

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

What is Education?

FOR some time the Churches have had much to say about education. There is confusion here not unmingled with that mental dishonesty which is common to religious propaganda the world over. First of all, what the clergy are aiming at is religious education (I follow their wording here for a moment) but in education, as such, they are not as clergymen in the least interested. And their interests even here are purely professional. They have no desire whatever that children shall be taught about all religions. It is about the Christian religion they are to be taught, and even then only about one section of the Christian Church. Roman Catholics will take care their children hear nothing about Protestantism and Protestants will reply in kind. Each would count that teaching the religion of the other would lead to little good, and the Freethinker would agree with both. His impartiality is not greatly appreciated.

I say that the Churches are not interested in education; what they are really concerned with is instruction, and while that may be associated with education the two things are not identical. One may indeed be the enemy of the other for instruction given in the most susceptible period of one's life, may almost destroy the native capacity for education.

What is the distinction between the two things? Dictionaries are not always helpful in these matters, but they may give us a starting point, and I find "Instruction" consists in the gathering of information, giving orders, directing what is to be done, etc.

Education may build—must to some extent—upon instruction, but it is mainly concerned with the development of the innate qualities of the subject. There is in use a rather misleading expression, "an educated fool," by which we mean a person who has acquired a great deal of information but lacks the innate capacity for using it in a competent manner. We had better think of "an educated fool" as one who lacks the capacity for education. He is merely full of information. Of course, all the ability in the world would not carry a man far if he had not some initial instruction. If each of us had to begin at the same point as our parents began we should get no further than they did. But man inherits a wonderful and growing set of tools in the shape of developing language, mechanical implements, institutions, etc., and it is to this that we owe what we call, broadly, social progress. The capacity for education would not get one very far if there was not available a growing mass of

instruction. And on the other hand the mass of information that each generation inherits would not be of much avail as an instrument of progress without the capacity for education. Instruction provides the material for education; it is the combination of the two that is desirable. Just at the moment we are seeing in many directions the uselessness of instruction where education is lacking.

I may put what I have in mind in the words of a very gifted writer, Mr. Fielding Hall. Education, he says:—

"is the drawing out of a child's mind so that it can see life as it is, not a mere mass of phenomena, but a consequence of underlying causes. . . . It is the exercising of the faculties of right judgment to meet events as they arise; it is an ability to gauge himself and others. Education is the cultivation of personality. It is to the child what perfect gardening is to the tree—a help to growth so that it may develop personality. The gardener helps each tree to put forth the essential quality of its own that differentiates it from all other trees and makes it a thing of use and beauty to the world.

That is education, and that alone is education. Instruction is simply providing the necessary weapons or implements to obtain the food. All instruction that does not tend directly to nourish personality is worse than waste—it occupies nerve and energy that are wanted for better things."

I class this as among the wisest of utterances. I know concerning the training of mind and character. It states clearly the relative functions and value of instruction and education. Many animals have a capacity for instruction, but their capacity for education is of very limited nature, even when it exists. That is why animal evolution is slow, while human evolution may be so rapid that it almost defies computation. The animal lacks the social environment man has. To put the difference in another way. Animal development is by the slow method of natural selection, or by the operation of some other equivalent. Human beings inherit the developed social forms, and the progress is proportionately quickened. It is this social inheritance that makes education of the greater importance, and instruction important only as it incites to education.

I think readers will now understand what I mean when I say that the great objection to religious "education" is that it is not education at all. It is pure instruction. Its quality is little higher than that of teaching an animal to perform tricks. Organised religion is based on instruction alone. With children the method is naked and unashamed. The child is told what it must believe and what it must say on given occasions. So for that matter is the religious instruction of adults. A religious creed must be set forth in fixed terms, the conclusions are stated before the formula is even learned, and to ask for an explanation—an understanding—before acceptance is in itself an indication of heresy. No religion in the world has put forward its teachings as something to be discussed and understood before it is accepted. Prayers must be said in set words and with set intonation, Intelligence

is reduced to its lowest level, all with the intention of limiting education and to confine statements concerning religion to nothing higher or better than mere instruction.

I have dealt so often with this point that I need not dwell upon it now; but I will cite from a book that has just reached me from India and which shows that religion wherever found, and among whatever people it is found, never changes its character. The writer of the book (*Rama-Rajya*, by S. D. Nadkarni, issued by the Rationalist Association of India) is dealing with the quality and character of religious instruction. He says:—

“Rules are laid down for the most minute acts and movements. It is not merely for training of students. . . similar rules are recorded for the guidance of every man in every action of his daily life. It would appear that the writers . . . revelled in the power which they obtained over the actions of the people . . . and they condescended to give no reasons for the rules. Nations were treated worse than children. They must ask no reason, exercise no discretion of their own, show no sign of independent judgment, but act just as they were told to act, for thus it is laid down in texts.”

Everyone who has added only a little education to his instruction will recognise the state of things described in India as well established in Britain. Particularly, he will find it at its best in the Roman Church, and then in other churches in smaller degrees. But all the churches will be at one concerning what they call fundamental dogmas and the performance of religious services. Here what they call religious education is distinctly instruction only. And in the fight the clergy are making for the capture of the schools it is sun-clear that what is called religious education is no more than instruction about what must be believed, how prayers must be said, and what attitude children must adopt. The priesthood—white, black or brown, north, south, east or west—have the same aim. In its essentials the instruction given is of the same character as the instructions an animal trainer will give to the creatures under his control. There is little education in any of it.

Knowledge and Understanding

What I have said invites an excursion in another, although related, direction. I mean the distinction between knowledge and understanding. Again, we have two things that have much in common; one is impossible without the other, and yet to take one as the equivalent of the other is as bad, and even as dangerous as taking instruction for education. Again, we have two terms which are related and yet independent.

The essential significance is “awareness.” It is with us from birth, and may even be said to be an attribute of all living things. Our sphere of knowledge runs from things that we see or handle to the recognition of states of mind and feeling. Knowledge is, of course, the rock on which understanding is built. In itself knowledge is easy to acquire. In itself is of no higher quality than the building up of a host of information about ourselves and things in general. And the acquisition of knowledge is not difficult. The curiosity of a boy will enable him to compile a host of facts concerning anything that arouses his interest—from marbles to rabbits, from tops to aeroplanes. As he grows he will develop this capacity to cover a knowledge of the kings and queens of England, personal stories, the date of certain battles, who invented the gramophone, who wrote this or that great work, etc., anything in short of a factual nature.

With a great many, probably the majority, this display of factual knowledge will arouse admiration with all who move on the same level as the fact hog. Such people will come within the category of Butler’s (the seventeenth-century one) schoolmaster,

The more he said

The more their wonder grew

That one small head

Could carry all he knew.

I am not quite sure whether the quotation is verbally correct, but it is right in substance, and that is all that matters here. I am not going to hunt up my copy for the sake of verbal exactitude.

To take higher examples of the position. I once heard someone describe Charles Darwin as the greatest naturalist of the nineteenth century. I promptly denied it. There were, in fact, scores of naturalists, probably hundreds who knew more of factual natural history than did Darwin. What they lacked was that flash of sheer intellectual alertness which gave us Natural Selection. All the facts were well known, and T. H. Huxley remarked that when pointed out the thought that came to many of the leading scientists of the day was, “Why did we not think of it?” Well, the only answer that can be given is they were not Darwins, and that flash of *understanding* did not come to them. The beginnings of science in ancient Greece, the fame of Copernicus, of Galileo, of Newton, and others, cannot be expressed in terms of knowledge, that is the raw material for all. It is the flash of understanding that comes to the rarest of intellects that tells.

Take another case. If we wish to get a knowledge of religious customs and practices and beliefs we may apply to the Mumbo-Jumboists from the savage medicine man to the Archbishop of Canterbury. We must attend churches and see how the people behave and acquire information about their forms of behaviour. These people have all the detailed knowledge of religious doctrines and beliefs about which sensible men and women with understanding will not bother their heads. All the believers in religion have plenty of knowledge about religion. What is it they lack? Just understanding. That is all.

If I wanted to know, in a hurry, all about the Coronation service in which the Archbishop of Canterbury transformed George VI. from just a very ordinary man into a semi-incarnation of the national deity, the Archbishop would be the best man to give me the information. But if I wanted to *understand* the Coronation service, he is the last man in Britain to help me. Men help with their knowledge, but they create by their understanding. It is a distinction that all should bear in mind. But if anyone asks me how one can acquire understanding I am bound to say I don’t know. I know only that the distinction is there. It is not due to industry, neither is it dependent upon mere knowledge. But I do know that the great discoveries and the higher intellectual life depend upon it.

So all those who wish to make the best of themselves and to do the best they can for others, all who wish to avoid the dark alley of pseudo-scholarship, all who wish to avoid fooling themselves as a preparation for fooling, all others will do well to be on guard against mistaking knowledge for understanding. Instruction may lie at the base of education, knowledge may well be the foundation on which understanding is reared, but it is dangerously misleading to consider that whenever the first is there the second must always be present.

There is a wise passage in the Bible which advises us that understanding ranks above knowledge.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

ART'S ALLEGED INDEBTEDNESS TO RELIGION

THAT the Reformation proved destructive to the artistic instincts of the people in all the lands in which it triumphed, is a fairly common belief. That the loving appreciation of beautiful creations was almost universal in Catholic centuries is also widely entertained in pious circles, and Christian art has been extolled as the natural product of heartfelt faith. Even the sceptical Draper in his "Conflict between Religion and Science" refers to the Gothic cathedrals as the only real miracles of Catholicism. Others, again, acclaim these architectural masterpieces as the achievements of an age when religion inspired men to manifest their pious aspirations in artistic service to the Church.

Yet the 13th century eclipses all others in its architectural triumphs, but long before the Reformation was dreamed of; with the social and economic advances of the intervening generations, sacred architecture had suffered a serious decline. That pictorial art flowered in glorious luxuriance during the Renaissance is well known to all, but Christian as so many of these masterpieces are in form, the neo-Pagan spirit that pervades them is fairly obvious.

In his highly instructive "Art and the Reformation" (Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1928), Dr. Coulton notes that, far from being original, nearly all the technique of the Middle Ages "can be traced back to Greek or Egyptian Paganism." Even the candelabrum in Milan Cathedral might have been that of a Chinese or Indian temple. "Moreover," Coulton writes, "even the details of our churches were not always distinctively Christian. We have seen how ostrich eggs were borrowed from mosques; and the baldacchino of Roman churches was originally, as its name tells us, simply a hanging of those brocades for which Baldak, or Bagdad, has always been famous. It is probable that the great statue of Peter in his own church at Rome, whose toes have been kissed away by generations of worshippers, was originally a Jupiter."

In their inception the Christian churches were the resting-places of the dead. Their defunct saints and departed deities were supplicated and worshipped there. De Gourmont points out that the earlier sacred edifices almost invariably sheltered "the corpse of a saint or a miracle-worker." This eminent writer denies the existence of any specifically Catholic art. "The Pagan origin of the symbolism of the catacombs," he avers, "is certain; it was mythology which supplied the decorative elements to the tombs of the first martyrs."

In proportion to population, the number of churches in medieval Christendom seems astounding, and, as the clergy increased their churches, artists were in request for their adornment. Thus an alliance began between religion and art. Moreover, as Coulton states: "The ubiquitous character of the medieval church can scarcely be exaggerated. In England which represents about the average, there was more than one parish church for every hundred families, without counting chapels and wayside shrines. The proportion was even greater in the towns than in the villages. Norwich had about 50 churches when its population was more probably 8,000 than 12,000 souls, Lincoln had 49, York 41." Nor were these consecrated buildings devoted to religious uses only. Every kind of commercial transactions, dramatic performances, and law cases were conducted within them. Plays and litigation were sometimes forbidden by the clergy, but apparently with little success. Stately ecclesiastics themselves thought nothing of discussing their personal affairs while Mass itself was being celebrated.

Indeed, the churches, like the inns, were places of public resort, and local sentiment found full expression within their walls.

Other times, other manners, but in the relatively primitive conditions of medieval life, residents in an adjoining parish were regarded as alien, at least. Nor is this local exclusiveness dead to-day. York and Lancaster still claim pre-eminence in brains and ability. No wonder then that the medieval parish church "was bound up with the spirit of local patriotism, narrow but intense; the inhabitant of the next village or town is spoken of in market regulations as a 'foreigner'; when different villages repair on solemn occasions to the nearest cathedral, each with the banner of its own local saint, there are fierce struggles for precedence, often ending in bloodshed and sometimes in death."

Within each parish there was marked social solidarity, and, as the artists' best patrons were the clergy, who commissioned and paid for their services, a fairly firm bond was established between them, even when the money was supplied by laymen. Indirectly, then, Churchmen fostered art, but this seems the full extent of their assistance.

Coulton dismisses as chimerical the assertion that undimmed faith created the magnificent architectural structures of the 13th century. He stresses the truth that this period was pervaded with scepticism, both academic and popular. "University scholars," he records, "were then condemned for formulating difficulties similar to the difficulties felt by the majority of thinking people in this twentieth century; and it would be absurd to suppose, even if we had not explicit evidence to the contrary, that the teachers who were bold enough to provoke these censures were the only men who thought thus in their hearts; or again that this ecclesiastical condemnation did in fact reverse the current of their thoughts."

In Greece it was much the same. The peerless works of art of the Periclean period were produced in an age of pronounced scepticism. Again, the divorce between orthodoxy and art was noted by Ruskin himself when he stated: "I have never known a man who seemed altogether right and calm in faith, who seriously cared about art."

The eminent Greek scholar, the late Sir Richard Jebb, read a paper before the Glasgow Art Club in 1889. Unfortunately, this striking essay has not been reprinted, so Coulton decided to summarise it in an appendix to his "Art and the Reformation." After noting the Freethought that prevailed in Athens in the noontide of its art, Professor Jebb remarked: "If, then, we ask what is the teaching of history on this point, the answer must be as follows: Religion has indeed supplied art with its loftiest themes, and has received in tribute some of its greatest achievements, but its artistical result has owed its excellence to an artistic and not to a religious motive. When Raphael painted a Madonna, the very nature of the subject constrained him to present human beauty in its highest and purest form. . . . But, as an artist, he would do this equally, whether he was or was not in mental accord with the doctrinal teaching of the Church. If to any this seems a truism, it has not always and to all men seemed a truism. We have sometimes heard language held by critics of repute which implied that for us . . . the supreme inspiration for Art has for ever passed away, along with that attitude towards Catholicism which prevailed in medieval Europe."

Perugino's and other great artists' paintings of a sacred character do not always denote the sentiments of a devotee. Coulton cites Vasari's assertion that despite Perugino's pious pictures this painter "could

(Concluded on page 75)

ACID DROPS

JUST as a gentle reminder that whatever Nazism may be called, Hitler himself has not changed, is the notice of him given in the 1942 edition of "Who's Who." In this standard work Hitler is rightly put down as a Catholic—and from his fervent appeals to Providence and God whenever he broadcasts to the German people, he proves that he still is thoroughly orthodox and religious. Even the "Universe" rather mournfully admits that "he hasn't been formally excommunicated, and no priest would refuse to answer a sick call from him." Which is very good news.

At the recent Convocation of Canterbury most of the priests and parsons there could not get away far from the subject of capturing the children for religious education. The Bishop of Bristol was full of pleas for a Christian home, for it was from there, he insisted, ultimately that religion must come. He wanted parents to make the children "regard religion as the central thing in life." He wanted them always to pray, to go to church, value Holy Communion, take a greater interest in the religious education given in schools, and "create a Christian atmosphere in the home." In this, the Bishop was, of course, warmly supported by his fellow Bishops.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, however, was shrewd enough to see in all this "a vicious circle." He pointed out:—

"On the one hand, religion could not be effectively taught without a Christian home; on the other, it was equally plain that there could not be Christian homes unless there was more Christian teaching. The teachers must not be unduly blamed for the lamentable ignorance of the elements of the Christian faith displayed by many young people, because they had had to contend with indifference in the home."

From which doleful lament it is plain to see that after all the efforts of archbishops, bishops, canons, deans, vicars and curates, for many centuries, the Christian religion was actually conspicuous by its absence in our Christian homes! Then how comes it that England is described as a Christian nation? And that we are fighting for Christianity? Convocation must be in a rare old ferment over this religious education business.

The same body went into a very "animated discussion" over a proposal to appoint a Commission to explore the possibilities of "Christian unity." This proposal appears to have found little favour, one parson moving an amendment "calling on all Christian people to recognise the need for unceasing and urgent prayer for the reunion of Christendom." This proved a splendid way of getting out of a very difficult situation. A call to prayer is the finest standby known to Christians whenever they are in a mess, and this attempt to get Christians to agree with one another, having failed from the time of Jesus down to 1942, badly needs God's help. Convocation should really cut out the blessed word "unity" until God gives a definite reply one way or t'other.

It will come as no great surprise to those who have made a study of Roman Catholic propaganda to learn that one of the two new B.B.C. Directors-General in succession to Mr. Ogilvie is a Catholic. Sir Cecil Graves, we are sure, will see that the B.B.C. attitude towards religion will be healthily maintained; perhaps he will even increase the religious broadcasts with a few more of his own faith. Our own readers will now see what chance we have of getting any hearing whatever for views which this Director-General would call not only heretical, but revolting. Yet the B.B.C. is supposed to be a public utility service!

A great deal of abuse has been showered on members of the "Black Market." Black marketing, it must be remembered, means getting a supply of commodities that people need badly and then charging a high price to the consumer. As one who is a buyer and not a seller, we join in the dislike of paying heavily for things we require. But our

sense of justice prevents our joining in the cry against these Black Marketers because they seem to be doing what is done in trade during normal times. Commercial groups form "corners" to get control of this or that, and when control is achieved, the holders fix their terms of trading. Other firms buy up inventions that would serve the public better and cheaper than existing articles and, by establishing a monopoly, are able to dictate what the consumer or user shall pay. Then if he is lucky, he may achieve a fortune, give some of it away, and find himself endowed with a title and hailed as one of the country's great men. The lesson we draw is that an eye should be kept on the Black Marketers in times of peace as well as during the war.

About 1,500 churches have been either destroyed or damaged by German air raids on this country. That looks as though God has to answer a very serious charge of neglect. Merely from the advertising point of view it is bad policy, for consider the good that would have been done to religion had the churches been saved! When God is asked, "What did you do in the last war?" what will he say?

Rev. C. M. Mansfield, of Barnstaple, says that if this country had spent money on Christian missions to Japan there would now be no war there. But as this country has spent money on many countries and this has not prevented war, we wonder what grounds there are that Christianity would have influenced Japan more than it has done elsewhere?

Rev. C. M. Mansfield has forgotten that Japan, so soon as it resolved to modernise itself, did send an investigating committee here. The committee examined our mode of life. The conclusion reached was that this country could teach Japan nothing worth while in religion, but they had much to learn from the Christian countries where war was concerned—and they have been learning from Christian countries ever since.

Lord Elton is one who is frequently engaged by the B.B.C. to soothe the air with amiable nothings that will never disturb anyone. In the "Daily Mail" he deals with the resignation of the Archbishop of Canterbury—which is neither a world-shaking event nor an adequate compensation for the troubles the country is facing. In the course of his article he says: "The chief concern of every one of us is undoubtedly what will the new Archbishop have to say to me?" If Lord Elton will question the first couple of hundred people he meets he will soon find that not one in 50 care a brass button who the next Archbishop will be, and that not one in 100 cares what he will say on anything.

Among the other frivolities of Lord Elton's is the wish to see the Archbishop on the scene praying with the people over such a disaster as Coventry and the smouldering City churches. No Archbishop is likely to be such a fool as to try that game. Too many present might want to know what on earth is the Archbishop's God doing to prevent such disasters? It is one thing preaching sugary sermons to people in church; it is quite another thing when meeting them face to face after such a disaster.

Mr. David Walker, in an "exclusive" message to the "Universe" from Lisbon, declares that while German priests preach against "paganism" (by which they mean the Nazism which will not allow the Pope to rule the roost), they want Germany to win the war. Well, of course. Only a fool would imagine that Germans or German priests want Germany to lose the war. What happens to Nazism is one thing, but Germany is for all Germans "over everything." Let Hitler admit, like Mussolini, the claims of the Pope, and almost every Roman Catholic in the world will stand by Germany—not Nazism necessarily.

As it is we have to reckon, in our forecasts of the future, that the Roman Church will back anything and everything that makes for its own aggrandisement. It is this elasticity of principle which makes the Church so great a danger.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

"NORTHUMBERLAND."—We have very little confidence in what is called "military intelligence." Put a body of intelligent civilians in charge of a given situation and it will be more alert to new possibilities than are hardened military experts; and when "military intelligence" and "big family" influence combine, one must expect trouble that would otherwise be avoided.

J. HUMPHREY.—It would not be very easy to dismiss an Archbishop. There would have to be some serious offence committed, and the process would be a difficult one. May be able to use next week.

H. SHAW.—We cannot print all letters that are sent, and a communication may be of interest without it coming within the scope of "The Freethinker." We are a specialised journal with a special purpose.

J. W. CORRENISK.—Thanks for your good opinion. We hope we deserve some of it. But we cannot ignore age, although we hope always to make the best of it.

A. C. CHAPMAN.—Received. We will see what can be done.

F. J. CORINA, J. STONE, S. H., A. HANSON.—Received. Thanks.

J. SNAITH.—We consider that the care—adequate care—of old people should be one of the first concern of governments. When one bears in mind the way in which millions can be poured out for war and the cry that we cannot afford adequate allowances for aged people, it looks as though there is something radically wrong in the existing situation.

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SUGAR PLUMS

A GREAT deal of the criticism of Fascism, as represented by Germany, has had to do with the policy of insinuating its champions into key positions as a step towards dominating the situation. This method has been taken directly from the policy of the Roman Catholic Church. It was in practice in the Church for generations before Hitlerism was heard of, and it involved the double-dealing, the deceitfulness and the threat to liberty that Fascism involves. There were Quislings in the Church before Hitler used them, and they will be in the Church after Hitler has disappeared. It would be interesting if someone would compile a list of the Roman Catholics holding responsible positions of importance in the State. It must be remembered that the majority of them would owe a part loyalty to the Vatican, even where they did not place the interests of the Vatican first.

One of the daily papers recently pointed out that while the personnel of the Government numbered just over 100, about a third of the offices were filled by men who had been instructed—loosely called educated—at Eton. Now no one would be foolish enough to claim that Eton absorbs one-third of the best intelligence of the country, and certainly the work of these men holding high political office does not justify by its character their selection. They are

where they are mainly because coming from certain schools gives a "pull." We are, said Mr. Chamberlain, a democracy. Perhaps so, but it is a democracy of a most peculiar kind. The next claim that will be heard is that these products of the old school tie will be held up for our admiration for the facility with which they can undertake any sort of job that is going—at least, they move from the Board of Education or from Postmaster-General, to Minister of Supply, with an ease that makes ordinary folk wonder. Their capacity appears to be demonstrated by their failures.

Apropos of what has just been said, we have a considerable number of people still in office whose policy did so much to assist Germany to arm for its onslaught on Europe, and who stood out till the last moment against a friendly understanding with Russia. The present state of affairs in India reminds us that Mr. Amery represents India in the British Parliament, and it is well to remember the vigorous manner in which he protested against any expression of ill-favour towards Japan's seizure of Manchukuo. Here is a quotation from one of his speeches made when the subject was before Parliament:—

"I confess that I see no reason whatever why, either in act or word, or in sympathy, we should go individually or internationally against Japan in this manner. Who is there among us to cast the first stone and to say that Japan ought not to have acted with the object of creating peace and order in Manchuria and defending herself against the continual aggression of vigorous Chinese Nationalism?"

Mr. Amery is now Secretary of State for India. But Hitler found no different plea for annexing Czechoslovakia than did Japan for annexing Manchuria and afterwards the mainland of China.

During the past week we have seen the name of Miss Dorothy Sayers continually referred to in both the secular and religious press. Never in one single instance was she called "Miss Dorothy L. Sayers." We hope that her crime-trained mind has detected all these inaccurate references and that she has given the miscreant writers—well, that she has let them have it hot and strong. Or are those awful inaccuracies confined only to "Rationalists"?

With reference to our note in "The Freethinker" for February 1, dealing with the possibility of bringing members of the Forces into friendly contact with Freethinkers in the area in which they happen to be stationed, we have received some replies and are seeing what can be done to establish friendly contact. The General Secretary of the N.S.S. will write those interested as soon as possible.

A nice bunch of magistrates live in Horsham. Angry, no doubt, that the town, by free vote, wants the cinemas open on Sundays, they have decided to make the cinema owners pay nearly three times as much to charity for the privilege—from £460 to £1,150. The cinema owners in return decided not to open their doors, with the result that large numbers of soldiers, war-workers and land girls had to spend their free day in the wintry streets. Even the clergy were forced to protest—one of them, the Rev. Mr. Lea, saying that as the public decided that cinemas should be kept open on Sundays "it seems illogical to introduce sanctimonious unreality and demand that something must be given to charity." But why "sanctimonious unreality"? Why not "sanctimonious humbug"?

It seems to us that cinema owners have the remedy in their own hands. Why don't they all band together and give all magistrates notice that this question of paying blackmail—for that is all it is—in the name of charity will have to be completely revised these days? The Sunday opening of cinemas is a national necessity for the millions of workers and soldiers who cannot go during the week, and there is neither decency nor justice in penalising the owners for providing the public with the entertainment it needs. Why should they pay anything to charity—unless they wish to do so, of course? Nothing but the baulked Sabbatarian spirit of soured Christians can provide the answer.

BOOKS ON THE WAR

"We Were NOT All Wrong." (G. Mander, M.P., 1941; Gollancz.)

BY quotations from Hansard and from public speeches, Mr. Mander seeks to show where the responsibility for the war and for Britain's initial weakness lies among our statesmen of the Appeasement school.

It may be asked, with some show of plausibility, whether inquiries of this kind can do any good at this stage. The answer is obvious: "Yes, if it makes the people chary of ever again trusting the men of Munich." No stone should be left unturned to make sure that we do not see in Britain what was seen in the shameful capitulation of France. So far as internal purity is concerned, Russia has shown the world a clean house. Its quislings were being liquidated by trials which aroused the enmity of the Western Democracies. How much better it would have been for France if Laval and Co. had similarly been rendered harmless.

Chamberlain, Halifax, Inskip, Hoare and Simon come out badly from Mander's examination, and it is indeed strange that one of them, associated with the disgusting Hoare-Laval plan for the betrayal of Abyssinia, should continue to hold public office, while Halifax, "the saintliest man in England," has not exactly been a roaring success in America. Hoare is apparently not yet cured of complacency (he described the French as the finest army in the world), for he gave a most rosy picture of Anglo-Spanish relations on his return from that country, only to learn immediately afterwards of amicable messages from Madrid to Hitler. Churchill comes out excellently from the inquiry, and it is perhaps the chief point of criticism to-day that he still tolerates such men in his Cabinet. Mander does not write as a party man, confining himself to quotations and conclusions from them. Baldwin, MacDonald and Chamberlain are made to look like the three worst Premiers in the history of the country. We should probably have to go back to the time of George III.'s favourite, the inefficient and bungling upstart Bute, to find their equal.

Others who come out well from the inquiry are Lloyd George, Sinclair, Attlee, Dalton, Noel-Baker and, we must add, Mander himself. This is no reflection on his modesty, for Hansard is an unalterable record, and there is also his work in the League questionnaire. Eden comes out fairly well, and so does Duff Cooper.

The usual pro-Chamberlain reply that the Opposition itself voted against the Defence Estimates is easily met by Mander; as he points out, the vote is against policy and represents an effort to turn the Government out.

"Help Us Germans to Beat the Nazis." (Heinrich Fraenkel, 1941; Gollancz.)

The author's assignment is to show what active groups are working against the Nazi regime, what other groups could be spurred into revolt, and by what means and propaganda this might be achieved. As a German he says frankly: "At the present juncture no British propaganda can do any good in Germany. Just now what moral capital you owned has been squandered to the last penny."

"So far (very early in 1941—G. H. T.) British propaganda could have hardly suited the Nazi book better if Goebbels himself had been in charge of it." The author claims to have reached his conclusions by conferring with many of his compatriots. He maintains that the anti-Hitler opposition is alive but underground. In seven years 2,000,000 people have passed in and out of concentration camps. "Suppose the German people were really Hitler's—body and soul—would he need concentration camps?" There were single weeks when as many as four or five new camps were opened, and dozens more were added in Austria and Czechoslovakia.

How popular is the Gestapo in Germany? Listen to its chief: "The entire country must be occupied by a minimum of 30 Totenkopf-Sturmabteilung ('Death's-head divisions'). No unit is ever to be used in its own district; every unit is to be moved to another district every third week; nor must any man with the skull-and-crossbones badge ever patrol a street alone. That will never do." (Himmler.)

There is other tangible proof of opposition in illegal literature, printed or multigraphed and in miniature shape and camouflaged often in the form of a tea sample or a baking powder, shampoo or suchlike envelope which hides

its anti-Nazi message. He has himself seen some 2,000 different samples and this is only a minor part of the complete output. In 1937 the frontier police admitted to 120,236 confiscations, according to official statistics.

Why don't the Germans kick Hitler out, then? This, he regrets, is more easily said than done, especially in wartime. Even the Czechs, with a much greater proportion of anti-Nazis, cannot be effective. Then why not simply turn the guns round on the oppressors? But this would require planning and concerted action, and (as Freethought branches in this country know only too well) a war can break up personal contacts built up through years; they are severed overnight.

Actually the only wartime advantage to the oppressed is the black-out, during which, he says, anti-Nazi slogans are displayed and illegal literature distributed. Some of this is quoted by the author, and he also quotes from German soldiers' letters.

He warns against the fallacy of over-simplifying matters by the term "Prussian." Hitler is a Bohemian, Goebbels a Rhinelander, Goering and Himmler Bavarians.

His vision of an allied victory is seen through the path of (1) the creation of factual basis of defeatism, (2) the working up by propaganda of the train of thought that leads to disillusionment and de-Nazification. The book was written in an internment camp near Douglas.

"Their Finest Hour" (1940; Allen and Unwin).

This is the war in the first person, containing the personal experiences of a sergeant in the retreat to Dunkirk, an air pilot over Dunkirk, members of the crew of a torpedoed merchant vessel, a Ruhr bomber pilot, a submarine officer, a bombed-out housewife, an auxiliary fireman, etc., etc. It could be read against the background of the more prosaic Air Ministry account, "The Battle of Britain."

"The Battle for Production." (Allan Flanders, 1941; International Publishing Company.)

This is an attempt to probe into the difficulties of reaching a 100 per cent. output. Mr. Flanders is an able handler of statistics, and there is a friendly, while critical, examination of a programme sponsored by the "Financial News." He is anxious to remove monetary grievances without risking inflation, and proposes to place a post-war credit to the name of the serving soldier. G. H. TAYLOR.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AT CLOSE QUARTERS

FOLLOWING up F. A. Ridley's very timely reminder that the Catholic Church is officially rationalistic and has laid down as dogma, infallible and not subject to other than amplification, that "a certain knowledge of the one and true God can be obtained by the natural reason independent of and antecedent to all revealed revelation," it may be interesting for one who has had many first-hand contacts with authoritative clerics, from the Pope downwards, to show how these gentlemen vary their theory and their practice to suit the audience. It is one thing to read the literature and quite another to have had it expounded by Cardinals, the head of the Gregorian University, members of the Society of Jesus so erudite as the late Father Welsby or that old friend and counsellor of John Wheatley in Glasgow, the happily still living Father Leo O'Hen. In the house of the Irish Dominicans at St. Clement's in Rome, of the Cistercians of Mount Melleray in Eire and of the English Priests of St. Bede, normally in Rome but now in Upholland, from believers in Spain and Poland, in Scotland and Italy, it is possible to observe the versatility of mind and speech that serves to convey the impression of great freedom of thought where none exists save, of course, for the initiated into the mysteries of the higher priesthood.

Again, that anyone should turn to learn of the priests and, still more, if he is reputed not to be what the insurance companies call a "good life," is taken as evidence that the Church is about to acquire another convert. If he has been a Communist M.P.

it is not surprising that Stanley B. James and the gentleman called "Jotter," who has just discovered Chapman Cohen, should not pause to make certain of their facts, but trumpet their hosannas of an altogether premature triumph. Contemplate their distress, therefore, when, not knowing what the Catholic Matsuoka had to say with the Godless Stalin and Molotov, when they signed the Pact of Neutrality on Easter Sunday, 1941, the editor of the "Catholic Herald" was not sure whether sundry Catholic diplomats he knew were watching for its appearance and should constrain him to publish this from my pen:—

"Stalin is not to be blamed because, relieved of the terror of Communism, such is the corruption and chaos within capitalism, that every other Government must forthwith fling its workers and peasants at each other's throats in what the Holy Father called on that same Easter Day, 'an atrocious war that threatens to become an inconceivable horror.'

Stalin is not to blame for the irreconcilable antagonisms of Britain and Germany, of the United States and Japan. These arise out of the miserable incompetence of their Conservative, Liberal and National Socialist rulers to find any exit from the economic and moral *impasse* other than production for destruction and death.

For my part, I hail the Soviet Union for standing aloof from the universal blood-bath and so to become the hope of the common people of all countries deceived, invaded, abandoned, devastated by those who fight everywhere but on their own property this second imperialist war for the re-division of the world." ("Catholic Herald," May 2, 1941.)

This was terrible from one whose conversion had already been bruted about by the incautious, and was expected, even by the cautious, to take his first Communion the week-end that "the Sword of the Spirit" was gathering "all ye faithful" into the Stoll Picture House in defence of private property against Godlessness. Alas, like Rudolf Hess, he was on his way to Scotland, but not to help Cardinal Hinsley and Adolf Hitler to "switch the War." He was going back to his old stamping ground on the Clyde. He was going to join the Glasgow branch of the National Secular Society.

The Catholic position is peculiar. It is needful to accept in reason but inadequate unless you do so in faith.

Now, I am going to be painfully frank and say that I did not find the Catholic dogma "contrary to reason." It seemed to me to be founded upon, and certainly to be buttressed by, a system of thought that issued out of anything but ignorance. If you granted certain assumptions regarding the omnipotence of the Prime Cause, you could accept even the Mass. The trouble for me was that I could not even begin to believe that which, for the sake of argument, I had been prepared to assume. It may have been that, had I ever allowed myself to fall into the condition of mind and emotion to receive baptism and to receive "the holy wafer," the belief might have come racing through my excited nerves. Indeed, I am certain that, without the Mass and the thought that the communicant is eating and drinking of the Saviour, there can be no adequate self-hypnosis to swallow the essentials of Belief.

In a great Labour and Sinn Fein concourse in Eire, when I have been the only heretic present (and that because I seconded the rejection of the Treaty Bill in 1922), I have come near to reading into the emotion of Benediction something that the fathers of the

Society of Jesus have thought—and have not thought—was an experience of spontaneous conversion! But I never felt it in the Basilica of St. Peter's or in any of the Pilgrimage Churches when I have gone round them with "the Faithful" in the Eternal City, even in Holy Week in Holy Year! So, I guess, it was not the "Real Presence" but the excitement preliminary to delivering a lecture on "Bank Balances and Irish Butter and Bacon!"

There are more ways than one of stirring the Irish peasant! And that is a fact very well known to the Church. It can be as accommodating to James Connolly as to Cardinal Newman when as fearful whether it lose "our very dear Ireland" or fail to regain "poor heretic England."

WALTON NEWBOLD.

(To be concluded)

Art's Alleged Indebtedness to Religion

(Concluded from page 71)

never get any notion of God into that hard head of his." The scepticism of the painter of "The Last Supper" is more than suspected, and how much faith was possessed by moderns, such as Rossetti, Burne Jones and William Morris, or the immortal landscape painter, the great Turner, himself?

A pronounced aversion to art embellishments in churches was conspicuously displayed by leading ecclesiastics in medieval times. As a matter of fact, it was the growth of the secular spirit that coincided with, and encouraged, an increased appreciation of artistic beauty. The earlier friars and monastics expressed very decided Puritanical convictions; but as generations rolled away church ornamentation became more and more lavish.

Instead of being the frozen music of the cult of Rome, there is great justification for the view expressed by Herbert Spencer in his splendid essay, "The Sources of Architectural Types," that the impressions underlying Gothic Art were derived from their primitive forest growths by pre-Christian peoples in northern Europe. This view apparently commends itself to Dr. Coulton, who observes that the nearer to Rome the less is evident the influence of Gothic art. The traceries, pillars and other essentials of this latter form of artistry are all reminiscent of the woodlands wild. So instead of Gothic originating from Catholic aspiration, Coulton declares: "That there is more historic, as well as authentic, probability in deriving Gothic art from the traditions of the half-nomad northerners who hunted, and reared cattle, and tilled scanty patches of corn amid primeval forests where the pines and beeches ran up to eighty feet before they threw out their first branches." Professor Lethaby also observes that "northern art had the great mystery of the great forests behind it."

It is now obvious that the claim, still made, that Gothic art is the inevitable outcome of a majestic Catholicism has no foundation in fact. The upholders of this fancy are stigmatised by Coulton as being, as a rule, men whose outlook, generally considered, would have appeared much less rational to the leading saints and thinkers of medieval days "than to the average Thor-worshipper of the German forests or to the free-thinker of Renaissance Rome." Coulton also doubts whether Huysmans, the protagonist of this doctrine of Catholic derivation, ever felt the enthusiastic admiration and profound veneration and unalloyed enjoyment of Gothic architecture manifested by "the Protestant Ruskin who ended in something like Agnosticism, and William Morris who had no use whatever for organised religion."

T. F. PALMER.

A NOTE ON THE OXFORD GROUP

IN recent days, weeks and months the Oxford Group Movement has achieved considerable fame—one might almost say notoriety. Such events as the attacks made on it by Mr. A. P. Herbert in the House of Commons have brought it very prominently in the public eye. Yet those who criticised it often had only the vaguest notions of what it really stood for—and in these enlightened days it is well that we should be perfectly certain of the ground on which our ideological and theological opponents take their stand. It is because of this that I am recommending all Freethinkers to read three small sixpenny books which have made their appearance lately. They are all published by Messrs. Heinemann, and their titles and authors are: "Remaking the World," by Frank Buchman; "Come Wind, Come Weather," by Daphne Du Maurier; "Fighters Ever," by Peter Howard. Taken together, these three pamphlets make extraordinarily interesting reading, and they deserve the most careful attention from all students of these columns.

First of all, then, the booklets dispose of the suggestion sometimes made on our side of the religious fence that religious propagandists must necessarily be unintelligent, or at the very least unintellectual. Dr. Buchman, judging purely on the internal evidence of his writings as contained in his booklet, is obviously a man of exceedingly acute intelligence, even though in our opinion that intelligence may be foolishly misdirected; and no one can for a moment pretend that Miss Daphne Du Maurier is anything but a highly intelligent lady, while Mr. Peter Howard's former "fans" among the readers of the "Daily Express" will readily admit that he is one of the better of the popular journalists of the day.

And what do these people have to say on this important matter of religion? Well, there it is not possible to be so precise from the evidence of their writings. Dr. Buchman, it is true, commits himself to the statement that the only way to save civilisation in this desperate crisis is for the nations to accept the guidance of God. He repeats, again and again, that God will speak to man just as readily as men speak to each other over the radio, but he is not so explicit as to the means which are to be adopted in order that this divine voice may be heard. This studious vagueness, in fact, would seem to be one of the besetting sins of the Oxford Group Movement. I do hope that supporters of the Movement (if any such are to be found among the readers of these pages!) will not feel that I am being unnecessarily critical when I say that, before we take them with complete seriousness we would ask for more detailed evidence that God really does "guide" individual men and women in the way which they assert.

That, however, is not to say that they can be brushed aside in the way which has often been adopted by Freethinkers in the past. These people have (let us admit the fact, however unpalatable it may be) got hold of something which the Freethought Movement, for all its philosophical attractiveness, somehow appears to lack. They do somehow manage to attract a large proportion of the younger people, which few other religious movements of our day can claim to do—and incidentally, one wonders what proportion of youth have any direct and active interest in Freethought or Rationalism.

Here I am again hammering at a point which I have frequently made in these columns previously; but to my mind it is a point which cannot be made too often. The Oxford Group Movement can claim to have an attraction which the Freethought Movement has not. Consequently there is a lesson for all of us in the three little books with which I have here been concerned. S. H.

Liberty is one of the choicest gifts that heaven hath bestowed upon man, and exceeds in value all the treasures which the earth contains within its bosom, or the sea covers. Liberty as well as honour man ought to preserve at the hazard of his life, for without it life is unsupportable.—CERVANTES.

CORRESPONDENCE

RATIONALISM

SIR,—In your very interesting remarks (January 25) arising from a letter from Dorothy L. Sayers, occurred a passage which drew my attention specially and on which perhaps you may allow me to make a few comments and ask your opinion. The passage was this:—

"But anyone who knows me is aware that I will not call myself a Rationalist, and my reason for doing so is not because I am in violent disagreement with 'Rationalists,' but because it is ambiguous in its meaning and in its application. And in important instances I dislike ambiguity. The world suffers much from half-meanings and indecisive speech. Its chief representatives are parsons and politicians. I would leave them with the monopoly. I call myself, and always have called myself, an Atheist, and I do so for the reason that an eminent Christian professor once gave. He said: 'The word Atheist is a thoroughly honest unambiguous term. It means one who does not believe in God and it means neither more nor less.' In this I agree with the Rev. Professor Flint. Atheism is a good, honest, direct word. It stands out as a beacon in a world which is full of false tricks and blind endings."

I look at these matters from the point of view of one who reached the Freethought position only gradually and after the age of 40. This process has left me very impartial and sceptical in the sense of having little inclination to accept too readily any particular philosophical theory any more than any religious dogma. I quite agree that the word "Rationalism" (i.e. "going by reason") is somewhat ambiguous, but to some of us the Universe seems so full of unreadable riddles that an elastic term is not inappropriate. This is really a matter for each person's own mind to decide.

A more practically important point which I should like to put is this: One of the curses of this country is the excessive privileges enjoyed by the Churches—privileges which are deadly enemies of rational progress. In order to combat this, surely it is desirable for the greatest number possible of people of progressive thought to work together. If those of any particular philosophy refuse to co-operate, the progressive cause is weakened and the Churches' privileges are aided. So I would like to see all free-minded people working together to fight vested interests, and I would think that this can be done without any of them giving up their special theories. What is your view?—Yours, etc., J. W. POYNTER.

THE CHURCH TRIUMPHANT

SIR,—I have just read that religious services are to be held at a munition factory.

Trust in Providence and keep the powder dry! If the Churches capture the B.B.C., the State schools, the Army and the factories, it will be a bad look-out for freedom and democracy. We shall sink to the intellectual level of Spain.—Yours, etc., W. MARGIE,

Chairman, Radio Freedom League.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11-0, C. E. M. Joad, M.A., D.Lit., "Goodness and Freedom" (II.).

COUNTRY

Indoor

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

Barrowford (Women's Guild, Co-operative Hall), Wednesday, February 18: 7-30, Mr. J. CLAYTON, "Woman and Religion."

Glasgow Branch N.S.S. (25, Hillfoot Street, off Duke Street): 3-0, a Lecture.

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate): 3-0, Mr. L. EBURY, "After the War—What?"