

# THE FREETHINKER

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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Here and There

I AM afraid these notes will be of rather a rambling nature, although I hope that some readers here and there will find a thread running through them. I place the responsibility for them on our new Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Temple. Incidentally, it will raise his salary by fifty per cent. and so equip him for properly representing one who who had nowhere to lay his head. This salary is, of course, not equal, measured by working hours, to that received by the B.B.C. Brains Rest Trust for their energating forty-five minutes attendance per week, but it is enough to keep the wolf from the door. The new Archbishop might even be able to help the retiring Archbishop who has made a touching reference to his having to live on a mere £1,500 per year. As editor of that flourishing concern "The Freethinker," I can dimly realise what hardships are involved in trying to live on so pitiful an allowance.

Recently Dr. Temple spent a week-end at Oxford, and in the course of his stay gave an address to the University Political Club. One of the questions asked was whether the Commandment "Thou shalt not kill" forbids war? Dr. Temple replied that this did not prohibit killing in war. There is, he said, a "difference between killing and murder." We agree, but the distinction is a legal one only and that was neither the intention of the command nor of the questioner. And as a theologian Dr. Temple must remember that the Christian plea is that the New Testament is the completion of the old, and that the Bible must be interpreted in the light of the precedent laid down by Jesus Christ.

On this point the New Testament is clear. The direct command of Jesus is that his followers shall not resist evil with force. There was nothing new in this teaching, it was carried out by wandering teachers long before Jesus Christ was heard of. But the followers of Jesus were to turn one cheek when the other was smitten. However they might hate evil the command not to resist it by force was imperative. If a man took your cloak you were to give him your coat also; if he struck you on the one cheek you were to turn to him the other. Nothing could be less Christ-like than the scorched-earth

theory applied to practical affairs. The command is clear and distinct. It is, in this respect, what the New Testament itself calls a "hard saying"—probably because it was a *soft* one. To think that this can be set aside by a mere expression of regret that the other fellow believes badly will not do. It reminds one of the apology of a parent to his unruly son as a prelude to a thrashing: "This hurts me, my son, more than it does you." So it may have done, but it was not in the same place. I do not think Dr. Temple faced the issue.

### Holy Wars

The same question, in a different guise, was put regarding war. "Is there any justification for war, and can there be a holy war?" To the latter half Dr. Temple retorts there can be no such thing as a "holy war." But here Dr. Temple has the whole history of the Christian Church against him, in both theory and practice. What war that any Christian country fought is there that has not been blessed by the Christian Churches? How many times has Dr. Temple and his clergy led the people to pray to God for help and has not been warmly helped by the Archbishop himself and his brother of Canterbury? We cannot believe that these two representatives of God in England would invite the deity to help in an unholy war. This war was supported because it was a "righteous war," and the distinction here between righteous and holy is too trivial to be bothered about.

Historically, too, Dr. Temple is quite wrong both in theory and practice. The whole history of the Christian Church is against him. The Roman Church has sanctioned holy wars against Protestants and Mohammedans, and Protestants have blessed every war in which this country has been engaged. During war-time chaplains accompany the soldiers—with officer's pay and allowances—our churches are freely decorated with war-flags, and after the last war there was actually a cannon in St. Paul's Cathedral to illustrate our adherence to the teaching of non-resistance. The atmosphere of "holiness" runs through our army. There are compulsory attendances at Church for the soldiers, and when a recruit presents himself and asks to be registered as an Atheist the officer in charge is almost dumb with amazement. The same amazement is exhibited by prison officials when a man enters a prison and says he has no religion.

War, of course, existed before Christianity; it was blessed or cursed before Christianity. The Christian Church did not invent war. It certainly did not prevent it. What it actually did was to moralise it. The Church did not make war less devastating, but it made war more easily justifiable. The Church did with war what it did with torture and with intolerance. It covered them both with the cloak and sanction of religion. It gave these ugly things a cover of holiness, and it is doing this to-day. No Christian ever had the moral courage to say plainly and openly "Evil be thou my good." What is done is to mask evil things in such a way that they who do them are not likely to recognise their true character. It is not a paradox, it is a simple truth, one which the world



would do well to recognise, that it takes moral courage to be consciously immoral. Christianity does not breed fine moral characters; it finds them and distorts them in practice.

"War," says Dr. Temple, "becomes justifiable when it is the only way of staving off the imposition of tyranny." That gives a fine illustration of the truth of what has just been said. How many wars have there been that were not on one side or on both sides claimed as wars to suppress tyranny? Very few on any considerable scale. The plea of Hitler was that he was resisting the tyranny of other people, and we claim that resistance to tyranny is our reason for going to war with Hitler. Granted that a man should consider whether a war is against tyranny or not before he takes an active part in it, we need not play the religious hypocrite and refuse to recognise that the "other fellow" also may believe that he is fighting against the tyranny of other nations. In any case Jesus Christ did not say "Thou mayst wallop the other fellow if you believe he is playing the tyrant." His uncompromising command was that we must disarm our enemies by practicing non-resistance, and it is the boast of Christians that Jesus went like a lamb to the slaughter and bleated not at all. The Archbishop believes that we ought to follow the commands of Jesus, but he also believes that in certain circumstances a machine-gun may prove a very convincing argument.

I think that if we could get the Archbishop down to a rock bottom position he would say that we are fighting this war to prevent Europe being controlled by a bigoted, ignorant, Roman Catholic degenerate. And that would only be saying that his feelings as a man and as a citizen urge him to take part in this war, and that his feelings put on one side shibboleths of Jesus and the rest of the "holy family." If I am right in saying this I put to the Archbishop a plain, straightforward question, but without the slightest expectation of receiving a plain and direct answer.

The question I would ask Dr. Temple is this. Suppose Dr. Temple was not an Archbishop, suppose he was not a Christian, would he in the face of the world situation act differently with regard to the support he is giving the war? Would he find no fault with Hitlerism if he were not a Christian? I think his reply would be that he would feel towards Hitlerism exactly as he feels now, but he would express his feelings in non-religious language, and that is only saying that his feelings as a man and his duties as a citizen would remain exactly what they are. Perhaps the most important difference would be that he would no longer be preaching one thing in theory and exhibiting another in practice.

### God and the War

One of the questions asked the Archbishop appears to have been what purpose (of God) underlies the world situation of to-day. Briefly the question was: "What part is God playing in the war?" Dr. Temple's answer must have surprised his audience. It was "God knows" which I take as the equivalent of "no one knows." That was honesty carried to a fault. For the main function of the Archbishop is to interpret God's will to man. He does tell us that God means to do this and that. He speaks, as do others, of God's desire concerning us; he talks of God's anger, and of his love, and of his wisdom, of the way in which he would have us act, and so forth. And yet when it comes to a situation which may wreck civilisation and we ask what is God doing in this matter, he says, "'God knows,' but what he knows and how he is going to act is more than I can say." It is true that Martin Luther once remarked that Satan in his artfulness might get the better of

"half-witted God" and I am wondering whether Dr. Temple is placing God in Luther's category. Dr. Temple does tell us often enough what God wants us to do; often enough points to what God does for man. But if he does not know what God is doing in this war, what reliance can we place on his accounts of God's work, of his wishes, of what he has done and is doing for mankind? Dr. Temple does not know what God is doing in the war. But is he doing anything? Or is he there to do anything? It is evidently no use applying to the Archbishop for information. He doesn't know. Then what in the name of all that is reasonable is his value as an Archbishop?

One day this war will come to end, and I believe, that in spite of all the blunders of our military and other leaders, in spite of the reprehensible tactics of the enemy in not doing exactly what we expected him to do, in spite of these things, we shall win the war. And when that time comes we shall have the usual religious processions to the Churches, to return thanks to God for having given us victory. And to the mountainous monument of lies that every war carries with it there will be added the master lie that God has given us the victory, that truth and our faith in God has been justified. That will be an exhibition of the most monumental lie of the greatest and most monumental of wars. For no victory, however complete, can undo what has been done. The dead are dead, and worse than that, the living remain carrying with them and on them the scars of the conflict. It is a lie, the worst of all lies, that man learns kindness through brutality, and truthfulness through lying. Here and there a susceptible nature may learn that lesson, but as for the mass they become inured to evil and accept it as part of the inevitable. The lies of the politician, the dishonesties of the priesthood, the hardening and coarsening of normal human nature grows more pronounced with war, and time alone can reduce their power. War may be the best of two positions, but do not let us fool ourselves and, above all, do not let our priests and our politicians fool us into accepting evil as the material from which goodness is wrought, and falsehood and brutality as things that breed human kindness and lasting truth.

One great lesson that we have learned from this war is that of "too late." And that lesson applies more strongly to "God" than it does to man. Man must often be too late, for he has nought but experience to guide him and he is compelled to stumble through blunders to accuracy and understanding. But God, the Christian God, knows the end from the beginning. He, says the theologians, made and planned nature as it is, he made man as he is. And assuming so absurd, so shocking a conclusion, that God is more than a mere figment of human imagination, it is too late to count his giving us a tardy victory as compensation for what that victory has cost. The dead will still be piled up as a monumental and eloquently dumb indictment of the wisdom and goodness of the Christian God. The bodies of mangled children will be there speaking with greater eloquence than could have been achieved by them had they been permitted to grow to the greatest of maturities. The shattered homes, the tormented minds, the hardened brutalities, the consecrated lies, the deeply seated distrust between peoples, all these things will remain as a legacy of a war which is already giving birth to epical praise that will hand on warfare as a great and glorious thing. It is bad enough having to face these things as consequences of human error, but to count them as part of a world plan designed by God is to create an unspeakable horror. If "too late" can be written over many of the actions of man, it can at



least be inscribed with calm sorrow and a determination that the future shall better the past. But to assume a God who could have prevented this, but did not, who might in comparative kindness have blotted out the human race, but would not, is to saddle human endeavour with an almost inconceivable load of horror.

My readers may remember that after long years the futilities of the Macdonald Government, the glaring dishonesties of the Baldwin one, and the fumbling futilities of the Chamberlain reign, drew from Lloyd George the contemptuous cry to Mr. Chamberlain, "For God's sake get out!" That demand came none too soon, and it had been well-earned. The time has surely arrived when we could say the same to the deity whom we are told controls all things. It is time that in no uncertain tones man cried to the gods "For humanity's sake get out. Leave us alone and we will cleanse human society of the evils of your rule and the consequences of your failures!"

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### DEFENCE OF JUDAS ISCARIOT

*(On Judgment Day the case of Judas Iscariot, charged with betraying his Master, was heard before the Three Persons of the Trinity; God the Father presiding. As Judas, having given back the 30 pieces of silver, was entirely destitute, and as no lawyer, as usual, could be found to defend him for nothing, he was granted a Court brief, and no less a person than the Archangel Gabriel asked me to undertake the case, which I did. The following is my final speech for the defence.)*

**MAY IT PLEASE YOUR LORDSHIPS:** It is now my duty to address you finally in defence of Mr. Iscariot, of whom so many and such hard things have been said since his decease by pseudo-Christians anxious to flatter at least one of you, and by the four witnesses for the prosecution, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; not one of whom, however, can be described as either impartial or unbiased in his evidence.

First, let me remind your Lordships of the indictment which charges Judas with the highest of all treasons: the betrayal, not merely of his friend or his King, but of a God. It is quite clear that Judas, like the other apostles, did not know, at the time, that his master was God. Therefore he must be taken as having betrayed (if anybody!) his master and friend. But my case is that he betrayed no one. The prosecution rests on the statements of the Four Evangelists that he "betrayed" by identifying his master in the Garden of Gethsemane. However, those four witnesses stated over and over again that Jesus was well known to the Pharisees, Sadducees, Chief Priests and Rulers of the people. No identification by a disciple was necessary. Thousands already knew him. Any "betrayal," therefore, is out of the question.

If Mr. Iscariot "betrayed" anybody at all, it was certainly not Jesus but his employers, the chief priests, by mulcting them of 30 pieces of silver. Even in this he deserves no blame, for he voluntarily returned the price, when no doubt realising that his services had no value. When one considers how difficult it is for a Jewish, or even a Scottish, gentleman to return anyone's money, I think Judas deserves credit for this return. It is true that the poor fellow confessed "I have betrayed the innocent blood"; but he was clearly distraught at the time and horrified at Jesus' masochistic conduct in allowing himself to be arrested and not working an easy miracle and "passing through the midst of them," as he did once before, or "withdrawing" when the multitude would have made him a King by force, as John tells us.

Further, on the "betrayal by identification" point, it must be acknowledged that, quite apart from his notoriety and the familiarity of the Jews of that period with his person, Jesus, by failing to run away, identified himself to those sent to arrest him. All the witnesses for the prosecution agreed that "they all forsook him and fled." There is no difficulty in identifying one person when only one person is present.

I have no wish to attack Simon, afterwards called Peter, who has risen so high since the time of these happenings that he is now Heaven's lodge-keeper, and actually regarded as honourable enough to be the ancestor of those Popes of Rome, almost all of whom your Lordships have convicted and condemned for the gravest offences. But compare Judas's conduct with Peter's. Surely the former

was the better man. Peter betrayed his master and friend three times; Judas but once. In remorse Peter merely "wept bitterly"—"tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean"; Judas, in remorse, killed himself. Peter lied, and lied upon oath, in denying his master. Yet a little later this same lying Peter struck Annanias and Sapphira dead merely for a small lie about money—they "kept back part of the price." This was every bit as hypocritical as the Judas-kiss. Nay, it was worse, in my respectful submission to your Lordships and to the Second Person in particular, because a false kiss is a mere monetary unpleasantness, while death is a much more lasting horror. Further, Peter, in spite of his cowardice, treachery and hypocrisy, only received a reproachful look from his master, and has been grotesquely over-honoured by the Church ever since. But the unfortunate Judas was publicly stigmatized at the Last Supper, has been in obloquy in the mouths of mankind ever since, and still stands in danger of eternal damnation, hell-fire and the worm which—

**THE THIRD PERSON** (interrupting): I do not think that learned counsel for the defence should anticipate what may or may not be the decision of the Court.

**MYSELF:** I am obliged to your Lordship. Your Lordship—indeed, all your Lordships—being omniscient, are always right. I will refrain.

**THE SECOND PERSON** (graciously): If it will assist learned counsel, I will say at once that I forgave, and do forgive, not only Judas, but much worse persons than my old disciple. Unfortunately, my Father here takes a different view; and so perhaps counsel had better continue.

**MYSELF:** Your Lordship's observation greatly helps me, and I can only hope that it will influence the remaining members of the Bench more than any weak words of mine possibly can.

**THE FIRST PERSON:** Go on, sir.

**MYSELF:** Reverting to what I was saying: It seems unjust that Peter should be so honoured and Judas so disgraced. I say this with the greatest respect for Peter, with his keys of heaven and hell. I may add that the witnesses against Judas are not reliable witnesses, and are obviously biased. Luke, for instance, first in his Gospel told us that Judas returned the price and committed suicide; but in his Acts of the Apostles made Peter say that Judas bought a field "with the reward of iniquity," fell headlong, burst asunder and all his bowels gushed out. Which story is true? I cross-examined Luke on this point, and it turned out that he was speaking from hearsay in both statements. He should have verified his facts before giving two contradictory tales. Counsel for the prosecution tried to suggest that both tales might be true: Judas might hang and fall. But who bought the field? No; it won't do. The second story was mere vilification of the unhappy dead man who, if he sinned treacherously as all of us do paid with his life, as most of us don't.

Doubtless more might be said on behalf of the accused, but, deeply humbled, he has not gone into the witness-box and told his own story, nor is it for me, his counsel, to

"... draw his frailties from their dread abode.

There they alike in trembling hope repose,

The bosom of his Father and his God."

All the evidence that we have before us are the testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—obviously incomplete testimonies. Not one of these witnesses said a single good word for the defendant. Much of their unfavourable testimony was derived from second-hand sources, I suspect mostly from Peter, who made it quite clear in an early sermon that he took a strong view of his fellow-disciple's character and conduct. "More royalist than the King" describes Peter's attitude, for he forgot his master's forgiving doctrine, as human beings are apt to do.

Further, let me pray in aid of my defence the fact that before the material date Judas was a man of good character. He must have been that, or Jesus would not have chosen him, nor would he have desired himself to be chosen. He was the treasurer: he carried the bag, and not even the witnesses for the prosecution, prejudiced as they are, suggest he ever stole or embezzled any of the money. If there were the slightest ground for an accusation of that kind, depend upon it, it would have been brought. Nor was my client indifferent to hard cash, as the 30 pieces of silver showed, but there were things he valued more, as that same episode also proved with his life.

Finally, I observe that all the rest of the apostles are going straight to Heaven—except Judas. Let me then quote to the Court various parables spoken by Jesus—the one Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, the Prodigal Son—and remind you all of his earthly saying: "There is more joy over one sinner that repenteth than the other ninety-and-nine just persons who need no repentance." I urge the



Court towards that joy, for Judas repented even unto death, and there can hardly be a greater repentance than laying down one's life for it.

I ask your Lordships to acquit the prisoner, and I trust your decision may be unanimous.

*(The Triune Court conferred. Later, the First Person announced that the Holy Trinity had acquitted Judas Iscariot (distinguishing his case from the worse cases of many European Popes, prelates and politicians) by two votes to one, the First Person himself being the negative. Judas, after warmly thanking his counsel, was admitted to Heaven by St. Peter, who was not too pleased with my speech or its result. Since this cause célèbre I have been overwhelmed with briefs, and it is generally believed, since this result, that even Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England may have a chance of escaping the Pharisees' "greater damnation" if properly defended by experienced criminal counsel. But the case of those European statesmen who caused the bombing of women and children is regarded as hopeless.)*

C. G. I. DU CANN.

## THE PROTAGONIST OF FEMALE ENFRANCHISEMENT

THERE were mild protests against the subjection of women before Mary Woolstonecraft. Yet this emotional and fearless advocate of woman's emancipation was the first Englishwoman to state the case in unmistakable terms.

It has been justly said that the most advanced female reformers of the 20th century did no more than repeat the message contained in Mary Woolstonecraft's celebrated "Vindication of the Rights of Woman." This work seems the sole product of her pen that is read to-day. Most of her other writings are now ignored, despite the discriminating and unconventional biography which Mr. G. R. Stirling Taylor has given to the reading public (Martin Secker, 1911). Mr. Taylor intimates that he has devoted more attention than most of his predecessors to his heroine's minor productions, which are very inaccessible. Like Thomas Paine, she defended the French Revolution from the aspersions of its bitter assailant, Edmund Burke. This, notes Taylor, "with her keen analysis of the French Revolution, her slighter books of fiction—all these remain in their first and only editions of the 18th century. . . . They have received very scanty notice since their first appearance."

Submission to male authority and strict observance of traditional rules was the accepted code of the age. A member of the middle class, Mary, as a girl, scorned the conventions to which her sisters were slaves and, at the age of 16, boldly aspired to earn an independent living with her pen. This was then a daring resolve, for the number of women writers who had preceded her was exceedingly small. Lucy Hutchinson had already rendered Virgil and Lucretius, but these early translations remain in manuscript. The Duchess of Newcastle composed memoirs and other writings which were published. Lady Fanshawe also wrote her "Memoirs," but these fashionable dames were mere amateurs. For the first recorded pen-women who wrote for a living were Alpha Behn, Susannah Centlivre and Mrs. Manley. This trio was one of distinct ability and its members were fairly successful in their vocation. Indeed, Mary Manley succeeded the great Jonathan Swift in the editorship of the "Examiner," and her plays were well received. Stirling Taylor considers that "she successfully asserted the rights of women in days when it had not occurred to anyone that women had rights. But she was almost the solitary swallow which does not make the summer."

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu was another pioneer. Hannah More and Fanny Burney also made their mark. Yet, when the latter determined upon publication, she deemed it desirable to keep her intention secret from her father. Still, the fact stared men in the face that the woman, Elizabeth, was a most sagacious Sovereign, perhaps the greatest that has ever occupied the English throne, while women like Aspasia and Sappho in ancient Greece proved conclusively that intellect is not completely confined to the masculine world.

Mary Woolstonecraft was born in 1759. Her father, Godwin tells us, was "a despot whose wife appears to have been the first and most submissive of his subjects."

Woolstonecraft inherited the then large fortune of £10,000 from his father which he soon proceeded to squander. The family migrated from place to place, and as her fickle father proved a brute, Mary soon regarded him with scornful contempt. As a girl she became acquainted with their next-door neighbours, the Clares, when the Woolstonecrafts were resident in Hoxton. Clare himself was a clergyman who introduced Mary to the Blood family, which seemed a second edition of her own. The father was a confirmed sot, the mother was a very weak woman and the children were left to their own devices. Fanny Blood painted pictures which she sold for the maintenance of her family. This display of female independence strengthened Mary's resolve to express her own individuality in literature. In the meantime, Mary and her friend Fanny opened a school in Islington, then a country village, and subsequently tried their fortunes as teachers at nearby Newington Green. This experiment, however, proved a dismal failure, and economic necessity drove Mary to penmanship. She had witnessed several cases of matrimonial misery, yet she realised the helpless position of the penurious spinster in middle-class society. All these bitter experiences proved preparatory to her celebrated pronouncement on the Woman Question.

A remarkably handsome woman, Mary met Samuel Johnson, and her beauty and charm captivated the irascible lexicographer, but his death soon ended their acquaintance. The famous Dr. Price was also warmly friendly, but the turning point of her literary life was her intimacy with Johnson, the St. Paul's Churchyard publisher. He treated her as his daughter, and from 1778 to 1791 she served as his publisher's reader and translator and contributed to his "Analytical Review." This led to her introduction to London's literary circle, for Johnson was a leading publisher who first introduced the works of Cowper and Erasmus Darwin to the reading world. He also published the writings of Thomas Paine as well as those of Fuseli and the heterodox artist, William Blake. "So it happened," observes Taylor, "that she who had been brought up in a home where high thinking was put on one side for deep drinking, was suddenly plunged into the very heart of the intellectual conspiracy against orthodoxy." She found this atmosphere congenial and cast aside the surviving remnants of her early religious creed.

Mary was now earning money which she bestowed very liberally on her relatives, hoping to aid them in the battle of life. "The Vindication of the Rights of Woman," the work which first made her famous, was a spirited reply to Edmund Burke's strictures on the French Revolution. Taylor regards this essay as "one of the most dashing political polemics in the language." Yet, while writing this vehement tract, Mary was the victim of a severe attack of nervous depression—a trouble that recurred throughout her brief life—which led to such debility that her publisher had to exercise his most persuasive arts to induce her to complete it.

Burke's lamentation over the woes of Marie Antoinette, with his indifference to the sufferings of the starving peasantry, inflamed her anger. She told Burke: "Misery to reach your heart, I perceive, must have its caps and bells; your tears are reserved very naturally, considering your character, for the declarations of the theatre and the downfall of queens, whose rank throws a graceful veil over vices which degrade humanity; but the distress of many industrious mothers whose helpmates have been torn from them, and the hungry cry of helpless babes were vulgar sorrows which could not move your commiseration, though they might extort your alms." This onslaught created quite a stir in the literary world and gave Mary a recognised standing as a writer.

Strikingly enough, at the very time she was composing her "Vindication of the Rights of Woman," which subsequently appeared, she was the brilliant companion of the metropolitan men of letters of the period. Apparently the outside public regarded the authoress as a truculent and dowdy bluestocking and was greatly surprised, Godwin assures us, to learn that the writer was "lovely in her person, and in the best and most engaging sense, feminine in her manner."

Yet her masterpiece, despite its title, was really a declaration of the rights of the entire human race. Thus, woman, instead of being a stumbling block to progress,



might make her legitimate contribution to human advance. For while pleading for female emancipation her chief contention reposes on the simple principle that if the feminine sex "be not prepared by education to become the companion of man, it will stop the progress of knowledge and virtue." But as her own experiences in later life proved she seriously underestimated the part played by sex in family and social life. Nevertheless, she advocated the parliamentary vote for women more than a century before it was gained. Also, she deprecated the insincere bowing and scraping to women customary in polite society as concessions which only thinly concealed the real supremacy of the male sex. Trimmings apart, the really practical requirement of free womanhood was economic security. "The laws respecting women make an absurd unit of a man and his wife; and then by the easy transition of only considering him as responsible, she is reduced to a mere cypher."

Mary's brief life was now nearing its close, for she died in giving birth to the baby girl, Mary Godwin, who became Shelley's second wife. In reviewing her own experiences in later life, Mary Woolstoncraft Godwin, as she then was, stated that: "All the world is a stage . . . and few are there in it who do not play their part by rote; and those who do not, seem marks to be set up to be pelted at by fortune; or rather as signposts which point the road to others, while forced to stand still themselves amidst the mud and dust."

Mary Woolstoncraft, like so many other eminent women, became a pronounced Freethinker. As already intimated, she died in childbirth. Every effort was made by Dr. Fordyce to prolong a life so precious to her husband, William Godwin, the author of "Political Justice," and her many affectionate friends. Pious fictions concerning her death-bed became current. Even one of her biographers, observes Stirling Taylor, "Kegan Paul would have us make her death a scene of Christian fortitude, yet the evidence shows that she was very indifferent about her past or her future; for Godwin says: 'During the whole of her illness not one word of a religious cast fell from her lips.'" T. F. PALMER.

### TO WINK!

THE famous point of attachment of the *winker-muscle* (*orbicularis palpebrarum*) is the inner side of the rim of the orbit.

(*Journ. Anthropol. Instit.* IV., 244, note.)

The winking membrano of a bird's eye is the *winker muscle*.

Two truths are told. Many similar might be added, but what we know not is so alluring, and as "It is not lawful for us to be ignorant of that we know not" (vide Montaigne), I think it desirable to lessen, if possible, our legal liability!

God says Paul has got an *orbicularis palpebrarum*—He *winks!*—which fact ought to command the homage of the devout!

God had evidently tipped Paul the *wink!* God and his apostle often indulged in forty *winks*, sometimes exceeding that number! On one of these occasions Paul would have been caught napping but for his being let down, like *winking*, by the city wall in a basket, dressed for the part, no doubt, with a *wink-a-peep* (scarlet pimpernel) for a button-hole.

The translators of the Bible, in 1611, fixed upon the word *wink* as being a correct rendering of the Greek word *uperidon*. Now, between 1611 and 1941, the word *wink* has not altered in meaning. The word is not a respectable one. It is associated with a gambling, disreputable class of men, and words, like men, are known by the company they keep! Why, therefore, should God stoop so low as to *wink?*

This word is used sparingly in the Bible. Its use must have been overlooked! Judging from the nature of the Bible stories, much *winking* must have been indulged in! In Prov. x. 10: He that *winketh* deceitfully with his eyes collecteth sorrow for men (lxx.).

He that *winketh* with the eye causeth sorrow (A.V. and R.V.).

Job xv. 12: What do thy eyes *wink* at? (A.V.). Why do thine eyes *wink*? (R.V.). At what do thine eyes take aim? (lxx.).

Ps. xxxv. 19: Neither let them *wink* with the eyes that hate me without a cause (A.V. and R.V.). Over me let

not my bitter enemies rejoice; who hate me without a cause, and give assent with their eyes (lxx.).

Acts xvii. 30: For the times of this ignorance God *winked* at (A.V.).

And God, indeed, having *winked* at the time of this ignorance, now declareth unto men that all should everywhere do penance (Vulgate).

Why did God *wink*? If he *winked* at "times of ignorance" he must have had a busy time! In some of the past centuries he must have done little else but *wink!*

Words are used for making known our thoughts. The translators of the A.V. evidently thought that the word *wink* represented what was in the mind of God. But what was precisely in the finite mind of the infinite is not revealed!

The Revisers of the O.T. admit, in their preface, that numerous passages in the A.V. are rendered, by mistranslation, "either inadequate or inconsistent, and sometimes misleading"; and that changes in the text were made by a two-thirds vote of the company present. Marginal reading, punctuation, etc., "were decided by a simple majority."

The Greek word *uperidon* may have suffered by mistranslation. Liddell and Scott give *overlook*, as also does the R.V., while the A.V. gives *wink*. But it may have been the "other eye" that their translation was meant for!

Other instances of the A.V.'s blunders:—

"Saul was one year old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years over Israel" (1 Sam. xiii. 1).

Jehoram died when 40 years of age, and was immediately followed by his son Ahaziah, who was 42—two years older than his father! (See 2 Chron. xxi. 20, xxii. 1-2.)

"The Cormorant and the Bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows" (Zeph. ii. 14).

For "Cormorant and Bittern" the R.V. gives "Pelican and Porcupine"!!

The Revisers must have had an audition of these gifted songsters before making what Artemus Ward would have called "their unparalleled decision!" But they warned us that such "imperfections" were unavoidable!

In the Preface to the R.V. (New Testament) we read:—

"Blemishes and imperfections there are in the noble Translation which we have been called upon to revise; blemishes and imperfections will assuredly be found in our revision, etc."

God's will, we are given to understand by the R.V. men, was not translated as it ought to have been, whilst admitting that it still remains by them imperfectly translated.

Should God be allowed to torment us for ever, before we can get a perfect translation of his will?

GEORGE WALLACE

### ACID DROPS

THERE is one quality we cannot deny the Christian God. He runs true to form. We have had many days of prayer in this country, and the King—who is, since the Archbishop of Canterbury worked his Westminster Cathedral magic by incarnating at least a part of the deity in the King—led some of these prayerful processions. And always they were followed by streaks of serious set-backs. Now we learn from the Press that the Governor of Singapore, before the Japanese made their direct attack on the stronghold, said, "We are in God's hands"—and in a few days Singapore fell. Of course, the Japanese Emperor is also an incarnation of God, officially, and so it may be a case of God against God. But a plentiful supply of aeroplanes would have been more satisfying than being in the hands of God.

A very touching story is told by the "Evening Standard" concerning the Governor, Sir Shenstone Thomas. When he took up his appointment Sir Shenstone "caused surprise by leading a cricket team on the field. This was regarded locally as a democratic gesture." A "democratic gesture"! It reminds one of the ridiculous figure cut by Lord Halifax, in the United States, where he was pictured taking a drink out of a bottle as an indication of his democracy. The conscious condescension of these men, taken with the appreciation shown by the "common people" of their stage antics, shows how far we have to travel in order to deserve the name of a democracy. Democracy is not exhibited by patronising a popular game, nor by drinking out of a bottle or the use of ungrammatical English, or by the



possession of a vote. The basis of a democracy is the recognition of the equality of men and women as equal members of a common human group. We have a long, long way to travel before we have an unquestionable right to call ourselves a democracy.

The plot that was hatched by the leaders of the Church and certain members of our democratic Government to establish the dominancy of the clergy in the State-provided schools is developing, and it will succeed unless some of our elected members summon up enough courage to dare the religious influences in their constituencies. There is also, it must be pointed out, some kind of an agreement between the Protestant Church leaders and the Roman Catholic Church, which is as unscrupulous as ever where the interests of the Church is concerned. The Roman Church will certainly not agree to send its children to a school where Protestantism is supreme. It will not agree even to a scheme which permits the withdrawal of the children during school hours for instruction in the Roman Catholic creed. It demands a Roman Catholic "atmosphere" during the whole of the school time.

Here are the Roman Catholic demands as plainly set out by the "Universe." It demands "the erection and full financial maintenance of denominational and undenominational schools. . . . The religious needs of the neighbourhood are necessary for all and should be provided for all." That is, the State is to provide all, and hand over all the schools to the control of the different religious sects. No viler plot was ever hatched, and it is being helped by leading members of a Government overwhelmingly Tory in character and claiming to be democratic.

With the above we may take a letter published in the "Daily Telegraph" from a Mr. F. E. Harrison, who writes from an education department. He says:—

"There should be room for diversity of type in this subject as in secular subjects. The orthodox, the heterodox and the sceptic should all be protected. Those who believe in denominational instruction and those who do not should be accorded equal facilities."

If that means anything it is that there should be schools for Christians and for Atheists and other forms of religious Freethinking. Does anyone imagine that the State in this country is likely to agree to this arrangement? We question whether Mr. Harrison would agree to his own plan if it were plainly stated. One need only recall the demand for the suppression of Freethinking schools when some experiments were tried soon after the Russian revolution.

But there is a very important consideration that none of these sectarians face. The schools should be institutions that lay the foundations of a feeling, later to become an understanding of a common citizenship. If we are ever to have that conviction in adults, not merely when an outsider threatens a nation, but during times when war is looming, the grounds of it should be laid during school life, which should not end before pupils reach the age of 15 or 16. Yet in these susceptible years the sense of a common social life is to be cut across by the exhibition, day after day, of sectarian differences which represent no more than the stupid demand of parents that what they believe concerning gods and ghosts and devils, heaven and hell, shall be taught to their children as incontestible truths. The schools should maintain an atmosphere of common feeling and aims. Religion must always carry with it the inevitable atmosphere of fundamental division.

Sir F. Manders, secretary of the National Union of Teachers, warns the public that "we are not as near to a solution of the religious question as we were a year ago. We are glad to hear it, if the settlement means satisfying the Churches. There can no more be a profitable arrangement with the Churches over the schools than there can be a just one with Germany over the Continent. There can be no just way of selling the future of the children to gratify the aims of spiritual buccaneers.

No one has yet pointed out that the "Normandie" which, we think, has met with more than one accident, was blessed by the Roman Catholics as well as by Protestants. It might just as well have been cursed by them. Is it not time that we dropped this foolishly fantastical customs of blessing ships. We note that in issuing insurances the companies do not inquire whether a ship has been properly blessed or by whom it has just been launched. Underwriters make very close inquiries concerning ships before insuring them, but the question, "Has this ship been properly blessed?" is not among them; and Christians would far rather have a competent Atheist in charge than an incompetent religious commander.

Here is a passage from one who would, we expect, call himself religious, because he has some nebulous belief which he would call a religion and uses the term "God" as substantially throwing over all that historical Christianity has taken the word to mean. The author is Professor A. N. Whitehead, the book is "Religion in the Making":—

"History down to the present day is a melancholy sacrifice, and in particular the slaughter of children, record of the horrors which can attend religion; human cannibalism, sensual orgies, abject superstition, hatred as between races, the maintenance of degrading customs, hysteria, bigotry can be laid to its charge. Religion is the last refuge of human savagery." All we need add to this is that religion was born of the human savagery on which it has naturally built.

That very useful publication, "Spanish News Letter," gives an enlightening account of the state of affairs in Spain. In a recent tour of the country by General Franco it says that "the streets of Barcelona were patrolled by armed police and machine-guns were at every important corner; no less than 5,000 armed police were drafted to the city for Franco's safety. All along his routes police with rifles and machine-guns were placed." Large numbers of the German Gestapo were present. It may be taken for granted that Spain, whenever it is ordered to do so by Germany, will take an active part against us in the war. Already a large detachment of Spaniards is fighting against the Russians. Our Ambassador in Spain is Sir Samuel Hoare—the same Hoare who entered into the Laval plot for handing Abyssinia over to Mussolini. The "honest" Baldwin was compelled to deprive him of office to pacify the British public, but he was soon reinstated. Let us hope that his influence on Spain is of a better character.

There is an interesting point in the "Catholic Herald" for February 20. Attention is called to a letter sent by the Young Communist League, asking for the co-operation of the Catholic Young Christian Workers in the fight against Fascism. The reply from Fr. George Davy, chaplain to the Y.C.W., is a refusal of any alliance with a party which is without "morality." Not a different conception of morality, but merely that it does not believe in the morality of the Roman Church.

We are not surprised at this, because the Roman Church dare not trust its younger members to move in friendly collaboration with a youth movement that is without the Christian religion, at least. We question whether it would permit its young people to join with even a non-Catholic Christian body. The Roman Church knows that the only way to keep its people—particularly the young ones—is to segregate them. "Ye are my sheep."

Now if the Roman Church, as it exists in a non-Catholic country, dare not risk its youth associating in a "common front" against German and Japanese Fascism, what are we to expect when the war closes and an effort is made to form a friendly and real alliance with Russia? Quite plainly we must expect the Roman Church, with its British aids, to do what it can to prevent any world alliance that is not controlled by Christianity ever becoming real and lasting. The Roman Church, as ever, remains a real threat to the betterment of human society. To it the case is, the Church or chaos, so that it may be said that it is chaos because the Church is not with it.



## "THE FREETHINKER"

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### SUGAR PLUMS

MR. COHEN has not been able to pay many visits to the Provinces this winter. Added to the difficulties of securing suitable halls—most of them being taken by the Government, whether they were used or not—the prolonged time taken in travelling, and absence from London for three days, have made it difficult for him to pay his usual visits. There are, however, several places he will visit between now and the middle of April. His first visit will be to the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, on March 8. The meeting will be held in the afternoon. Subject: "What Will Follow Religion?"

Very gently we wish to remind all concerned that the countries to which we are all looking to play a very important and a decisive part in winning the war are Russia and China. The first is the only country engaged in the war the Government of which has definitely set the gods on one side. More, it has declared that until men clear their minds of godism the social structure will always be less effective than it might. There has been with Russia no days of national prayer—and it is the one country that has more decisively checked German attacks than any other.

China, with a population of over 300 millions, is definitely a non-Christian country, and there is not the slightest prospect of it ever becoming a Christian one. The majority of its people are either Buddhists or followers of Confucius. Buddhism has, in its pure state, nothing to do with gods of any kind. It is substantially an Atheistic system, with a more scientific morality than Christianity can lay claim to. Confucius certainly treated the gods very coldly.

From our own leaders we get nothing now but praise of these two peoples. Without them world peace seems impossible. With them and the United States thrown in, victory, no matter how long it is delayed, is as certain as anything in this world can be. Finally, considering the treatment of both Russia and China by the Christian world, it looks as though they are heaping coals of fire on the heads of Christians. It may be that the thickness of the heads of most of them will prevent these live coals doing more than merely scorch them, but the facts we have pointed out look as though they deserve some consideration.

We have said several times of late that when the time comes for which we are all looking and longing, namely, the end of this war and the creation of a world peace, the only chance of bringing about a lasting peace is for Russia, Britain and the United States joining hands—and keeping these hands clean. To these we think we ought to add China as among the leaders of this world peace. But we

have also pointed out that when the time comes for creating this desirable endeavour, the one enemy near home that we shall have to reckon with will be the Roman Catholic Church. The Roman policy has been, and continues to be, no friendly alliance with anti-Christian countries, and only a limited toleration with non-Christian ones.

The newspapers of February 19 carried a picture of Mr. Churchill drinking out of a mug at a canteen he was visiting. That kind of a picture is, of course, intended to show to the world what a real democracy we are. We wish this sort of manoeuvre would stop, for what it does show is that we are far removed from a real democracy. In a genuine democracy such a circumstance would pass without notice. It is only when an aristocrat "stoops" to sharing the life of the "common" people for a moment that incidents of the kind are worth recording. We are not criticising Mr. Churchill, but rather the "common" people, who themselves feel interested, even honoured, that such an incident should occur. After all, when a man pats the head of a dog he does it partly because the dog likes its head to be patted, and in human intercourse one man can look down on another only when the other one looks up.

May we offer a suggestion? British Christians have prayed very hard for success against the Axis forces. The sequential result has been that the enemy has not been beaten and the war promises to drag on for a long while yet. Moreover, following nearly each organised bombardment of heaven, we have had a disaster of some kind. Now it has occurred to us that God may have his pride: he may dislike criticism, and if a Prime Minister may retort to his critics, "If you are not satisfied with the way I am running the war get someone else"—which is, of course, the significance of a vote of confidence—why may it not be that God resents his people telling him how to do his job? After all, gods have their feelings, as also have Prime Ministers, and no god and no Prime Minister likes to have it quietly suggested to him that he might manage things better than he does.

So we suggest that as the ordinary prayers to God are followed by victories for the Axis party, and if we are right in our suspicion that this is because God resents advice given as to what he should do, the British Government should proclaim a day of National prayer and pray loudly for the victory of Germany in Europe and for the victory of Japan in Asia. Then we might witness a striking and decisive victory for the Allied forces. It seems worth trying.

There is a very close and instructive likeness between kingship and religion in their evolution. Every anthropologist knows that kingship in its rise is purely religious. The king is an incarnation of a tribal deity, a transformation that can be traced in the English consecration of the king. Being an incarnation of the god, the king's person is "sacred"; he is always of a superior character—to all who believe in him—and he guides his people in a more or less miraculous manner. Then comes the conflict of superstition with more civilized thinking. Bit by bit the miraculous power of the king declines, but in its stead, however commonplace and ordinary the king may be, he is still credited with a very powerful and quite undefinable influence exercised for the benefit of the people. There is a transmission of all the primitive superstitions in terms of alleged social value. The subject is worth dealing with in detail. We did this on the occasion of the Westminster coronation of the present King. But we may deal with it again.

When one comes to think about it, we ought, from the religious point of view, to be in clover. We have a King who is partly deified by the Westminster ceremonial, we have Archbishops who are called by God, via the Prime Minister, and an army of parsons advising the Lord what to do.



## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

RECENT efforts have been made by the Archbishop of York and various other ecclesiastical leaders to reawaken the dying embers of the education controversy. A wish has been expressed by them for the introduction of doctrinal religious teaching into all schools at the expense of the State. A correspondence in "The Times" has been reinforced by a deputation to the Ministry of Education. The question is serious, for it involves a far-reaching threat to liberty of opinion in religion.

The Archbishop is quite clear as to his desires. The orthodox doctrines of the Christian Faith are to become a part of the normal educational curriculum. Instruction is to be given by teachers who are properly qualified in the subject. The rights of parents are safeguarded by a conscience clause, but there seems little expectation that widespread exception would be taken to such teaching. The country is to be recalled to a new spiritual life by an inoculation of schoolchildren with credal instruction.

In spite of the studious moderation in which they are couched, the demands make far-reaching inroads upon a liberty of the subject already threatened enough. They certainly involve tests for teachers and possibly for school inspectors as well. The rights of minority groups within the State are tacitly set aside. There is an easy assumption that it is the concern of a modern State to teach a defined orthodoxy in religion. The children are to be subjected to an education confined within certain specific preconceived supernatural limits which must dictate the general conclusions set forth in any subject. It is the same cast of mind which attempted, in the middle of the last century, to square Darwin with Genesis.

The issue is important; it spells a new attempt at ecclesiastical domination in the State. For almost a century the Church has lost hold in the management of secular affairs. For example, the Divorce Act of 1857 marked the beginning of the end as far as the interpretation of law in terms of religious morality was concerned. Education was freed from a background of denominational propaganda. Whilst any Church was at liberty to conduct its own schools, a compromise was reached in 1870 which removed the teaching of the creeds from the orbit of the ratepayer.

The justice of such a move was obvious to the legislators of 1870. Nonconformists and non-believers were not involved in the hypocrisy of paying for doctrinal teaching which they did not accept. Education was put upon a basis largely secular in tone. Results have justified the steps then taken. The average product of English State-aided schools stands far in advance of children reared in the Church establishments. The examples of priestly education to be seen in such countries as Spain, Ireland or Italy leave no doubt as to which is the better system. The child is neither encouraged to become a morbid adolescent pietist nor trained into a little bigot. The teacher is free to impart an objective knowledge of his subject. He is not in danger through the scrutiny of a Diocesan Inspector or some other upholder of religious orthodoxy. The vast improvement in tone to be observed among artisans, which has taken place during the last 70 or 80 years, is very largely the outcome of the system of popular education. It has provided the opportunities for a new seriousness of life. It is not without significance that there is no parallel in countries where the schools are under priestly control, nor was it generally induced, in spite of common assertion, by the Evangelical Revival during the 18th century.

But there are even more far-reaching considerations. The Church leaders are always crying out about diminishing numbers. The orthodox doctrines are shattered so far as educated men are concerned. It is highly unlikely that the Atonement, for example, will again be accepted as a belief commonly held. Miracles are no longer treated seriously by historians. Orthodox Christianity is not so much denounced as ignored. There is no repetition of the secularist controversy of the last century. Charles Bradlaugh is without counterpart in the popular forum. But this is not due to a revival of belief. Churchgoing is far less common than it was in the days of the older secularists. There is general indifference to the subject. The impotence of the Churches to set forth any distinctive attitude with

regard to the war, their constant inconsistent echoing of popular opinion, their opportunism, has intensified the breach which exists between the ecclesiastics and the average thinking member of the population.

It is futile to imagine that this general outlook can be altered by merely inoculating children with a serum of orthodox theology. Religion is, in the last resort, an affair which concerns human emotions and impulses. It is an individual matter in the teaching of which the State has no part. Religious education, as the Archbishop of York understands the term, can mean nothing more than instruction in factual knowledge concerning certain traditional doctrines and creeds. It bears no obvious relationship to the religious experience of those who accept some such mystical explanation of life. At the moment it means nothing more than a demand that children should be taught as truth certain theological views which once swayed men's minds but which they accept no longer. The fact that there is an increasing volume of intellectual and moral criticism directed against these doctrines suggests that the attempt to use schools as centres of propaganda on their behalf is scarcely an honest or straightforward proceeding. It is on a level with the choice of a time of intense national crisis in order to raise the matter at all.

There is an obvious political bearing to the whole question. The Churches have stood firm on the side of vested interest. Anglicanism is, historically, the preserve of the Tory Party. In spite of certain clergy of wider views, three centuries of tradition cannot be broken down overnight. It still remains as a façade of Tory sentiment. In many places the tone of religion imparted in Church schools is largely that of the old squire-parson relationship. It has shown scant sympathy with movements for social reform. The Malvern Conference denounced the profit motive in industry. It was revolutionary in its implications. But nobody lost a night's rest concerning it. The outcome simply meant talk and more talk. It is interesting to compare the lack of general interest in its doings with the excitement provoked by the People's Convention held at the same time. The tone of the one implied activity. The other suggested a flood of words which would never come to birth in any concrete happening. No wealthy pew-holder withdrew his subscription as the result of the Malvern resolutions. Again, orthodox Nonconformity has been the property of the liberal industrialist. Its talk of progress was inhibited by its compromises with the capitalist era. It has ceased to be an effective element within English life through the collapse of political liberalism of this type.

Religious emotions have passed over very largely into the political realm. Men now study Marx or Lenin with the intensity which they once gave to the Bible. The Co-operative Guild has usurped the place of the class meeting. Political oratory has become the contemporary sermon. There is not less religious emotion and instinct, but it takes material form under very different guises. The lessons of this fact have not been lost upon the Church leaders. They are anxious to stabilise the system of society to which they belong. Their interests are bound up in the endeavours of private capitalism, the exclusion of the people from the land, the reign of the banker. On every side the attacks upon this era suggest that the enthusiasm of an ethical socialism is bearing fruit. It is not unnatural that attempts should be made to stem the tide and to increase the grip of established religious institutions upon such potent factors as the education of the country. Obsolete theology, social reaction, the dead hand of past creeds, have been common partners throughout history. The children are to be exposed to them all as a means of stabilising their outlook and preventing their evolution into rebels against conservative social orders, however much the quality of their education is thereby impoverished.

The political dangers of the suggested move are enormous. A machinery is created which uses education as propaganda for accepted creeds. It depends for its ultimate power upon the goodwill of Parliament. It is impossible to say what system of government will prevail in this country in 30 years' time. It could conceivably be a form of totalitarianism. The means are ready for inculcating some political dogma alien to democracy under a religious guise by strengthening the hands of its enemies. The example of



what has actually occurred in both Italy and Germany is a severe warning of what could happen in England if a similar situation of State-dictatorship arose. Democrats would do well to consider the possibilities from this angle before they give way to the ecclesiastical demands upon the schools.

The evolution of society does not show religious institutions to be desirable controlling factors in education. They destroy its objectivity and impartiality. This is the more true when a situation is reached in which teaching of this type can only mean credal assertion. It is not accompanied by efforts to ennoble the character, to train and guide the will or conscience, to provide an atmosphere in which the future citizen may learn a sense of civic responsibility. On the contrary, religious creeds have shown themselves to be impotent to inculcate these ends. They have become merely a series of stated facts, not relevant in themselves to religion in the highest sense of the term and largely disputed in common life. The final end which an effective educational system seeks to achieve is that of culture, a sense of critical discrimination. The failure of the Churches to provide this element in life generally is a sign of their decadence. The lack of a distinctive standard of Christian discrimination by which life may be tested is one of the more remarkable aspects in the present situation. As a result of their condition, the Churches are incompetent to administer education. The present efforts of the ecclesiastical zealots suggest an attempt to withstand the spirit of disintegration by means of an effort at totalitarianism. It is not without interest that they seek the renewed imposition of creeds rather than an interest in moral improvement. They are anxious lest men should be moral or religious in other than the orthodox ways.

There are obvious reasons why no believer in an enlightened democracy could support such a scheme as the Archbishop and his friends propose. It splits up the State into contending theological groups, it perpetrates an injustice against all who do not accept the episcopal theology as an adequate statement of the problems of the Universe, it entails assistance to an atmosphere of social reaction. The scheme belongs to a totalitarian planning rather than to a democratic society. It lowers the meaning of religion from an individual intuition to a matter of State expedient. But its most objectionable features are revealed in the bland manner with which it sacrifices the advantages of objectivity, experiment and comparison, as scientific methods in education, to preconceived notions concerning the truth of certain doctrines. It makes for a lowering of the quality of the educational system generally and, as such, should meet with the resistance which it deserves.

"CLERICUS."

## FREETHOUGHT AND THE UNSEEN WORLD

THE doctrine of Freethought has from time to time been described as arid and devoid of hope. The following extract from an unpublished manuscript is part of an attempt to dispel this conviction, and to show how a comparatively small extension of the powers of animal perception would lead at once to glimpses of a vast Unseen Universe co-existing around and within us, only one small aspect of which forms a recognisable environment to human experience.

With such a vista before him, in the sure and certain knowledge that only the veriest edge of this vast frontier with the unknown has yet revealed itself to the limited animal perception and reason of homo sapiens, no true Freethinker need ever feel discouraged. For before him in all its majesty and mystery lies limitless truth—the enthralling domain of science and evolving intellect, compared with which the sorry myths of tradition are as stories told at our mother's knee.

The following imaginary speculation was included in a chapter entitled "subjectivity" and reads as follows:—

Suppose a surgeon was able to acquire a subject who would allow him to interchange the delicate neural communications between the eyes and the visual centre of the brain with those leading from the ears to the brain centres of hearing. What sort of a world picture would be presented to the patient as he was driven away from Harley Street into the country for convalescence?

Traffic sounds would be registered as intermittent or continuous flashes or stabs of light, whilst as the rapid

variations of sound caused by the light and shade of the streets around Portland Place gave place to a full view of the sunset from Highgate Hill, who knows? Perhaps music so lovely as to drench the soul! And all "real"—just as real as the streets of London and the evening beauty as seen by the driver of our patient's car. If the patient were young and had time to learn, he might in the course of years achieve some sort of harmony and understanding of his new environment, which would at first be as unintelligible as everything in his bedroom appears to a new-born babe. And what kind of a world would this be? No one can tell, nor what new truths it would reveal; and such a world exists, awaiting only the necessary organs or apparatus for its perception, which might some day be available to man. Nor would the strange new world of our imaginary patient necessarily be any larger than our own. Itself only a fractional construction of endless possible worlds, it would be but a limited translation of a different configuration or pattern of "events" and yield a different aspect to anyone who could inhabit it.

Imagine the new values which such a converted creature as our patient would discern and react to. To us, once he learned to use his new world as we do ours, he would appear to be quite insane—hearing light and seeing sound! But the surgeon who operated on him would be able to explain many of his strange actions.

If he was able to retain his memories, he could give us in time a wonderful picture of a world we could not possibly know—perhaps achieving in the end a synthesis of his two worlds which opened up endless new joys and delights. The writer has often wondered how much is really known of certain obsessional mental states, and whether or not many of the strange things which patients "see" and "hear" may not possibly be "real" in some sense the normal observer cannot understand. The extraordinary conviction with which the subject of nervous disease or breakdown calmly asserts the presence of a voice or vision is at times very impressive. To the patient, after all, what he sees or hears is true, and one must presumably allow him the testimony of his own peculiar translatory machinery, even if it can be shown that the rest of us translate the same presentation differently. It is worth noting that light does not exist at all, excepting to those animal species whose perceptive apparatus is developed to pick out the limited range of wave lengths which reveal it as such. A little thought on this fact would do much to lessen the fear of death which is largely born of the darkness, felt to be its principal terror. Whatever else one relinquishes on dissolution, the darkness which accompanies the great silence is of purely subjective significance, and in the greater Universal Background is quite unknown.

"Only while we are living are we separated from the Universe." A Universe containing no sound, no light, no feeling excepting when such aspects are specially and fitfully constructed by consciousness when, in a word, through consciousness a minute part of the Universe is able by some inexplicable chance to catch a glimpse of itself. Would it be true to the real spirit of Freethought to limit the possibility of such auto-perception to the few animal eyes and ears of this small world? Stripped of its theology, could not the perfectly logical conclusion of Berkeley that if the world is anything at all, it is an observed world, be a normal product of free speculation? Must I, as a Freethinker, close my mind to the implications of subjective perception? Must I narrowly deny that anywhere else throughout the whole cosmos there exists any kind of observer other than man himself? It is asking a great deal.

J. R. STURGE-WHITING.

## AN ANSWER IN ONE WORD

What is a disease in the young and a luxury for the old?

What is sustained by the fears of the living and the wealth of the dead?

What compels to perish slowly and painfully from some deadly disease when we might be put to sleep without suffering?

What leaves us defenceless against undue influence when we have become weak and helpless?

What adds imagined terrors to the actual doom of death?

Religion.

TAB CAN.



## BOOKS ON THE WAR

"Offensive Against Germany." (Sebastian Haffner, 1941; Secker and Warburg.)

The author is all for an attack on morale. The bombing of industries, blockade or even invasion of Germany is not likely, he considers, to be effective. (The book was published before the Russian counter-attack.)

He puts forward the following rather peculiar idea. All the Germans, not excluding the most ardent Nazis, have a deep knowledge "that they are the most easily conquered nation in the world," having "an inexorable premonition that they will come to a bad end." From the time of the Cimbric and Teutonic invasions until 1914 "there has been enacted the same simple and impressive myth," the rise of a leader, irruption into foreign living space, great victories, then the turn of the tide, and finally sudden collapse and disaster. On the other hand, he says, the English are noted for a slow start, underrating their opponents and "losing every battle but the last."

It seems to me that any effort to make history look tidy is likely to fail as soon as facts are consulted. It is true that like causes give like effects, and similar sets of historical conditions may be expected to yield similar results. German history superficially lends support to the idea of a recurring myth, particularly in the wars during the Great Migration, but even then we have to suppose that it lay dormant from about the time of the conquests of the Ottos and the Hohenstaufen right up to 1914, and we have to ignore the fact that in 1871, the last act which completes the tragedy, collapse and defeat is missing; and as for the notion that England loses every battle but the last, it is a wild untruth.

English propaganda, he maintains, should play on this German sense of final defeat. Had the Germans found themselves in Britain's position after the collapse of France they "would have capitulated in a swoon. Proof: the certainty with which they expected it of England. The great psychological weapon which turns the secret certainty of impending disaster that obsesses all Germans into live panic is called consternation. At the moment the Germans are like a man in a car which is out of control. The same force which bears him forward at a dizzy speed will hurl him helplessly into the air and on to the ground if a bit of glass in the right place happens to puncture his tyre. What the Germans at the moment can least endure is shock. They are all waiting secretly for the bolting car to crash." The Nazi propaganda machine has drummed the phrase "unconquerable Germany" into their ears to counteract this deep-rooted feeling of historic frustration. Hitler "has repeatedly out-roared and drowned their secret and deep forebodings by the din of his tremendous deeds." Britain must produce counter-propaganda which will bring out this notion of final and inevitable defeat; 80 per cent. of Germans, he opines, are unhappy and therefore susceptible, while 30 to 40 per cent. are filled with positive hatred of the regime, but are doomed to inertia by lack of a revolutionary slogan and technique. "Despite their veneration of uniformity the Germans are the most divided people of Europe," Spain excepted. "Unexampled terror and suppression are needed in Germany to prevent the outbreak of a sanguinary civil war."

Britain has to match Hitler, he says, as a theatrical expert, for he is "the first artist in politics," the "first conscious creator of a political mass-drama," and for its sake the audience is ready to forgo butter for guns. "What does a theatre audience care about profits and losses? It is even willing for a time to be subjugated by a Richard III. Negotiations bewilder it, compromises bore it, but accomplished facts impress it. That is what Hitler has realised and practised for seven years with stupendous success. That is what English statesmen still refuse to grasp. Politics to-day must be produced theatrically or not at all. The purpose of politics is to influence the masses, upon whom every political event depends in the last resort; and the masses are not influenced by transactions, negotiations and calculations, but by action and drama."

"From Munich Chamberlain returned with the completely honest conviction that he had brought off a master stroke of diplomacy," but what the masses of Europe saw was "a great Power flinging its protégé into the dinosaur's

maw." "They branded England as the villain of the piece, and the weak and despicable villain at that. All England's prestige as a great Power and her moral integrity established with sanguinary heroism through centuries of proud history were torn to shreds before the eyes of the world in the space of a few hours of that September day." Even weak nations like Rumania began, under German pressure, to insult and molest British citizens in their midst.

G. H. TAYLOR.

(To be concluded)

## ARE THEY SUPERIOR?

A VAST span of time separates civilised man from his primitive savage ancestors, but it is not generally realised how often they meet in religion and superstition. Self-satisfied Christians feel religiously superior to the savage—quite a common feeling when the other fellow's case is not known—but comparing the respective beliefs and conditions, in what way are Christians superior?

However stupid, to civilised man, the beliefs of savages appear to be, they are representative of the tribal mentality. No conflicting knowledge is available, and the social life of the tribe dovetails with it.

But with Christians in England the facts are quite different; the Bible is not representative of British mentality, scientific knowledge, shattering to Biblical teaching, is available to all for the asking and every fundamental department of our social structure is organised and maintained as though we were a nation of Atheists.

If some Christians deliberately avoid and try to suppress knowledge so as to accommodate an obsolete god, and others, well aware of the disharmony between our social life and Christianity, carry a dead god as a social passport, in what way are they superior in religion to the savage? This at least is certain, the savage is on top in honesty, sincerity and courage. An Indian man god was the son of a carpenter, another was a cotton bleacher; the Christian man god was the son of a carpenter; so here also neither superiority nor originality can be claimed by the Christian. Savages believe certain effigies will keep off evil, Christians believe the same. The savage adorns a post with his effigy, the Christian fixes his to a motor-car and calls it a mascot, but the motor-car does not make the idea superior in the Christian.

A cathedral expresses the tremendous advance in building and architecture over the business premises of a tribal god in Central Africa, but that does not create a similar advance in the religious beliefs let loose in the cathedral. The trade tools used in the cathedral reveal a vastly superior culture over the tools used by the medicine man in his calling, but we are dealing with beliefs—not buildings and vestments. A bloater wrapped in a newspaper does not become a superior bloater by transferring it to a beautiful silk wrapping, and beliefs that are primitive remain primitive no matter in what surroundings they are expressed. Christians and savages expect the same services from their respective gods. Like the tribal gods of savages, the Christian god is expected to look after the welfare of its patrons, to provide good weather and send rain when it is needed—but not too much—to give good crops and bountiful harvests, to keep off sickness and other forms of evil, to fight on our side in war, bless our weapons, give us the victory and deliver us from our enemies. Like savages, Christians place themselves at the mercy of their respective gods, and Christians and savages alike are desperately afraid of their gods. Only too well do they believe in the power and severity of punishments possible from their gods and, in common with savages, the Christian god must be petted, pampered, praised and appeased.

Such beliefs are primitive whether uttered in rude terms in a forest clearing in Africa, or in Oxford accents in a beautiful English cathedral.

When God was officially removed from the government machinery of Russia, gigantic strides in social and economic betterment followed. Then Russia tackled her mighty peace problems with five-year plans. In the present war the absence of days of national prayer does not appear to have made Russian military achievements less brilliant



than those of her allies. That at least should give intelligent Christians courage to compare their intelligence and religious beliefs, and to face the inevitable result, especially when we remember that England and America joined in a day of national prayer on January 1, and the Japanese captured Manila the following day, whilst Russia announced more important successes against the common enemy on the same day.

R. H. ROSETTI.

### IMAGINATION

A GOOD many of us are inclined, at times, to let our imagination run riot, and we give ourselves pleasure or pain according to the nature of our thoughts.

We may have gone to bed with our mind preoccupied with a grievance—real or imaginary—and after spending a restless night, during which the world appeared black and dismal and everyone's hand seemed against us, we get up soured to the extreme. Our shaving water is cold, we cut our face with a razor and swear under our breath; we drop our collar stud and it rolls into some unget-at-able place and we swear again—audibly this time. Eventually we find the fare on the breakfast table anything but inviting, and the news in our morning paper (propped up against the toast rack) most terribly depressing. We fall over the cat as we go to put on our coat and hat and curse it for being such a blithering idiot as to get in our way. Arriving at the station we learn that the train is running late for some unknown—and, we are sure, unjustifiable—reason, and we say what we think about the decadent railway companies. And as for our travelling companions—well, there never was such a lot of loquacious, damned fools. By the time we arrive at the office we have reached boiling point, only to find, from a letter in our morning mail, that we were mistaken after all! That other fellow wasn't—as we imagined—a “wrong 'un,” but has enclosed his cheque with profound apologies for the little delay in remitting.

Alternatively, as we go upstairs we may tell ourselves that we are suffering from some incurable disease, and in the blackness of the night we picture ourselves at death's door, if not actually already laid out for burial, when all that is wrong with us is that we have swallowed our food hastily and set up chronic indigestion. At such times as these we are inclined to magnify our little aches and pains out of all proportion to reality.

Yes, the majority of us are occasionally given to this sort of thing and we torment ourselves in consequence. When we are courting we fancy that some ne'er-do-well is endeavouring his utmost to steal our loved one away from us, and being young and foolish we suffer agonies of mind and body. Later—when we are, as we think, engaged in the serious affairs of life—we become suspicious of those whom we meet in business, and we tell ourselves that some other fellow is trying to do us down in this way or that. The suspicion grows and grows until the very devil seems to take possession of us.

Of course, at times we indulge our fancy in the opposite direction and we dwell, for the time being, with the angels. In our day-dreams we picture ourselves achieving distinction in some walk of life or in some domestic or social sphere, and for a period we are right on top of the world. The sun shines brilliantly and we reach Elysian heights. What a marvellous place this planet is, we exclaim joyously, and how delightful it is to be alive and well, so full of vim and vigour.

There is, after all, something to be said for those mental ups and downs, these periods of exaltation and depression. Life would be terribly monotonous if we were all alike, unimaginative and unemotional. To be sure: to indulge in these flights of fancy may result either in such a thrilling book as Walter de la Mare's “Behold This Dreamer,” which has a lot to do with day-dreaming, or a murder. Many a man has been imprisoned—and subsequently hanged—because he has nursed an imaginary grievance until it has got the better of him.

Admittedly it is not always possible even for those who have the utmost self-control to remain undisturbed by some passing event. It has been said, too, that the most courageous soldier experiences a slight feeling of fear before he goes into battle because, maybe. . . . And since the war began thousands of us have imagined that the bomb which dropped

some miles away with such an awful thud demolished the house next door or made a huge crater in our own back garden.

Thus do our thoughts and feelings play havoc with us now and again; or alternatively we are enabled, in our imagination, to escape to some pleasanter sphere and satisfy some intense longing; and the only consolation we have—if we want any consolation—for this weakness is that we are human, with human frailties, to be loved or laughed at, according to the hold they have on us and the mood of the moment.

GEO. B. LISSENDEN.

### CORRESPONDENCE

#### RUSSIA AND ANTI-SEMITISM

SIR,—A letter from your correspondent, F. J. Corina, in your issue of February 8 might give the impression that Communism is tainted with anti-Semitism.

Permit me to correct this erroneous idea. Communist principles are utterly and completely opposed to anti-Semitism, or to any other kind of racial or religious persecution. The British Communist Party, like its brother parties throughout the world, has always defended the rights of religious or racial minorities, which is in keeping with its defence of the Colonial peoples.

As for the Soviet Union, anti-Semitism there is punishable by law, as the following extract from the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. shows:—

“Article 123: The equality of the rights of citizens of the U.S.S.R., irrespective of their nationality or race, in all spheres of economic, state, cultural, social and political life, is an indefeasible law.

“Any direct or indirect restriction of the rights of, or conversely, the establishment of direct or indirect privileges for citizens on account of their race or nationality, as well as the advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness or hatred and contempt, is punishable by law.”

—Yours, etc.,

HARRY POLLITT.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

#### LONDON

##### Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 12-0, Mr. L. EBURY.

##### Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Street): Rev. C. EDWARD BARKER, “Will and Belief.”

#### COUNTRY

##### Indoor

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Jubilee Assembly Hall, Market Hall, Blackburn): Monday, March 2nd, 7-15, Mr. J. V. SHORTT, “Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?” Literature on Sale.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (P.P.U. Rooms, 112, Morley Street): 7.0 p.m., A Lecture.

Glasgow N.S.S. (25, Hillfoot Street, off Duke Street), Mr. TOM EWING, “Christian First Aid,” 3 p.m.

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate): 3-0, Anniversary, Mr. JOSEPH McCABE.

Nelson Branch N.S.S. (21, Rhoda Street, Nelson): 11-0, Mr. J. CLAYTON. A Lecture.

In England in 1716, Mrs. Hicks and her daughter, aged nine years, were hanged at Huntingdon “for selling their souls to the devil; tormenting and destroying their neighbours by making them vomit pins; raising a storm so that a ship was almost lost by pulling off her stockings and making a lather soap.”—KNIGHT'S “HISTORY OF ENGLAND.”



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