

# THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

Vol. LXI.—No. 45

Sunday, November 9, 1911

Price Threepence

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Continued from last week.)

### After the War

What will be the reactions of the Christian Churches to post-war conditions? So far they have made it quite plain that they intend to exploit the war in the interests of the Churches. We have seen Roman Catholics join with Protestants—each privately charging the other with not being “true” Christians—to extract a larger measure of governmental support for their status and for religious profit. These different bodies will not worship together, but they will hunt together when the hunt involves a gain in status or in hard cash. We will be charitable and assume the capacity for self-deception that so many possess, and which is fully developed where and when it is a question of primitive beliefs fighting for existence in a modern environment. So it happens that when the Churches speak of a better Britain they have in their minds a more completely Christianised Britain, a greater degree of ecclesiastical privilege and power. Like a gambler who stakes his last sovereign in the hope of recovering his losses, the Churches feel it is a case of now or never. Either the Churches must re-establish themselves in the post-war world or their decline will be more rapid after the war than it is at present.

Before coming to more intimate matters, a glance at the probable attitude of the Churches towards international relations is worth considering. With Russia outside a federated Europe a guaranteed international peace is impossible, and an armed peace is a state of potential war. It means a condition of things in which war may break out at any moment. It means mutual distrust, lying, cheating, each body of “diplomats” trying to steal a march on other bodies, a state of deferred war that may become actual war at any moment. Russia must come in if European peace is to become a reality. The manner in which Germany, beaten to the ground, surrounded by enemies—of a kind—was able to re-arm on a scale sufficient to disturb the peace of the world proves the foolishness of thinking of a real European peace to which Russia is not a party.

But it must be remembered that it was mainly due to the lusty lying of the Christian world concerning the Russian revolution that a friendly understanding with Russia was made impossible. These lies have been disproved by the facts of the past few months.

when the people of England have been permitted to know something of the real Russia, although still deplorably ignorant of the vile character of the Czarist Russia that was overthrown. But the Churches have withdrawn none of their lies, nor apologised for making them. That is not the custom of any of the Christian Churches. The old guard never apologises. It puts the lies into cold-storage, to be used again when advisable.

“There were other forces beside the religious one that were at work.” Of course there were. International finance is an absolutely unethical, even anti-ethical force. But at the same time it must do much of its work under cover—so far as that work strikes at the well-being of masses of men. The more one enlarges the scope of international finance the more obvious this truth. Men will risk their lives—and lose them—for all sorts of ideas and ideals, or for the mere love of adventure, but nowhere in the world can men be found who will consciously risk and lose their lives merely to increase dividends. I think we may take that as true of even the financiers themselves. When a man such as Lord Halifax, or a representative of finance, or the Archbishop of Canterbury, speak of “England” they visualise it as a country in which their own class is well to the front. All the rest is mere background. They do not think of themselves as exploiting that background. I do not believe they have the moral courage to do wrong on a large scale with their eyes open. They manage to fool others because they begin by fooling themselves. It requires a colossal moral character to say with Milton’s Satan “Evil, be thou my good!”

This country spent a great many millions in the endeavour to restore the old Russia—also with an eye on Russia’s mineral wealth, but here, again, cover had to be found. And as we all know it was religion that supplied the cover. The Churches in their campaign against Atheistic Russia became one and indivisible. They worked together with a unanimity such as the world had never seen. And when forces are added together they represent more than a mere arithmetical procession. Blind to the obvious fact that the state of Czarist Russia was so bad that any change must be for the better, no crime was too great, no action too vile to be placed to the credit of the revolution.\* Community of women, abolition of marriage—not

\* Those who wish to form an opinion of the state of Czarist Russia should consult “Russian Characteristics” (1892) and “Russia To-day and Yesterday.” Both are by the same author, although the first is written under the name of E. B. Lanin. The writer is E. J. Dillon, an author of European reputation, one who had lived in Russia, was a non-Communist—even an anti-Communist. In the first book he says, writing from personal experience: “Drunkenness is an instrument of government. Drunkenness is general. The clergy are described by their own bishops as ‘avaricious, ignorant and intemperate,’ no man or woman is to be permitted to give instruction to a child (except their own). The priest alone must do so when sober enough to discharge the duties of a pedagogue.” “The high schools of Russia are powerful winnowing machines, warranted to keep out the grain and retain the tares.” “Lying and treachery are taught to the youngest.” “Scarcely five years have elapsed since a secret circular was sent by the Minister to the

(Continued at foot of column 1, page 502)

merely an alteration of marriage laws and customs—the slaughter of children, were the stock items that ran through the papers and sermons month after month. No such ebullition of righteous indignation had often been seen in this country. The sight of a huge nation of which but a small section could read or write, where justice was openly sold and corruption everywhere, where drunkenness was encouraged by the government and famines were yearly epidemic visitors to one part or another of this huge empire, the throne powerfully influenced by a half-rogue, half-religious maniac, where Jewish girls had to register as prostitutes to be able to study in a university, none of these things seriously disturbed the English Christian Churches. These things, they said, were the concern of Russia alone. But a new Russia, a Russia the controllers of which said there should be no State religion and that Atheism should be taught in the schools, that was quite another thing. The example might spread, and if in the end 150,000,000 could get along comfortably without religion, it might be asked, "Why not try the experiment at home?" So the English Church, which is in itself a huge financial interest; the Catholic Church, which could not honestly give its blessing to any people that denied the right of at least some form of Christianity to control; the Nonconformists, professedly based on the principle that the State should not interfere in religious matters; all these constituted a magnificent screen behind which other interests could work. Religion was the Panzer division that alone in this country could open the road for the operation of other interests.

Other features may be specially noted. The Roman Catholic Church may be counted on to do what is possible to sabotage any arrangement which promises to leave Russia where it is and as it is. In America the strongest body of people that President Roosevelt has to fight is the Roman Catholics—some 23,000,000 strong. These are, perhaps, not so well organised as others, but, where the interests of their Church is concerned, they are more obedient. The Vatican is, as is usual, playing a double game, backing Fascism here, and anti-Fascism elsewhere. But the Papacy finds no fault with the establishment of Nazism in Spain,

Governors of Universities instructing them to connive at inebriety and vulgar immorality on the part of the students." The purpose was to keep them off serious studies." In 1929 Dr. Dillon returned to Russia on a visit, still non-Communist, but merely to see the New Russia. He had described the old one, the one whose departure our churches lamented, as "A vast mosaic of nations held together by violence, falsehood and injustice." He met the New Russia with the eye of a critic, and pays full tribute to the enormous changes for the better, although he is no convert to Marxism. But he says he found education where ignorance prevailed, sobriety where drunkenness reigned, pride in work where sloth was the rule. He is not sure that Bolshevism will survive, but he is sure that the seed is sown and will bring forth (good) fruit in the appointed season. Here is one of his closing passages: "The Bolsheviks have accomplished much of what they aimed at, and more than seemed attainable by any human organisation under the adverse conditions with which they had to cope. They have mobilised well over 150,000,000 listless, dead-and-alive human beings, and infused into them a new spirit. They have wrecked and buried the entire old-world order in one-sixth of the globe, and are digging graves for it everywhere else. They have shown themselves able and resolved to meet emergency, and to fructify opportunity. Their way of dealing with home rule and the nationalities is a masterpiece of ingenuity and elegance. None of the able statesmen to-day in other lands has attempted to vie with them in their method of satisfying the minorities. In all these and many other enterprises they are moved by a force which is irresistible, almost thaumaturgical. . . . To me it seems the mightiest driving force for good or evil in the world. It is certainly a stern reality, smelling perhaps of brimstone and sulphur, but with a mission on earth, and a mission that will be fulfilled."

openly regarding General Franco—who sent a "token" force to help Hitler—as a loyal and favourite son.

I think, then, we may take it for granted that as soon as the war is over we shall have to be on our guard against first, the manœuvres of the Churches who will feel driven to weaken, so far as is possible, the anti-religious influence of Russia on the people of this country and second, the tactics of those who will dislike a too-close association with a country which maintains a social and economic system so different from our own, and the influence of which must tend seriously to affect those who swear by the existing methods.

Per contra we ought to be able to count on the difficulty of recreating the legendary Russia which, for twenty odd years, has been dangled before us—that of a people terrified into submitting to a system to which they are in their hearts strongly opposed, an incapable government, with people forbidden to practice the Christian religion—the Churches would never have kept this campaign going if it had been merely the suppression of one form of religion against another. The Christian Churches have shown that they can live on moderately good terms with any State, but it must have a religion. It is a government that counts God, and heaven, and hell, as mischievous superstitions against which it cannot, dare not, live in peace and encourage cordial relations. Common sense has a contagion of its own.

### English Homes

There will, of course, be many reforms in which the Churches will quite willingly play a part. For example: We happen to have in this country some of the most hopeless slums in Europe. In passing it may be noted that the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the legal administrators of Church of England funds, are the ground landlords of some of the worst slums in London. When attention has been called to this fact the reply is that the question of the slums rests with other authorities. In the strict letter of the law, that may be true. But ground landlords have certain powers when leasing land, and in any case there is no proof that the Church of England leaders have made any strong and united objection to money received from this source. Pleading for charity for the poor is a very poor substitute for action. But the London slums are here, save those that the German bombers have destroyed—the one good action—had it not been accompanied by loss of life, that might be set on the credit side of Germany's war account.

I recall the time, during the nineties, when "slumming parties" were popular excursions from the West End of London to the East End. They formed, for a time, quite interesting outings, but they have now died out. There are, however, still visits paid by Royalty—and other distinguished individuals—to the most presentable of the slums, and one reads with mixed feelings of the expressed contentment of the slum-dwellers in conditions where contentment is an offence against humanity.

Now I imagine that the Churches will show their zeal for reform by taking a hand in agitating for the inevitable. I mean by this expression that fresh houses must be built on the vacant stretches of land, and as the new houses for the working classes simply cannot be worse than the ones that have been destroyed, they must of necessity be better. But personally we hope that we shall not—as a consequence of this outburst of a passion for reform—find ourselves faced with huge blocks of flats with communal feeding for all. Some people may prefer feeding with a mob; I prefer a meal that suggests a home. In any case, individuality of taste is a fact, and may count for more in the make-up of individual character than many

imagine. And the war-time talk of the tame—generally unnamed—scientists who inform us how we can be fed better by taking a given selection of vitamins, etc., is just scientific rubbish. It overlooks the important part played by psychology even in the matter of digestion. The test of civilisation is ultimately not that of how many people can be housed on a given area, but the kind of individuality developed. Sir John Reith (how on earth he got where he is is one of the mysteries of political craftsmanship) may dream visions of the future, in his own probably commodious house, of rows upon rows of flats with its lengthy corridors so arranged that each denizen runs the risk of falling over his neighbour every time he leaves his rooms, the whole reminding one of a model prison, with each of its inmates allowed to enter or leave his cell or cells at his own wish and will. Personally, I have a prejudice in favour of a home, and somehow a flat never carries that feeling. In fact, one very seldom hears the word "home" applied to these multiple dwellings. One resident doesn't invite another to come home; it is usually "Come round to the flat." A sense of mutual dependency is an excellent thing, but so also is a sense of individual independence. Even an occasional spell of solitariness has its values and its charm. An harmonious life is, in fact, composed of an amalgamation of opposites, but the mixture must not be made up of extravagantly one-sided ingredients.

I may never live long enough to see the form that post-war England will take, but old men as well as young ones may dream dreams, and I like to visualise an England of the future as made up of homes inhabited by mothers, fathers and young humans.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

## THE ADVANCES AND RETREATS OF DEMOCRACY

IN the generation preceding the World Conflict of 1914-18, democratic aspirations developed rapidly in Russia. Unlike the sentiments and institutions of Britain and the United States, the ideology of the Russians was Marxian and revolutionary in character. According to Dr. Rosenberg, formerly Professor of History in the University of Berlin, who penned his instructive and suggestive *Democracy and Socialism* (Bell, 1939), in exile: "Four tendencies fought for power in Russia. First of all there was feudal absolutism: the Tsar, the great landowners, the high officials, officers and ecclesiastics—in short, the actual usufructuaries of the old absolutist system. In the second place there were the capitalists and imperialists who called themselves 'liberal' in Russia." These last were the political reformers who desired the extinction of the antiquated and inept bureaucratic administration. The third party was the popularist which advocated a peasant revolution, a republic and a division of the great landed properties. Fourthly, as large-scale industry developed, a Labour group gradually emerged.

In accordance with many precedents the social democrats in Moscow soon split into distinct groups. This cleavage occurred as early as 1903. The larger division—the Bolsheviks—became completely opposed to the minor party of Mensheviks, whose tenets were practically those championed by the various Labour groups then predominant in progressive circles in Western Europe. The Mensheviks attempted the organisation of labour, so far as the persecution of the Tsarist officials permitted. Their programme was

distinctly democratic, but they were fully convinced that the assistance of its middle class adherents was indispensable to the success of the revolution. They urged, that it was imperative that the working community recognised capitalistic leadership in a State where the industrial orders were numerically insignificant when compared with the vast peasant population.

The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, were grimly realistic. Prior to the 1914 War, Lenin had repeatedly stressed the absolute necessity of proletarian solidarity. He scorned the coquetry of advanced parties with their eternal enemies as a suicidal policy. Rosenberg even alleges that "Lenin's remark that the ideal of the Social Democrat should be the tribune of the people and not the trade union secretary, actually uncovered in a single sentence the fundamental difference between original Marxism and the theory and practice of the Second International." Yet Lenin was ever sympathetic towards the grievances of the factory workers, and fully appreciated the services of the unions to the cause of labour. Still, he was completely opposed to any compromise with capitalism, which he regarded as an invincible obstacle to social and economic revolution.

Lenin did not desire a Russian Republic reposing on private property, but the rulership of the industrial and agrarian communities. While willing to profit by the aid the bourgeois classes might render, he was not prepared to retain them in power. Rosenberg even asserts that: "In Lenin's propaganda, there appears for the first time in Europe a vital conception of social democracy as a revolutionary alliance of all the labouring people for the purpose of overthrowing the privileged upper class."

A born autocrat, Lenin early displayed anti-democratic tendencies. In place of a chaotic multitude, Lenin envisaged a carefully chosen revolutionary band, at any moment prepared to fight, and to strictly obey the behests of its appointed leaders. So, when the time was ripe and Lenin rose to power, he, as his friendly critic Rosenberg concedes, was able to "develop the most radical form of popular democratic self-government in his Soviet system and then soon after to destroy his own new democracy by means of his party dictatorship."

Russia was sadly unprepared for the 1914 War, and this was chiefly owing to the ineptitude and corruption of the administration. Many mournful disasters ensued. Yet at its outset the triumph of the Imperial authorities over the revolutionaries appeared complete. But as the war proceeded the privations suffered by the toiling masses greatly increased. The assailants of the autocracy gained strength, both in number and influence. And when the upheaval of February, 1917, came, the moderates assumed transient control, while the extremists intensified their activities. Consequently, in the succeeding October, Lenin became supreme.

Possessing a very limited faith in representative government, Lenin revived the suppressed councils of soldiers, workers and peasants. Legislative and executive functions were assigned to these bodies, and with their aid the revolutionaries destroyed the centralised authority of the military officials, as well as the power of the police, judiciary and civil services. The only armed force permitted was that of the proletarian militia, while administrative affairs were conducted by Soviet commissars, who, at least in theory, were solely subject to the decisions of the industrial workers.

This communal form of democracy proved very difficult to co-ordinate, as the local councils were so widely dispersed, and there was very serious unsettle-

ment as a sequel to the Revolution and the Civil War. But when the Central Powers collapsed in 1918 and there appeared a marked revival of Socialist and democratic sentiments in Germany and Austria, workers' councils became the bases of the newly-established republics. For a time the wave of Russian insurgency flowed over the Balkans, convulsed Italy and intimidated France. In England, however, nothing more startling occurred than an unprecedented growth of the Labour Party. The Liberal Party fell to pieces, and the Conservative and Labour protagonists in Parliament became the sole competitors for power. As we too well know, the reactionaries have been victorious in Germany, Italy, and elsewhere. But what the future will reveal one can scarcely more than surmise.

Rosenberg praises the achievements of the democratic groups in Czechoslovakia, but his work was completed before the shameful overthrow of their republic by the Nazis. He also praises the remarkable reforms carried out in Turkey by the genius of Kemal. This successful administrator and military commander is acclaimed as "the only contemporary dictator who employed all his force to clear away the refuse of a thousand years of political, economic and intellectual oppression which had burdened the Turkish peasants. Thus, this dictatorship not only meant a technical advance over the previous periods, but at the same time, an extraordinary elevation of the power of judgment, education and social position of the masses." Kemal was a pronounced Freethinker, whose comparatively early death is to be deplored.

Throughout Europe democracy sustained a serious reverse in 1923, and even in Russia itself. In 1921 Lenin realised that Bolshevik propaganda abroad had failed and he revised his domestic policy. The centralised authority of the Bolshevik party replaced the system of local self-government, and Moscow became the seat of "a bureaucratic system of State capitalism."

Still, when we consider the complex difficulties Russia had to unravel, the economic improvements rapidly accomplished are truly astonishing. Since Rosenberg's survey of 150 years of political life was penned, the world has been temporarily transformed. Few indeed were those who ever expected to witness the Russian and British flags waving in unison, and that Stalin's and Churchill's portraits should have been paraded side by side, as they were in an officially supported demonstration a few Sundays since on Parliament Hill fields in London.

Whatever the result of the present struggle, the association of England with Russia should at least lead to the removal of too-long cherished prejudices and misunderstandings on both sides, and to a completer and more generous appreciation of the good qualities both people possess. We may learn much from Russia, and the Russians in their turn may learn, at least a little, from us. For, as the old Greek Homer says: "Through mutual intercourse and mutual aid, great deeds are done, and great discoveries made."

T. F. PALMER.

#### TOO MUCH TO EXPECT

Inquirer: "Say, doctor, have you been able to reform old Hardense?"

Minister: "Oh, yes; he's now paying his church dues regularly."

Inquirer: "But I understand that he still abuses his family."

Minister: "Oh, that's a mere detail; you can't expect him to be perfect."

#### OF HERESY

FOR nearly 16 centuries after the Christian era, before the sun of Shakespeare had tipp'd the hills with gold, people, like the shipwrecked crew in Byron's "Don Juan," "knew not where nor what they were about." They floundered in a sea of heresy.

Christianity made its first appearance as a heresy. "I confess unto thee," says Paul to Felix, "that after the way, which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers" (Acts xxiv. 14).

Christianity remained a heresy until by force, fraud and favour it became a powerful party in the State. It had suffered persecution, been victimised and, now it returned revengefully, evil for evil. And by the help of Constantine, offering "Baptism or death," it became the dictator of a crazy creed.

From its earliest days there never has been a general agreement as to what Christianity really is. But, split up into so many "fractions of a sect," it must have had a least common denominator!

It owes its continuance more to heretics than to aught else. Age after age it has been pruned of its many stumbling blocks. This pruning process continues. And what precisely will be its last phase we know not. "It doth not yet appear what it shall be!"

The Holy Ghost—wind and fire—"sound and fury, signifying nothing!" "Whether there be any Holy Ghost or no" (Acts xix. 2), doubted from the beginning; now, for ever silent!

The Father—the great Panjandrum himself with the little button on his top—never played the game, has had his little day and practically ceased to be.

The Son—adopted or begotten, his body only apparent, particularly at birth; "clothed with an etherial body, saith one of the heretics, he passed through the body of Mary just as water through a canal" (Mosheim. Ecc. Hist. Vol. 1, p. 148; ed. 1863).

Mary, once the Mother of God, now only accepted as the Mother of Christ. She and her son yet reign. His reign seems weakening, while the mother's growing stronger but needs but a popular slogan—"Gods for women"—to establish her as our leading lady God!

Heresy in 1 Cor. xi. 19 seems to mean, parties. Or it may mean sects, as in Acts xxvi. 5; or as factions or schisms. "There must be," says Paul, "Also heresies (sects or schisms) among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. xi. 19). In Acts xxiv. 14 it means difference in methods of worship. Heresy led an uneventful, harmless sort of life until it fell into the hands of the priest: On 2 Pet. ii. 1, the modern ecclesiastical use of the word was founded, heresies became "damnable" and ever after met with "proper recognition"—ecclesiastically!

Most of what follows is taken from Lardner's "History of Heretics" and Mosheim's "Ecclesiastical History" up to and including the tenth century, to serve my purpose.

Mosheim, in his history, devotes a chapter at the end of each century to "Schisms and Heresies." He should be read by everyone having time and opportunity. It's a big job, I know. But the book is a literal gold mine.

The edition in front of me is dated 1863; 3 vols., demy 8vo., 600 odd pp. each. Those who have no time to spare will find a brief (53 pp.) interesting summary of it given in "The Freethinker's Text Book," vol. ii., sect. iv., by Annie Besant, each century being separately dealt with up to the fifteenth.

Heresies began in the apostolic age, for instance—Hymenius and Philetus, who said the resurrection was already past (2 Tim. ii. 17-18). One of the most ancient founders of heresy is Simon the Magician (Acts viii. 9-10). False Christs abounded (1 John, ii. 18, 22; 2 John, 7).

Hegesippus, called "The Father of Church History," gives an account of the heresies of the second century! He speaks of those who believed in the miraculous conception, calling their heresy madness.

The Docitæ thought that Christ "was man in appearance only." While the Ebionites thought that he was "no more than a man."

Marcion held that Christ was not born at all.

Lætantius, that God made a second God—"Visible and Sensible"!

Novatian, that Christ, being begotten and the Father not begotten, they could not be on the same level.

Arius said Christ had no being before he was begotten. That he was not of the substance of the Father—not a chip of the old block!—but, like other things, was made out of nothing.

Nestorius asserted that there were two distinct natures in Christ—the divine and the human, and that Mary was the mother of the human only.

From Paschasius Radbert we learn how "Christ was born without his mother's womb being opened, in the same manner as he came into the chamber where his disciples were assembled, after his resurrection, though the door was shut."

The Council of Ferrara, 1439, explained the procession of the Holy Spirit thus:—

"The Holy Spirit is eternally from the Father and the Son, and he proceeds from them both eternally, as from a single principle, and by one single procession."

"Lucidity of soul," says Browning, "unlocks the lips"!

Finally, history proves that heresy and progress go hand in hand. There seems to have been less heresy in the 8th and 10th centuries than in any of the first fifteen. And these two centuries were anything but ideal ones.

Mosheim speaks in the beginning of his history of "how much protection and advantage Christ's advent brought to men, and how beneficially his religion acted upon all the circumstances of life" (Ibid., p. 21). In the fourth century he says: "If we look at the lives and morals of Christians, we shall find, as heretofore, that good were commingled with bad: yet the number of the bad began gradually to increase, so that men truly pious and godly were more rarely seen" (Vol. I p. 275).

Mosheim, from the beginning of his history to the end, shows us that "pomp and ceremony" only made any progress. Moral progress none.

If the eighth century ignorance and vice abounded. This he explains thus:—

"The religion of this century consisted almost wholly in ceremonies and external marks of piety" (Ibid., 513), and "That those who in this age had the care of sacred things, both in the East and the West, were highly corrupt in morals is abundantly testified" (Ibid., p. 495).

Of the tenth century he says that: "The incredible stupidity of this age, which was the source of so many evils, had this one advantage, that it rendered the Church tranquil and undisturbed by new sects and discords" (Ibid. 611).

"All agree," he says that in this century the state of Christianity was everywhere most wretched, not only from amazing ignorance, the parent of superstition and moral debasement, etc. (Ibid., p. 579).

It is universally admitted that the ignorance of this century was extreme, the age was dark and cheerless, the Latin nations sunk in great barbarism (Ibid., 588-590). . . . The sacred order, both in the East and West, were illiterate, stupid, ignorant of everything pertaining to religion, libidinous, superstitious and flagitious (Ibid., 594). And in this century, Christianity reigned supreme!! Heresy was practically unknown!

The above few illustrations taken from the fourth to the tenth centuries show that Christianity had not (as Mosheim says it had on p. 21) "acted beneficially upon all the circumstances of life." That great progress had been made in rites and ceremonies may be true, but we have no evidence that any great moral progress had been made.

The incontrovertible testimony of history is that progress is impossible without heresy.

Heresy seems to have led humanity like a pillar of fire throughout the ages.

Finally, therefore, if social progress, after the war, needs encouragement, a religious revival is a most undesirable thing. What is really needed is a revival of heresy.

GEORGE WALLACE.

## ACID DROPS

THE plot between the Archbishops and members of the Government is developing. The latest news is that "the Board of Education will next year conduct schools for instruction in religion to teachers, workers in youth organisations, and parents." We wonder whether any member of the House of Commons has the courage to raise the matter of this gross abuse of power by the Education Department? It is certainly not the business of the Board of Education to do anything of the kind. If some stop is not put to this back-stair business, we shall find, not merely our education system turned upside down, but many other things beside. We do not know any other Government in our time that would have ventured on such an enterprise.

The announcement is that "tuition will be free and the Board will pay part of the travelling expenses, but the students will be required to pay a maintenance fee for residence." The object is to "ensure a religious background to the education and training of children and young persons." The "Freethinker" is the only journal that has dared to say there was a plot between religious leaders and members of the Government to subsidise religion and to convert the State schools into an annex of the Churches; and here is a proof of the truth of our charge. We are fighting a battle for freedom abroad and losing freedom without a fight at home.

One of the members of that B.B.C. curiosity, the Brains Trust, praised the edition of the Bible in basic English. He found it more impressive even than the authorised version. None of the wise men assembled before the microphone had the courage, or the knowledge, to point out how much the Bible owes to its translators and to the fact of it having forms of expression peculiar to itself. Bible English is an English that is peculiar to the Bible. It was never a language of the people at any time, whether "people" is used to cover all the inhabitants of this island, or certain classes. One need only compare the authorised version with the writers of the period covered by the 16th and early 17th centuries to recognise this.

One need not, in fact, go farther than the Bible itself for conclusive proof of what we have just said. The introduction to the Bible was written by the people who were responsible for the authorised version. Let anyone read that carefully, and if he does not see that he has two different kinds of English, he must be tone-deaf. One is the language of the educated men and women of the time, the other is a priestly lingo that developed in connection with the Bible.

If the preface to the Bible is not enough, here is more proof. The Book of Homilies of the Church of England belongs to the Elizabethan period. It was intended partly for the use of clergymen who lacked the intelligence to preach a passable sermon "on their own." It is in fine, serious, idiomatic English that every student of literature should read. If he does not realise its literary strength, he may confine himself to a diet of B.B.C. orators. But the English of the "Homilies" is, again, the English of the period. It is the English that one meets in the literature of the day. But it is not the English of the Bible. That was never other than a priestly lingo.

A great many are asking why should not the clergy join in the fighting? They are not pacifists—although their Lord and Master told them to turn one cheek when the other was smitten. It cannot be said that the clergy must stand aloof from war, since they have prayers for success in war, they decorate the churches with monuments to soldiers, and then exhort men to go to war. The "Yorkshire Post," in a recent leading article, says that if the clergy were called up as others are, "some units might have several clergymen with them and others none at all." We sympathise with those who are overloaded with clergymen, but that has nothing to do with the issue.

Another excuse is that "the rule of the Church has always been that men dedicated to the special service of God should not become combatants and shed blood." But if the clergy exhort others to shed blood, we see no difference between the clergy and others, except that one is safe and the other is not. The next excuse is that

"No Christian man can lightly take up arms against his fellows." Again, beside the point. We do not know of anyone, Christian or non-Christian, whether in modern or ancient times, who advocated taking up arms "lightly." And the question here is left unanswered.

Sometimes the plea is made that if the clergymen of military age went to war, the number of parsons left would not be adequate to carry on. Rubbish! Half the churches could be closed altogether, and there would be plenty of room for all who wished to attend church in the buildings that were left open. The truth of the matter is that clergymen cannot venture on letting congregations run loose, for fear they would never recover them again. Church-going is as much a habit as smoking or drinking. No one knows that better than the clergy.

A remarkable discovery was made recently by the "Sunday Graphic." It discovered that there is a "nation-wide desire to translate religion into reality." Well, who is preventing the satisfaction of this "nation-wide" desire? No one is likely to be assaulted by the public, or locked up by the police, or turned out of a Government job because he is vocally religious. Wisdom may get a man into serious trouble, but not religious folly. Honesty may prevent a man getting wealthy, independence of character may prevent his appointment to one of the many lucrative jobs that are going, but no Church will refuse membership to a wealthy rogue, and the use of religious phrases by politicians is evidence that religion will not hamper a man's career. And the stock of religions in this country is as varied as the contents of a Woolworth store. There are religions for everyone, and as an impartial observer, we believe that anyone of them is as good as the rest.

So it would seem that the "Sunday Graphic" has blundered. It simply cannot mean in any fair sense of the phrase that there is a nation-wide demand for religion. All it can reasonably mean—perhaps we ought not to impute reasonability without evidence—is that there are some people in all parts of the country who want everybody to be as religious as they are. No one will seriously dispute this. Man is a social animal, and he will no more play the fool by himself than he will continue to make speeches with no one to listen. Whether he is playing the fool or emulating the philosopher, he seeks after his kind. If he has a good story, he looks round for someone to hear it. If he is in trouble, he seeks consolation; and, naturally, when he finds a God, he wants to introduce him to his neighbours. Fool or philosopher, man meets his fellows on the neutral ground of a common humanity.

Getting down to brass tacks, all the discovery means is that religious folk want others to be religious also. There is nothing new in that. On the other hand, there are multitudes of people who are without religion and will not have any of it. When the Christian says he is happy with Jesus, the non-Christian says he is quite comfortable without him. When the godite says he must have a god, the Atheist says he feels no such necessity. In every capacity the belief in gods appears to be about as urgent as crutches to an athlete. Honours are at least equal all along the line. So we suggest that the "Sunday Graphic" should try another course. It should first of all settle exactly what it means by "religion." Then let it institute an inquiry as to how many people in this country really are religious, and what are the reasons why so many brush it on one side. We should be pleased to lend a hand in this inquisition. Our services would be given free.

We hope that too much sympathy will not be lavished on the case of Mrs. Ethel Powner, who was discharged from her job of bus conductor by the Potteries Motor Transport Company, for stopping her bus to get a pot of tea. Mrs. Powner says she had been on duty since 4 a.m., and the crime was committed at 9 o'clock. One of the company's inspectors discovered the act. But the public must remember that it is the duty of a detective to detect, and the detective who never detects stands a chance of losing his job. We trust that no censure will be passed on this inspector, for if that is done it will discourage other inspectors, and perhaps one of the most flourishing of our existing industries be ruined. Moreover, every little inspector needs a bigger inspector, and the

bigger, yet a bigger one, right up to the Minister whose decree takes the place of law (one might even say of God Almighty), and before whom we, as a people who will be free at all costs, bow, even though we may not move without permission, and receive our orders through the blare of a B.B.C. microphone.

What will happen to the schools if the Churches succeed in their present aim of saturating them with a Christian atmosphere? First, teachers who are not Christians will find admission to a school difficult and promotion impossible. That is certain, if we may judge by a development that is going on in the B.B.C. We have listened of late to stories told during the "Children's Hour," when "Uncle Mac" doles out stories and advice that can only be described as "shameful." The crudest of the miracles worked by Jesus are repeated as though they were official reports and beyond question, closing often with a form of prayer that is a perfect lesson in ethical demoralisation. No decently-minded teacher, we are quite sure, would advise children to confess to God any "sins" they may have committed, and also confess their own powerlessness to cease sinning without the help of God. It is a sanctification of sinfulness such as no well-trained teacher would be guilty of to-day. We may remind "Uncle Mac" that teachers who are worth their salt to-day impress upon their pupils the teaching that, however much others may *advise*, it is the child itself who must develop its own nature for the better. There is such a thing as moral strength and moral development, but the Reith-haunted B.B.C. has not yet reached that stage of understanding. We wonder whether candidates for a post are still asked: "Do you believe in Jesus Christ?"

The Bishop of London says that "the Church without the Bible has lost its anchorage, the Bible without the Church lacks its fulfilment." This is the kind of clotted bosh in which the clergy delight. Probably it saves both themselves and their congregations the trouble of even attempting the painful task of thinking. As the Christian religion claims to be built on the Bible, and as it is claimed that the Bible was given by God to pave the way for the Church, it would indeed be strange if the two did not match—more or less. The only maggot in the woodpile is that there is no agreement among those who believe in the Bible as to what kind of Church it meant to build, and as Christians have always been denouncing some Church or other as not carrying out the teachings of the Bible, the enlightenment given cannot be very clear, and no Church can feel very certain. Probably what the Bishop of London means is that without the Bible he would never be getting a salary of £10,000. If so, that is one point on which we are in agreement. His predecessor once confessed that without Jesus Christ the world would not have been what it was to him. We never saw any reason to doubt this.

We take it that the Bishop of Chelmsford doesn't quite mean what he says, unless it is that he feels the position of Christianity is becoming so desperate that the clergy will have to risk telling the truth. Addressing a meeting at Chelmsford, he said that the Church must devote "its best efforts to the conversion of the non-Christian multitude who are totally out of touch with the Christian religion." This was a damning confession to make after Christianity has had so much of its own way. And it encouraged another speaker at the same meeting to go a little farther and to say that "Christianity is hanging by a thread." Now, what can anyone say of a system that has existed for so long and has enjoyed so much power? It looks as though real Christianity is about played out.

The Bishop, having made the plunge, began to show his Christian hand more plainly. He reminded his hearers that Hitler devoted his organisation "to twisting the minds of children," and the Bishop is so fond of this method that he advises us that the welfare of Christianity depends upon "collaring the kids." We agree. That is the only way one can make sure of securing Christians—one must breed them. And every biologist knows that breeding animal types is a very common practice. But what one would like to know is this. Wherein lies the difference between breeding Nazis and breeding Christians? To reply that one is *better* than the other is beside the point, for the real offence lies in coercing the mind of the child. We have often said that Christian methods and Nazi methods are essentially alike. Neither can exist without coercion, or can trust people that grow up with independent minds.

## "THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Farnival Street, Holborn,

Telephone No. : Holborn 2601. London, E.C.4.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS

Will Mr. McGirrie, of Glasgow, be good enough to send his address to the Editor. The letter has been mislaid.

**Y. L. MARKHAM.**—All the remaining copies of the "Bible Handbook" were destroyed in the Farringdon Street "blitz," and it would be in present circumstances a very costly job to reprint. And unless it is to be sold at a moderately cheap price, the object of the work would be frustrated. We agree that it should be kept in print; we shall seize the first opportunity of getting the book republished. It would be specially useful just now, and we have many demands for it.

**C. ROBERTSON.**—The gospel of the nobility of labour is, like so many popular sayings, nine-tenths rubbish. Whether labour is noble or ignoble depends entirely upon what the labour is for. On the whole, burglars work fairly hard, but also, on the whole, it is a poorly-paid job. Few burglars retire with a competency—unless they hold a Government job. And where "labour" is congenial and useful it ceases to be labour—it is a healthy and beneficial occupation for all. It might and ought to be remembered that the vogue of hymns to the nobility of labour were mostly born in the days of sweated labour.

**T. WAINWRIGHT.**—Obliged for quotations. Both interesting and useful.

**G. LEE.**—Securing four new readers for "The Freethinker" is good going and real help. Many thanks, with hope for more recruits for the "one and only."

**RAYMOND BOTT.**—Thanks for cutting. We had already seen the impudent circular of the Board of Education that it will finance the religious education of parents and "workers." It is all evidence in favour of believing that the religious section of the Government is taking advantage of the war to do what they would not dare attempt under normal conditions. We have our suspicions as to whether the Board of Education has the legal right to spend public money in this way. But in these days of fighting for freedom, the "rights" of the public have become microscopical. But we hope that some question will be asked in Parliament about it. There should be someone there who is not looking for a "job," and who believes the liberty of the individual to be more important than the welfare of a party.

**WAR DAMAGE FUND.**—M. Baker, 19s. 8d.; "Geo. Jo'burg," 4s.

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Farnival Street, London, W.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. Rosetti, 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, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.*

*Lecture notices must reach 2 and 3, Farnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.*

### SUGAR PLUMS

THE following letters from one of our readers in the Navy will interest many:—

"To register as an Atheist is impossible in the Navy. The forms, of course, are there (we must have forms for everything; an organisation is no longer judged by its efficiency, but by its forms) asking you to state your religion. Thereupon you must do so. The dear, kind people who dealt with me were astonished. 'No religion! But you must have one.' 'I have not got one and have no wish for one.' 'But the forms—what can we put? Oh no, you must choose one, you know.'

"They presented me with a list of nice prime religions from stock and proceeded something on the same lines as one does when serving a customer. They say, pointing to R.C.: 'If you choose this you will be excused church parade. . . . But this particular customer is not as ignorant of Roman Catholicism as they are of sincerity and says, in effect, that he is not prepared to buy even a little religion.

"Shades of a beautiful line in Popes! How are the gods to be appeased? Oh, saboteur of thy beautiful official forms, how could I stand aside and see them, with their pride in their salesmanship destroyed. So I point out that their forms would retain their neatness if they inserted the word 'None.' Alongside that official word 'religion' and superimposed on to those extremely official dots there was 'A Word.' Their salesmanship had triumphed and their form was complete. They had sold me, or at least I had bought, something. No longer was I an infidel. I had a religion—it was 'None.'"

"So that now, when the fellows ask me why I am not parading for church, I tell them it is against my religion to do so. When they ask me what it is, I tell them it is 'Nun.'"

We congratulate the writer on his account of his experiences. But when shall we reach the stage when this pantomime of a confession of faith ceases? A man joining the Armed Forces is almost forced to profess a religion—unless he has the grit to stand against it. And we are fighting a war for freedom!

Will anyone who ordered copies of Ingersoll's "Rome or Reason" and has not yet received them be good enough to advise us. All have left the "Freethinker" office, but even the Post Office is not so dependable as it was. We hasten to say that it has worked marvellously well in very difficult conditions.

A sub-committee of the Brighton Education Authority appears to have forwarded a very sensible resolution. According to the "Daily Herald" of October 27th:—

"It advocates that education should be entirely free in all its primary, secondary, higher and university stages, that every school should be open to all classes, and that the only distinction made should be in respect to the vocational tendencies of the child.

"The report says that an inherent fault of the present system is that it is based to some extent upon the idea of regarding education in terms of social classes."

This seems to hit the nail on the head. So long as our educational system works with one system of education—whether decided by money or by a titled class—we have no right to call ourselves a democracy. Education, from the elementary school to the University, should be free to all, the only condition being a capacity test. We can and do praise the stuff of which the *people* are made—in a time of war. We should bear that in mind in times of peace. Were that done, it might even be that wars would be less epidemic and less dangerous.

The B.B.C. marked another page in its history when it brought to the microphone a soldier to say what Christianity meant to him. What we should like to hear from the B.B.C. is in what respect a Freethinking soldier falls short in courage, intelligence or duty when compared with a Christian soldier. Any sucking curate could have said all that the one selected said. But probably the B.B.C. prepared the speech. At any rate, it could have easily been lifted from a cheap tract.

We have received the following from our brothers in the spirit, the Rationalist Association and Sunday Freedom League, Auckland, New Zealand, per the secretary, Mr. A. T. Parlane:—

"I have been instructed by my Executive Committee of the Wellington, Christchurch and Hamilton Rational Associations of New Zealand, respectively, to convey to you the following resolution: 'That the Rationalists of New Zealand extend to Mr. Chapman Cohen and all connected with "The Freethinker" their deepest sympathy in the misfortune which has befallen them in the destruction by air-raid of their office, and trust that it will arise, Phoenix-like, from the ashes so that the great task of breaking the shackles of superstition will be carried on with undiminished vigour.'"

We value very much this expression of good feeling from our brother-fighters in a common cause, a cause that is made the more urgent by the outbreak of savagery that is now engulfing the globe. Our friends will, long before this issue of "The Freethinker" reaches them, understand that while we cannot say "The Freethinker" is pursuing its *undisturbed* course, it is following its old lines with undiminished vigour and determination. Our greatest difficulty is the constantly increasing cost of things and the paper scarcity. Our readers, and everyone connected with "The

Freethinker," will read the message of our far-away friends with every appreciation, and on their behalf we offer our congratulations on the manner in which our fellow-workers in New Zealand are carrying on the great work of human emancipation.

A great many deserved tributes have been paid to Greece of late. But it is significant that when the Greeks themselves appeal to Greek traditions for inspiration, it is to Pagan Greece they go. Thermopylae is a far greater inspiration to modern Greeks than is "the crucified Christ," just as when Greece is praised for its intellectual greatness it is the pagan philosophers, poets and dramatists that are invoked. Greece has, of course, not been without great men during its Christian history, but it cuts but a poor figure at the side of the pre-Christian era. One need only compare modern Rome and modern Greece with ancient Greece and Rome to get some sort of an indication as to the influence of Christianity on the world.

It is not only with regard to the question of liberty that Greek-Pagan civilisation led the world. The Greeks were the creators of democracy, and it has been by the exercise of what the man in the street would call "instinct" that lovers of liberty have turned to them for inspiration. Long ago Bagshot pointed out that Greece was the first country that conducted civic affairs by discussion, and discussion implies the possibility of being wrong, and the possibility of being wrong is the best guarantee that anyone can have of at least a considerable measure of freedom.

What a hell of a war there will be when the present one is finished! It will, we hope, be one that is fought by wits and not by cannon, a clash of ideals and not a struggle of physical force. In that war Freethought might play a great part. Every recruit we now make for the Freethought army is a promise of a better future.

We have received three excellent propagandist pamphlets published by the Rationalist Association of New Zealand: "Christians and Freethinkers," a telling rejoinder to those who are inclined to trumpet the superiority of Christians over unbelievers (2d.), "Christian Principles" (3d.) and "Krishna and Christ" (2d.), giving the analogies between the Krishna and the Christ legends. One or two of the analogies have been questioned, but the result is not greatly affected thereby. The author of the pamphlets is well known and appreciated by readers of "The Freethinker"—Mr. H. J. Hayward. We commend them to our readers.

To-day (November 9) Mr. H. Cutner is addressing the Leicester Secular Society. His subject is "The War, the Churches and Freethought," which will attract, we hope, a good audience.

## THE BLACK INTERNATIONAL AND THE NEW COUNTER-REFORMATION

(Continued from page 484.)

TO-DAY, things are quite other: the social landscape has changed in fundamental perspective. Despite our present crop of artificial superstitions consequent on the present *fin-de-siècle* phase of the bourgeois civilisation, it yet should never be forgotten that this is essentially an *artificial* recurrence: it does not naturally belong to the social scene of the twentieth century; to the Machine Age of Power Production. Our contemporary atavism is self-conscious and consciously so. And it is still true that "hypocrisy is the homage that falsehood pays to truth!" If our soldiers "trust in God," they equally fulfil the second part of the historic adjuration of Cromwell; they do not forget to "keep their powder dry!" If our airmen wear amulets, it is not on angels' wings that they trust to return from the skies! Superstition, a born native in the agrarian Middle Ages, is a veritable cuckoo in our age of mechanical determinism.

If we understand this with our fallible senses it can be taken for granted that the fact is already long self-evident to the Infallible rulers who, from the heights of the Vatican, have watched so many centuries come and go. And, in fact, for the past half-century the practice of the Church has increasingly corresponded

to the nature of the new social realities. For ever since Leo XIII. published his (literally) epoch-making Encyclical Letter—"Rerum Novarum"—one of the great social documents of the nineteenth century—the Church, with that unobtrusive skill in which she excels, has been silently but effectually shifting her emphasis from theology to sociology; from the next world to this. The road to power no longer lies through the next world but through this. Whoso fails to discern that this is indeed so is barred from all comprehension of the whole real trend of Roman evolution as it is really directed to-day. Far more than even its secular disciples and imitators the Fascists, the Church of Rome is the supreme opportunist on earth. She will be collectivist or individualist, revolutionary or counter-revolutionary, as the occasion demands. The occasion *and her own interest*. For there is the unique criterion! For when Mussolini once spoke of "sacred egoism," he did but summarise in a single trenchant phrase the innemorial practice of the august Papal dynasty beneath the rule of which his own ancestors had lived for so many centuries. (As far back as 1513 Macchiavelli indicated this egoism as the chief obstacle to the political unity of Italy—cp. "The Prince.")

To describe in detail this new counter-reformation everywhere so energetically and ubiquitously pressed, falls outside the scope of this study. Nor, indeed, is it possible to write objectively of a movement still in full blast and gathering momentum all the time. We note only what have thus far been its principal features: elsewhere, we have described its social character. (Cp. pamphlet cited above.) Here, we merely note a few of its leading manifestations.

From 1891 to 1941 the entire half century has witnessed a continuous series of social encyclicals published by successive Popes; all of them, however, united in their insistence on the *social* as distinct from the theological and ethical teaching of the Church. To be sure, in this connection, the names of Leo XIII. and Pius XI. are conspicuously prominent, and the "Quadragesimo Anno" (May 15, 1931) of the latter equals in importance the "Rerum Novarum" of his great predecessor. More and more, as the decline of capitalist civilisation accelerates, the voice of the Church becomes louder and more confident; tracing the present maladies of Europe to their alleged source in the supposedly inevitable evils in the Reformation and the "Enlightenment." A voluminous literature points the moral. Hilaire Belloc, already in 1913, predicts "The Servile State" as the logical terminus *ad quem* and inevitable nemesis of the cut-throat competition of *laissez-faire* capitalism—he has lived to see his prediction fulfilled in Fascism. As we write these lines there appears a new book by Mr. A. C. F. Beales—"The Catholic Church and International Order" (published in the widely read "Penguin" series—which boldly denounces the final demise of "Liberalism" so long denounced by the Popes, pours scorn on "Progress," and declares that the only hope of present-day society is to turn its back resolutely on all its contemporary "isms" and seek shelter in the *social* gospel proclaimed by the Popes. Numerous similar examples can be quoted; all summoning mankind to abandon his quest for Utopia and come to rest in the ark of the Church.

What social order is it at which the Church aims? In brief, at a stagnant society founded on the supremacy of conservative—land over radical industry. At an authoritarian ideology; a kind of clerical Fascism; Fascist towards its lay subjects, but respectful of the "rights" of the Church (i.e., a non-totalitarian species of Fascism. Cp. *ut infra*.) Nor are we speaking of a mere paper programme; in fact, the Church is



already a European Power. Three European States are avowedly based on the Papal Encyclicals: the France of Petain, the Ireland of De Valera, best loved of all at the Vatican, the Portugal of Salazar. (The Spain of Franco is a no man's land between secular Fascism and Roman clericalism—a few years back we could have added the Austria of Dolfuss. Nor must we forget the rapidly growing influence of Rome beyond the Atlantic, one increasingly reflected also in the social sphere.) Apart from these Catholic States there are the ubiquitous "Jocist" and "Catholic Action" movements—respectively, proletarian Catholicism and "the participation of the laity in the apostolate of the hierarchy," as the latter, by now ubiquitous, movement has been defined, virtually canonically, by its late Founder, Pius XI. Let us add, also, that recent most sinister mover of clerical mass politics—the self-styled "Sword of the Spirit." And behind this great and growing movement in life and literature—one commanding the pens of a Maritain and a Belloc—lies the most experienced General Staff and the most terrifying organisation in all history: the whole weight of the "Black International," of the New Roman Empire, hungry for power with the stimulated appetite of nineteen centuries non-stop "aggression" in both the ideological and material spheres.

F. A. RIDLEY.

(To be concluded)

### DETERMINISM AND PUNISHMENT

THE doctrine of determinism may be true. There is at least sufficient evidence for its acceptance as an "over belief" to justify a measure of caution by the most convinced advocate of "free will" when it comes to dealing with delinquencies in social behaviour. And since all human behaviour has no accountable significance outside the social structure—at least, none which any self-appointed interpreter of the hundred mutually exclusive theological systems has any right to recognise as binding on others—it behoves all fair-minded men, in the interests of possible injustice, to consider its implications.

If determinism is true, for instance, *punishment* which goes an inch beyond pure corrective quality or intensity is immoral, assuming the character—as indeed it so often does—of the gratification of innate cruelty, disguised as "righteous indignation"—one of the most seductive and dangerous emotions.

Looking back over history with insight and discernment, the very imagination reels at the sum total of human suffering—the rivers of blood and tears which have flowed down the ages that misguided moral power shall feel itself avenged.

And it is only of late that here and there, at the promptings of a dawning public conscience, the still small voice of hesitation has resulted in a tempering of judgment with mercy, at the promptings of "half-doubt"—a blessed spirit of "perhaps after all, being the man he was, he could not have done otherwise."

And now, under the ægis of science itself—accepted by no lesser man than "the maker of the Modern Universe," Einstein, and a host of other eminent thinkers, these vague promptings to forgiveness, reiterated, if not originated by the founder of the Christian faith himself, are found to have a basis in truth. Progress is slow. It is 2,000 years between the death sentence of Socrates and the spiritual murder of Oscar Wilde. And determinism unequivocally asserts no less than that, taking all factors—heredity, internal and environmental into consideration, a man *cannot* act differently in any given circumstances than he does. That this doctrine is perfectly consistent with social responsibility (of which moral responsibility is a part), and that *deterrents*, rather than punishments are morally justifiable as determining factors *only* in the interests of public good.

And yet, whether one relies merely on the dawning spirit of tolerance, which since the days of early Quakerism, when for instance, Elizabeth Fry so much alleviated the worst aspects of prison punishment, or only the growing tendency to live up to that penetrating French proverb, "To know all is to forgive all"—we have a long way to go.

Society at large must, of course, be disciplined by a certain minima of determining factors applied to its erring members, and the same holds good for any section of society, as for instance, the Army, where by virtue of its special code, many dangers may be expected.

In this connection, a recent article by Hannen Swaffer makes bitter reading.

Referring to an article in the "Railway Review," "The Disgrace of Army Gaols," Swaffer quotes:—

"He has known a commanding officer give a savage sentence of detention to a lorry driver who did 21 miles per hour when his permitted speed was 20—or inadvertently putting on wrong gaiters, or having sand in a rifle magazine in impossible conditions in a gale on a sandy coast, or losing some losable item of kit."

"Overcrowding (in the prisons) with its evils is shocking; men are bedded in groups of cells, there is noise, confusion, cursing, blows and lack of light. Men of all grades, genuine criminals as well as young militia men guilty of some simple lapse, are flung together, and men doing 14 days are mixed with two-year men."

Referring to one case, the correspondent describes how he took a prisoner for a railway journey involving many hours, complete with loaded rifles, bayonets and handcuffs.

"On arrival at the gaol, which contained nearly 1,000 men, a prison officer uttered a lecture on what was *coming to him*, and how they were going to make a soldier of him in three weeks. 'The little bespectacled man had not been so bad at Dunkirk,' he comments. His crime was that he had been drunk one Saturday night."

The correspondent then speaks of:

"The senseless cleaning, recleaning, polishing and repolishing of brasses long ago cleaned clean—the idiotic 'doubling' and 'the incessant rain of insults.'"

A soldier in three weeks? It would be far more likely to produce a gibbering idiot—such torture on a sensitive, modern man.

From all this it seems clear that within the closed system of Army administration there exists a régime of deplorable laxity where punishments are concerned, and an almost total denial of the growing humaner tendencies which are at last beginning to permeate civil justice. For in the absence of restraint on the one hand, and free criticism on the other, harsh and sadistic officers and N.C.O.s are being permitted to indulge their livers and petty prejudices at the expense of helpless prisoners with complete impunity.

No doubt the system is protected by theoretical safeguards from this kind of thing, but what humble soldier can hope to invoke them without risk of victimisation?

Mr. John Hilton, always alive to injustice and the interests of soldiers, recently made a brave effort to convince the ordinary "Tommy" that by using the machinery provided by K.R. "to right his wrongs," he would incur no subsequent disadvantage. But in practice this is but a kindly and pious hope. In the last resort, like so many other problems of human intercourse and human suffering, it is a question of philosophy. A convinced and moral determinist *could not do these things*.

On the immediate practical issues, the above crying wrongs call for a change in the detail of military law, with strong new safeguards against the erratic and irresponsible officers and N.C.O.s concerned. More broadly, as in all such problems, one must appeal to wider issues.

Psychological determinism may or may not be true—but a study of its possibilities and implications, already admitted in enlightened social practice, should at least impart a spirit of restraint amongst those who administer military dispensation against helpless men.

J. R. STURGE-WHITING.

### ESOTERIC PRIESTCRAFT FOR YOUNG PRIESTS

(Continued from page 490.)

OUR firm originally based its claims on the Bible. It still does, but with a difference. The principles and practices of our firm are so different from the Bible that we had to spend a lot of time and go to a lot of pains to make a

plausible explanation. Some fuller description of our bother with this awkward document and what we have done about it will come later.

The Bible, as you are aware, is really a collection of books. Nobody knows who wrote them. Many of them have authors' names given, but they are little but names. In not a single case is the date of a book known. Nor are there any original documents. The first book gives an account of the creation of the earth. Then come "histories" of the Jews. There is a detailed description of a religion of the Jews. Then there are books of "prophets," the contents of which are more or less incomprehensible. Following these books of the Old Testament is the New Testament, which tells of Jesus and the beginnings of Christianity.

Out of such a hotch-potch of books anything can be made—or nothing. The following is approximately the Christian version of the Bible story: In the beginning was God. He made the Universe, the crowning act being the making of man in his (God's) own image. (Actually, of course, man made his God in his (man's) own image.) Although when God looked on his work he considered it good, yet he allowed a certain rebel, Satan, a fallen angel, to spoil mankind, and after a period in which, seemingly, mankind appeared to be hopelessly bad, God drowned the lot with the exception of one family. Incidentally, he drowned all other creatures except a pair of each kind. How fishes came to be drowned is not explained, nor is there any suggestion that these other creatures had done anything to deserve being drowned.

Well, although there was supposed to be a new start, things went on much as before. So God chose a certain man and said that his descendants should be God's Own People. Actually, it was not all Abram's descendants who were the Chosen People. It was only those descended from a certain grandson of Abram—namely, Jacob. It might seem a poor example to set to parents—to make favourites—yet the Jews, notwithstanding being God's specially Chosen, had a poor time of it. So God said (this is the Chosens' tale) that some time one of the race should be a great conqueror and subdue the whole earth, and when this happened the Chosen People would be all right. What the rest of mankind might think, or what should happen to them, was left vague. The favoured people did not bother their heads about the fate of the Lord's orphans. . . . A few hundred years passed without the appearance of either the Messiah or the Millennium. Then a certain street preacher appeared. He preached a doctrine of charity and holiness, meekness and resignation, though not without very human lapses into naughty temper and violent language (which, by the way, we have found useful in "justifying" our Atrocity Department). It would seem that he had a period of popularity with the mob, though this may be a partisan and exaggerated statement. The adulation of his admirers may have made him think he was the promised Messiah, though anything less likely than the idea of the Messiah in the minds of the Jews could hardly be imagined. He was neither soldier nor statesman. He had practically no effect on the higher classes of the Jews, and he could not have had much following in the rest. Some unguarded expressions, either of his or his followers, led to a charge of sedition against him. There is absolutely no record of him except the New Testament (i.e. a partisan record), but even from this it is plain that his trial resulted in the mob being fanatically against him. He was executed. Then (according to the New Testament—there is no other record of him, a thing very strange considering the marvellousness of the tale), three days after his execution he rose from the dead, and was round and about for a few weeks, and then ascended bodily into heaven in full view of a crowd. After this, a cult of Jesus arose, its first adherents being inconspicuous Jews, or near-Jews (Gallileans, Samaritans). The Jewish nation never accepted Jesus, either as a Messiah or a teacher. That is why we hate Jews. They are very inconvenient to us.

You see, they say that *they* were the recipients of the "promises," and that *they* are the judges as to what the Messiah must be like when he comes. As for us, we are outsiders who have no share in the "promises," and it is impudence on our part to say we have. All this is too true

to be convenient. And the results of Jesus quite disprove that he was the Messiah, for instead of being a blessing and a benefit to the Jews, he has been quite the reverse. We are the *enemies* of the Jews—always have been. How, therefore, can we be the beneficiaries of the promises when we do not act for the good of the Jews? Of course, it is no use arguing with Jews on the point. But we make a case out for our own clients. It is a poor theologian who cannot make black into white. It is your job to pass it on to the mutts, our clients. You will find it quite easy.

Yet it was a Jew who was chiefly responsible for making the Jesus cult into a Gentile cult. He was subject to visions which he took to be divine revelations. The career of Jesus had parallelisms with many pagan cults, or at any rate could be "interpreted" as such. Paul considered him as God's only son, a divine being in human form. His crucifixion was a "sacrifice" to God for the sins of humanity, thereby making atonement or reconciliation and giving a chance of salvation and paradise to believers. The street preacher of Jerusalem, after his ascension to heaven, took his seat at the right hand of God, and this proved he was the "Messiah." The Jesus cult thus had its first metamorphosis—into Christianity. It had an appeal to many, especially the lower classes, to whom it gave some comforting ideas and hopes. Also, at this period, paganism was becoming discredited. The old local gods had followings, locally. But the Roman Empire, having conquered all the countries round the Mediterranean, had caused a mingling of the various peoples. Large numbers of men travelled about and saw the various brands of paganism. The crop of gods was too rank. Their mutual jealousies and quarrels led to a cynical attitude to all of them. They ceased to function as credible supernatural powers or personages. Christianity appeared just when the people felt a gap, a void. The menagerie of pagan gods, mostly of low character, with priests and ritual corresponding, were in such a condition that something the very opposite would be likely to "take on." Christianity appeared at a psychological moment. One God instead of many, no idols, no priests, no ritual, decent morals and a philosophy of charitableness and hope, a large mixture of sob-stuff and a human "saviour" with an appeal, particularly to the lower classes—its total oppositeness gave it an appositeness to the situation. Its novelty appealed to a people that was always ready to be ready for an "unknown" God.

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

(To be continued)

## COMPANIONSHIP

COMPANIONSHIP is expressed in many ways. There is, for example, the regard which a man has for his dog—which becomes in time his "real pal" and, because of the affection which it feels towards its owner, is never more than a yard or two away from him, night or day; there is the respect occasionally shown by two people of the same sex to each other, and whose sincerity is beyond question. But unquestionably the highest form of companionship is that displayed between two people of the opposite sex whose admiration for and attachment to each other grows with the passage of time. Poetically, this latter might be said to be Nature's way of adjusting the species; practically, it may be described merely as human nature at its best.

During the evolution of Homo Sapiens it was only natural that, in the early stages, there should be little or nothing more than the physical attraction of the sexes, with the care of the mother for her young, and so on. To say the least of it, that made for the propagation of the species and the continuation of life in human form. But with the development of the human mind there was, by the very nature of things, bound to be, eventually, another and a still stronger tie which, for the want of a better word and without any religious implication, we will call the "spiritual" tie, meaning thereby the bond which is known only to human beings—love, if the word is preferred. And it is that which, when all is said and done, binds people together inseparably and in such a way as nothing else does or can.

A story is told of two philosophers who would occasionally spend hours together and say very little during the whole evening, so content were they in each other's company. The story has been laughed at by some as "incredible," by others as an indication that the men were a couple of "potty old fools," and so on, according to the outlook of the people who heard this "yarn." But in spite of all that—and the like—there are occasions when speech seems sacrilege, because speech means a noise, and at times—when two minds are "in tune" and there is perfect understanding and appreciation of the mood of the moment—when the noise of the voice is offensive to the ear. . . . If that seems an overstatement, think of how objectionable it is if, as a passionate lover of music, you are listening intently to some favourite opera—even if it only comes to you over the radio—and someone butts in with an inane remark. You at least resent the intrusion and feel annoyed. Multiply that by the importance and—again to use a convenient phrase—the "sacredness" of the occasion, when perfect quiet is desired, and the statement does not appear to be over-emphasised. The fact of the matter is, of course, there are times when most of us prefer to be alone and undisturbed with our thoughts and feelings.

Yes, and there are certainly some who prefer, now and again, to be quite alone—if one can ever be said to be quite alone in such circumstances, which is doubtful—with his or her books or pictures, or amidst beautiful scenery and the birds, especially the songsters. There is even a "companionship"—silent, but none the less sincere and abiding—between an enlightened individual and such inanimate and non-human things, and a deep emotional response to them, which only he or she who is accustomed to revel in their presence can feel. To be alone with a good book or picture, or in the melodious woodlands, is to experience one of the supreme joys of life and get an additional heart-throb. As has been said:—

"If thou art worn and hard beset,  
With troubles that thou wouldst forget.  
Go to the woods and hills—  
No tear stains the face that nature wears. . . ."

Just poetry, maybe, but it has its inner meaning for those who understand.

Some there are who entertain the notion that a man who has outgrown the beliefs of his childhood no longer feels these emotional responses, because he has, in their view, become "materialistic" or "atheistic"—they use these words, especially the latter, as terms of reproach—and consequently he does not now see "the light," whatever that may be. Or they say that he has "lost God"—whom, incidentally, they cannot define and defend—and therefore he has really nothing to live for. But nothing is further from the truth. It is, on the contrary, quite correct to say—and this should be self-evident—that unless and until a man has got rid of his mental encumbrances he cannot possibly understand and enjoy life—and all that that word implies—to the full. As long as anyone of us is burdened with relics of the past, no matter what they may be or whence they came, just so long do we remain incapable of accepting and appreciating new truths and enjoying the highest and purest manifestations of life, companionship in its truest and best form, for example. Thought-forms which were invented many centuries ago are worse than useless to-day; they are brakes on progress.

Mutual attraction is obviously the basis of all firm and lasting companionship, and equally obviously opposites never meet—or if they do they soon repel. But when "like attracts like," and the two people thus drawn together—magnet-wise—have the same or similar tastes, lofty aims and aspirations, they can and do meet on the same mental plane and a great deal can be accomplished jointly. Separately two such people can, it is true, take their respective parts in the world's affairs and do a lot of good work, but together they can do so much more. They can, when working in double harness, so to speak, help each other in a thousand and one ways—as only those who have enjoyed such companionship can possibly understand. To have the constant presence and inspiration of one of the opposite sex in thought, word and deed, is to know immeasurable joys, or as some would put it, the joys of heaven.

Put shortly and without any trimmings, the position is this: with the evolution of the human race there has at last come into being a *mental urge*—an urge which is creating in man an insatiable appetite for knowledge: knowledge of his real origin and history, as distinct from the current theories on the subject, and a desire to live a full and free life; a life not of luxury and idleness, but of usefulness—and he knows and appreciates, maybe only dimly at present, that the attainment of that end can only be reached when male and female unite this latest fundamental urge, this urge of mutual attraction, and pull together as one. Hence companionship.

GEO. B. LISSENDEN.

## CORRESPONDENCE

### NEVER FEAR

SIR,—The "Sugar Plum" for November 2 prompts me to exclaim:—

"Here's to genius and longevity, may they run in double harness, step in step, to the end." Which they surely must in C. C.'s case!

As a thirty-year reader, I think I was never more interested in the "Lollypop" page than in this number's—grand!—Yours, etc.,  
C. F. BUDGE.

## NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

### Report of Executive Meeting Held October 26, 1941

President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the Chair.

Also present: Messrs. Bryant, Seibert, Ebury, Horowitz, Griffiths, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, Miss Woolstone and the secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted; financial statement presented.

New members were admitted to West London Branch and to the parent society. Correspondence and lecture reports covering Durham, Lancashire and Glasgow were dealt with. Preliminary arrangements for winter lectures in London and the provinces were made. The receipt of a cheque for £65 from the executors of the J. W. J. Easterbrook Estate was announced. The possibilities for extended propaganda were discussed and suggestions noted.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for November 30, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

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## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON

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North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11-0, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields, 3-0, Mr. L. EBURY.

#### Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11-0, Professor G. W. KEETON, M.A., LL.D., "The Roman Conception of Empire."

West London N.S.S. Branch (57, Warrington Crescent, near Warwick Avenue Tube Station): 3-0, Mrs. Wood, "Russia and Its People."

### COUNTRY

#### Outdoor

Kingston and District N.S.S. Branch (Market Place): 7-30, Mr. J. W. BARKER.

#### Indoor

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (P.P.U. Rooms, 112, Morley Street): 7-0, a Lecture.

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate): 3-0, Mr. H. CUTNER, "The War, the Churches and Freethought."

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