agreement that each one will work for the other. If any member of society so acts as seriously to upset, or make impossible, the operation of this substantially collective agreement, then war is declared, and the man who makes the boots has to readjust himself to the task of knocking the stuffing out of the one who is making this collective action for mutual benefit impossible.

One safeguard I must note. I am not either praising or preaching the need for war. My opinion of war has always been, and still is, that it is a retrogression in the social scale. If it is "inevitable" it is still a step downward, it still involves social deterioration while it lasts, and there is a lot of lee-way to make up when war ceases. Looked at from one point of view a policeman is a dead loss to the community. He produces nothing, and other people have to work to feed, clothe and shelter him. But he does make it possible for the collective action of society to proceed along better lines than it would go without him. I need not keep a private police force to fight the private police force of other people.

So my thesis is that the fact of Collective Action is not merely the only way to world peace, it is the only form of action that is open to human beings. We may have collective action for construction or for destruction. It may be for good or bad. I do not know whether our politicians realize this, or whether our newspaper-men have enough knowledge of the simplest biological and psychological facts to agree with what I have said. But I do know that these cries that it is no concern of ours how the rest of the world behaves; that we must practise "Isolation" and laugh at Collective Action in international politics as a midsummer night's nightmare indicate—to take a mild view of them—an ignorance of the fundamental constitution of social life that bodes ill for the people who look to them for guidance.

## The Cult of Courage

"The high price of courage indicates the general timidity."—Emerson.

Mankind are dastardly when they meet with opposition.—Franklin.

COURAGE is a quality which has always commanded the admiration of men. The hero is the central figure in ages'-old legends, and also the darling of last night's newspaper. Yet physical courage, which is quite common, to men and animals alike, is higher in popular esteem than moral courage, which is really rare. All hearts go out to Leonidas, Richard Cœur de Lion, Saladin, Cromwell, Napoleon, Nelson, and Ney. Shackleton braving the Antarctic snows, Amy Johnson flying solo to Australia, are always sure of our applause. No one would be so churlish as to wish for a moment to dim the glory of such heroism. Nelson, dying on his flagship, or Captain John Brown, of Harper's Ferry, dying for human emancipation, equally strike the imagination, but John Brown commands the deeper response, because it comes from the heart as well as from the head:—

John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave  
But his soul goes marching on.

The refrain becomes the marching song of the soldiers of the North inspiring them to ultimate victory, and to the emancipation of the slaves. Think also of the calm resolution of Florence Nightingale, fighting British Bureaucracy and the Circumlocution Office with the same courage and tenacity as the heroes of the Charge of the Light Brigade. The charge itself, however, was a matter of an hour or so, but her task extended over the months and the years, and was far harder.

Consider the courage of William T. Stead, a great editor, who thought that a newspaper should be a vehicle of ideas, and not relaxation for fools. He found that a decadent aristocracy was guilty of enormities at which the mind reeled. Did he palliate it, or ignore it? He did neither the one nor the other, but he exposed their terrible misdeeds in his articles: "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," and never rested until he had placed the Criminal Law Amendment Act upon the Statute Book, and rendered such infamies liable to heavy punishment. Stead was a champion of unpopular causes. He combated Militarism with his periodical, *War Against War*, and he pressed the claims of Spiritualism in his *Borderland*. Hoping to extend culture, he published *Books for the Bairns and Penny Poets*, despite the howls of the book-publishing trade, which so much prefers seven-and-sixpenny novels, and guinea volumes. Stead died bravely upon the ill-fated "Titanic," but his life was cast in heroic mould, and his career shows clearly what such a man can accomplish. In an age of compromise and cowardice, Stead remained faithful to first principles; in an age of commercialism he cared only for truth. What an example for the guinea-pigs who now control the popular press, whose main concern is pelf, not principles!

Methinks, moral courage is a rarer quality than merely physical courage. In the heat of battle a man can rise to great feats of heroism. He can face the cannon's mouth, and fight at overwhelming odds. But the perfect will, which no terrors can shake, and which pursues its way to the end, in lonely adherence to the right, is a thing to marvel at. Think of the calm resolution of Socrates facing his judges, and afterwards meeting his death with equanimity. Recall the righteous indignation of Voltaire when he determined to bring the murderers of Calas and Sirven to the Bar of Humanity. Recall also the high

and heroic action of Emile Zola championing the poor Jew, Dreyfus, against the anger of an entire nation. What superb courage! Zola risked his reputation, his position, even his life, on behalf of truth. His letter, "I Accuse," not only aroused France, but electrified Europe. At an age when most men seek slipped case he fought the good fight, and raised our estimate of human nature.

Aye, sharpest, shrewdest steel that ever stabbed  
Imposture, thro' the armour joints to death.

The history of Freethought supplies many such instances. Think of the lion-hearted Richard Carlile. What an indomitable and unforgettable man! There flits into our memory the terrible martyrdom of this brave soldier of liberty. Think of it! Carlile suffered nine and a half years' imprisonment for championing the liberty of the press. His heroism infected his relations and associates, and, in the battle for a free press, they divided among them fifty years' imprisonment. The name of Charles Bradlaugh recalls a man as brave as any soldier who ever drew a sword. He fought a Homeric battle for Freedom for thirteen years against overwhelming odds, and his was the cool head and the calm judgment of the great captains of men. He gave his life for liberty, and our children's children well remember something of this great Freethought leader when they have forgotten the name of his opponents. And what a fight Annie Besant put up for "the best of causes." For fifteen years she was in the very forefront of the battle, roasting people everywhere with her golden voice. In her farewell speech at the old Hall of Science, London, she said: "I have been called prostitute." That was, indeed, but a small part of the price this cultured woman had to pay for her championship of Freedom of Thought. Fifteen years of insult and drudgery for intellectual liberty, a cause which, like virtue, brought its own reward, not of pelf or power, but in the consciousness of duty well done.

Remember also Thomas Paine. His *Age of Reason* is one of the bravest books ever written. It was as superb a piece of audacious courage as the attack of the little "Revenge" on the armed strength of the Spanish Armada, for, in this volume, Paine attacked the far greater Armada of Superstition single-handed. It seemed the most hopeless of forlorn hopes, and doomed to utter failure. Yet Paine's courage was justified. His book is still being read by posterity, and the enemy is in full retreat all along the line. Nobody to-day with a reputation to lose dare defend Orthodoxy as it was defended in Paine's time. The old cock-sureness has disappeared, and, instead of bullying and shouting, the Orthodox stammer their apologies to an ever-decreasing audience.

Napoleon himself praised "two o'clock in the morning" courage, but this is a most superficial aspect. It would almost seem as if men are attracted by the spectacular side of the act of courage, rather than by the will-power. Are people really as interested in their heroes as would appear? Great scientists who have risked their lives in their study of dread diseases have received too little recognition, although their discoveries have benefitted humanity. Yet a sailor or soldier, for a single act of "derring do," is acclaimed to the skies. The warrior obeys the word of command, and acquits himself well. But the doctor who loses his life in the service of humanity, and the man who has dedicated himself to the service of principles, have at least an equal claim on our sympathies. For they are both entitled, in their degree, to echo the noble words of Heine, "I lay a sword upon my coffin, for I was a loyal soldier in the war of liberation of humanity."

When lion-hearted Richard Carlile was fighting the good fight for Freedom, he was unaware that his deeds of daring were watched by Keats and Shelley, two very great poets, both Freethinkers and Republicans, who looked out from their towers of song, and recognized that he was a hero battling for the most precious possession of humanity. And nearly one hundred years later another brave man, G. W. Foote, fighting valiantly for the same cause, was heartened by the encouragement of George Meredith, John Davidson, and Gerald Massey. It was well and happily done. For the pioneers look beyond the tumult and the shouting of the day, and are touched by what Shakespeare so finely calls "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

MIMNERMUS

## Sanctimoniousness in Victorian Times

THE drab religiosity depicted by Mr. E. E. Kellett in his *Religion and Life in the Early Victorian Age*, Epworth Press, 1938, exercised an influence almost incredible to the emancipated mind of to-day. But, even then, scientific research and invention; the rapid increase of industry and commerce; Biblical criticism and philosophical speculation were preparing the impending intellectual revolution that has reduced the traditional theologies to a state of insolvency. This at least may be said of the immense majority of cultured people, although the most primitive superstitions persist among the peasantry of all European lands.

But in the 1830's, at least half of that learned centre, Oxford was convulsed by the, to us, unimportant Tractarian agitation where Newman and his associates were conducting the campaign which culminated in the former's conversion to Catholicism. Crowded congregations at St. Mary's hung spell-bound on the eloquent language that flowed from his lips, while as each successive *Tract for the Times* appeared, its sale rivalled that of the most popular novelist. Newman and his teachings were excitedly and rancorously discussed by day and dreamed of by night. Anglican Bishops censured *Tract 90*, and when a couple of these prelates died almost immediately, their detractors pointed to the judgment of God. When, with Newman's retirement to Littlemore amid the supplications of his supporters and the execrations of his enemies, he "seeks refuge in the Roman Church, some men literally weep; Gladstone staggers at the news like a drunken man; others cry gloatingly 'I told you so.'"

Yet, despite all this emotional display in religious circles, ordinary academic life, even in Oxford, apparently proceeded much as usual. The Gallios seemingly regarded all this pious commotion with indifference. As Mr. Kellett observes, James Pycroft, who resided at Oxford during the Tractarian turmoil scarcely notices its existence in his *Memories*. Yet, he was at Trinity in 1833, when Keble's celebrated sermon initiated the Oxford Movement and Hurrell Froude, the historian's sanctimonious brother with many other devotees were obsessed by mawkish sentimentality. Nevertheless, the Oxford men Pycroft describes in his two volumes of reminiscences "were flirting with shop-girls, stealthily slipping out of college by night and climbing acrobatically back over the railings to avoid discovery, they were running into debt to the extent of hundreds of pounds at their tailors' . . . Of the passionate enthusiasm for re-

ligion and theology which fills the pages of other writers there is not a trace."

Still, it was a sanctimonious time when compared with our's, and one in which all suggestions for reform were treated as treasonable by the governing classes. The new Poor Law system was so maladministered that the indigent shunned its "Bastilles" with loathing and dismay. For the recently created Boards of Guardians condemned some fifty thousand adult males to the tasks of "oakum-picking, stone-breaking, and bone-crushing in labour yards on pit-tances of poor-relief just sufficient to keep their families alive. Men, women and children pent up in a dusty atmosphere from five in the morning till seven at night, without change, without intermission, fled to the beer-shops on Saturday nights to forget their misery." Naturally, the death-rate in congested areas was appalling, and Gamfield, the brutal chimney-sweep in *Oliver Twist* was no caricature.

In rural districts conditions were little better, mitigated as they were by charity doled by the squirearchy to assuage the smouldering discontent. Mr. Kellett, himself a humanitarian religionist, admits that theology was deliberately utilized as a soporific. "Not," he urges, "that the rulers themselves believed in it. That was an age which, according to John Stuart Mill, was 'destitute of faith, but terrified at scepticism'—especially the scepticism of the ruled; and Mill tells us that the world would have been amazed to hear how many of its leading men were well known by their friends to be utter unbelievers. . . . But it was desirable that the multitudes should believe and one of the schemes of Castlereagh and Sidmouth for the purpose of soothing the discontented was to spend a million pounds for church building in the dangerous districts."

With the religious revival in the 'thirties, social injustice was little considered. Newman resented all references to poverty and misery: his thoughts were concerned with the world to come. Dr. Arnold's sympathy with the oppressed was confined to those who were resigned to their fate. Even the humane Simeon, it is said, "dwelt too much on the text that 'the poor we have always with us,' concluding that we must make no over vigorous effort to diminish either their numbers or their poverty."

In Wesley's day, Methodism's campaign of conversion closely resembled the later Salvation Army in restricting its appeals and prayers to the saving of the sinner's soul from the flames of hell. With the material aspects of life neither, at one time, troubled to interfere. The Methodists lent no assistance to the early social and political reformers who devoted their days to striving for earthly betterment, and the Government had no more loyal and obedient servitors than Wesley's disciples. Wesley himself was indifferent to self, but as working-men soon rose into the ranks of the master class, which coincided with the rapidly increasing opulence of manufacturers, many of whom were Dissenters, these men gained greater influence in Nonconformist circles. A few Methodist ministers displayed liberal sympathies, and many of the poorer members of their congregations shared these sentiments. But as a whole the religious community stood sullenly aloof when Shaftesbury and Sadler commenced their reforming crusade.

As Hammond and other authorities have shown, the Church was hostile to the repeal of the Corn Laws, while the Wesleyans united with the other dissentients in their opposition to the 'Ten Hours' Bill. John Bright was a conscientious Quaker, who on principle opposed Shaftesbury's proposed reform, and for this that benevolent, pious and somewhat narrow-minded philanthropist never pardoned him. Still, it must be remembered that Bright made serious politi-

cal sacrifices in the cause of peace, and that he championed Bradlaugh's right to take his seat in Parliament. Much of the wickedness imputed to opulent employers was the result of misunderstanding. As Mr. Kellett states: "As John Bright, conscious of his own rectitude could not believe that other masters needed the strong arm of the law, so with many of these. When Bright was slandered by his Tory foes as a tyrannical factory-owner, his workers gave him a testimonial which showed that those who knew him best trusted him most." Indeed, what the new Act compelled them to do, the more humane and enlightened employers had already accomplished in more generous measure than was now legally demanded, and they naturally resented the coercive conduct of the State.

Kellett's chapter on *The Minister* is exceedingly interesting and instructive, and although our author ever speaks as if the liberal Christianity he cherishes were synonymous with morality, his presentation is scrupulously fair. Himself the son of a Wesleyan pastor, he writes from personal experience of the Methodist denomination. After the Wesleyans had forsaken the Church of their fathers they continued to regard themselves as true Anglicans, and when a minister returned to the State Church, this was rarely regarded as apostasy until the advent of the High Church movement.

The Methodist minister, as we know him, is a comparatively inoffensive individual, but Mr. Kellett recalls the time when he was decidedly dictatorial. He informs us that "rightly or wrongly, my early impressions of a minister were rather of a master than a servant. He ruled, and so far as I could see, he meant to rule. Obedience was the business of the laity, to give commands the right and duty of the pastor. He was not, of course, a believer in the High Church doctrine of the Apostolic Succession; but as I heard one of the order maintain, 'My position is of divine origin, though I should trace it rather to St. Paul than to St. Peter.'" This autocratic attitude sometimes led to revolt and mass secession, yet as recently as 1878, when the laity were first admitted to conference, and one of the lay attendants died a few days later, a veteran Methodist preacher publicly pronounced this death a divine visitation.

The experiences of the children of religious households until the nineteenth century was well advanced present wide differences from to-day. The popular children's books of the period such as the *Fairchild Family* were morbidly moral in tendency. In this publication, Mr. Fairchild, the pious parent takes his offspring to witness a culprit's execution in order to impress them with the penalties of sin. And we are reminded that even the relatively enlightened Dr. Arnold when Head Master of Rugby "went about obsessed with the idea that his boys were at every moment watched by the devil, who was lurking in the most unexpected corners."

In the average religious home the children might be seen but not heard, and parental authority was drastically exercised. The youthful personality was moulded, as far as possible into a pattern desired by the parents and Wesley's dictum that the wills of children should be broken at the earliest opportunity was eagerly embraced by many outside the Methodist fold. As Mr. Kellett phrases the matter: "It was a Nazi or Fascist home with the father in place of the Führer or the Duce. . . . It was commonly emphasized that the will of the parent was the will of God, and that disturbance of the parental convenience was a sin of the first magnitude. The more religious a father was, the more likely was he to make this confusion between his own inclinations and the divine purpose."

The youngsters were systematically marched to church or chapel, condemned to doleful prayers and other pious exercises. To these mournful experiences were added stories of the terrible punishments that were inflicted by God on disobedient children, then published in juvenile magazines, while nursery rhymes, children's hymns and spelling-books conveyed the same warnings.

In addition to the terrors inspired by pictures of the Day of Judgment, the clergy pestered little children with pious palaver. A minister hardly ever met children of five or six, it is credibly recorded, without inquiring of the one he saw whether he was saved, "if he loved Jesus, how often he prayed, whether he did his lesson in the name of Christ. The result was that either the child answered the pious man according to his piety, and thus practised a defensive deception or maintained an embarrassed silence. The parents having more opportunity for fretting their offspring sometimes made his life a perpetual burden."

T. F. PALMER

## Letters to a Christian Friend

(17) POOR JUDAS!

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Apologies for the delay since my last letter, but a minor operation and other little difficulties have intervened. Anyhow, with this letter we come to the end of our examination of the sayings and doings of Jesus from a social aspect; and with a few general conclusions on those teachings and their application, I must really round off this correspondence, which has taken us through so many months, and which has, I hope, proved of value as well as of interest.

The Gospel according to St. Matthew has little further to offer us from our particular point of view. We have already considered questions of forgiveness and of marriage and divorce, and have seen the narrow views Jesus taught about them (see letters on "The Unforgiving God" and "Holy Deadlock"). I do not suggest, of course, that all so-called Christians are as narrow in their outlook on these and other questions as they should be—for that is the whole point of these letters, the difference between the narrow mould in which the teachings of Jesus were actually cast, overshadowed and restricted by primitive theological conceptions; and the wider and more generous "re-interpretation" which so many Christians find themselves compelled to adopt, compelled simply because their own natures are less bound by theological restrictions and more open to the wider and more generous impulses of humanity.

Matthew also relates those two famous incidents which reflect little credit on Jesus, either as God or as man, but on which we need not lay undue stress—his "breach of the peace" in the temple when he assaulted money-changers who by established custom had every right to be there; and the blasting of the fig-tree, which shows a stupid petulance, whether considered with or without its supernatural element of the actual withering of the tree. Attempts to explain away or re-interpret the fig-tree episode have been various and sometimes ingenious, but always unsuccessful.

There are in this remaining section of Matthew, it is true, more exhortations by Jesus to his followers to do the good deeds taught by most preachers of righteousness, religious or secular, and we must not overlook or underrate their importance; but, accompanying them, the dominating reward motif of the

Christian life is again summed up in Jesus's promise that "when the Son of man cometh in his glory" to judge the nations, those who have fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, clothed the naked, visited the sick and those in prison, and so on shall "inherit the kingdom" and go away "into everlasting life," while those who have failed to do these good deeds shall "go away into everlasting punishment," they shall "depart . . . ye cursed, into the everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. xxv. 31-46). There is lots more on the same lines, but sufficient. Jesus also stresses the need for true humility and service—"whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister (or servant); and whosoever would be chief among you shall be your servant; even as the Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. xx. 26-28); "whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (xxiii. 12).

The two greatest commandments are quoted by Jesus from the Jewish Law as "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Deut. vi. 5), and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. xix. 18; Matt. xxii. 34-40); and the other-worldly valuation is well illustrated in the case of the rich young man who had kept all the commandments from his youth, but felt unable to follow Jesus's advice that he should sell his possessions and give to the poor so that he might have "treasure in heaven" (Matt. xix. 16ff).

Jesus picturesquely foretells his forthcoming death and resurrection, and his early return in triumph and clouds of glory as the Messiah, preceded by terrible tribulations; and so we come eventually to the events of his arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection, with all their contradictions, inconsistencies, and very very dramatic little touches—into which I shall not go in detail. The events have no special significance from the social viewpoint; and the whole thing reads like a carefully elaborated religious drama or "mystery play."

That it should be necessary, even at night, to employ someone to identify and "betray" the familiar Jesus, has the fantastic touch of naïveté; indeed, Jesus himself, rebuking his captors for being so numerous and well-armed, says, "I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me." But the key to the procedure is at hand in Jesus's next words: "But all this is done, that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Just before, in ordering Peter to put up the sword which he had drawn and begun to use, Jesus had asked, "Or thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he will send for my defence more than twelve legions of angels? But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be so?" Yes, how else indeed? In other words, we are dealing here not with sober history, but with religious history and prophetic fulfilment—a very different matter!

The entire business, including the trial, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, his "betrayal" by Judas Iscariot, Judas's repentance and suicide and the buying of the Potters' Field with the thirty pieces of silver, even down to the parting of Jesus's garments and the casting of lots by the soldiers, had all been prophesied, either by Jesus himself or by the earlier prophets, and everything happened as foretold. Isn't that marvellous? Or—is there a simpler explanation?

The conduct of Pilate in connexion with Jesus, whom he finds innocent and a "just person," is extraordinary behaviour for a Roman governor; but it must be pretty tough work sometimes making sure that the Scriptures are fulfilled! It is, however,

Judas for whom I feel the greatest sympathy. Obviously he was a key-man in the affair; if he hadn't "betrayed" Jesus, then the Scriptures could not have been fulfilled, and the whole Christian scheme of redemption, salvation, atonement, and heaven only knows what else would have come tumbling to the ground. Yet, although Judas efficiently carried out a key job arranged for him by God, and helped to bring God's all-important plan of salvation into operation, all the reward that this faithful servant got from God apparently was that he was graciously allowed to repent and commit suicide. Why he should have to repent for having helped God and mankind by doing something on which the whole Christian plan of atonement and redemption depends, and without which the divine Scriptures could not have been fulfilled, has never been explained to my satisfaction; but what pains me more is the utter lack of respect accorded Judas. Here is a key-man, ranking next in importance to Jesus, and coming even before Peter; yet not only is his name cursed and reviled throughout Christendom, but as far as I know he has been flatly denied a place in the Christian calendar of saints (which, God knows, contains enough rogues). At least, I have never heard any of my Catholic or Fundamentalist friends speak of St. Judas or even of the Blessed Judas. Poor Judas, if he had any inkling of what an ungrateful lot the Christians were going to prove, no wonder he repented!

Well, so much for Matthew, except for minor points on which we need not dwell. And, similarly except for minor points, so much for Mark and Luke, too. I have been glancing through the other two Synoptic Gospels, the earlier and simpler Mark, full of cures, miracles, apparitions and other supernatural events, and the more elaborated Luke; but neither contains any major point of moral or social importance other than those we have already considered on their parallels in Matthew. Luke, however, has the parable of the Good Samaritan (x. 25-27), in which Jesus teaches that the Old Testament injunction to love one's neighbour as oneself should not be interpreted in too narrow a sense, and that one's neighbour need not necessarily be fellow-citizen, compatriot, or co-religionist, but may be a stranger who shows one mercy and kindness. And although we are omitting the "Gospel according to St. John" from our examination—because it is a much later and more doubtful work than the three Synoptics—partiality to the episode tempts me to mention also the case of the woman taken in adultery, whose would-be executioners are put to shame by Jesus's words, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John viii. 3-11)—though the whole incident is regarded by some authorities as a later invention. The last twelve verses of Mark are also held by many authorities to be a spurious addition to the original, and this opinion is no doubt welcome to the modernist Christian, for the verses contain the infamous dogmatic declaration, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (xvi. 16)—although too much fuss need not be made over this one text, since the same sentiment is frequent in Jesus's utterances and dominates his outlook.

This, then, must conclude our "bag." I have quoted Jesus freely throughout these letters, in an attempt to cover both sides adequately, but if I have left out any point that you consider important, by all means call my attention to it. General conclusions must now wait for another letter, of course. All the best to all.

Affectionately,

R. H. S. STANDFAST

## Acid Drops

The Government White Paper, published just before we go to press is one of the most horrible documents ever published. No such criminal Government as that which rules Nazi Germany has ever before existed. It is an example of what a large section of a population can be reduced to by fear and systematic brutality; and the process has been made easier by the elimination from Germany of a large number of the best type of the population by murder and emigration. There is no need to repeat here what the White Paper says, and what all the newspapers have summarized. If it were only part true it would justify what we have said. But it is not part true. It is, as the report says, far less than the truth. The naked truth is so horrible that no one would publish it. All we need say is that we have more than once pointed to aspects of this gang of criminals that have been deliberately kept out of the press, and which our Government did its best to keep dark.

But there is one thing that should be said. There is nothing substantially new in what is said in this White Paper. It has been in substance published in books, and anyone who has had any contact with Germany or German refugees knew what was going on. And although the obscene brutality of the German gangsters has increased in intensity during the past three years, it has been there so soon as the Hitler gang was firmly in the saddle. But it was in the face of this knowledge that we received testimonies as to the honesty of Hitler, the charm of Goering, assurances of the kindly intention of these criminals towards this country, etc., etc., by prominent politicians, men and women in high social circles, and quietly permitted the subsidization of Nazi propaganda in this country. We are now engaged in war with Germany, and the avowed aim of the war is to secure the destruction of the present governing gang. However long delayed that, we firmly believe, will be accomplished. But we hope the British public will summon up enough courage and resolution to deal with our own politicians and others who for some years have done what they could to mislead the British public, and to shield one of the greatest gang of scoundrels that have ever exerted power in the whole history of humanity. We have to do more than win the war. And without doing that "more" a great deal of our sacrifice will have been in vain.

We note that the ex-Bishop of London delivered what he calls "My Last Message to London." An old yarn tells of an author asking a friend, "Have you read my last book?" and receiving the reply: "I hope so." The ex-Bishop calls his book: "The Secrets of Happiness." We have not seen the book itself, but we take for granted that his "revelations" resemble those of the millionaire who told how he amassed a huge fortune. He said: "I rose early, I never drank, smoked, gambled nor used profane language; I saved a dollar a week till I was 25, and then I inherited £10,000 a year." Dr. Ingram didn't inherit all his wealth—he did better—he had influential friends who exercised their "pull" and got him two good jobs at a thousand a year each, and finally landed him with the Bishopric of London.

The wickedness of England for which we are being justly punished—by Poles having been sacrificed wholesale—continues unabated. The latest abomination is disclosed in the *Methodist Recorder*, by the Rev. E. P. Scholes, who cries aloud to an Avenging and Outraged Deity:—

It would seem outrageous in peace-time that a canteen, opened on our church premises, should be open for the sale of refreshments, including cigarettes, at the same time as the Sunday evening service is going on, and that ladies of the church should imagine that their duty at that time lay there. Again, the thud of a football played by hand has been heard all the time of a Sunday evening service in the chapel separated only by an inside wall. I have been up against both these episodes. Even

on the Sunday morning, when the war broke out, I found in one church the minister's vestry taken up by a young lady winding balls of knitting wool from a skein stretched on two chairs. It was supposed in some way to be connected with the inevitable war.

England seems to be going from bad to worse. But we notice that God appears to have blundered again. If He sent the war, as so many believe, because of these very sins, it has not yet been a very effective punishment if Mr. Scholes' indictment is to be believed.

In a Newcastle Tribunal, the Presiding Judge Richardson is reported as saying to a Conscientious Objector:—

I'm certain, as sure as I am that I sit here, that if Christ appeared to-day He would approve of this war.

Next day the judge admitted that

it was inadvisable to have made that remark,

but excused himself as having had a very boring day listening to other people's views as to what Christ would do. Nobody, however, seems to have questioned the judge as to the exact role Christ would have played in the present tragedy of which "he would have approved." On which side, in what capacity, and to what extent would the Second Person of the Trinity have acted. (1) Would He have been bombing Edinburgh with Nazi aeroplanes? (2) Would He have been shelling German territory with French guns? (3) Would He have been in America selling ammunition to anybody, for any purpose, on the "cash and carry" principle? Or (4) would He have stayed at home declaring that He would willingly sacrifice a million men rather than give in?

There is no intention of the Government, we understand, to create an air-controller who shall measure out the amount of oxygen we are permitted to use. But there are controllers of nearly everything else, and we hope that while they may be regarded as necessities during the war, one of our expressed war-aims should be to abolish them directly the war is at an end. If we have to keep them afterwards it might not be bad to offer Hitler, as compensation for his giving back Poland and Czechoslovakia, the post of Controller-General of everything in England.

Shortly before his death Viscount Astor converted his American property—valued at ten million pounds—into two trusts for the benefit of his two sons, Viscount Astor and Major Astor. The American Government challenged the validity of the trusts, on the ground that the aim of the trusts was to avoid payment of taxes. The Government recovered two millions, and the Astors must struggle along with only eight millions between them. Our own Dukes must look with loathing on a Government that will not allow millionaires the right to turn themselves into a limited liability company. But then Britain depends upon its "old nobility" for maintaining the stability of the country. America does not. What would happen to this country if, for example, Lord Londonderry no longer held his mines in Durham? American millionaires seem behind the times.

We are pleased to see that the Government is finding itself compelled to re-open schools in the evacuated areas. The prospect of children running wild during the most formative period of their lives holds out a big packet of trouble for the future. But as people are pouring back to their homes, whether the Government wishes them to or not, we presume our bunch of dictators had no choice. Now what we need is a little attention to the army of controllers we have. Many people think they are only for the "duration." We know, and we imagine the dictators feel, that they are for a much longer period. We have no doubt about our winning the war, it is what we may lose after the war with which we are concerned. And when the war is over we should like to see just a little less Government propaganda than existed before the war.

The wild panic of evacuation would never have taken place so easily, had it not been for the campaign of fear that has been going on. For more than twelve months the people were advised to be afraid, not, of course, in so many words, but first, by talking of our utter helplessness if war came, and then with fantastic legends of the enormous forces Germany could bring against us. All things considered, we consider the British public have done well in recovering so far as it has done. But the bogey set up in 1938 and the crusade carried on since has had its effect.

Even now the streets are kept in a state of blackness that is steadily getting on the nerves of thousands, and that condition of fear is well calculated to make people swallow the constant advice, from Radio and Government not to criticize those in power; we are advised not even to talk to others about the war—for fear the man who takes away the dust, or the one who delivers parcels, or the neighbour whom we have known for years, may hand on hints to the enemy. If there is anything better calculated to weaken people's nerves than this kind of campaign, we should like to hear what it is. If our little god almighties had had their way, even places of amusement would have been closed.

Quite a number of newspapers now, as an evidence of the quality of our culture, run a column—or more—of astrological predictions. It is therefore interesting to note that *The British Journal of Astrology* is closing down because of "uncertainty of the immediate future." Evidently the newspapers find it more satisfactory than does the *British Journal*, etc., to rely upon the number of "mugs" among its readers. And we are willing to wager that quite as many of these worshippers of one of the most ancient of superstitions and the easiest of modern frauds are to be found among the "upper" as among the "lower classes."

It was announced that "Syd Walker" of the B.B.C. would occupy the pulpit of St. Cuthbert's Church, Brinsford, Bristol, on Sunday last, by invitation of the Vicar. We daresay "Syd Walker" will feel at home, and if it would only keep him off the B.B.C. it would be a gain to listeners, for of all the commonplace, foolishness that comes over the air, that of Syd Walker's is the most tiresome. But we have no doubt it will come up to the level of St. Cuthbert's. Otherwise he would not have been asked.

The President of the Baptist Union of Scotland told the assembly, in the course of his official address:—

In Europe the Church was a shadow of itself, pleading to be allowed to live, while in Scotland there was a steady loss of members.

In 1938 the Baptist Church in the United Kingdom had lost 4,162 members, 14,906 Sunday School scholars, and 1636 teachers, while there had been a decrease in baptisms of 857. Over the last 30 years they had lost over 50,000 Baptists and a quarter of a million Sunday School scholars. That was appalling.

It depends upon the point of view. We regard the figures given as one of the bright lights in a dull outlook. After all a few generations of people without Church connexions cannot well present us with a worse state of affairs than we have after some sixteen centuries of Christian domination.

Ex-Dean Inge should know better than to write the following:—

The founder of our religion had a horror of labels. He abolished all man-made barriers by ignoring them. He cared nothing whether a man was a Jew, or a Samaritan, a Roman or a Greek.

Dr. Inge can hardly plead ignorance of the fact that a rabid nationalism belongs to the Christian period of history. The Roman Empire with which Jesus, if he ever lived, would have contacted, had practically no national barrier in the modern sense of the term. At

most a different nationality meant no more than the bare fact of nationals. It carried with it no necessary badge of inferiority; or whatever indication of this might be argued for had a cultural basis. National boundaries existed, but were not used as badges of inferiority.

The following ridiculous eulogy of Chapter Seven of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is quoted (without approval) by the Rev. George Jackson in the *Methodist Recorder*. It is taken from the Rev. Alexander Whyte's book on *Bible Characters*. Whyte was at one time the idol of the Scottish Church:—

The seventh of Romans is the most terrible chapter in all literature, ancient and modern, sacred or profane. Set beside the seventh of Romans all your so-called great tragedies—your Macbeths, your Hamlets, your Lears, Othellos, are all but so many stage-plays: so much sound and fury, signifying next to nothing when set alongside this awful tragedy of sin in a soul under a supreme sanctification. Paul, he says again, might have been a Christian Herodotus, and a New Testament Pausanias, had it not been for his absolutely absorbing province of sin and salvation from sin.

It only shows to what lengths interested Ministers will go in wild praise of a Scripture passage which at its best is an argument of a Church Dogma now almost wholly discarded by civilized mankind.

The *Christian World* does a public service in publishing a "Harvest Thanksgiving Proclamation," prepared by the Spiritual Council of the German Evangelical Church, which was read in all German Churches on October 1. After acknowledging the goodness and beauty of God, the Proclamation continues:—

But the God who watches over the destinies of nations has this year blessed us German people with another harvest, no less rich. . . .

We thank God that He gave a speedy victory to our arms. We thank Him that He has allowed age-old German territory to return to the Fatherland, and that our German brothers, henceforth free, can sing hymns of praise to God in their mother-language. . . .

How could we be grateful enough to God for this!

We ought to pause before we go to war with a people so favoured by God as are the Germans.

Mr. Middleton Murry, in *The Guardian*, boasts of a "mystical experience of my own." In far-off days Jesus Christ, he says, "was far more real than my most intimate heroes or my personal friends." How queer it must have been that so "real" a presence could fade away and a period of doubt intervene! But the "real" Christ turned up again. "My focus suddenly changed. Suddenly I was overwhelmed by the self-evident truth that Christ was risen indeed." Naturally with a real Christ (alive or dead "indeed") so "self-evidently" interested in this otherwise insignificant worm, Mr. Murry could hardly in decency remain "doubting"! So, "I returned to the church which I had left for 15 years." Wonderful! And now he recommends "meditation and contemplative prayer," which apparently will make a very unreal myth into a "real" one. Yet, Mr. Murry modestly "would not deny for a moment that there are other modes of apprehending God." Maybe, but we wonder if there are ANY ways at all of "apprehending" Mr. Murry. What a man? What a mind, to whom and to which a resurrection from the dead is a "self-evident" truth!

### Fifty Years Ago

MR. BRADLAUGH has warmly espoused the cause of India, and his illness was heard of with profound sorrow by the educated natives. A telegram from Simla stated that "universal prayer" was being offered on his behalf.

*The Freethinker*, November 3, 1889

**To get a New Subscriber is to make a New Friend**



## Freethinkers and H.M. Forces

FREETHINKERS joining the Army, Navy and Air Force possess the full legal right to have themselves registered as Atheist, Freethinker, Agnostic, Rationalist, or of "No religion." This should be accepted by the officials without further question. Those who have signed under a religious attestation have the legal right to have the error corrected at any time. They should refuse to sign any document in which they are described as belonging to a religious body, and acquaint us at once concerning any difficulty that occurs.

CHAPMAN COHEN,  
President, National Secular Society

## THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4  
Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. BRUNEL.—Thanks for pamphlet. Sorrow for the people who can stomach such rubbish is the only appropriate feeling. But the existence of such mentality on even a moderately large scale must have uncomfortable social reactions of an unpleasant nature.

"TAB CAN."—Yes, the Captain Ramsay, M.P., mentioned by the Marquess of Donegal, is the one who brought in a ridiculous Bill for the purpose of suppressing the International Freethought Conference. He was also very active with the Nordic League, now disbanded, but which exists under other names. The Marquess of Donegal will ask what this man is doing in the British House of Commons.

G. PRESCOTT.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks.

H. DE MONTMORENCY.—Thanks for copy of letter. It is excellent.

A. W. DAVIS.—Next week. Crowded out of this issue.

K. E. ROSSLER.—Obliged for cutting. It is a piece of arrogance worthy of a parson. But the only legal form of marriage in England is the civil marriage. For the purpose of performing the marriage ceremony a clergyman is just a licensed Registrar.

W. POWELL.—We may devote an article or two to a discussion of words and phrases so soon as we have time and space. Sorry we cannot describe the significance of "science" in a phrase. We have dealt with it in our *Materialism Restated*.

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

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

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

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

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

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

## "Jubilee Freethinker Fund"

We continue to receive many pleasant letters from both the "old guard" and from recent recruits. One of the former, H. Spence, a sturdy Freethinker from Tyneside, although for many years in London, sends his congratulations on completing half a century's service in the best of all causes. Mr. Spence's own service cannot be much less than ours. Mrs. E. E. Trask also sends her congratulations on our "truly magnificent services." J. W. L. says that if his pennies were pounds he would be "getting a bargain" a bargain in what he has received. Mr. H. Stockton says the *Freethinker* has done more than any other journal "to assist me to approach questions with a much clearer outlook than I could have done otherwise." That is the kind of thanks we appreciate most. Mr. Fred Terry, as a fifty year's reader, says he would "gladly sacrifice any other publication than sacrifice the *Freethinker*." Mr. F. Stenhouse regrets that he has not "the opportunity to take part in offering us some personal testimonial to our many years work for Freethought, and as a testimony to the help he has received from this journal." We have already said that we take the response that has been given as covering that, and if the war is a long one, we feel we can depend upon adequate support to see that the *Freethinker* weathers the storm.

We lack the space further to quote from the kindly letters sent. It is something to know that what we have done meets with so much appreciation. We feel the future of the paper is safe while it has so many loyal friends, and we thank them all.

But, as we have before said, we do not care for long-standing appeals for help, so we think if we fix November 26, for the closing date for this fund, all will be given an opportunity for doing what they can to help over a peculiarly trying time.

Brought forward, £310 10s. 3d.; G. Bernard Shaw, £10; E. Arundel Smith, £1 6s.; Mr. and Mrs. F. Terry, £1 1s.; Harry Spence, £1 1s.; Mrs. E. Trask, 10s.; John Roberts, £2 2s.; J. Hewitt, 10s.; W. P. Ellis, £1 1s.; W. Newall, 10s.; G. W. L., 10s.; J. Gallery, 10s.; W. A. Atkinson, 7s. 6d.; W. J. P., 10s. 6d.; H. Trummel, £1 1s.; H. J. V. Templeman, £1; Spinster's Mite, 5s.; H. Stockton, 10s.; Miss V. Murray, 5s.; Ernest Gill, 5s.; H. A. Lupton, £1; W. McManus, 2s.; Old Age Pensioner, 1s.; F. MacLachlan, £1; Harry Sykes, £1; H. Harvey, £1; Peter Foster, £5; J. T. Ives, 2s. 6d.; No. 24833, 6d.; Old Reader, 3s.; S. Newton, £1 1s.; E. W. Carrance, 1s.; D. Longmuir, 10s.; Humanist (Rosyth), £1; Mr. and Mrs. Parkinson, 10s.; A. C. Clements, 5s.; Two Leicester Friends, £2; G. M. & G. P., 5s.; H. J. Lenson, 5s.; M. Norman, £1 1s.; Joseph Allen, 6s. 3d.; W. M. Ainsley, 10s.; F. Stenhouse, 10s.; H. C., 10s. Total £351 18s. 6d.

The above represents sums received up to and including October 30. We shall be obliged if errors either in names or amounts are pointed out.

When once we gain some real notion of the extent and unconquerableness of our ignorance, it is a very broad and restful thing to depend upon; you can throw yourself upon it at ease, as on a cloud, to feast with the gods. You do not thenceforward trouble yourself, nor anyone else, with theories or the contradiction of theories; you neither get headache nor heartburning; and you never more waste your poor little store of strength, or allowance of time.—*Ruskin*.

## Sugar Plums

It was a wretched day at Leicester on Sunday last, and that may have accounted for the rather smaller audience for Mr. Cohen's meeting in the Secular Hall. We were pleased to learn, however, that the Leicester Society is carrying on with courage and success in spite of war-time difficulties. In these times when, in order to prosecute the war we are sacrificing so many liberties, it will need a strong body of Freethinkers, whether belonging to our organizations or not, to see that these liberties are restored. It must be borne in mind that no Government, whether of the right, the left, or the middle, willingly gives back the freedom it has taken away. Mr. Hassell occupied the chair at Mr. Cohen's meeting, and did so with his usual ability. The Society is fortunate in having so dependable a man at its head.

On Sunday next, Mr. Cohen visits Liverpool, and will speak in the Picton Hall, at three o'clock.

A chaplain writes in the *Church Times*, in a very distressed manner, that out of 100 twenty year-old recruits into the battalion to which he is attached, 58 who "claimed" to be C. of E. only twelve had been concerned, and none of them was a regular communicant. What we are more concerned is to know how many of this hundred were entered as Christians, and as C. of E. against their will, but because the recruiting officer told them that they must have a religion, and had booked them as C. of E. We suggest to "Chaplain" that he should interview the recruiting officer, and inform him that he has no legal right to force a statement of religious belief from any recruit, and above all no right to let the first lesson learned on entering the army be one of lying. No man will make a worse soldier because he values truth. Some of these recruiting officials appear to be of a different opinion.

Despite increased difficulties N.S.S. Branches are carrying on indoor meetings where possible, and in some cases visits from London speakers have been arranged. To-day (November 5) Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak for the Birkenhead Branch in the Beecheroff Settlement, Whetstone Lane, at 7 p.m., on "The Churches and the Threat to Civilization," and Mr. L. Ebury will travel further North to Glasgow, where he will give an afternoon lecture at 3 o'clock in the McLellan Galleries, on "Atheism a Social Necessity," on behalf of the Glasgow Branch N.S.S. Branches deserve full support for their enterprise and local Freethinkers will no doubt see that the halls are filled.

The following from the pen of the well-known musical critic Mr. Ernest Newman, is worth noting as indicative of the rapid decline of German intellectual life under the Fascist regime:—

Both German musical papers and German musical books have lately been receding more and more beyond the pale of international concern; most of them were already virtually unreadable by the time the present war broke out. The German national interest in Jew-baiting and rhapsodizing about "the German soul" is apparently inexhaustible, but the rest of the world had got to the point when it turned away from all this with a yawn. The restriction and the monotony of it had become unbearable. How the Germans themselves can stand it year after year is a mystery; but the German mind is something that no other nation can hope to understand. No doubt a few of the writers who shout the party slogans do so from a keen sense on which side their bread is buttered; but the English public will be deluding itself grievously if it imagines that the bulk of these intellectuals do not sincerely believe what they say.

The astounding and depressing thing is the extent to which the minds not only of the mob but of scholars and thinkers have fallen victims to the newest doctrines of national self-sufficiency and racial superiority. Book after book appears in which the history of European cul-

ture is complacently treated as purely and simply a matter of the history of German culture. Music in particular is claimed as almost a specifically German art; and scholars whose attainments one has always respected are now busy re-writing the twenty-centuries-old history of music in terms of "the German soul." In several cases what these doctors and professors are saying to-day cannot be squared with what they were saying before the Nazis came into power; but no doubt they have the common German gift of being able to convince themselves of anything they want to believe.

Only those of us who have kept in touch with the German intellectual world during the last few years know how thoroughly the ideological poison has infiltrated into every layer and every activity of German life, and especially infected the youth of the nation. Optimists may indulge in dreams of a swift cultural turn-about after the war—but they must be incurable optimists to be able to do so. In the Germany of a hundred years ago the restraints on political thought did not extend to imaginative literature: if a German could not say just what he thought about the petty tyrant who ruled him, he could at all events express his sentiments about freedom through the mouth of a dramatic character like William Tell. Such thorough-going suppression of freedom of thought as we have witnessed for some time in Germany is something to which history shows no parallel. It is difficult to believe that minds that have been intensively trained to think along a few rigidly prescribed lines will know what use to make of mental freedom for a considerable time after they have achieved it.

From the *Sunday Times*

## Religion and Spiritualism

### I.

How many books, pamphlets and articles have been written on that difficult question, the origin of religion in general, and of Christianity in particular, it is impossible to compute. But the number shows no sign of decreasing. Whether we are at last in sight of the Promised Land may be a matter of opinion; though perhaps it would be grateful to add that we owe much to modern investigators who have proved, to the satisfaction of the unbiassed at least that religion came into being through fear and ignorance, as well as to mistaken interpretations of natural phenomena.

There are, however, two classes of people—perhaps there are others also—who strongly object to this categorical way of settling the problem. It would make many books, over which years of hard work have been spent, so much waste paper; it would make many religions just so much organized superstition; and it would put too many people claiming to be in touch with higher things out of their jobs. And vested interests could not, and would not, tolerate such inhuman extinction. Religionists and Spiritualists may differ on many things, but they both do agree on one thing, and that is on immortality. Prove that there is no such thing, or at least maintain that so far there is no evidence for it, and they will appear at once under the same flag. "Survival," or "immortality," or whatever it is called, is the great battle-cry which rallies them to fight dauntlessly upon the same field.

The strange thing is that a good many well-known Spiritualists have been, for all practical purposes, Atheists. They have maintained the falsity of religion with all the fervour of genuine Freethinkers. A striking example is the first editor of the *New York Truth Seeker*, D. M. Bennett, and both Robert Owen and Robert Dale Owen were convinced of the reality of "spirits," quite as much as of the unreality of "God." And a modern example is Mr. Arthur Findlay, the author of the *Psychic Stream, or the Source and Growth of the Christian Faith*. It is

a big book, and contains over 1,200 pages of solid reading matter designed once for always to put the public right over this problem of the origin of religion.

I have more than once in these columns dealt with Mr. Findlay's books on Spiritualism which, though written with the most convincing optimism, seemed to me could only bring the glad tidings to those already in possession of them. They have had big circulations, and were certainly received with great joy by those of my spiritualist friends who had already seen the light and were not disposed to see anything else. But I was unable myself to accept the "etheric," placed somewhere in the Universe, and which was Mr. Findlay's grand discovery. Or was it?

The author of the *Psychic Stream* has certainly studied religion and its origins. The greater part of his book deals with and analyses in minute detail hundreds, perhaps thousands, of facts in myth, legend, and allegory. A good deal of this was arrived at through believing in, and studying Rationalist literature; but when Mr. Findlay "experienced" psychic phenomena in the presence of a medium more than unusually endowed with mediumistic gifts" mythology and religion became "entirely new subjects." They showed why we had all been stumbling in the dark in trying to discover the key to religious mystery thus meeting without success. His book, says Mr. Findlay,

is revolutionary in its conclusions. When everyone is able to accept its contents, an entire change will take place in our religious outlook, just as great a change as took place in consequence of the discoveries made, and the conclusions arrived at, by Darwin in biology and by Copernicus in astronomy.

Of course, whether the *Psychic Stream* will rank in this way with the *Origin of Species* or *De Revolutionibus Orbium Cælestium* depends upon whether the general public will joyfully accept or obstinately refuse to accept psychic phenomena. Mr. Findlay thinks also that man's highest aspirations will be "strengthened and encouraged" by the study of his book—meaning, I take it, the complete recognizance and acceptance of his psychic theories. But what will happen to those of us like myself, who simply cannot accept the "etheric" whether it is the likeness of ourselves on the other side of death, or of this very material earth of ours also on the other side?

In giving man "two bodies" an "etheric" body and a "physical" body, Mr. Findlay can easily build up all sorts of—what appears to me, at least—fantastic conclusions, some of which are very religious. The constant struggle which he stresses between man's "carnal" desires and his "etheric" aspirations, the carnal, of course, pulling man down to earth, and the etheric up towards heaven, is, and has been, the constant theme of religious writers for centuries. It is the story of the age-old struggle between night and day, or summer and winter, or good and evil, personified by the rivalries and jealousies between gods, or between gods and devils or fallen angels, in so many ancient religions. You have it seen through the mind of one of our greatest poets in Milton's *Paradise Lost*; but it really is wearing a little threadbare.

There may be many genuine mediums—I do not know of any, but that is by the way—who are convinced, and have convinced people like Mr. Findlay, that man has this dual nature, and that he can acquire, through psychic science, the certainty that there is something "etheric" to which our "etheric" bodies go when we die. But for most people, humdrum materialists like myself, for example, this seems to be the only world we know anything about—and

that is not, I admit, very much—and that when we die, that is the end of our own special personality. The beings called from the mighty deep by mediums are so very, very etheric that the special personality which was *us* seems to become attenuated out of all recognizance. At least I have never myself been able to recognize any of the unseen friends who know me so well who surround me at a seance.

But Mr. Findlay's book deals more with what we know about religion, and in particular, about Christianity, which, in his opinion, originated very much in the way Christians claim for it, but which we poor mortals who are not Spiritualists have not been able to interpret properly because we lacked the key to unlock the mysteries. He says:—

Religion has developed from the supernatural, not from anything miraculous. Miracles never happen, but psychic phenomena have often been turned into miraculous stories. All religions have evolved out of something which happened to one or more people, who were not normal, but who experienced quite natural phenomena which do not come in the way of the ordinary normal individual.

That, of course, is the great, perhaps the unsurmountable difficulty. The phenomena never do come to normal people; they come to people who say that they come to them; or we are *told* by other people the phenomena have appeared to someone, and we must take their word for it. We must take Mr. Findlay's word for it, to give a concrete example; and he is so sure about it that he spent two years writing his book with the object of making other people believe him—though, alas, so many of us seem quite incapable of either producing or experiencing the phenomena which have impressed him so profoundly.

When he come to details—and the details in his book are very many—he spends a long time showing us that sceptics have very good grounds in not accepting miraculous stories for which there is not a particle of evidence, and which can only be accepted by a complete abnegation of reason. But when the path is lighted by the psychic torch, everything fits in, and the ridiculous and absurd become immediately perfectly reasonable and understandable.

There is not one scrap of real evidence that a god called Jesus ever walked this earth, that he was put to death, and that he rose again. Mr. Findlay senses this all the time, for he is so hard put to find some reasonable ground for his "psychic" Jesus, that is, a Jesus who was not a god but one gifted supernormally, that he is ready to accept the canonical and the uncanonical gospels as equally valid. In this way, he is ready to defend anything, no matter how utterly absurd, because he can always fall back upon the "supernormal" theory that *he* understands, because he is psychic, but which *I* cannot possibly understand, because I am a mere materialist.

He is quite sure that Jesus did rise from the dead, but not in the same body. It was an "etheric" body which his disciples saw—just as many people have seen "apparitions," and just as he himself has seen "genuine" photographs of ghosts.

But I shall deal a little more fully with this cornerstone of Christianity in another article.

II. CUTNER

#### DISTRESSING SITUATION

The preacher, after preaching a while, said to one of the ushers, "Wake Brother Brown up." The usher replied, "Wake him up yourself! you put him to sleep."

## Missionaries of Freedom

WHEN the word Missionaries is used, one generally associates it with the propagation of religious doctrines by white men to the coloured folk of other lands. Very seldom is the propagation of religious or political ideas to the common man of Britain now associated with the word; but during the end of the eighteenth century, and the first part of the nineteenth century, it was in general use both in the religious and the political movements.

In opposition to the bad social and economic conditions unjust political representation, and intolerable clerical prerogatives, in practice during this period—the reform movements sent their orators and organizers to the chief industrial towns, in the endeavour to persuade the working men to try to remedy this bad state of affairs.

These men, like their contemporary religious fellows, were termed missionaries. Amongst others who journeyed through Britain, often speaking to vast crowds, were the followers of Robert Owen, and later the Chartist Missionaries.

The followers of Robert Owen were opposed to all forms of organized religion. Robert Owen's works, Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, and *Age of Reason*, and Volney's *The Ruins of Empires*, were among the number of books which many of the Owenite Socialists, and the Freethinkers, sold in spite of magisterial constraint.

J. L. and Barbara Hammond in *The Town Labourer, 1760-1832*, tells of an extract from Volney's *The Ruins of Empires*, being found in the market place in Manchester, in 1801, causing a great deal of alarm to the local authorities. The Hammonds give a large part of this extract. Here are a few lines—they are from the chapter called, *The New Age: Then the ecclesiastical governors said*: "There is but one resource left. The people are superstitious; it is proper to overawe them with the name of God and religion."

*Priests* "Our dear brethren, our children, God has appointed us to govern you."

The Chartists sent missionaries to convince the people amongst other things, the necessity of universal manhood suffrage, equal electoral districts, and the secret ballot. Running through the Chartist movement was a deep current of defiance to clerical autocracy; for instance many of the banners of the Chartists bore the slogan—"More Pigs and less Parsons," and other similar anti-clerical slogans in their processions.

But the price had to be paid! Many of the social-reformers and Freethinkers, suffered imprisonment and even worse persecution from the governments of the time—because of the advocacy of their principles.

To men like Richard Carlile, Hetherington, Harney, Holyoake, and, later, Charles Bradlaugh, we owe the priceless possession we now have—freedom of thought.

It is also apparent that we owe very many of the reforms we enjoy to-day to the great man who first propounded them—Thomas Paine. Concerning this great pioneer the street-corner-evangelical missionaries of our time, still repeat the old lying insults—but often they are indignantly refuted. Personally, whenever I hear a disparaging remark about Thomas Paine, I always think of the oft quoted words: "Once upon a time a donkey kicked a lion—the lion was dead."

THOMAS WILLIAMS

## Correspondence

### MORE ABOUT AGNOSTICISM

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I had intended my previous letter to contain my last word on this subject, as bitter experience has taught me that a newspaper controversy, if too protracted, is apt to weary both the readers and the disputants themselves. It is only my sense of the vital importance of this matter to all who have the cause of Freethought and Rationalism at heart that impels me to send you this further communication on the subject. It would, however, be ungracious of me not to acknowledge the friendly way in which you have dealt with my enquiry, and the trouble to which you have obviously gone in order to make your own position perfectly clear.

"I do not know," you say, "and cannot conceive any personal power except that manifested by man." It is only in the words which I have italicized, I take it, that we differ. You ask me if I believe that there *may* be somewhere behind everything a huge manlike thing who is responsible for all *things*? This I might add, is almost precisely the question which I asked you at the beginning of the discussion, and which you have not yet answered because you say my terms are not clearly defined. However, I answer "Yes," and add that if that *may* is really representative of a negative or an affirmative I do not know—and I have more than a shrewd suspicion that no one else knows. Of course, all the parsons of the country say that there *is* such a manlike thing, whom they call God. You say that there *is* not. I say that I do not know whether there *is* or not.

I am sorry that we seem to have come full circle in this argument. Possibly the position of the Atheist and that of the Agnostic (both of which have been taken by a large number of intellectually honest men and women) cannot be reconciled, but I cannot help feeling that this is very unfortunate. We are agreed on so many things that it is a pity we still seem to possess mutually irreconcilable philosophies.

JOHN ROWLAND

[We do not think that any useful purpose will be served by continuing this controversy. Mr. Rowland and myself appear to be talking a different language, and living in different worlds. I am not prepared to discuss whether some almighty man may be behind the universe. To me it still sounds like absolute nonsense. Nor do I think that is really what Agnosticism stands for. The Agnostic is certainly not committed to a transparent absurdity.—C.C.]

SIR,—With reference to the interesting correspondence on Agnosticism, may I point out—and I believe I am right in so stating—that there are hundreds of millions of people in the world who, owing to their mentality or their speech, can have no conception whatever of the meaning of one God or of many Gods? the Chinese and all Buddhists for instance.

Secondly, both Aristotle and Kant, two of the greatest of metaphysicians, explained number as being a mere category of the human understanding, which has no meaning whatever apart from the human mind. In realms which transcend the human understanding, therefore, one God or a plurality of Gods can have no meaning whatever.

Monothemism, historically, is an invention of Amenhotep, or Iknaton, the Pharaoh who reigned in Egypt from 1375 B.C. to 1351 B.C., and it was adopted by the Jews, and eventually by the Mahometans. Christianity, which is not Monothemism, but involves the worship of a trinity, not to mention the Virgin Mary, is merely an adaptation of the myth of Osiris, Horus and Isis, as is proved by the study of hieroglyphics, which was made possible by the discovery of the Rosetta stone in 1799.

HERVEY DE MONTMORENCY

## NEWSPAPER FREE INSURANCE

SIR,—I do not know if this letter would be welcome in the correspondence columns of the Daily Press, so I send it, to you.

There is a very marked feeling of disgust, quite apart from the disappointment experienced, and that is by what one must refer to, as the "working class" (which indeed, they are) at the immediate cutting off, of all the richly advertised and persistently boosted, Free Insurance promised, might one say, GUARANTEED, by certain papers, to subscribers. I say subscribers, advisedly, as previous to this non-existent Free Insurance against accidents, many men bought a paper as they wanted one. By persistent canvassing, families were persuaded to give a subscription to these newspapers and have them delivered daily.

One could only smile at the Innocence which expected these honourable contracts to be honoured.

W. I. ENGLISH

## LIVING SPACE

SIR,—I have read Mr. R. B. Kerr's letter "Fascism and Living Space," and the answer to his doubt about Democracy is answered in H. G. Wells' last book *Homo Sapiens*. I think every one ought to read and re-read what I consider Wells' most instructive up-to-date book. May a cheap edition soon be printed so that every one who is interested in Democracy can understand what that means.

(Dr.) L. H. LINDLEY

SIR,—One usually looks for something provocative of thought in the *Freethinker* Correspondence Column, but for Mr. R. B. Kerr, in that column for October 22, to say that the Socialist Revolution in Russia has not done much for the Russian people "beats one to a frazzle." To some of us there seems to have occurred a tremendous improvement since the days of Czardom. If not economically, or politically, say, surely, as a *Freethinker*, which I suppose your correspondent to be, he must admit that to have almost abolished that "Jeek fierce fraud, with hidden knife behind"—Priestcraft—has done something towards improving the conditions of the Peoples of the U.S.S.R.

C. F. BUDGE

## NATURE OR NURTURE?

SIR,—Re "Nature or Nurture?" by G. H. Taylor, in the *Freethinker* for October 22, 1939. Perhaps I have misunderstood Mr. Taylor's article, and maybe as there is more to follow, it is too early to review his writing. As I understand, Mr. Taylor he is arguing for "Nature" as opposed to "Nurture," in Intellectual matters, and apparently quotes or intends to quote Mr. J. B. S. Haldane and L. Hogben, with others, in support of this. This is the opposite to the position I was under the impression Professors Haldane and Hogben take up on this subject. I quote the following from Dr. Gray's, *The Nation's Intelligence*, p. 22: "Eugenists have rendered valuable contributions to the study and measurement of mental and physical traits. They dominate the official attitude to the problem of mental defect and influence very largely the common view of the present population crisis. But their theoretical deductions concerning the role of hereditary differences in determining observed differences in human behaviour have recently been subjected to many damaging criticisms, notably by Lancelot Hogben, and J. B. S. Haldane."

Also, the impression left upon me by the Chapter on "Nature and Nurture," in Hogben's *Science for the Citizen*, is that, in intellectual traits nurture is more important than nature.

Mr. Taylor, in his remarks re "Identical Twins," does not say how the comparisons are made, but in general, I believe, it is by so-called "Intelligence Tests."

Here again I will quote Dr. Gray, p. 126: "Which-ever method we use for comparing the variability of twins, the results point to the conclusion that nurture is

much more effective in producing intellectual differences than physical ones." One might point out that "much more," does not necessarily amount to a "great deal."

Dr. A. Anastasi (*Differential Psychology*), is in a similar strain: "It is not the race, or sex, or physical 'type,' to which the individual belongs by heredity, that determines psychological make-up, but the cultural group in which he was reared, the traditions, attitudes, and points of view impressed upon him, and the type of abilities fostered and encouraged."

Finally, Dr. Gray considers that a civilized community depends "rather more on good intellectual habits," than superior intelligence; and goes on to point out, that if our civilization is in danger, it is partly because many highly intelligent persons have not learnt the necessity of good intellectual habits; and suggests that this may be due to having inherited a social tradition which precludes them from acquiring them.

In the above paragraph I would underline "habits."

ALBERT R. THORNEWELL

## THE "RUSSIAN ENIGMA"

SIR,—Mr. Jack Lindsay's efforts to do a good turn to his Moscow friends are understandable, and on the whole I, personally, have no quarrel with such advocacy. But he must remember in what journal he is pleading. Arguments that may "get by" in other papers may not do for the *Freethinker*, which is read by the acutest minds in Great Britain. Mr. Lindsay says he thinks all *Freethinkers* will be in agreement with the principle that "one cannot and must not fight ideas with force." That all is rash; surely by now the writer knows the Latin tag, *Quot homines, tot sententiae*. This diversity of minds is especially to be found in the ranks of *Freethinkers*. In any case, I (again personally) entirely dissent from the principle we are all alleged to accept.

"One cannot fight ideas with force." Really, Mr. Lindsay, and you an historian! All history is full of the account of ideological conflicts which men have sought to liquidate by force. It is arguable that these attempts at suppression of ideas have not been successful, but, however that may be, the suppression of ideas by force has not been such a manifest failure that mankind as a whole has given up this activity, as one, to quote Mr. Lindsay, that won't wash. Possibly—even probably—Mr. Lindsay means that one *ought* not to fight ideas with force. Here we come into the realm of morals, in which there is generally at least two opinions. Mr. Lindsay is entitled to say *ought not*: history is against his *cannot*.

But it is to Mr. Lindsay's *must not* that I take greatest exception, that is if he means what he writes. If his *must not* means *ought not*, I have already conceded him his right to say this. But who is Mr. Lindsay that he should lay down the law on what I, and others, *must not* do with our force? A man has a fundamental right to fight for his ideas. If he has not, he is a slave, and that is all there is to it. *Freethinkers* know better than any one else that the right to think freely is not worth anything unless and until the right to think is accompanied by the right to strive to bring into being the results of our free thinking. To fight for one's ideas is so elementary that I feel inclined to apologize for reminding people of this, but apparently the reminder is needed.

I claim, therefore, my right (mankind's right) to fight for what I believe in against those who would deny me my right. I imagine that Mr. Lindsay would make the same claim. Where he seems to have got into a mess is, where so many others do, in trying to divorce ideas and ideals from the people who hold these ideas. Again, I cannot refrain from raising my eyebrows and saying "Really, Mr. Lindsay, have you not heard of semantics, of Mr. Stuart Chase?"

There is no such thing as Communism or Fascism apart from the people who hold certain views on government and economics. In other words, what we (meaning you, Reader, Mr. Lindsay and I) have to deal with is certain people who are called, or call themselves, Fascists, Communists, and Democrats; with Ger-

mans, Russians and Britishers I claim the right to fight German Fascists, and to prevent by force, if necessary, Russian Communists from assisting German Fascists. If I, and those of my countrymen and their allies, should, peradventure, be successful (maybe the odds are too heavy against us—but that is another matter) in overcoming German Nazis, and non-Fascist allies they may have, I do not think that non-Fascist Germans will complain that we have robbed them of their task of overthrowing Nazidom. I doubt if Republican Spaniards complained of the intrusion of Russian Communists into their fight against Franco and I have yet to learn that the American negroes complained of John Brown and his white friends espousing their cause.

BAYARD SIMMONS

### Twenty Five Years Ago

FOLLY and ill-temper seem the residual psychology of war. But there is room for hope yet. Hundreds of German prisoners, the other day, were marching through the principal street in Southend-on-Sea towards their floating prisons at the end of the pier. They presented all sorts of human nature, but rags and misery were the prevailing types. Some of the more hooligan population, at a certain corner, were for greeting the captives with groans and jeers, but they were shamed out of that by the manly protest of one human voice. Here and there an Englishman offered his unfortunate German brother a soothing cigarette, which was accepted with a grateful smile. There is the secret of the world's salvation. Neither keys nor statesmen will do it. We have nothing to trust to but the multiplication of the kind-hearted. At present they are only "the remnant." Not War, but Wisdom drives man towards his Millennium.

"No sword

Of wrath her right arm whirl'd,  
But one poor poet's scroll, and with *his* word  
She shook the world."

### MARK TWAIN'S WAR PRAYER

"O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody threads with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the cries of the wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with un-availing grief, help us to turn them out, roofless with their little children to wander unfriended through wastes of their desolate land in rags and hunger and thirst, sport of the sun-flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee, for the refuge of the grave and denied it—for our sakes, who adore Thee. Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with tears, stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet! We ask of One who is the Spirit of Love and who is the ever-faithful refuge and friend of all that are sore beset and seek his aid with humble and contrite hearts. Grant our prayer, O Lord, and Thine shall be the praise, honour and glory, now and ever, Amen."

### FASCISM

I wear a shirt. It is woven of the catch-words of a man I hail as my leader. It is dyed with prejudice. It is sewed with dogmatic slogans which delude me. I can not take it off, for then I would not "belong." And I am afraid not to "belong." I dare not think, I can merely believe, and march, and shout, and repeat catchy phrases that ensnare my mind. I know no logic. I am the victim of the wiles of an expert mass psychologist. He knows what will get me. I have no job. I join the wearers of shirts. I vent my wrath on him who will not join, who will not conform. I am afraid of superiority. I drive it from me like the plague. I am a Fascist. I wear a shirt.

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WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 12 a.m. until 6 p.m. Various Speakers.

##### INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Cricketers Arms, near Camden Town Tube Station) : 7.30, Mr. J. Desormeaux (Secretary, Socialist Christian League)—"Christianity and Politics."  
SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, opposite Clapham Common Station, Underground) : 12.0, Mr. T. H. Elstob.—"Harvest Home."

#### COUNTRY

##### INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane) : 7.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"The Churches and the Threat to Civilization."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.45, Mr. J. Clayton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street) : 3.0, Mr. L. Ebury (London)—"Atheism . . . A Social Necessity."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 3.0, Mrs. Mary Saran.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Hall) : 3.0, Chapman Cohen—"Fifty Years of Freethought."

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