

# THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

Vol. LXI.—No. 47

Sunday, November 23, 1941

Price Threepence

## CONTENTS

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Views and Opinions—The Editor...                  | 525 |
| English Jew-Baiting—F. J. Corina                  | 527 |
| Prophecy—Geo. B. Lissenden                        | 528 |
| Esoteric Priestcraft for Young Priests—C. R. Boyd |     |
| Freeman   | 528 |
| Acid Drops  | 529 |
| To Correspondents                                 | 531 |
| Sugar Plums                                       | 531 |
| Hymns Which Humiliate—Mimmermus                   | 532 |
| Conversions—A. R. Williams                        | 533 |
| Russia Under Religion—Yesterday and To-day!—      |     |
| Henry J. Hayward                                  | 534 |
| Of Hands—George Wallace                           | 535 |

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

(Continued from page 514)

### Reform of the Church

In what follows I shall chiefly be concerned with the Church of England. Reforms have been called for many times. The planning of a new England after the war offers an opportunity for their realisation. And a great step in the right direction would be the disestablishment of the Church. That in itself would lead to a removal of such medieval survivals as blasphemy laws, Sunday laws, etc. It would also lend strength to those who oppose the schools being turned into training grounds for Church and Chapel. Religion would also tend to become what it should be, while it survives—something that any man may believe in or practice, so long as its practice does not interfere with the activities and freedom of others, and so long as it is supported only by those who believe in it. And along with the suggestion of the rationing of the churches in proportion to the needs of the existing population there would be put an end to that long-standing scandal of the City churches.

Circumstances have converted an area that is thickly populated by day into one nearly deserted by night. On Sunday it is a city of the dead, and speaking as a lover of London, of the history enshrined within the City walls, and for the sheer artistry that it still retains, the City must appeal to many. Some of the City churches one hopes will be left after the war for historic and artistic reasons. The old ones that are destroyed cannot be restored, save for those who are without imagination and to whom an antique bearing the stamp of "Brummagem" on it is as satisfactory as the original article.

But the scandal of the City churches should be removed. The maintenance of churches with congregations of 20, 30, or at the most 50 people, with salaries for some of the incumbents running to £2,000 should be ended. They are opportunities for sinecures for such as have friends in high places, for political bribery, for the encouragement of all sorts of substantially corrupt practices. Neither social nor religious needs can justify their continuance. My books are scattered—thanks to the war—and I have no recent account of the income of the City churches near me, save one published about 40 years ago ("The City Churches," by the Rev. H. W. Clarke), but those who can consult any census of attendances

at the City churches and note the sums of money paid to the preachers will be surprised. I am fairly certain that if a census of Sunday attendances at the City churches were taken to-day, with the sums paid to preachers lecturing to empty benches, things would be found to be quite unchanged. Exposure alone would have ended this scandal, had it been connected with anything but the State Church. Disestablishment would end this scandal—and many others.

My thesis is really a simple one. It is that if and when the government of the day abolishes the Episcopalian Church as a State establishment, it is legally and morally entitled to use what is called Church property and Church possessions in the interest of the community and in whatever direction it thinks best.

### A Poor Record

What is the Church of England? It has a history of about 500 years. Prior to the Reformation there could be no Church of England. As a Roman Catholic Church it could never become a branch of the State. Its aim was always, and is to-day, to make the State subordinate to the Church. And until the Reformation the King was subordinate to the Church in all matters "spiritual," leaving the King in control in matters secular. But the bishops had this advantage, that they were also feudal lords and held to their secular privileges as well as to those arising from their vocation. But in Catholic times there was a Church in England, and the distinction is important. There is no need now to go into the miserable circumstances that led to the downfall of the Roman Church in England. The main thing in relation to what I have said and wish to say is that the Church of England was a creation of the State and functioned under the control of the State. The Church received great privileges, as a Church, and it repaid them by being always—with the exception of the Cromwellian period—a creature of the State and of the ruling class.

It is that to-day. Accession to the higher posts in the Church have generally been determined by the use of the selected candidates could be to the secular State. They are quasi-political appointments, and if occasionally priests show themselves to be rebellious to the government of the day, that is a consequence which cannot be avoided. But an examination of those who are appointed to the governing positions in the Church reveals the significant fact that the Archbishops and leading Bishops are nearly always of a desirable political colour—in a few shades. One sees also the play of the "old school tie" principle in the family connections between those who hold high positions in the Church. The Archbishop of York—salary £10,000—is said to be likely, on the retirement of the Archbishop of Canterbury, to be his successor—salary £15,000. Why not? The cost of living is rising and the breed of birds that fed the prophet has long since died out. The Rev. H. W. Clarke says quite plainly that Archbishop Temple's father was made Archbishop of Canterbury by Gladstone as payment for political services.

The Church is subordinate to the State; it is really a branch of the State, as may be shown by a few familiar facts. The prayer book of the Church and

the Articles of the Church of England were decided by the State. The prayer book and the official creed cannot be altered but by the State. That a great many clergymen do not follow the plain teachings of the Thirty-Nine Articles, nor of the prayer book, is evidence only of the adaptable conscience developed in the Church which enables "honourable men" to get paid for preaching one thing and then preaching something different. The Kensitites are right when they accuse many of the prominent clergy as mentally dishonest. And the representatives of the Church are probably right when they accuse the Kensitites of the same fault.

Until 1836, when the Ecclesiastical Commission was appointed to control the funds of the Church, the rapacity of the Church was as great as was the neglect of its religious duties. It should be said and remembered that the Commissioners were not appointed to diminish the huge income of the State Church. Its duty was to see to its more equitable distribution among its ministers.

Dr. Coulton, in some of the important works given us, has dealt faithfully with the rapacity of the Roman Church with which it collected its dues during its existence in pre-Reformation times. But we question whether it was more rapacious than those who dominated the English Church in the 18th and early 19th centuries. In the early part of the last century, for example, out of 11,000 livings there were 6,000 where the incumbents were non-resident. In Ireland the livings belonging to the English Church were nearly all sinecures. The Dean and Chapter of Carlisle drew from Hesketh between £1,000 and £1,500 per year. They paid the officiating curate less than £1 per week. From Whetlerdale and Warwick the Dean and Chapter of the See received annually from tithes and rents about £2,000. They paid the curate annually £50. There were a number of poorly-paid clergymen, but the number has been greatly over-estimated, for in many cases the sums received were in the nature of a gift from a friend or relative in whose hands the appointment rested. And as many of the poorer-paid appointments were duplicated in the same person, the actual salary was often greater than it appeared to be.

Another element of the situation. By an Act of the time of Queen Anne, provision was made for the building of 50 churches in London. But only about 20 had been built when the 19th century opened. Those who had the "patronage" of churches sold the appointment of ministers as other commodities were sold, and it was profitable to keep the number down. The Duke of Portland was the noble owner—patron—of the appointments in the parish of Marylebone. The borough had a population of 40,000, but the number of churches were kept down so that the value of the holdings might be increased. In the whole of London, with a population of over a million, there was church accommodation for about 150,000.

It is not easy to get an account of the rapacity of the Churches, and even from the religious point of view, of the scandal of our Established Church. Standard and recognised modern histories gloss over the facts in such fashion that while not stating verbal lies, they succeed in setting forth what is a blazing falsehood from beginning to end.\* The report of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, the body which receives and administers the larger part of church income, acknowledges in its report for 1838 the receipt of about three millions and a half sterling, of which about one and a half millions is derived from rents and

nearly one and three-quarter millions comes from dividends and interest. It will thus be seen that our spiritual guides have a very substantial interest in the financial side of political life.

What the total wealth of the Church of England is it is impossible for me—or perhaps anyone else—to say. Little more than a century ago the capitalised wealth was given as between five and nine millions. A government commission of 1832 gave it as £3,500,000. To-day it must be larger, even when one subtracts the selling of nearly all the interest of the Church in tithes. The famous "Black Book," published in 1831,† gives many illustrations of the character of the clergy and salaries of the Church. The Archbishops of York and Canterbury took between them £52,000 annually. There were twenty-four bishops taking an average of £10,000 each. There were 2,800 clergymen, mainly non-residential, who held either two, three, or four livings. In some of these livings there was not even a church. The total value of the Bishopric of Ely was given as £27,000. It is only fair to the Bishop to say that he made his son a Prebendary of the Ely Cathedral, Rectory of Levington, which, with other offices, brought him a hand to mouth revenue of £1,805 per annum. And to his son-in-law he gave another cathedral stall, the Rectory of Bexwell, and the vicarage of Waterbeach, which together amounted to £2,100. There were two people to be kept in this case, and the old bishop, like most modern ones, was fully convinced that a solid income was more reliable than waiting on the "providence of God." It should be said that the Bishop owed his position to the patronage of the Duke of Rutland, to whom he had acted as tutor.

The Bishop of Lincoln, who changed his name from Tomlin to Prettyman, also possessed a strong feeling of family affection, since he presented his three sons with four Prebendaries, also one vicarage and seven Rectorships. But these multiple offices were very common. It depended upon what kind of friends one had in high quarters. The game continues to-day. Look at the B.B.C. and at the appointments to high ecclesiastical offices. If we were not in a state of war one might point out that a great many of our diplomatic appointments are still managed in the same way. It is a wise child who manages to get born in the right quarters. Whether he shows his wisdom by knowing his own father is a very minor consideration.

The London churches offered as great a scandal as did the provincial ones. For those who had friends in high places London was a happy hunting ground. The City churches were more richly endowed, and there was an Act of Henry VIII. which permitted two churches not more than one mile apart to be united. In an area where riches increased so rapidly, and the value of the land rose sharply, this was a great advantage to those appointed. All churches were not of equal value, but there were some beautiful plums, which grew and grew when the land belonging to the churches became of greater commercial value. The unfortunate Londoners were robbed, and are robbed, to the West by Dukes and Lords, to the East by the Churches.

\* "The Black Book," one of the principal handbooks for reformers of the day, consists of nearly 600 closely-printed pages, and contains an account of the income of the Established Church, so far as this could be obtained, the numerous clerical abuses, the income of the Crown and its disposition, the quality of the Courts of law, the public debt, abuses of the revenue, pensions and salaries in all branches of the State, and the services for which these pensions were given, "Places" and sinecures, with payments and who receives them, etc. It is a pity that something of the same kind is not attempted now. But we live in later, and in some respects, more accommodatory times.

\* I will give some illustrations of this method of dealing with the Churches and religion in one or two special articles when this series—it has already been too lengthy—is concluded.

I have space for only a few examples. The Rectory of Saint Botolph, Bishopsgate, was worth £4,000 a year. The Rectory of St. Andrew's, Holborn, £5,000. The Rectory of St. George's, £4,000. There were many others on this level. These figures are of a century ago; the values have not changed, there is only a difference in the distribution. Cobbett made a fanatical attack on the Church, but in principle his indictment was sound.

I will conclude this week with an example of the workings of the City churches by an incident of recent years. When Winnington Ingram was appointed to the bishopric of London, the "Atheneum," our then leading literary paper, remarked that his predecessor, Dr. Creighton, was a man of ability or learning, the new bishop had neither. No one who ever came into contact with the bishop will dispute the characterisation. Yet within a few years of ordination he was presented with one of the sinecures attached to St. Paul's worth £1,000 annually, and two years later with another £1,000 and a house free. It was the same Ingram who said to a Church Congress "Do not be deceived by the monstrous idea that we working parsons are rolling in riches." Well, not exactly rolling in wealth, but enough as to where a new pair of trousers is coming from.

I am not surprised that a celebrated lawyer, Lord Cairns, said of the use made of church funds, that the finances of the Church of England were "A misappropriation of trust funds, and no mistake."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued)

## ENGLISH JEW-BAITING

SOME well-meaning people in this country are apt to pride themselves on being members of a nation that does not engage in the more Continental habit of persecuting the Jewish community; they smugly pride themselves that in this country there is a harbourage for Jews, in which the Jew can share to the fullest extent the privileges of citizenship, and social and business life, enjoyed by the Christian.

Some there are, indeed, who I have heard declare that one of the objects of the present war is to prevent persecution of Jews. I have heard it said that the people of this country would not tolerate Hitler's idea of Jewish inferiority and the consequent repression and subjection of Semites that Hitler's idea necessarily imposes.

Such people need educating in the facts of the Jewish situation in England. In the light of my observations of this question during the past ten years or so, these people are hopelessly out of touch with present-day tendencies. Being neither Christian nor Jew, but a Freethinker; being neither Semitic nor English, but a British-born subject, of grand-parental Irish-Italian extraction; being engaged in business in recent years in a manner that has brought me into contact a good deal with the "business mind," I have had the advantage, in my own part of the country, of watching the development of the Jewish question from a detached standpoint.

My conclusions are rather sad ones.

That anti-Jewish feeling is on the upward trend in this country, that there exists a smouldering hatred of the Jew that only requires the slightest fanning to become a flame of practical persecution, I am compelled to recognise. That the so-called "safe harbourage" for Jews is just a misconception of well-intentioned people becomes more and more evident. The idea is growing that the Jews are really responsible for the war, in fact, and this "crime" must now be added to the list of Jewish offences. Moreover, it is an idea that is sponsored by more than the pro-Fascist elements in the country, and there appears to exist a large degree of sympathy with Hitler, in his anti-Semitic outlook, among people who otherwise ardently support the war against Germany.

"Well, at least Hitler kicked out the Jews!" is by no means an uncommon remark among our own anti-Semitic crowd.

Among my own acquaintances there are even some who call themselves Freethinkers who have been infected by the disease of anti-Semitism, and while they make pretence of defending the Jew's right to enjoy liberty of religious belief, they are as vehement as the rest when they speak of the Jew in a "racial" sense; and they display the same ignorance of the finer distinctions between racial origin and religious creed.

The reasons for this tendency may be debatable, but there can be no doubt about the facts, if one cares to inquire.

Only recently the debating society attached to my club was degraded by a low-level attack on Jews, in which they were referred to as "long-nosed devils" by a member who, in other respects, would never use a foul expression of any opponent. I took up the defence of the slandered Jew, hoping to shed a little reason in an emotional atmosphere, but the result was that the atmosphere became even more highly charged with unreasoning emotion. At the close of the debate an "impromptu" followed in which I was surrounded by good English citizens, Christians and non-Christians, urgently seeking to infect me with their anti-Jew virus. One other (an Atheist, incidentally) supported me in my hopeless minority struggle to convince the Jew-thirsty majority that the Jew was not different, religiously, from other believers, and no worse, racially, than any other ethnological variety.

To have talked about more intelligent aspects of the question in this atmosphere of crude prejudice would have been impossible, and I was driven to the conclusion that some otherwise reasonable people must suffer from a form of temporary insanity when the word Jew is mentioned—like the bull and the red rag, you know.

In business there seems to be an unwritten code that the Jew must be maligned, and I have, time and again, experienced the example of business men and travellers who have indulged in virulent attacks on the Jews. Their astonishment at finding a non-Jewish business man who does not respond sympathetically to this sort of treatment is highly amusing, and there has been more than one thoroughly discomfited traveller in my office.

To slander a competitor by attacking him on either creed or breed is probably the lowest and meanest of dirty business tricks, much more contemptible, from an ethical standpoint, than the alleged price-cutting tactics of the Jews.

I could give many examples of a factual nature concerning anti-Jewish feeling in the North, but that would be dealing only with effects, and I want to deal to some extent with the general nature of the question, as it is only by an understanding of this that we can hope to bring reason to bear on the subject.

One of the main charges against the Jew is that he is insular or clannish; that he is generous with his own kind, but mean with others; that he will play the game with his own people, but not with Christians. There may be some truth in this argument, but surely the same characteristic is prevalent in all sects. I know many Christians who are generous to their religious organisations and associates, but who would be very "mean" if help were sought from quarters with which they were not in sympathy.

The same applies to Atheists. My own connection with the Secular Society has often exercised the generous side of my nature, especially so as I am a branch treasurer. But when the Salvation Army come round with their high-sounding appeal for "Self-Denial" I am particularly "mean," as I always return the packet empty.

The quality of meanness is clearly relative. One would not expect a Christian to donate to a Jewish charity; so why blame the Jew for declining to act generously toward the Christian community? In any case, from an historical point of view, he has very little cause to feel generously disposed toward Christians.

With regard to insularity, I question whether the Jew is more insular than other religious sects. The Roman Catholics, for instance, could probably teach the Jews something in that respect. But if they are insular, surely they have been encouraged in that attitude by the unpleasant Christian habit of treating them as a sub-human variety of mankind—

a trait of Christianity noticeable in other directions, particularly among coloured peoples. If you drive a man into a certain position, is it reasonable to blame him or persecute him as though it were his own fault entirely that he should be so placed?

F. J. CORINA.

(To be concluded)

### PROPHECY

SPECULATING as to the future—telling fortunes by one means or the other—is a game that has been indulged in for very many centuries, to the profit of the fortune-teller and the pleasure or pain (according to the disposition, the hopes and fears) of those who seek to know their “luck.” “What the stars foretell” is good sales-talk for those who play upon the credulous; it provides the “consultation” with a very useful air of mystery, if not of “divinity,” and leaves the soothsayer with a good get-out if things do not turn out as he predicts. He—or she, as the case may be—can always say: “Of course, I cannot guarantee; I am only telling you what the stars (or whatever it is that is “consulted”) foretell!”—or something to that effect.

But apart from this sorry trade, it is not very difficult to speculate—to tell fortunes if the term is preferred—and prophesy, fairly accurately, what any person or any number of people will do in certain circumstances. Once a person's social standing and character are known, or can be estimated, it is generally easy to foretell—at least approximately—what he will do. . . . And to know a man well is to be surer of the forecast. . . . For instance, a child born of drunken, dissolute parents and amidst squalor and crime cannot reasonably be expected to do other than follow in his father's footsteps, as it were. We know in advance what the child is almost sure to do, because he can hardly do otherwise with such a handicap. It is nearly a “dead cert,” because there is the backward pull all the time. We know, too, that if a child is born and brought up in congenial surroundings, and has the loving care and attention of a devoted father and mother he will, in all probability, profit by his birth and upbringing and turn out a worthy citizen. There is the “probability” in both cases, and so far the speculation is easy. But it is with the grown-ups and the mass that we are here more concerned.

Generally speaking, a man will follow his inclinations, whatever they are, and in spite of any copybook maxims which he may be fond of quoting. For example, if it is known what sort of life “A” leads, both privately and publicly, what are his hobbies, political and religious creeds, and so on, what he will do if and when he gets a chance is a safe bet. As likely as not he will do that which he thinks will pay him best, which will bring him more and more into the limelight and increase his bank balance. And if he is possessed of an accommodating conscience, and a readily adjustable system of morals, he will seek to justify himself at every turn. To him expediency is every thing. . . . “B,” being less ambitious or less venturesome will not get quite so far; while “C,” having plenty of desire but no initiative, stays “put.” “D,” we will say, is just a good sort, and is quite content to jog along merrily, doing his best meanwhile. Whether we belong to A. B. C. D or any other class, is for each of us to decide for ourselves. But to whichever class we belong, the majority of us are subject to the moods of the moment. If, so to speak, the prevailing economic wind is from the east, and bitterly cold, we turn up our collars and hunch our shoulders. Ugh! If it is from the south, warm and balmy, we throw off our coats and exclaim, “Phew!”

And as with the individual, so with the crowd: it will sway this way or that way, according to the atmospheric conditions—according, that is to say, to whoever is pulling the economic or political strings. A man will get into power, and if it suits his party to acclaim him, he will, by their account and for the time being, be possessed of all the virtues imaginable. In their opinion there never was such a man, he is a real “find,” and so on, and the crowd will yell with delight. But let him not play the party game as they know it, or side-step a bit, and he will soon fall from grace and be booted! Such is “public opinion.”

It did not require any special gift of insight to know that the pact which Hitler made with Molotov some time ago was not worth the paper it was written on; nor did it require any gift of prophecy to forecast that as soon as it

sued Hitler's convenience to do so he would treat the pact with contempt and regard it as another “scrap of paper.” Knowing Hitler as we do, we knew that is just what he would do—sooner or later. What he did, what he always does, is perfectly natural to the man—or the vile thing that he is, rather. He did that which, by the very nature of things—his birth and upbringing, and the use which had been made of him in certain quarters—he was simply bound to do. So potent were the forces behind and around him that he could scarcely help himself. And those who treated with him must have—or should have—known this quite well, although it may have suited their purpose to ignore the facts of life.

Nor did one need to be omniscient to forecast that as soon as Hitler attacked Russia and she became our “ally,” those very people who had hitherto spoken scathingly of Russia and everything Russian would immediately change their tune and sing the “Internationale.” The crowd always acts in that way, and that, of course, throws a great responsibility upon those who help to form “public opinion.”

We are, in truth, a wayward, emotional and, often enough, easily gullible crowd—each from his particular mould, with his pettifogging likes and dislikes, his hopes and aspirations—and we turn this way or that, as persuaded, or as our fancy dictates. And the onlooker, if he knows much about us, either individually or collectively, can prophesy to a nicety what we will do if and when the opportunity arises. . . .

GEO. B. LISSENDEN.

### ESOTERIC PRIESTCRAFT FOR YOUNG PRIESTS

WHEN our predecessors took over the Christianity business they found it strongly anti-pagan. It had descended from Judaism (worse luck), which was strongly anti-pagan because it taught only One God, and had no idols and was fanatically anti-goddess worship; though it had the pagan features of a professional priesthood and animal sacrifices. The Jesus cult had no professional priesthood and no sacrifices, and so was almost as far from paganism as it could be. To put it professionally, the Christianity business had the very small stock-in-trade of One God and a quasi-divine man (deceased). Although the business had done fairly well up to a point, it was evident that it could only go further with a larger stock-in-trade, or, if you like, a better-filled shop window. The prospective clients for any enlarged business were pagans. Paganism was in their blood. Whatever else was in their religion they must have plenty of show and ritual and materialistic aids. Our Christian predecessors had made a great point about morality and self-discipline and other irksome things which only catered for a minority. Whilst still catering for the minority which made a fetish of discomfort, our predecessors saw that a really large clientele could only be gathered together by purveying a religion more in conformity with the ideas of the great majority; of pandering to the majority, in fact. (Between ourselves, there is no need to mince words.) Through Judaism and Jesusism we were committed to anti-pagan terminology—and are yet. The firm when new was in competition with powerful pagan firms, such as Ephesian Dianners Limited, Egyptian Monstrosities Unlimited, Greek Many Godders Unlimited, etc., and we had to run them down as much as possible. We had to talk anti-pagan whilst we were filching the stock-in-trade of the pagan firms, and we have still to talk anti-pagan and call all the rest of the world “pagan.” It is only one of the numberless cases where we get away with a thing by vehemently denying we have it. You will find it a very useful dodge. In order to camouflage an inconvenient truth, shout the very opposite. . . . The characteristic features of paganism were ornate temples, gods, goddesses and godlings, with idols representing the same and purveyed for mutts to pray to, altars, priests, sacrifices, incense. Who, *alone* among white people have these things? Us. Our business outfit is now 99 per cent. pagan, but we shout that it is other people who are pagan, even when they have not a single one of the items just mentioned! Yes, it is humorous, even if it is hypocritical lying. But then, it is part of the game, and therefore profitable. As confidence tricksters we (you) cannot afford to be squeamish.

Actually, the old firm (Christianity) had got on to the slippery slope of paganism when it *deified* Jesus. Jesus may have claimed to have been a son of God, but this was implicit in his calling the supreme God Our Father—which means, if it means anything, that all men are God's children, and therefore men will be God's sons and women God's daughters. (It is rather strange, though, that there is a hesitancy about calling people God's sons or daughters; the vaguer description of God's "children" is more usual.) However, the seemingly inevitable trend towards the marvellous promoted Jesus from "a" son of God to "the" son of God, and from that to the more definite "Only Son of God." Of course, if he was the Only Son, then the rest of men were *not* his sons. But a thing like this does not trouble the ordinary illogical believer. He feels flattered by being described as a son of God. He likes to boost his divine man Jesus by calling him God's Only Son—and when he "likes," then logic and consistency and common sense can go hang. Herein also is a mutt's foible which we turn to our advantage. Pamper their crude sentiment, and logic and criticism will not touch them. If Jesus was specially God's Own and Only Son, he was by descent divine and, therefore, a God himself. But the pagan mind seems to like Gods to go in threes. This was so in ancient times (Egypt, etc.), and still is—e.g., in Hindu paganism. There were favourite combinations of two, but practically always such pairs were a goddess with her infant son (who was also a god). But Christianity, with its fanatical hatred of goddesses (a heritage from Judaism), would not have tolerated a goddess as an addition to the Father and Son gods. The time was not ripe for introducing the Virgin Mary. So some vague references of Jesus to a Spirit that should take his place when he had gone to heaven were utilised with to provide a third person in order to form a trinity. We had to make this Holy Spirit masculine. We had, however, made him a rather nebulous personage. We have not purveyed him much as a subject for our clients to worship, nor have we had him working miracles. We have left him more or less comparable to the "spirit" of truth, the spirit of a nation, etc. He has come in most useful as our familiar spirit who has "guided" us in our work. It sounds well to say we have the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and especially it has worked the oracle for us in our progress paganward. As confidence tricksters we are guided by the spirits of lying and hypocrisy, but we have to work the oracle with high-sounding words that mean the direct opposite of what we are getting at. You will find that patter containing many references to the Holy Spirit that guides us in our business very useful in imposing on our simple mugs and mutts. Of course, you must not refer to "our business," but to "God's Holy Church." Use the word "holy" with great frequency. It goes down very unctuously and camouflages a great deal of its opposite.

The doctrine of the "Holy Trinity" is clotted nonsense, but from our point of view is none the worse for that. Our clients are the kind of people that like that sort of thing. If clotted nonsense is true, how magical, marvellous and miraculous it must be *in order to be true*—that is their attitude. It is part of our, i.e. your trade to make them and keep them so simple and confiding that they will believe such stuff. Tell them that One god is Three, yet the Three are One. One of the Three is the Father and one of the others, yet the Son is as old as the Father and entirely his equal. This is wonderful and marvellous. If you meet any stirrings of doubt, you may take the line of saying that it is beyond even your comprehension, but this is where God's great gift of faith comes in. God knows all about it and revealed it to his Holy Church by His Holy Spirit, so it must be all right. Now we see as in a glass darkly, but soon it will be made clear to us, and the good, humble child of God does not question, but, in the assurance of faith, waits for God's good time to make all things plain . . . and so on and so forth, etc., etc. It is all beautifully easy—with well-trained mutts.

Ultimately the firm managed to introduce a goddess and goddess worship. We did it by a barefaced robbery of the Egyptian goddess Isis, who was a very popular figure in Egypt and nearly always represented by statues of her along with her infant son Horus.

In order to promote Mary we had to start a cult of her. There was opposition from the old fogey diehards, but the idea was so confluent with those of our ignorant big bat-

talions that the cult spread. The matter of introducing ideas was somewhat harder. The diehards here made a tremendous struggle; it lasted 200 years. But the believers in the big battalions won. In this connection we may mention an important point. The panders to the big battalions could count on the B.B.s to riot for them. The refined people do not like either to turn out as rioters or to be inconvenienced by rioters. The *force majeure* of the big battalions is a very handy weapon to use. Before we (you) use it, say beforehand how sorry you are that unless the provocation of the other side ceases you will be helpless to restrain your followers, and the other side must take the blame if trouble arises. This is a very useful wheeze.

The local godlings of paganism were easily replaced by "saints." The firm found that progress in proselytism and conversions, and even total annexation of pagan temples, complete with adherents, was facilitated by taking them over complete and renaming the items of the outfit. This, of course, was when we had got to a commanding position in regard to the other pagan firms, and when we had items in our stock-in-trade that corresponded to practically everything in the pagan firm's outfit. We had adopted "sacrifice" and had altars, so with a preliminary and elaborate "purification" we could commence business straight away on an annexed pagan temple. Although our sacrificing was bloodless, we adopted the pagan incense. Our vestments were mainly taken from the old pagan religion of Rome, so in most cases there was no great change in appearance as between the old priests and us. We adopted the tonsure from Egyptian priests. Local legends of the local godlings were taken over with a minimum of adaptation and applied to the local "saint" which we installed. Local feasts in connection with the local paganism were kept up on the same dates with slight changes of name. We adopted the pagan "holy water." In short, we made a combine with paganism. We ameliorated the irksome puritanism of Christianity, and either dropped or camouflaged awkward doctrines. We also introduced novelties of our own, especially the very profitable ones of purgatory and confession. In short, we claim that we have now made this firm, the inner circle of which you are now members, exactly what Macaulay described it as: "Among the contrivances which have been devised for deceiving and controlling mankind, it occupies the highest place." Of course, this is strictly between *ourselves*. In public, you describe the firm in terms the very opposite, namely, as God's Own Holy Church, the source of salvation, the sole authority on morals, the sinless exemplar for mankind, the perfect and complete state, the bride of the Lamb, the ark of refuge for poor humanity, etc., etc., etc. Always keep the patter going.

C. R. BOYD FREEMAN.

## ACID DROPS

THE "Daily Sketch" is boosting the cry for more religion. It also publishes a lot of letters endorsing a leading article which appeared in that paper and to the end named. But, curiously enough, there is not a single letter on the other side. Now, that is very, very clumsy on the part of the editor. We have said often that we have no very strong objection to lies, whether the lies are assumed, boldly stated or artfully suggested. But lying is a very old pastime, and in its day has attracted some of the greatest of writers. Therefore, editors should bear in mind the fact that the moment they step outside of simple, plain uninteresting truth they are inviting contrast with some really great men and women, and if one cannot move with dignity and merit in such circles, one should remain content with ordinary newspaper commonplaces.

For example: If we were running a "Faith is our Weapon" feature of the kind such as that published by the "Daily Sketch," we would include samples of letters from the other side, even though we had to order someone in the office to write them. For everyone knows there are vast numbers who do not believe in the "Daily Sketch" slogan, "Faith is our weapon." Who does believe it? The Prime Minister doesn't believe it. Parliament doesn't believe it. The Press doesn't believe it. The general public doesn't believe it. Even the "Daily Sketch" doesn't believe it. The clergy themselves agree that if a complete representation of public opinion were given, many unbelieving voices would be heard. And perhaps the cruellest cut of all is there

in a letter which takes first place in the issue for October 30, which, while praising the article, says it might have appeared in "any religious paper issued in this country." We agree thoroughly, but why print it? The editor is heaping coals of fire on his own head.

The Roman Catholic papers are still busy emphasising the fact that freedom of thought and speech in Russia, with regard to religion, is not what it ought to be. We agree. But then freedom of thought and speech is not quite what it ought to be in this liberty-loving country of ours. There are privileges given to religious folk that are not given to others, and there are laws restricting freedom for the purpose of helping religion. And in Spain and Southern Ireland, where the Catholic clergy are very strong, there are very marked restrictions where religion is concerned.

But all this talk about restrictions in Russia is beside the issue. Russia deserves the applause of the world, not because everything is ideal there, not because there is even as much all-round freedom there as there is here, but because in the course of a single generation Russian leaders have taken a mass of over 150,000,000 people, who were living under the very worst form of government that could exist—bar contemporary Nazism—a people 85 per cent. illiterate, with self-respect and human dignity at its very lowest point, with freedom almost non-existent, and for the first time in its history has given to the Russian people a sense of brotherhood such as they have never before possessed. It is the positive results of the Russian revolution that we must consider, not all that yet remains to be done. We have much to learn from Russia, even though we may see things to avoid. Our real testing time will come *after* the war. If at the end of twenty years we can claim as great an advance as Russia has made it will be well. We shall see.

Representatives of the various divisions in Christianity, led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, have served notice on God Almighty that from Sunday, January 4, 1942, there will be a universal week of prayer. In the notice issued we find no account of what it is to be about, but we expect it to be something to do with the war, also with an appeal that he will help one body of his children to kill another bloc of his offspring. We agree that from this point of view of one lot of his children killing another lot, the Archbishop and the motley gang that will head the prayers will be able to announce, say in March, that their prayers have been answered.

We offer the following contribution towards this week of prayer. We have suggested it before, but make another appeal for its acceptance. It could be delivered on the last day of the week of prayer:—

Oh God, for six days we have been asking thee to give help to thy children who have stood up for you so steadfastly. Against the assaults of the ungodly on thy character and control we have stood up valiantly. We have said that you could if you would end the war by giving us victory in so signal a manner that no one could question your handiwork. And surely if there was ever a case for thee to act as thou didst in the days of Joshua it is now.

We, the officially faithful of thy followers, do what we can to keep thy name and thy worship in the foreground. But we are sorely tried. Our Prime Minister constantly insists that the war will be won, not by praying, but by working, not by thy power conspicuously displayed, but by building more aeroplanes, more ships, making more guns than the enemy. Our Minister of Supply tours the country telling working men that the war will be won by them—and pass you by unnoticed. Inevitably, if unconsciously, multitudes begin to act as though thy power and thy action do not matter.

Therefore, O Lord, with all humility, we advise thee that if no direct and unmistakable instance of your intervention takes place within fourteen days from the close of this week of prayer, we will advise the people of this country that your temples shall be closed, prayers to you suspended, offertories refused and all praise to thee suspended.

The latest piece of humbug staged by the B.B.C. is a series "Ask the Padre," in which absurd questions are put by absurd soldiers (?) to an absurd army chaplain. We use the phrase, absurd soldiers, with all reservation because knowing the tactics of the B.B.C. the questioner who reads

the prepared questions to the chaplain may just as likely be one of the staff. Otherwise it would be impossible to find soldiers asking empty questions and expressing satisfaction with the prepared answers. Our own accounts of the questions that are put to chaplains, and the evasive nature of the answers, tell of a different tale. After all, this army is made up of ordinary citizens, and the ordinary citizen is not quite such a numbskull as the B.B.C. presents him. We agree in shedding superstitions; one we have got to get rid of is that the private soldier is naturally of lower mental grade than officers.

Here is one of the questions we caught recently. The question of why the soldiers should go to church services was raised, and the answer given was that men should not stay away merely because they did not like to attend. As children, the Chaplain explained, are made to do things which they may dislike, but which it is to their benefit to do, so we should do things, which at first we do not care to do, to please God and to carry out his wishes. Then we shall gradually come to like the church service, and feel its need.

We like that way of putting it. "As children." We agree. If soldiers can be induced to behave as a not over smart child, they will come to like religion. That is really the way in which the taste for drink, or bad language, or betting is developed. But suppose the soldier objects to being treated as a child, and also to be marched to church to listen to a preacher who is not worth hearing, what then? That is a situation the selected "padre" does not consider. But surely all army chaplains are not so foolish as the one selected by the B.B.C.? And we are quite certain that there are hundreds of thousands of soldiers who are not so easily gulled as those in the broadcast.

Captain James Cameron informs the readers of the "Yorkshire Post" that in Scotland the clergy of the Established Church are encouraged to become combatant officers, and many respond. He sees no reason whatever why the same rule does not hold in England. We suspect the reason is that England is a country in which privilege runs riot, and where "A man's a man for a' that" does not hold as much as it does in Scotland. We still, through our Press and in general conversation, marvel at a man who was "only a working man," and who rises to a position of eminence. Of course, the intellectual capacity of the working man is as good as that of any other class. But education, home life and social status make a *devil* of a difference.

The Bishop of Woolwich, for a Bishop, is a very modest man! He not only wants in the schools a staff of "competent religious teachers"—that is, teachers who are believers in the literality of Bible mythology—but looks forward to a time when religious lessons may be given any time during school hours, when inspectors—paid by the State—shall see that the religion taught is of the right kind, and to have religious services at any time of the day. This, the Bishop hastens to add, is not a complete statement of what he and the other "kid-snatchers" wants, he says it is "a beginning." We should like to see his complete programme.

Mr. Percival Sharp says in "Education" that what is wanted in the schools is the co-operation of teachers, churchmen and the authorities. That is not the case. What is needed in the schools is, of course, the co-operation of teachers and the authorities, for both of them are, or should be, interested in giving a child the best possible education. But why the Churches? Where do they come in as a necessary factor in the training of a child? The teacher aims, or should aim, at turning out children who are self-dependent and independent, armed with as much understanding and appreciation of life as is possible. But the aim of the Church is to see children turned out from school with no real understanding of the world in which they must live and work, to have no strong sense of self-dependence, and parade their weakness instead of developing their own strength and independence.

#### TAKE YOUR CHOICE

I prefer Miranda to Caliban, but have not the slightest idea that either of them ever existed. So I prefer Jupiter to Jehovah, although perfectly satisfied that both are myths.—INGERSOLL.

## "THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,  
Telephone No.: Holborn 2601. London, E.C.4.

### TO CORRESPONDENTS

D. LE ROY.—Thanks for verses, which shall appear. We do not agree that the belief in immortality was born of a desire to perpetuate oneself in the memory of mankind. That is a late "rationalising" of an existing belief which owes its origin to other circumstances.

W. A. HOOLE.—Thanks for addresses of members of the forces. Copies of the paper shall be sent.

J. HUMPHREY.—Thanks for all you are doing; paper being sent to likely new reader for four weeks.

WAR DAMAGE FUND.—A. George, £10.

*Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.*

*When the services of the National Secular Society in connection 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, Furnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.*

### SUGAR PLUMS

WE are very glad to see the increasing number of protests against the clerical conspiracy, backed up by certain members of the public, to hand the schools over to the control of the churches. If this plot is successful it will prevent any real advance in education, and at a time when it is more than ever necessary for our education to be far better than it is. There is no case in modern history where clerical control of the schools has not been subversive of real education. Kingdon Clifford was right when he said that the lesson of history was that if we wished our children to grow with strong character and developed intelligence, "Keep them away from the priest."

It is idle and stupid for anyone to think that when this war is over and the attempt to build a better Britain is made, the vested interests in this country—clerical and other—will not fight hard to retain their old positions. Many of the people who were, so far as individuals can be made responsible, largely responsible for the sinister activities of the Baldwin and Chamberlain governments, are still with us and in positions to sabotage genuine reforms. We cried "never again" while the last war was on, we are crying "never again" during this war, but for that "never again" to be translated into action will mean a struggle not less fierce than the one through which we are now passing, and there will be needed a display of a higher kind of courage than is found even on the battlefield.

Consider the case of Colonel Bingham. He was removed from his post because of the anger felt among the people after his declaration that the higher posts in the army should be held by the products of the public schools because a large proportion of others fell down on their jobs. We think there was considerable truth in the statement. Colonel Bingham suffered for telling a rather disgraceful truth at an inconvenient moment.

The products of public schools are not, on the whole, better men with better brains than the products of Council schools; but their training is of a different character. They are told in set words that they are the future rulers of the nation. And, indeed, there is nothing wrong in telling them that when they go into the world the direction of this country for good or ill will rest in their hands. That is not a bad teaching. It is a very good one. To quote the celebrated Captain Cuttle, the wisdom of it lies in the application thereof.

For the teaching is one that should be driven home in all the schools. Every school in the country, public or Council, should impress upon pupils that any of them may be called upon to hold the highest positions in the country if they prove themselves worthy of it; and that sense of possibility of responsibility should be encouraged and

developed with all. Every pupil in every school should receive that lesson in citizenship and its responsibilities. When this is the case we may lay legitimate claim to be called a democracy.

Colonel Bingham spoke a greater wisdom than he knew. He was impeaching our educational system without knowing it. If people are to have real social freedom it must be based on a sense of human equality. We do not mean by that anything so foolish as that all men are equal in intelligence, capacity or courage. They are not. But there should be no fences between the primary school and the university. The highest education should be at the service of all. It is this issue that is really before us in the attempt of the Churches to control the schools. The "black army" is the advance guard of unwarranted privilege and sectional divisions.

Following a report in the "Yorkshire Post and Leeds Mercury" for November 4, we notice a remark made by Judge Stewart, as a member of a tribunal for hearing cases of Conscientious Objectors. The man concerned was a member of the Peace Pledge Union. We have nothing whatever to do with the Union, we do not say whether it should be permitted to exist or not. But it is not suppressed and therefore cannot be called an illegal body. But justice should rise above personal opinions, and what we are concerned with is the following remark by Judge Stewart: "You recognise that the Peace Pledge Union welcomes anyone—Atheists, Agnostics—with open arms?" The appeal was refused.

Now what we should like to know is what Atheism or Agnosticism has to do with the issue? The Judge seems to believe that it is the crowning crime of the Peace Pledge Union, and an important element in deciding whether a "Conscientious objection"—permitted by the government as a reason for refusing military service—existed in the case before him. The implication is that had the man been a member of a church he would have met with more sympathetic treatment. The Judge should know that Atheists and Agnostics are playing their part in this war, and so far as numbers go, more than their numerical share. Judges above all should be careful to avoid comments that are uncalled for, and by implication belongs to a chapel rather than to a court of law.

In an article in the "Daily Mail" for November 2 Lord Elton says that

Six months after the outbreak of war an enquiry into the state of religion in the armed forces—based on letters and memoranda from more than one hundred chaplains, officers and men—showed that nobody put the proportion of practising Christians at more than 10 per cent. of the whole.

We are not surprised at these figures, and they give—even though the proportion was doubled or trebled—an idea of the impudence of our religious leaders in attempting to rule the roost, and also of the pressure brought to bear on men who join the forces to confess adherence to some Church.

Lord Elton himself is an avowed Christian, so he considers that the facts as stated by him justifies the call for more religion in the schools, and a general boosting of religion. Those who have listened to Lord Elton's amiable futilities will not be surprised.

The following, from the "Church Times" of October 17th (the "Church Times" represents the Anglo-Catholic section of the Church here), is worth bearing in mind:—

"Let it be frankly faced that many people, both here and in the United States, are uncomfortable at the thought that in what they are assured is a struggle to preserve Christian values, Christian teaching, and the Christian way of life, England's foremost Ally should be an Atheist State."

But it is sheer dishonesty to claim that this war is for the maintenance of Christian values. Of course, the right to advocate Christian values must follow the destruction of Nazism, but only in the sense that this war is, or should be, a fight for liberty to advocate anything. But there is no more justification to represent the war as aiming only at giving the right of freedom of thought and speech to Christians than it is to maintain liberty for Atheists. The world is not at war to preserve Christianity, but to preserve freedom in all directions. If it is not for that, then the war is not worth the fighting.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is more artful, and for the present is ready to regard the Soviet Russia that was pictured by English Christian leaders as "bygone history." With an eye on the future, the "Church Times" says: "It would be interesting to know upon what evidence his Grace is relying." We would not put it that way, we would instead ask the Archbishop if he really thinks that the religious campaign of lies about Russia is no longer useful? It certainly is not for the moment, but there is the future, and so progressive a country as Russia has shown itself to be—with all its faults—must always be a standing threat to every country in which Christianity has a very privileged position.

The lying about Russia—the deliberate slaughter of children, community of women, torture of priests, the terror under which every Russian lived and the hatred of the régime felt by the people, etc., etc. had a very long run, and such things do not die easily. One day we may write a very brief sketch of this period. Details ought to be placed on record. An understanding of history is very necessary, and events are history in the making. History is still being written with a strong bias in favour of the Christian Churches. The most that is done by the most "advanced" of the writers among us is to remain silent concerning the real influence of religion on social life. We need a school of historians that would set down a perfectly objective statement of the facts.

### HYMNS WHICH HUMILIATE

"Talk about it as we like, a man's breeding shows itself nowhere more than in his religion."—O. W. HOLMES.

"Hebrew mythology contains things which are both insulting and injurious."—J. A. FROUDE.

"The vain crowds, wandering blindly, led by lies."—LUCRETIUS.

A DISTINGUISHED metaphysician has told us that literature is but a puny branch of social life, that he is greatest among authors who appeals to the widest circle of readers. If this were true, then would the writer of "Old Moore's Almanac" be the greatest living prose author, and the hymn-writers the princes of poets. Is there a church or chapel where their effusions are not sung? Is there a tin tabernacle or mission-tent from John o' Groats to Land's End but derives spiritual sustenance from the lilt of the hymns? We trow not! Recognising that all who run can read, more or less, the Christian Churches have circulated a poetic literature, and provided nothing to read which is beyond the understanding of the stupidest of their congregations. We raise our hats to the priests as astute men of business; but our admiration is diluted by the thought that, after all, they have "collared" their docile congregations because these have never been able to rise above their low level of intelligence. Clerical culture is largely taken for granted, whereas it is but the patter of a sorry profession. The truth is that the people in the pews are often better informed than the men in the pulpits. "Punch," which is sometimes humorous, hit this off in a picture some years ago which depicted a clergyman groveling on his knees before a sceptical member of his flock, saying: "Pray, pray, don't mention the name of another foreign author, or I shall have to resign my living."

It is very doubtful if the average hymn of to-day has any more claim to be considered as real literature than the usual music-hall song, about which the clergy are so indignant. This may well appear a grave indictment, but the hymns which are regarded as being eminently suited for public worship are far too frequently barbarian in ideas, unrythmical and nonsensical. Under the soporific influence of religion, the public has been far too ready to accept bunkum, bombast and bleat as the fine gold of poetry, and has hailed hysteria as the quintessence of reverence and religion.

The hymns used by Churchmen and Nonconformists alike are not really much better than those painfully familiar and disgraceful compositions which are used by Salvationists, Revivalists and other howling Dervishes of our streets and open spaces. The charge of sentimentalism is not the only one that can be brought. Some hymns are actually brutal in tone and language, written in the worst possible taste, and are full of sanguinary details and a glowing satisfaction

which is repulsive. Here are some samples, more suggestive of a Cannibal Creed than a religion of "Love":—

"There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Emanuel's veins."

"Come, let us stand beneath Thy cross;  
So may the blood from out His side  
Fall gently on us drop by drop;  
Jesus, our Lord is crucified."

"Here I rest for ever viewing  
Mercy poured in streams of blood."

"By the red wounds streaming  
With thy life-blood gleaming."

"Lift up Thy bleeding hand, O Lord,  
Unseal that cleansing tide."

"O those limbs, how gaunt their leanness,  
Tortured, torn from our uncleanness,  
On these stiff branches weltering."

If we turn to the purely literary aspect of these hymns, we find some of them bad enough to break a critic's heart. For sheer, downright bathos this triplet is worth noting:—

"Upon the Crucified One look  
And thou shalt read, as in a book,  
What well is worth thy learning."

The solitary attempt at rhyme in the following is sufficient to disqualify an amateur in a limerick competition:—

"Mercy, good Lord, mercy I ask,  
This is the total sum;  
For mercy, Lord, is all my suit,  
Then let Thy mercy come."

The author's reason must have been tottering on its throne when he penned this pious outburst:—

"Faithful Cross, above all other  
One and only Noble Tree,  
None in foliage, none in blossom,  
None in fruit thy peer may be;  
Sweetest wood and sweetest iron,  
Sweetest weight is hung on Thee."

But the most nonsensical couplet of all occurs in the following:—

"May all these our spirits sate,  
And with love inebriate."

"These," as a reference to the preceding lines in the masterpiece shows, refers to nails, wounds, vinegar, thorns and other "properties" associated with the legend of the crucifixion. Toplady's "Rock of Ages" is a perfect medley of irrational images and misapplied metaphors. "Cleft rock," "riven side," "to Thy cross I cling," and "to the fountain fly," are examples. The confused imagery drowns the sense in the veriest verbiage.

Another popular favourite, "Hark! Hark! my Soul," has upset even the Christians. Archbishop Alexander, who knew something of literature, once said of this gem that "it combines every conceivable violation of every conceivable rule with every conceivable beauty." "Onward Christian Soldiers!" which is more popular than "Ol' Man River," is by no means above criticism. The last line of the chorus is not only commonplace in expression, but atrocious in rhyme.

Christians are always boasting of the spiritual uplift of their religion. There is a frankness of "materialism" in some of these alleged "spiritual" hymns which is sufficient to make a bronze statue burst into smiles, and a civilised man burst with indignation:—

"Lord, I believe, Thou hast prepared,  
Unworthy though I be,  
For me a blood-bought free reward,  
A golden harp for me."

And again:—

"Oh! for the pearly gates of heaven,  
Oh! for the golden floor."

Plummet cannot sound the depths of feeble-mindedness revealed in some of these effusions. They recall Nietzsche's sneer that Christianity is a religion for slaves, so apparent throughout is the inferiority complex in these compositions. The bewildered outsider feels that he has glanced at a portrait album of a lunatic asylum, so painful and so obvious is the comparison.



These quotations, be it remembered, are from the most distinguished Christian collections, and they are by no means the worst of their class. If any reader wishes his raven hair turned white, and curled afterwards, let him turn to the pages of the "War Cry," where he will find the work of bold versifiers, weak in their mother-tongue, and yet unafrighted by the awful spectacle of their first "General" arrayed in the unaccustomed robes of Oxford University, and looking more of a charlatan than usual.

As miracles do not happen, a literary standard in hymns is a counsel of perfection. The Churches are losing their hold on the nation. Even the State Church is notoriously weak among the upper and working-classes, and especially among men. Hence we are not surprised at the inclusion of some appeals to the British working-man in the Church of England hymn book. Listen to the dulcet tone of the priestly syren:—

"Sons of Labour think of Jesus  
As you rest your homes within,  
Think of that sweet Babe of Mary  
In the stable of the inn.  
Think how in the sacred story  
Jesus took a humble grade  
And the Lord of Life and Glory  
Worked with Joseph at his trade."

The popularity of certain hymns is due to the music.

"As long as the tune has a right good swing  
It doesn't much matter what trash you sing."

And Lewis Carroll's advice to speakers, "Take care of the sense, and the sounds will take care of themselves," is commonly inverted when applied to hymn-writing. Such hymns as have a slight claim to some literary merit are little esteemed by the public compared with "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," "The Glory Song," "Tell Mother I'll be There," and other pieces of divine doggerel.

To an outsider, hymns would suggest restraint, sobriety, the dignity of reverence; but the McPherson Mission, like the Torrey and Alexander crusade, and the Billy Sunday revivals, amply prove the association of Christianity with hysteria and theatricality. What is worse, these gospel shopkeepers gauge their public to a nicety. Their audiences are, perhaps, better dressed and better schooled than those who listen to the trombones and tambourines of the Church and Salvation Armies, yet they sing hymns embodying rank and fulsome barbarism. Christian congregations seem unable to understand the true meaning of words, to distinguish between poetry and piffle, pathos and bathos. Singing their delirious rhymes, they are intellectually on a level with barbarians. Savages do this one way, and the country-men of Gipsy Smith and the Bishop of London another, but the nature of the act, and the result, are much the same.

MIMNERMUS.

(Reprinted)

## CONVERSIONS

### I.

ESAU MOORE was an affable youth, easily persuaded to courses of action not of his own choosing. He liked the company of grown men, even middle-aged and elderly, and was often led by them, though never astray, but to scenes and incidents of adult life which were new to him, but not always so thrilling as he expected.

Thus, at the age of 16 years, Esau was asked to go to Miss Fidey's Bible Class, the inviter adding, "You're old enough to, now. Old enough to begin thinking about serious things."

The youth agreed, and went on the following Sunday afternoon.

Miss Fidey had a local reputation for piety, charity and good works. In pursuance of these she kept a large room in a block of offices at the middle of the town.

Esau Moore found this room heavily carpeted and curtained, furnished mainly with chairs, fairly comfortable. About 20 men sat there, presided over by a white-haired lady, retaining much gentle vigour and good looks.

Proceedings were decorous in the extreme, soft-voiced and refined. Combined recital of the Lord's Prayer was

followed by reading from the Bible and discussion, all in a spirit of anxiety for the safety of men's souls, coupled with desire for them to live moral, patient lives, exemplars of Christian fortitude, forbearance and faith.

At the end, by request of Miss Fidey, an old member prayed aloud, extempore and at great length, reiterating much which had been said during the past hour, and calling God's attention to its importance.

Of details, Esau Moore could remember little, so walked home in silence while his companions talked for a brief while of the religious uplift they had experienced, soon changing with relief and gusto to personal gossip about absent Bible Classers.

The youth's main impressions, not yet formulable in words, were of dullness, futility, utter remoteness of the afternoon's performance from the realities of life. He never went to Miss Fidey's Bible Class again.

### II.

As a change he accompanied his father to the Men's Own Brotherhood, held at a large local chapel.

The Mob it was called by the irreverent, and The Brotherhood by an earnest but ignorant devotee.

The chapel was crowded with men. Loud and hearty singing of Fellowship hymns such as "Fight the Good Fight" and "Courage, brother, do not tremble," and "These things shall be; a loftier race," and "Our fathers built the city," was followed by an address.

This was from a Town Councillor. He dealt with the whole duty of man. The good son and brother would lead to the good husband and father. He would perforce be a good citizen and subject of his King. Transcending all and perfecting it, he would be a good servant of God and a good Christian.

More hearty hymns and perfervid prayers concluded proceedings. On the way out was much handshaking and loud greetings of Brother Who and Brother Which.

All too smug and smarmy, superficial; unreal, Esau Moore found it, so made no further attendance at the Brotherhood.

### III.

Gruffydd came from South Wales, and was unusually enthusiastic for the institutions of the country he left and would not return to.

So when a revival meeting was announced to be held in the town he persuaded Esau Moore to go with him.

In the Public Hall a dense throng gathered. From the beginning a tenseness was palpable in the air, expectancy, heightened by reports of what had happened in other towns.

The opening was commonplace enough. Three theological students were on the platform. One prayed aloud for spiritual guidance. Another gave a short address recommending his hearers to surrender themselves to the will of God.

He had not finished when events started. A woman stood up and prayed rapidly, her voice rising louder and faster to an hysterical pitch. From the far side of the hall a man testified to the change Christ had wrought in his life. Another called vehemently for the same to come to himself. Soon he was shouting, so were several more people.

Others were rocking themselves to and fro, sobbing, moaning or praying incoherently. All around rose ejaculations of "Alleluia!" "Jesus!" "Thank God!" with mutterings and fragments of prayers and Bible texts.

From Esau Moore's side Gruffydd jumped on to a chair and began to sing in a high tenor a long Welsh hymn to an intricate tune.

Deafened and disgusted by the increasing pandemonium, Esau Moore withdrew.

At their next meeting Gruffydd asked aggrieved, "Why did you leave so early, mun?"

"I feared a riot."

"Dear God!" exclaimed Gruffydd ecstatically. "There was a great outpouring of Holy Ghost."

"Was that it?" queried Esau Moore mordantly. "It sounded to me like a Zoo—with the howling monkeys in full cry."

The friendship ended after that.

## IV.

Working and therefore resident in a small Welsh town, Esau Moore found unoccupied time hanging heavily on Sundays, Sabbatarianism still being in power. He could not spend all his time in bed, reading, or walking about, especially on wet Sundays. So he went to places of worship merely as pastime, largely bored by the services and sermons.

He made a few acquaintances and was invited to attend Sunday afternoon school, it being explained to him that adult scholars were nearly as many as juvenile ones.

Out of curiosity for the social side, and to kill time, Esau Moore attended. With several more like-minded young men he proceeded to extract amusement out of it.

The regular minister was an old hand at religious controversy. He knew how easy it was to ask difficult questions, especially in theology. He claimed the right not to reply at all, or to give a negative or brief response, and not to answer interrogations on a question, regardless of how such an attitude reflected on his knowledge or authority.

Young visiting ministers, particularly students fresh from college, were too innocent or timorous to take up that cavalier and safe position. With them great fun could be had by the group of sceptics with whom Esau Moore associated.

The culmination was a Sunday afternoon lesson on the Seventeenth Chapter of Acts, wherein Paul is represented as finding at Athens an altar inscribed "To the Unknown God."

Obviously the callow visiting minister intended to emphasise the orthodox commentary that Paul had full knowledge of God and could tell the Athenians all about him.

The doubting members determined he should not. By questions and subtle suggestions they led discussion along to arrive at the conclusion that the Unknown God was unknowable, therefore non-existent, so must be ignored in human calculations.

Indignant, the young minister told the old one that he had not reckoned on coming to a den of Atheists, whereat the elder man laughed.

Eventually the explosion came. Weekly an advanced class met for study of Christian foundations. With a rugged, blunt-spoken Welsh countryman, boasting the uncommon name Jones, Esau Moore attended. A textbook of Christian ethics was used. One night Esau Moore struck a disturbing note.

The minister said, "The basic axiom of metaphysics is: God is."

"That's what most of us are doubtful about, and seek for certainty upon," objected Esau Moore.

It being a side issue to the main theme of Original Sin, the class leader left the subject. Esau caught a gleam in Jones's eye and noticed a grim twist of his wide mouth which made him wonder why the mountainy Welshman kept silent at the moment.

His occasion came a few minutes later. The minister read aloud the quotation from Browning:—

"This is the faith  
Which to cast its dart at the head of a lie;  
Taught—"

He was not allowed to finish with the poet's "Taught Original Sin."

Instead, Jones jumped to his feet and shouted, "Taught a greater lie still."

With blazing eyes and clenched fists the man declaimed, "It's all lies—all a pack of lies. We've been stuffed with lies all our lives. Those who teach us and those who believe 'em 're liars. Disgusting creatures!"

His jaw outthrust and head held high, Jones stamped out. That was the end of his connection with religion.

## V.

Vaguely entertaining, also irritating, was the habit good people had of thrusting books and periodicals, tracts and pamphlets upon Esau Moore. He read them all; gave them at least a quick cursory glance, enough to know the aim of their contents.

Thus at different times he was donated with "Church Evangelist," "British Weekly," "Christian Science Monitor," "Christian Commonwealth," and nearly all the official organs of Nonconformist sects as well as those of the Roman Church.

More unusual religious bodies contributed their quota, as the British-Israel movement and the effete Fundamentalism of the International Bible Students' Association, which later changed its name to Jehovah's Witnesses.

In some cases it was backed by personal appeal and argument, when Esau Moore fenced adroitly with the protagonists of religionism, less often contradicting them flatly, most usually explaining to them the primitive origins of their beliefs.

"Really," he said, "I find all their literature unconvincing. Does this spate of religiosity convert anyone? I suspect it convinces only those who already believe, deluding them that their faith's grounded on sound principles.

They can't understand it's religious propaganda which made me an unbeliever. One thing I don't forget: religious literature, like religion generally, makes well-paid, soft jobs for many idle hypocrites."

A. R. WILLIAMS.

### RUSSIA UNDER RELIGION!—YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY!

NEVER in the history of humanity is there a greater object lesson of the utter failure of religion to govern and promote national welfare than the pre-revolution Government of Russia that controlled absolutely the lives of 150,000,000 of people and one-third of the world's land.

1. The Czar was Pope of the Greek Catholic Church as well as monarch of all the Russians.

2. The State and Church was "one and indivisible," and as Russia had no Parliament, the control of this religious Government was absolute.

3. Russia possessed over 100,000 churches, religious shrines were erected in the streets, roads and public places, and millions of homes had private altars.

4. There were 237,000 priests, and never before or since in mankind's history did so many prayers ascend to Heaven—Russia earned the title of Holy Russia, and not in derision.

5. The Church also controlled the liquor traffic—so it was spiritual in more senses than one.

6. Their Government was inspired by God—they told us so!

7. This religious Government controlled all the economic resources, together with the Army, Navy and police; it possessed absolute power to promote progress, and to put into force all the alleged ideals that orthodox religion ceaselessly professes.

8. Over 90 per cent. of the people could not read or write—Russia was the most ignorant country in Europe.

9. Only one house in a thousand had sanitary conveniences.

10. Only one house in 300 had any service of running water.

11. Whilst the Court of the Czar-Pope was the most expensive, luxurious and extravagant in Europe, the homes of the people were the poorest and most miserable, and the nation as a whole was marooned in a 13th century civilisation.

The pages of history are wet with the blood and tears of Humanity groaning under religious governments: Spain under the Inquisition, Italy under the Popes, Switzerland under Calvinism; and Russia, under the Czar-Popes of the Greek Catholic Church, which ended less than 25 years ago, is, let us hope, the epilogue of these tyrannies.

Why did Russia's religious Government fail, with its pean of prayers, its swinging censors, its chanting creeds and its protestations of divine inspirations?

Russia under religion failed because thought was stultified, the creeds forged at the cruel Court of Constantine petrified the minds of the people, because its aristocracy and priesthood doped the people for their own selfish ends, because religion, looking backwards through unchanging creeds, imprisons Truth, Science and Progress within the cobwebs of its mythologies.

It took a bloody revolution to change this Russian religious Government, the most fruitful revolution in the whole history of mankind.

1. What an amazing change secular government has produced in less than 20 years!

2. Russia to-day glows with progress—70 per cent. of her people can read and write, she has over 100,000 schools instead of 100,000 churches.

3. Russia in 1935 published more books on Science, Art and Industry than the rest of Europe combined.

4. Russia to-day has 31,000 cinemas more than the U.S.A. and Britain together, and over 10,000 of these cinemas are run by the Government of Education, and the moral and technical standard of film production in her studios is the highest in the world.

5. Russia to-day is second only to the U.S.A. in industrial motor production.

Russia to-day produces more gold than any other nation except the British Empire.

6. Russia has the most humane prisons, and her motherhood and child welfare services are the most progressive known.

7. Russia has still, with her immense population with its diverse, polyglot people, much leeway to make up, but freed from the incubus and the dope of religion, she is marching to wider liberties and more equitable distribution of her expanding production.

Her resurrection and regeneration is the greatest event in humanity's history.

With sympathy and fraternalism, Rationalism greets Russia in her mighty efforts to mould her new civilisation.

Rationalism is a non-political organisation, but we cannot be indifferent to the gigantic struggle which Britain and her Allies are making so that Liberty may not perish from the earth, and we, in common with all friends of freedom, thrill to the gallant Russian nation's heroic struggle.

HENRY J. HAYWARD.

## OF HANDS

THE word *hand*, an interesting word that may be used in some 200 different ways, thrust itself upon me 70 years ago.

Travellers, calling at our house, by the side of the road—some of them—would sometimes sing a song, tell a tale or recite, while all of them were ever ready to gossip.

One of these callers was said to be a grand *hand* at telling a tale.

Two of his tales, and an experience of mine, which follow, complete my introduction to this interesting word.

1. A Scotsman is a man, who not only keeps the Sabbath, but everything else he can lay his hands on. The story-teller, a Scot himself, said he could vouch for the truth of this statement.

2. A canteen menu, in a mining centre out West, early in the nineteenth century, read as follows:—

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| A Meal .....         | $\frac{1}{4}$ dollar |
| A Square Meal .....  | $\frac{1}{2}$ "      |
| A Mortal Gorge ..... | 1 "                  |

In the North Country, some 70 years ago, we partook of:

|                                   |
|-----------------------------------|
| On Weekdays: A meal.              |
| On Sundays: A square meal.        |
| On Christmas Day: A mortal gorge! |

On Sunday, a grace, and a quaint remark, preceded dinner:—

"Bless and sanctify to our use, O Lord, we beseech thee, these thy offered mercies; and may to-morrow be as this day and much more abundant. For Jesus Christ, thy son's sake. Amen."

"Now, jist rax oot yer hands!" which being freely translated, reads: "Now, just reach out your hands and help yourselves."

Later, on being ill, a sick visitor, an old elder from the kirk, comforted me with the following words: "Although the *hand* of the Lord is heavy upon you, you must be verra, verra thankfu' that in his infineet mairey he has only laid yae (one) hand on ya'," etc., etc.

The hand of the Lord, I began to think, was a thing to be avoided. But having it dimmed into my ears daily, "search the Scriptures and you'll soon change your opinion," I searched and learned many incidents which corroborated my opinion, e.g., 1 Sam. v. 2-4, how the God Dagon's head and both palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; and how he was left with naught but his stump; and how, in v. 6, "the Lord's hand was heavy upon them of Ashdod"! and also upon a city, in v. 9, etc.

Then to read that God's right hand denotes power and strength—all the effects of his omnipotence—glorious in power (Exod. xv. 6).

Why is his left hand rarely mentioned? Is it reserved for unspeakable tricks?

The left is associated with evil doing, ill-health, etc., etc. Why?

Wrong is the antonym of right. Left is only the opposite of right direction. As a word it has no moral significance like right, but it has had much thrust upon it, historically, by religion!

Little credit is given to the word left. The "rule of the road" recognises it: "If you keep to the left you are sure to be right; if you keep to the right you are wrong."

And politically: To lean to the left is to be liberal-minded, democratic, etc.

Folk Lore: In Staffordshire, warts, if rubbed with a dead man's hand, soon disappear; in Devonshire, if a baby's hands are washed before a certain age it will never have money; a moist hand, says Brand, is a sign of an amorous constitution; a dry hand is one of the characteristics of old age; fingers and finger nails were objects of superstition—e.g., the Witches in "Macbeth":—

"By the pricking of my thumbs  
Something wicked this way comes."

And that popular rhyme:—

"A gift on the finger  
Is sure to linger;  
A gift on the thumb  
Is sure to come."

Artificially-coloured finger-nails are significant of the wearer's lack of *nous*. Finger-nails were coloured in Ancient Egypt.

The Bible overflows with references to hand, and a number of interesting Hebrew customs. But the uses that the hand of God and man are put to as revealed there, sicken one with barbarity.

To stand, or sit, on the finite hand of an infinité, triune deity, may be—ought to be! an honour. But to grasp the hand of that God, impossible!

What great uses the human hand can be put to!

Who can forget the use made of it by the poet Burns:—

"And there's a hand my trusty frère,  
And gi'es a hand o' thine!"

To Burns the human hand was the symbol of fellowship. And William Morris, truly reminds us that:—

Fellowship is life.  
Lack of fellowship is death.

GEORGE WALLACE

**Read the New Zealand "Rationalist."** Published monthly, 4d., post free, each issue, or 5s. annually.—Write to the Editor, 315, Victoria Arcade Buildings, Shortland Street, Auckland C.I., New Zealand; or orders can be taken through "The Freethinker" office.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON

#### Outdoor

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, Dr. R. H. THOULESS, "The Psycho-pathology of Hitler."

### 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. T. M. MOSLEY (Secretary of the Nottingham Cosmo Debating Society), "Is Humanism Bankrupt?"

## Pamphlets for the People

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

A series designed to present the Freethought point of view in relation to important positions and questions

Agnosticism or . . . ?

Atheism.

Thou Shalt not Suffer a Witch to Live.

Freethought and the Child.

Christianity and Slavery.

The Devil.

What is Freethought ?

Price 2d.

Postage 1d.

Other Pamphlets in this series to be published shortly.

### THE FAULTS AND FOLLIES OF JESUS CHRIST

By C. G. L. DUCANN

A useful and striking pamphlet for all; particularly for propaganda among intelligent Christians.

Price 4d.; by post 5d.

### ROME OR REASON? A QUESTION FOR TO-DAY

By COL. R. G. INGERSOLL

One of the most telling criticisms of Roman Catholic doctrines and policy. Never so needful as to-day. In Ingersoll's best vein.

Sixty-four pages. Price 4d.; by post 5d.

### DID JESUS CHRIST EXIST ?

(New Edition)

By CHAPMAN COHEN

A simple and decisive criticism of the Christ myth.

Price 2d.; by post 3d.

### THE CASE FOR SECULAR EDUCATION

(1928)

Sixty-four pages. Price 3d.; by post 4d.

THE PIONEER PRESS

2 & 3, Furnival St., Holborn, London, E.C.4

All that is left from the Blitz

## Almost an Autobiography

By CHAPMAN COHEN

This is not an ordinary autobiography. It sums up the experience of 50 years in the Freethought Movement as writer and lecturer. It is of interest to both religious and non-religious readers. It is both a criticism and appraisal of life. A limited number only have been saved from the "blitz," thanks to their being in another building.

With Five Plates. Price 6s. (postage 5d.); or cf all newsagents and booksellers.

**SPAIN AND THE CHURCH**, by Chapman Cohen. Price 1d.; postage 1d.

**THE AGE OF REASON**, by Thomas Paine. With portrait, and 44-page introduction by Chapman Cohen. Complete edition. Price 6d.; postage 2½d.

**THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHURCH**, by Colonel Ingersoll. Price 1d.; postage 1d.

**WHAT IS RELIGION?** by Colonel Ingersoll. Price 1d.; postage 1d.

**HENRY HETHERINGTON**, by A. G. Barker. Price 6d.; postage 1d.

**PETER ANNET**, by Ella Twynam. Price 2d.; postage 1d.

**BIBLE ROMANCES**, by G. W. Foote. Shows one of the finest of Freethinking writers at his best. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

**ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING**, by Chapman Cohen. First, second, third and fourth series. A series of special articles contributed by the author to the "Freethinker." Price 2s. 6d.; postage 2½d. The four volumes, 10s. post free.

**A GRAMMAR OF FREETHOUGHT**, by Chapman Cohen. An outline of the philosophy of Freethinking. The author at his best. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 4d.

**THEISM AND ATHEISM**, by Chapman Cohen. Price 3s. 6d.; postage 2½d.

**BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL**. A sketch and evaluation of the two greatest Freethinkers of their time. By Chapman Cohen. Portraits. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 3d.

**INFIDEL DEATHBEDS**. The last moments of famous Freethinkers. By G. W. Foote and A. D. McLaren. Price 2s.; postage 3d.

**THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH**, by Chapman Cohen. Price 2s. 6d.; postage 1d.

THE PIONEER PRESS

2 & 3, Furnival St., Holborn, London, E.C.