

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED BY CHAPMAN COHEN •

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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Here and There

LOW, the greatest and wittiest of our cartoonists, has made a slip. I call Low the greatest of our cartoonists because he never mistakes a mere exaggeration for a portrait. If he appears to do so it is because he has stripped a situation of a number of its incidental or accidental accompaniments. And I call him the wittiest of our cartoonists because he never counts clowning as the equivalent of wit. The two things are almost as poles apart. Take the average daily or weekly paper, with its column of alleged wit and humour; contrast it with the work of Low, and if you cannot perceive the gulf between the two give it up and count yourself as having not yet outgrown the old-fashioned harlequinade. I call him the wittiest of our cartoonists because his drawings have that quality of wisdom without which we are dull dogs with a restricted outlook and small powers of imagination. Australia has given this country much in the shape of fighting men, but she gave us of her best when she parted with Low. One of his admirers said recently that every cartoon of Low's was a sermon. That was a badly chosen term. It smacks of the pulpit, of preaching, and one does not go to the pulpit to-day for either inspiration or wisdom. Great artists or great writers never preach. To preach indicates a stabilised intelligence, a mind that lives on commonplaces and fattens on platitudes.

But perfection irritates. It puts we common folk so hopelessly in the rear that we hail with pleasure the discovery that our idol is not free from a slight infiltration of clay. We cannot climb up to him, but it is heartening sometimes to find him falling down to us—even momentarily. It gives us a feeling of kinship we should not otherwise have.

So it was with some amount of pleasure we noted recently that Low had slipped. In a recent issue of the "Evening Standard" he depicted the death of one of his own children—that incarnation of hopeless, pomposity, irremovable stupidity, that incarnation of the old school tie and worshipper of the commonplace, Colonel Blimp. The cartoon depicted a funeral service in Westminster Abbey (?). The coffin lid was raised to show the body of Blimp as impressive in death as in life. The drawing of the officiating minister was evidence that Blimp would

not be without successors. I think the close association of Blimp, parson and the Church may have a deeper significance than might appear at first sight. The funeral might have been pictured as in an ordinary cemetery. Even the Abbey might have been served as the mere receptacle of a monument. It is the combination of the three that is significant and richly suggestive of Low's own opinions on religion.

But yet Low slipped. Blimp is not dead—at least, to use a recently coined word, "Blimpism" is well alive. Blimp is everywhere: in every branch of the public service, in the Houses of Parliament; it is even in the Law Courts. It was Blimpism that prevented the British in Singapore accepting the help of the Chinese when it was offered. Blimpism prevented us realising that the Japanese—the little yellow men—would fight desperately against us. Blimpism was at the bottom of our estranging the Burmese and the advanced section of the Indian people by refusing them a workable measure of self-government. It was Blimpism that for years ruled we must not enter into a close and friendly relationship with Russia. It is Blimpism that looks to the public schools for providing the higher ranks of the Army and the manning of the higher—and better paid—diplomatic army. And when we are done with the "upper" classes we find innumerable Blimps in the "lower" orders of our peculiar "democracy." For the plain fact is not merely that the Blimps are to be found in the upper, titled strata of our society, but that they are found in battalions among the "common" people. It flourishes inevitably in our Press: in the special news that a working man has raised himself to the level of the upper classes and may now walk with them with a self-conscious feeling that he has lifted himself above his origin. Blimpism is present in the scramble for titles. There is really no escape from Blimps. They are as common as guats in a damp summer—and just as irritating.

But I find I have blundered; for, behind the coffin of the great Blimp, Low has given us a serried row of Blimps mourning their lost leader, but ready to manifest their devotion to the father Blimp, to perpetuate his teachings and to glorify his name. Damn Low! He seems to have seen even that; but we will let stand what we have written.

Russia and British Youth

Many of our readers will remember the consternation caused in certain circles when Mr. Anthony Eden, our Minister for Foreign Affairs, stated publicly that it was the hope of the Government that the friendly relations and close co-operation of this country with Russia, formed during the war, would continue during the peace. That was as good an item of news as we could have. It would assure the peace of Europe, even though certain interests might feel the pinch. The Roman Catholic papers were shocked. There was nothing wrong in Christians fraternizing with "Atheist Russia" for the purpose of killing, but real Christians could not fraternize with Russia for the purpose of perpetuating the peace. The rest of the Christian world here, with a very few exceptions, said nothing, but they probably thought a great deal how such close relationship

could be prevented. It was one thing to be forced into combination with a Government that publicly proclaimed itself to be Atheistic; it is a very different thing to voluntarily say that we, a very Christian country, would continue a close friendship and honest co-operation in the peace. That was "strong medicine." What are to become of the stacks of lies about Russia that, for the duration, have been placed in cold storage? Were such genuine Christian efforts to be wasted? What sort of backing can the Government continue to give to placing the clergy in practical control of the schools if we are joining hands with a Government which regards Christianity as a social pest? It seemed an impossible situation, and all the plotting and planning of the last and the present Archbishop of Canterbury would be fruitless. Either we must admit that Christianity is not absolutely necessary to a country (consider the consternation among the religious Blimps in Broadcasting House!) or we must decline to work hand-in-hand with a country whose policy would end the churches. When peace does come we shall have to keep an eye on our religious fifth column.

Now comes another bombshell for the English religious world. It would not be complimentary to Sir Stafford Cripps to say that it was the shortage of first-class politicians in the Government, and the prevalence of Blimps that should have been turned out years since, which forced the Government to invite the co-operation of Sir Stafford. His work in Russia alone should have made his entrance into the Government certain. But force of public opinion finally did the trick. The calibre of Sir Stafford Cripps is shown by the fact that, in spite of his being Leader of the House of Commons—and to give a man a Parliamentary job is a recognised method of gagging him—Sir Stafford attended a meeting of the Anglo-Soviet Youth Friendship Alliance. He not only attended the meeting, he spoke there. There was a notice of his speech in the "News Chronicle" of March 2, and Sir Stafford is reported as saying:—

"It is vital that the youth of Britain and the Soviet Union should work together in a common partnership with the youth of China, America and the oppressed European countries."

Russia and China! A joint population of about 600,000,000 people. One of the countries with an anti-Christian Government, the other a nation with philosophies and teachings of its own and which shows neither intention nor desire of becoming Christian. What an outlook for our Christian Blimps!

Here is another passage from Sir Stafford's speech:—

"Youth in Russia to-day has a burning zeal for its country and its institutions. It feels that it really is its country."

What sort of an outlook does this hold for our Christian leaders? What hope and reliance can they have in the future when this kind of plan is suggested by a prominent member of our Government, and who was hailed at the Youth meeting as "our future Prime Minister"? It is certain that the professional religious section of our society will not quietly submit to any such agreement between the youth of this country and Russia. They must fight against it, openly if possible, by underhand means if necessary. And our Non-conformist Labour leaders may be trusted to do nothing that will stand in the way of their "career." Meanwhile the youth of Britain are, so far as is possible, being taught that complete social life is impossible without Christianity. In the schools children are being familiarised with the need for religion, while the B.B.C. offers the almost criminal

advice during its Children's Hour to the effect that children must pray to God to help them to be better than they are, for by themselves they lack the strength to develop as they should.

What, then, is to happen? The two teachings simply will not work together. The objection to the fraternization of British and Russian youth will not come from the Russian side; it will come almost wholly from the British one. Can one imagine, say, men of the stamp of Lord Halifax quietly agreeing to the fraternizing of British and Russian and Chinese youth? Would even Churchill, Leader of the Conservative Party, lend himself to assist free competition between Christianity and Freethought? And our army of priests, what position will they take up but that which they occupied before the war? Christian leaders dare not encourage intercourse between believers and unbelievers. The dice are too heavily loaded against them.

So I think that the end of the military war will at most mean a cessation of the physical contest. But if it is a real "peace," and if there is fraternization, exchanges of visits, contact with all sorts of opposing opinions, etc., the end of the war of blood and physical destruction will mark the commencement of a hell of a war of opinion such as the world has not yet seen. But it will be a war that is upon a higher and more profitable level than that provided by blockades, battle planes, burning homes, wrecked lives and other products of our Christian civilization. If that war emerges I envy those who are alive to take part in it.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

JOSEPHUS AND MODERN CRITICISM

FOR some years previous to the war many eminent scholars were engaged in seriously studying afresh the work of Josephus. The current English translation was made by William Whiston in 1737 from the Greek; but Josephus had been translated into many languages, and a comparison of these, or some of them, showed wide divergence in hundreds of details, many of the MSS. giving very amplified accounts of incidents where others only allotted a line or two to them. In other cases even different accounts were given of the same episode. In addition, scholars had their attention drawn to a Slavonic translation made somewhere about the 12th or 13th century in which details appeared for the first time not found in the other translations. As this Slavonic version was made from the Greek, it was obvious that the translator had a MS. before him different from the one used by Whiston. Moreover, the Hebrew translations and the Latin ones seemed to throw fresh light on a good deal of the history of Josephus and his sources; and altogether it appeared as if the time was ripe for a fresh valuation of the Jewish historian.

It should be emphasised that, for the greater part of Jewry, Josephus had been more or less a sealed book. He was looked upon as a traitor to the Jewish race; and, indeed, one of his latest critics can hardly refer to him without going out of his way to call him a liar, a traitor, a swindler, a renegade, a boaster and so on. Given such a character, the critic would not, naturally, be too enthusiastic about his work, which in turn, therefore, gets a terrible beating down. In fact, if it had not been that Josephus is actually the only contemporary historian of the events leading up to the conquest of Palestine by the Romans, and an eye-witness of the siege of Jerusalem—in which he himself took a leading part—many of the critics, particularly the Jewish ones, would have boycotted Josephus completely. It is only right, they argue, that such a traitorous renegade should be boycotted.

But there is another, and weightier, reason why Josephus is being studied now with such a meticulous care. His work deals minutely with the history of the 1st century of the Christian era in Palestine. That is, it must—or should—deal with the beginnings of Christianity and the story of Jesus, his life, trial and death at the hands of Pontius Pilate. Moreover, Josephus seems to be the only historian outside the New Testament who was almost contemporary with these events or who could have access to official documents, and therefore was a most valuable witness to the truth of Christianity—at all events, as far as the life of its founder was concerned.

It is very sad to have to record the fact, but Josephus, so far, is about the greatest witness history has produced against the truth of Christianity. The more the various MSS. have been studied the more true is this emphatic assertion.

First and foremost, the famous "testimony" to "the Christ" in Whiston's translation is about the rankst and most impudent forgery in literature. Numbers of Christian historians have had, very pathetically, to assent to this. Others, shocked and dismayed that Josephus so consistently ignores Jesus, have tried, by a most minute examination of the text, to prove that the passage in question is not wholly a forgery; there must have been something written about the Christian God, only it has been "worked over" by some pious forger. Other critics, and particularly the more recent ones, are doing their utmost to prove that the description of Jesus in the Slavonic MS., although also "worked upon," must have been in the Greek from which the translation was made. No game ever devised is quite as merry as the one in which the various critics are examining afresh every word and phrase in different MSS. to see if it is at all possible to fix upon something—heavens alive, just something—which shows that the original writings of Josephus undoubtedly referred to Jesus, but that copyists, transcribers and translators, egged on by their own prejudices, deliberately effaced or distorted or forged the various contradictory statements now found in existing MSS.

Let the reader remember that so far there are no MSS. which are free from the suspicion of forgery or distortion. All have passed through the fraudulent but extremely pious hands of Christians, Jews or curious types of converts, Jewish and Christian.

Now, the disintegrating work of Dupuis, Robert Taylor and John M. Robertson, among others, have made the myth theory of the beginnings of Christianity widely known. There is an increasing body of sensible people who are quite convinced there never was a Jesus at all, even as a man; that the whole story of him as narrated in the New Testament was made up partly from all kinds of pagan deities, including astronomical myths, and also from stories of various Jewish martyrs whose deaths are recorded by Josephus and who bore the name of Jesus. This patent fact seems to infuriate many modern critics; hence their determination to make Josephus a witness for their beliefs at whatever cost—even that of plain common sense. They start with the belief that there was a Jesus, there must have been, and Josephus simply must have spoken of him. And the tremendous labour of collating the various MSS. and "speculating" as to what is and what is not the truth is the result of their misguided beliefs.

For my own part, the simplest way of understanding the hopeless mixture of fraud and forgery in the extant MS. of Josephus is to start right away with the fact of the non-historicity of Jesus. One can then see how, when the published editions of his works came to be more widely read—say in the 2nd century

—Christian readers were horrified to find no mention of their God; and how, as the copies were multiplied, they took every care to make good the deficiency. Pious Jews did not at first want to read Josephus, who was hated by the Rabbinical schools. When, however, they did begin to read him—and to copy the MSS.—the story of "the Christ" was almost settled for good or evil through the circulation of the Gospels. They therefore, in all probability, did their utmost to substitute their own version, and made it as derogatory as possible to the Christian God. This seems to me the most plausible explanation of the various accounts given of Jesus in the different versions of Josephus.

The exact truth may perhaps never be known; but it is something to ponder over to find that, in the one historian who ought to have told us all about the "Saviour," there are nothing but lies and forgeries. And, so far, the critics have failed to prove anything else.

H. CUTNER.

THE NEW ARCHBISHOP

THE tumult and the shouting are now over. The rumours of reactionary political intrigues have been silenced. It is announced that, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister, the King has graciously approved the appointment of Dr. Temple, Archbishop of York, to the vacant Archbishopric of Canterbury. In due course a further permission will be sought when the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral invoke the Holy Spirit. Dr. Temple will then become eligible to be enthroned. A preliminary comment is permissible. The Holy Spirit has at least a right to complain concerning the late stage at which he is consulted in an important question affecting his interests, whilst the Dean of Canterbury, as a well-known Marxist, will probably feel somewhat uncomfortable at the prospect of referring the matter to somebody other than the proletariat. The contradiction is a good illustration of the State subservience in which the Church of England is involved and, indeed, of the utter folly attending the whole business.

At first sight it may appear unimportant to readers of "The Freethinker" that a new Archbishop has been appointed. His name is probably unknown save to a small minority of the population. Only a tiny fraction are active members of the national Church. But the Archbishop of Canterbury is far more than a figurehead who receives £15,000 a year for administering certain high priestly rites. He is a member of the House of Lords and of the Privy Council by virtue of his office. He wields considerable power behind the scenes at a good many State functions. As was proved by the behaviour of Dr. Lang at the abdication of Edward VIII., an Archbishop may still be the consultant of the Prime Minister at moments of crisis. He is the head of a national institution. As such, his personality is of importance to anybody of advanced views or interests who is opposed to the work of that particular corporation.

The new Primate of All England is not, it is whispered, beloved by some of his fellow Churchmen. He is a Socialist who has frequently spoken out against excessive private profits. In 1931 he upset the good members of his Church very badly by suggesting that the unemployment cuts should be restored before the reduction of the income tax. Those fondest of preaching charity were somewhat slow in desiring to see it practised when it hit their own pockets. More recently, Dr. Temple sponsored the Malvern Conference which proposed to get social reform accomplished by talking about it in pulpits. He has supported the "Sword of the Spirit Movement," Cardinal Hinsley's manifesto for the betterment of society. As the Cardinal was one of General Franco's leading English apologists, it is easy to define the terms in which he would construct the good society. The political career of Dr. Temple appears mild enough to the real social reformer, but it has been strong meat for the Church of England to swallow. A body steeped in reaction and vested interest is made uncomfortable by the least hint of challenge to its objects of worship.

The appointment of Dr. Temple is a marked improvement upon that of his predecessor. He has provided some contributions to scholarship. He is the author of many volumes on theology and philosophy. Theologically, he makes a stand for a moderate orthodoxy. He has shown accordingly the bitterest unfriendliness to the Unitarians in the name of meekness and lowliness of heart. He defends the traditional views concerning Jesus and his relationship to God. He is given to wide generalisations which are often more than questionable. The work of the new Archbishop upon Biblical studies cannot be compared to that produced by progressive scholars of the type of Loisy, Guignebert or Kirsopp Lake. In philosophy, Dr. Temple is a disciple of Plato, whom he seeks to bend into the shape of traditional Christianity. His work suffers by its lack of objectivity through its utilization for religious propaganda. When it is put side by side with the publications of accepted philosophers, such as Dr. Broad, Professor McTaggart, A. C. Bradley or Bertrand Russell, the archiepiscopal metaphysics are merely dwarfed. His scholarship, as is that of many parsons, appears in an exaggerated guise because of the lack of true learning which is characteristic of the orthodox Churches. It is not a compliment to claim that it is unrivalled in these circles.

The liberal thinker need not be worried lest the new Primate will steal his thunder. Dr. Temple is certainly outstanding when compared to his successor at York. The Bishop of Winchester, Dr. Cyril Garbett, who goes to the junior archbishopric, is completely unknown, either by name or attainments, outside the narrow sphere of the national Church. Orthodox religion is certainly doomed and the progress of science will probably settle its fate within a century. In England, the national establishment enjoys immense power and prestige. It has become the organ of certain vested social interests rather than the religious leader of the nation. These interests are now in process of losing their grip upon the contemporary mind. The Church was first attacked by physical science. It fell a victim to the later challenges of psychology. The onslaught of sociology has yet to come in its full force. Already, the Church of England possesses upon its body the plague-spots of a moribund institution. Its priests can reach no higher intellectual level than to chatter about vestments and reserved sacraments. Its membership is confined to a small fraction of the nation. Attendance at its services has fallen to the lowest of levels. The signs are of a decay which suggests an early death. One day, Church and worship will cease altogether. Man will then merely wonder that it has dragged on for so long. Even Dr. Temple's sociological accommodations to the spirit of the age are not likely to prove of much use to it as it faces its death struggle. The ordinary man will be grateful to the Archbishop for his efforts to bring about some alleviation of his earthly lot, in so far as they imply disinterested motives. But gratitude does not suggest any acceptance of the primitive survivals which constitute the background of Dr. Temple's thought-forms, even though his appointment to Canterbury may be assumed as finally signed and sealed by the Holy Spirit himself.

An important practical question arises out of the whole matter. Nobody can challenge the right of any minority Church to choose its head. Yet the time has long passed when the leader of such a body can claim an inherent title to secular privileges within society upon any democratic principle. It is idle to pretend that Dr. Temple represents in person the general will of the whole nation; he is merely the symbol of a State establishment which defends a certain set of social interests. The statesman-ecclesiastic is an outworn figure in any modern society. It is necessary to go back to the period of Archbishop Laud to find him in his medieval setting, and even that 17th century Primate was already out of date in his own age. A social order concerned with modern needs must put an end to the continuance of State establishments of a specific religion. Historians of the school of Buckle, Lecky and Bury have shown them to be a curse to society generally in every age. They still militate against both reason and intellectual freedom to-day; they still claim the right to dictate over individual lives. The scheme which Dr. Temple has sponsored for dogmatic religious education in all State-aided schools is an example of a contemporary attempt to interfere with per-

sonal liberty. Church and State should be separated and left to fulfil their individual functions. When this severance does take place the State may make plans for the future with a certain confidence. The Church of England, on the other hand, will be forced to order its coffin, for its last elements of vitality will have gone. "CLERICUS."

TWELVE CÆSARS

A NEW political phenomenon arises; a fancy yet immediately comprehensible name is required; fetch the Roman histories. So, in effect, the sequence runs. The alleged grandeur that was Rome can always be relied upon to lend a simulacrum of dignity to your political cloth, be it shoddy or samite. The introduction of *dictator* and *Fascism* is in established tradition, the tradition that threw up the words Kaiser and Czar and emperor and senate and consul and province, and that popularised the chief bird of prey as a national symbol. The tradition is not really old: most of the words mentioned above are—as applied to existing institutions—comparatively modern. The renaissance of classical culture began as early as the 13th century, but that of classical imperialism was delayed until the turn of the 18th century, when its Giotto and Dante suddenly appeared united in the person of Napoleon. That egocentric little man, whom H. G. Wells accuses of having spent too many youthful hours reading Plutarch, was the first to realize the mass-psychological appeal of mock-Roman imperialism. He was, of course, favourably placed to try the experiment and his conspicuous success bewitched—and, as we are painfully aware, continues to bewitch—large sections of humanity. One might speculate, carefully avoiding the stern looks of the Marxists, on what course European affairs might have taken had Napoleon revered Greek ideals rather than Roman realities.

What was Imperial Rome like? The evidence of the contemporary star reporters is worth some attention. If you favour the thoughtful and penetrative commentary, read Tacitus; if you prefer the first-class character studies, read Plutarch; but if your liking is for terse objectivity, for the inside stories of the god-emperors and if, moreover, you don't mind being sickened at two-minute intervals, Suetonius is your man. His "History of Twelve Cæsars" was ably translated by the Elizabethan scholar and stylist, Philemon Holland.

Naturally, Suetonius was not contemporary with all his subjects. He was born about the beginning of the reign of Vespasian, the eighth Cæsar, and was in his middle twenties when Domitian, the twelfth, died in A.D. 96. But as private secretary to Hadrian, Suetonius had access to the imperial archives as well as to the ready tongues of the Court gossipers and old-timers. Like Boswell, he made use of all the available information; unlike Boswell, he generally withheld his own opinions. Art for truth's sake.

The briefest testament to the quiddity of the first century and a-half of Cæsardom is this: Out of the twelve who were empurpled six were assassinated, one was poisoned, one was probably "assisted" to his grave, one committed suicide and the remaining three actually died natural deaths. Violence and sudden death were pretty common in the heyday of our mother civilization; and it is perhaps because of the familiarity of so much of the Roman social setting that the record of butchery and sadism strikes us more sharply than the other blood-inscribed pages of history. Suetonius conducts us through a great, distinctively European, city where there are shops and inns and libraries and law courts, where there are well-organized public entertainments, where the architects clearly seem to have in mind the National Gallery and the Arc de Triomphe, where learning abounds, where books and poetry are published in quantity, where there is a postal service and a passable sanitary system, where gastronomy is a fine art and personal cleanliness a ritual, and where the more prosperous citizens affect country houses and the playing of ball games. Here is no exotic community, remote from our own way of living; on the contrary we feel almost at home. But stay! Why is no notice being taken of that mutilated body floating under the stately bridges of Tiber? What means those fearful screams from behind that elegant doorway? Can this crowd actually be enjoying and

encouraging the merciless whipping of a slave? And what are those soldiers up to, advancing purposefully through the chattering groups in the Forum? Good God! they have just hacked down that patriarchal senator!

As I say, to read of most old torture cults and past cruelties disturbs us little; the atmosphere and the conditions are usually too alien and distant to enable us to set up a conscious relation with our own lives; and even when we can, when the time and place are fairly close, there are usually what one might charitably call extenuating circumstances; the cruelties were probably done in the name of justice or religion or progress. But the unmistakable inference from Suetonius's account is that the Romans in general and the Emperors in particular either openly revelled in the horrible, or at best accepted it as normal: there was no attempt at justification. Even Augustus, by far the most sane and human of the Cæsars, once "commanded a praetor to be killed, having first with his own hands plucked his eyes out of his head."

Confronted with this positively frightening picture of human nature minus repressions, one regards the material progress of the Empire during this period with chastened enthusiasm. Fiscal and economic reforms, rebuilding programmes, road laying, new aqueducts: what is the worth of these balanced against cruelty, oppression and intolerance?

Julius Cæsar himself was certainly a remarkable man, a super-careerist who bent all his talents to the achievement of his ambition to bstride the narrow world like a Colossus. Alas! he was liquidated by the Old School Ties. But the *führer* idea was cautiously revived later by Octavius Cæsar—Augustus was a subsequent honorary title. An astute man was Octavius. He understood the plebians, the patricians and—most important of all—the soldiers; he always kept an ear close to the ground and was thus able to adapt his conduct to current opinion. He carried a whole skin for 75 years and then he died peacefully, leaving behind him genuine mourners and a reputation for wise administration. The public servants and the military between them by then had the Imperial machine running sufficiently well to withstand interference by knaves and bunglers. Octavius's immediate successors were all describable by either or both of those terms. Two thousand years later their names are still well known—as synonyms for monstrous depravity and cruelty. If you are interested in the reasons for this, accept Suetonius as—not the prosecutor: he is too impartial for that—your chief witness.

And as you heed the evidence, reflect on the worthiness of Roman Imperialism generally to serve as a model for later generations.

N. T. GRIDGEMAN.

THE CHURCH

YOU have so debilitated the minds of men and women by your promises and your dreams, that many a generation must come and go before Europe can throw off the yoke of your superstitions. But we promise you that they shall be generations of strenuous battle. We give you all the advantage that you can get from the sincerity and pious worth of the good and simple among you. We give you all that the bad among you may get by resort to the poisoned weapons of your professions and your traditions—its bribes to mental indolence, its hypocritical affectations in the pulpit, its tyranny in the closet, its false speciousness in the world, its menace at the death bed. With all these you may do your worst, and still humanity will escape you; still the conscience of the race will rise away from you, still the growth of brighter ideals and a nobler purpose will go on, leaving ever further and further behind them your dwarfed finality and leaden, moveless, stereotype. We shall pass you by on your flank; your fiercest darts will only spend themselves on air. We will not attack you as Voltaire did; we will not exterminate you; we shall explain you. History will place your dogma in its class, above or below a hundred competing dogmas, exactly as a naturalist classifies his species. From being a conviction, it will sink to a curiosity; from being the guide to millions of human lives it will dwindle down to a chapter in a book. As history explains your dogma, so science will dry it up; the conception of law will silently make the conceptions of

the daily miracle of your altars seem impossible, the mental climate will gradually deprive your symbols of their nourishment, and men will turn their backs on your system, not because they confused it, but because, like witchcraft or astrology, it has ceased to interest them. The great ship of your Church, once so stout and fair, and well laden with good destinies, is become a skeleton ship; it is a phantom hulk, with warped planks and sere canvas, and you who work it are no more than the ghosts of dead men, and at the hour when you seem to have reached the bay down your ship will sink, like lead or like stone, to the deepest bottom.

JOHN MORLEY.

(Reprinted)

ACID DROPS

THE Roman Church has one advantage over Protestants in dealing with the Bible. To the Protestant the Bible is the word of God, but each sect, even each individual, is left to do the interpretation; and as the Bible is God's first and last effort in literature, he does not seem to have expressed himself with the clarity one would desire. Hence the rows among Protestants as to what God really means in his manifesto. The Roman Church agrees that God is the author of the Bible, but to the Pope alone is given the final authority as to what God meant. In this matter God represents some other authors we could name who have written books and then left it for other people to explain them.

The way the Catholics deal with Bible problems may be seen in connection with Bible difficulties. A reader made inquiries of the "Universe" concerning Bible chronology. Whereupon the "Universe" explains. "The account in Genesis is a true account couched in popular language, but not to be taken literally as far as the chronological setting is concerned." But the God-directed Papacy did for centuries hold that the account in Genesis was literally true, and would have denounced anyone who said otherwise. What the "Universe" is really saying is that Christians—the real Christians—must believe that the Bible tells us the truth and nothing but the truth, but what the truth really is—God only knows.

Bishop McNulty (R.C.) is seriously disturbed at the increase of "mixed" marriages. He has in view the increasing number of Roman Catholics who marry Protestants. If we were looking for a single thing on which to hang an indictment of the retrogressive nature of Christianity we would select this objection to mixed marriages. Intermarriage is one of the clearest and best indications of a genuinely civilized people. Until intermarriage is so common as to call for no comment, civilization is faulty. One of the most objectionable features connected with the Jewish religion is its forbidding of mixed marriages. The Roman Church carries the same objectionable feature in forbidding Roman Catholics to marry Protestants. There can be no fusion of culture with a people while this artificial and objectionable barrier obtains.

The following from the "Sunday Pictorial" hardly calls for comment:—

"A year or so ago, on a day of National Prayer, a certain Bishop went to a church in Catterick Camp, Yorkshire, to preach to the troops. (I do not write 'a certain Bishop' to be careful or kind; I've honestly forgotten his name.)

"The church was packed: the congregation was spick and span. 'It is a wonderful thing,' said the Bishop, 'to see so many soldiers here to listen to me to-day.'

"Well, for at least 53 of the congregation there was nothing wonderful about it at all. Twenty were there—because they lost the toss of a coin, and the other 33 because their names had been drawn from a hat. I was present at 'the draw': those who were lucky howled with laughter—and those who lost were glum.

"'Yes,' said the satisfied Bishop, 'it is a wonderful and inspiring sight.'"

The writer of "Ilico's Column" in the "British Weekly" devotes a couple of columns as to whether there are really any Atheists in the world. The question reminds one of a story told of Hume. While in Paris he dined with a few of the Encyclopædists, and in the course of a discussion he said that he doubted whether there existed such a thing as a real Atheist. The reply that came was that he was dining with six of them. "Ilico" doesn't understand how anyone can be an Atheist. That is, unconsciously, an explanation of his attitude. He doesn't understand. All the rest of his two columns give an illustration of that single and explanatory fact.

The Rev. R. J. Jones, writing in the "Western Mail," reaches the conclusion that "the teacher who has no use for religion should bear in mind that the freedom he enjoys carries with it an obligation not to propagate unbelief among his pupils." Mr. Jones should make a little closer study of history and logic. If he does this he may discover that in no country in the world has religion made for freedom. The quarrels between religious bodies have often resulted in a greater measure of freedom, but this is not what the religious minded were aiming at. Where religious people have fallen out with each other a measure of freedom has often resulted because none has been able completely to crush the others. The nature of the result is well summed up in the old saying that when rogues fall out honest men may get their dues. But when the rogues work together, the chance of the honest man surviving is very small.

What we should like to know is, first, when one lot of religious sectarians has completely subdued the others what amount of liberty has resulted? Second, when and where has a religious body, exercising full power, permitted freedom of thought with regard to religion?

There is a final question. If a teacher who believes in religion is justified in forcing it upon his pupil, why may not a teacher who does not believe in religion have the liberty to place his views before those under his care? The Rev. Mr. Jones, as is usual with ministers of religion, appears to think that he should have the right and power to force his religious opinions upon children, while a Free-thinking teacher should be compelled to play the hypocrite and teach what he believes to be a lie.

We agree with the Earl of Glasgow (although he is a Roman Catholic) that, "If God is left out in the early upbringing of a child it is equivalent to imparting the alternative, which is Atheism." In plain language, if you do not plant in the child a belief in God before it is able to understand what is being done, it will never develop that belief. We have said the same thing all our life. But we doubt if the Earl of Glasgow really understood the significance of what he was saying. Yet he is one of our legislators in the House of Lords!

Lord Halifax, during an address in the United States, reminded people to beware of enemy propaganda which is so artful that many who think they are on the other side are actually helping Hitler. On that topic Lord Halifax should be a first-rate authority.

The Bishop of Gloucester is convinced that the "break-down of moral and spiritual life in France and Germany is due to the system of secular education." We would suggest that the Bishop goes back in this country to the times when whatever education there was was controlled by the Churches. That gave us children being murdered in factories, women working half naked in coal pits, men transported for asking collectively for a few shillings per week extra on their starvation wages and the people without voice in the government of the country. What sublime trust men such as the Bishop of Gloucester must have in the ignorance and the gullibility of those to whom they preach! But Jesus said, "Ye are my sheep," and good Christians have tried to live up to this authoritative description of them.

A club for Servicemen has been opened at Streatham and is being run by the W.V.S. The Bishop of London advises, in his Diocesan leaflet, that in view of the shortage of wine, "the clergy would be wise to dilute with water." Now does that mean that the clergy are apt to take their wine with a too high alcohol content, or that the Bishop of London despairs of God doing anything to help? But what a chance to repeat the Miracle of Cana? It would be more effective than the Mons Angels. To advise the eking out of the wine with water hardly needs a man with £10,000 a year salary. Publicans have been doing this, we suspect, ever since the war began.

The "Catholic Herald" for February 27 prints a declaration of the Pope concerning the resurrection of the body. It reports the Pope as saying, "The body is destined to rise again and in the Temple of the Holy Ghost." The "Herald" considers this as proving that Catholics have a higher conception of the body than Materialists. It does nothing of the kind. It proves only that where religion is concerned Catholics are more stupid.

We have seen somewhere the calculation that if the whole of the earth was used for the purpose, there would not be enough material to provide bodies for all human beings that have existed. But that calculation was made by a Freethinker, and the Christian belief is that God made the world out of nothing; and nothing is the most plastic and the most inexhaustible (excuse the phrasing) material that can be imagined. It can be used without stint, without diminishing the quantity to hand. A builder who could discover the smallest quantity of it would make a fortune. He could cart all that was wanted in a disused salmon tin. So we believe the Freethinker who made the above calculation was wrong. God may have saved just a little of "nothing" for use at the general resurrection. We wish he would drop a packet of it to our paper-maker. Full acknowledgment would be made.

The Vatican gives the following figures for the Christian populations of the world: Catholics 389,277,000; non-Catholic Christians 382,016,000. The figures seem to offer some kind of an explanation why the world is in such a mess.

A tract was put in our hand the other day giving us the information that the world war is an indication that God is not pleased with his children. When mankind gets finally and thoroughly displeased with his gods the world should make a move for the better. We can assure whatever gods there be that men and women all over the world are rapidly getting distrusted with the "tyrant of the skies."

It is said that Lord Rochester is the only Free Church representative in the House of Lords. In the discussion on Education that recently took place (actually it was a discussion as to the best means of making the schools training grounds for the Churches), Lord Rochester said religious education "should lead up to personal experience and Christian discipleship." Now we have no desire to hurt anyone's feelings, but that kind of deliverance is just unadulterated nonsense. It is as empty as a sieve and as helpful to understanding, or to anything else, as a telescope to a blind man, or concert to a totally deaf one.

Quite seriously, does this very common statement mean more than teaching a child to attribute all its impulses to an outside and unknown source, giving the devil credit for one batch and Jesus or God credit for the other? Of course it can be done; so also can it be taught and believed that every physical pain we experience is due to some little, invisible snake crawling about inside each of us. To call feelings expressed in terms of religion evidence of the power of Jesus, etc., is sheer nonsense. It is not any more worthy of respect than attributing headaches to demons or storms to witches.

"THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,

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

TO CORRESPONDENTS

C. McCALL.—Received with thanks. Hope to publish soon, but we are overloaded with "copy" and our space is much restricted.

M. MURRAY.—Thanks. We agree with the judgment, as you will see.

T. OWEN.—We believe the Education Committee has the legal right to act as it has done, but that does not make either the law or the practice of the Committee less objectionable. The action is optional, not compulsory. But one despairs of either honesty or fairness where the interests of religion are concerned.

LADY MAUD SIMON.—Received. Will appear next week.

A. STEVENS.—Much obliged. We are trying to get fuller particulars. Have already had correspondence with both the military and naval authorities on the matter.

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

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

THE FREETHINKER will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad): One year, 17s.; half-year, 8s. 6d.; three months, 4s. 4d.

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

SUGAR PLUMS

THE large number of communications we have had, combined with those received by the N.S.S., lead us to believe that it would be useful information if we could compile a list of Freethinkers who are serving with the Forces. We have no hope of compiling anything like a complete list, but such as we could get, and ought to have, would be useful for many reasons. We are quite certain that the number is very much larger than most people imagine, and it is time that Freethinkers ceased treating Christians as poor, weak things that have to be pacified by a "respectful" attitude shown by those who believe that Christianity is a mere superstition, and a dangerous one at that. As we are fighting a war for freedom, we might just as well make it an all-in conflict.

May we again suggest that some very useful work for Freethought would be done if those who are Freethinkers in the towns and villages of this country could get to know one another? We have already suggested that this might be done in towns by gatherings of Freethinkers in their own homes for friendly intercourse. There is not a town in the country where friendly centres of this kind might not be formed and, in the larger towns, several centres. If those who wish to co-operate in this movement would write to either "The Freethinker" or the General Secretary, N.S.S., every help will be given to form contacts.

Just at present, when our members are in so many cases away from their "home towns," when suitable halls for lectures are difficult to obtain and with travelling facilities difficult, our propaganda has necessarily suffered in some directions. We, of course, maintain contact, not merely undiminished but extended. It is the propagandist organization that has felt the war stress most. The only stress we have experienced is on the publishing side, the difficulty of paper restrictions just when extra paper is most needed. But the demand for our books and pamphlets is better than it has been for some time, and "The Freethinker" has made many new members and friends since the war began.

Good news comes to us through the "Catholic Herald" for February 27. Quoting the "Church Times" of Milwaukee, U.S.A., it says that "of 131,660,000 American citizens, barely 23 per cent. go to church regularly and 65,800,000 never go to church at all. Less than half go to church regularly . . . 4,000,000 Catholics are drifting towards religious indifference. . . . The spirit of the neglect of God pervades American life."

That is good news, and we have every reason to believe that the actual figures, if they could be obtained, would be still more unsatisfactory—for the Churches. One clergyman is cited as saying that three out of five Americans "know nothing about Christianity." Emphatically that reverses the truth, which is that three out of five know too much about Christianity. It is the know-nothings who are most loyal to the Churches and who swallow the "dope" given them under the impression that it is a healthy stimulant. Like all dope-takers, for a momentary stimulation, they pay the price of a permanent lowering of their intellectual vitality.

We regret that in Miss Sayers' letter in last week's issue the word "anthropologists" was printed "anthologists." We hope it will not be taken as convincing evidence of mental decay.

It will help readers to value more correctly the objection of some Catholic papers to a Newsreel film in which occurs the passage, "The Vatican seldom frowns on those who dislike Protestant England." They claim it is not true, and admitting the importance of distinctions without differences exist, we may admit the truth of this one. What Rome would say is that it loves England but hates the Englishman who prefers Protestantism to the "true" Church. In practice the distinction is not very important.

The following are the closing words of a recent speech by President Roosevelt. It will be of interest to Freethinkers:

"We of the United Nations are agreed on certain broad principles in the kind of peace we seek. The Atlantic Charter applies not only to the parts of the world that border the Atlantic but to the whole world; disarmament of the aggressors, the self-determination of nations and peoples, and the four freedoms—freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom from want and freedom from fear."

"These are the times that try men's souls." Tom Paine wrote those words on a drumhead by the light of a camp fire. It was when Washington's little army of ragged, rugged men were retreating across New Jersey, having tasted nothing but defeat; and General Washington ordered that these great words written by Tom Paine should be read to the men of every regiment in the Continental army, and this was the assurance given to the first American armed forces: 'Summer soldier, and summer sunshine patriot will in this crisis shrink from the service of their country, but he that gives it now deserves the love and thanks of men and women. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered, yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the sacrifice the more glorious the triumph.'

"So spoke Americans in the year 1776. So speak Americans to-day!"

FOR THE FORCES

Members of the Forces who are in any way interested in the Freethought Movement who would care to have a copy of the "Freethinker" sent them weekly, and who are not already subscribers, are invited to send their name and full address to the General Secretary, National Secular Society, 2 and 3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4.

Freethinkers who are willing to entertain men in the Army during the evening, and Freethinkers on war service who would value such invitations, are invited to write the General Secretary.

Men belonging to the Armed Forces are always welcome at the Society's offices, any day except Saturday, between eleven and five o'clock.

A GERMAN INDICTMENT OF PRUSSIANISM

IN his "Europe and the German Question" (Allen and Unwin, 1941; 16s.), Professor F. W. Foerster essays to enlighten the world concerning the appalling menace to civilization resident in an impenitent Prussian military autocracy. He contends that those sanguine pacifists who imagine that the German people are really awaiting deliverance from Nazi oppression and would eagerly welcome their emancipators, are merely unsophisticated simpletons who live in a fool's paradise. Foerster reluctantly estimates Hitler's adherents at 90 per cent. of the German population, who have been deliberately trained to desire the demination of the world by a long succession of Chauvinistic leaders and teachers. The aggressive policy of Frederick the Great, or the Greedy, as Herbert Spencer termed him, was the natural sequel to the remorseless conduct of the Teutonic Knights in earlier times. Later, Bismarck's methods of blood and iron were strikingly manifested in his successive attacks of Denmark, Austria and France. These military triumphs prepared the way for the sabre-rattling of Kaiser Wilhelm II. and his militarist and industrialist supporters.

The doctrine of Germany's indisputable right to occupy a pre-eminent place in the world's affairs found able if unscrupulous advocates in Professor Treitschke and General Bernardi, as well as in many prominent military, naval, political and academic authorities.

Dr. Foerster is himself a German who, in his earlier years, was greatly impressed by the humane philosophy of the French Positivist, Auguste Comte. Now, however, he has reverted to a fervid belief in the supreme necessity of the alleged moralising influences of the cult of Christ, so sadly disregarded, he says, in Germany, where it is more contemptuously treated than in any other nominally Christian State. For, if mankind is to recover its lost faith in the gospel of peace and goodwill, a world-wide change of heart is essential. He avers that the calamity that has overtaken humanity is chiefly traceable to the world's indifference to religious ideals. It certainly seems strange that a man so obviously able and sincere should so completely overlook the plainly attested truth that nearly all the pioneers of the doctrine of peaceful settlement by arbitration of all international differences have been those who were unorthodox or those who definitely rejected the Christian creed. Moreover, apart from the sanguinary record of all Christian communities whoever possessed the power to strike, Foerster himself cites several instances of contemporary Catholic theologians who have voiced in unequivocal terms the atrocious doctrines associated with Hitler and his adherents. Also, if the present conflict is to be regarded as the outcome of practically 2,000 years of Christian teaching, then evidently no greater imposture was ever imposed on a credulous world.

Foerster insists that although driven from his native land when his liberty and even his life were in danger, he still cherishes an affection for Germany: "I address my fellow countrymen—not only as a patriotic German, whose patriotism, however, is given to a country still invisible—but also as a German who knows Europe and therefore believes that it is his vocation to explain to his people the reaction of the world to German aggression."

When, in 1895, the then Kaiser made a truculent speech at a celebration of the Sedan surrender, Foerster drastically criticized this deliverance. For this offence he was imprisoned and his promising career in the universities brought to a close. Still, on liberation, he persisted in his attempts to enlighten the public, but with little success. As he mournfully observes: "Gradually I was cast out by a public long made captive by elements which, by dint of incredible exertions, had completely eliminated the old German tradition in favour of the new Prussian tradition of the power-State. I was officially condemned by the teaching bodies of all the German and Austrian universities. For many I was a traitor pure and simple. . . . After the war (1918) nearly all my supporters left me. The young men who returned from the army, many of them officers, had been transformed—and the propaganda against the Allies completed the work."

When warned by a friendly official of his "immediate danger, Foerster fled to Switzerland, and afterwards he proceeded to Paris, where undue optimism prevailed, while the Socialists and pacifists demanded disarmament. The refugee solemnly conjured the Poles and French concerning their insecurity and counselled rearmament. "Then," he writes, "even the German pacifists with very few exceptions turned against me and denounced me as a militarist." Then, when enlightenment came, the pacifists threw the blame on Poincaré for not making fuller concessions to Germany. For they were unaware that every concession was regarded as an evidence of weakness. Yet, the attitude of the City in face of German menace was much the same. When Foerster was the guest at a luncheon given by the British Overseas Bank he candidly discussed the impending danger with leading London financiers, and he plainly told them of their illusions. They answered that they were anxious to expedite Germany's recovery. They were warned that they had unwittingly encouraged the worst element in the Fatherland. Foerster reminded his auditors that plain speaking to Germany's rulers was imperative. "I told them, too, that every concession should be safeguarded with rigid conditions and cast-iron guarantees; indeed, that no concession should be granted until . . . at this point a Swedish financier who had been looking at me with an inscrutable expression broke in: 'That's true; I never heard anything truer. Yes, you Germans are all like that; I've known them for the last 30 years. But it will take you two years to convince these Englishmen.'"

Foerster's volume supplies a very elaborate analysis of the historical antecedents of the First World War, while its outbreak in 1914 he most unreservedly assigns to German arrogance and ambition. "The vice of modern Germany," he avers, "is militarism, a deification of war and its supposed blessings, unqualified belief in force and contempt for international law; and for this very reason Germany was guilty of the World War. That guilt can be questioned by no one who sincerely seeks the truth, has genuine knowledge of pre-war Germany and has studied the relevant documents." Foerster's case could not be more concisely stated, and the detailed investigation of the genesis of the conflict his work contains, powerfully supports the views he expresses.

Unfortunately, Germany's main responsibility for this crime against civilization has never been realised by the German masses. Enormous sums were spent by the authorities on patriotic propaganda in order to convince the general community that the conflict was caused by the malevolent intention of France and Russia to encircle an innocent Germany. In truth, Bülow to the very last was convinced that Britain, then under a pacifist Government, was certain to remain neutral, but when she entered the war the German people were assured that this intervention was entirely due to English envy of Germany's industrial and commercial successes and her increasing pre-eminence in science, art and letters. Then, with American assistance, a guileless Germany, whose only desire was fair treatment in colonial and international transactions, was shamefully humiliated and sternly compelled to assent to the signing of an infamous Treaty.

According to Foerster, the German people are still suffering from this illusion, which has undoubtedly been encouraged by credulous if well-intentioned humanists in other lands. Thus, Hitler's and his confederates' diatribes, which are constantly repeated in a completely controlled Press and officially inspired radio, are accepted as truthful utterances. Daily repetition of mendacious statements in time impose on the very elect. No dispassionate consideration of the unvarnished facts has ever been permitted, and regret for evil conduct has never been expressed. Foerster observes that: "The complete absence in Germany of such a national examination of conscience has hidden the truth from the German people beneath a deluge of lies, so that to-day it is dominated by the same attitude, is held captive by the same political illusion which 25 years ago thrust it ineluctably into the First World War."

The more recent absorption of Austria, the annexation of Poland and Czechoslovakia, with the subsequent overthrow of France and the invasion and occupation of Denmark, Norway and the Low Countries, all stress the same

moral. The ambition—nay, the natural right to world dominion—has evidently become the very fibre of militant Germany. Much as the Teutonic barbarians so materially contributed to the destruction of the Roman Empire in the West, so Germany's present rulers seem bent on the destruction of every State in which a modicum of freedom of thought and expression precariously survives.

Foerster's stimulating and suggestive volume, "Europe and the German Question," is one to be read by every well-wisher of his kind. As a work of reference alone it should prove invaluable to our public men. For it is not the product of a sensationalist, but one pregnant with fact and meaning. It is the manifesto of an eminent man of letters and affairs who possesses inside knowledge of the machinations of German power politics carefully gathered at first hand.

T. F. PALMER.

DANGERS OF STATE-AIDED AND STATE-CONTROLLED RELIGIOUS TEACHING

[The following leaflet has been issued by the Secular Education League for general circulation. The address of the League is 58, Chandos Street, Palmer Street, S.W.1.]

THE present international crisis, the suspension of political party controversy, and the almost complete pre-occupation of the mind of the people with the life-and-death struggle of the war have provided the opportunity long awaited by the advocates of compulsory State-aided religious education to make a new effort to secure their ends. What they could not achieve by an appeal to justice and equity they seek now to obtain through panic in a time of national emergency.

Other sections of the community in present circumstances willingly subordinate their theoretical preferences in the interests of national unity; the ecclesiastical zealots alone try to exploit a national crisis for sectional ends. They are apparently prepared to endanger national unity and to outrage justice if the teaching by the State of dogmatic religion can be introduced into the nation's schools. Let us see what they demand.

1. That the nation should renounce the basis of the compromise which has existed in regard to religious teaching since 1870.
2. That the nation, at this crisis in its affairs, should assume direct responsibility for, and control of, denominational religious teaching in State schools, training colleges and universities.
3. That this official religious instruction should be given by the teachers at the public expense.
4. That this policy must involve tests for teachers as a natural consequence.

In confirmation of what has been said, a copy of the five points laid down by the Archbishops in "The Times" of 13th February, 1941, is reproduced:—

(1) In all schools a Christian education should be given to all the scholars (except, of course, in so far as any parents may wish to withdraw their children from it). The religious instruction should be entrusted to teachers willing and competent to give it. We desire that no teacher should be prejudiced in his professional career by his unwillingness to give this teaching; but all teachers will agree that it is a sound principle of their profession that the teaching of any subject should be in the hands of persons qualified by personal interest, by knowledge, and by training to give it.

(2) We urge that religious knowledge and the imparting of it should be an "optional subject," not merely an "additional option," in the course of training for the Teacher's Certificate. This means that it should count in the gaining of the Certificate. We also urge that the Local Education Authorities should further develop the Post-Certificate Training Courses in this subject arranged by them, and should actively encourage teachers to attend these courses.

(3) Where only one or few teachers in the school are duly qualified to give Christian teaching, we urge that it should be made permissible to give this teaching at any period within school hours, so that the same teacher may teach several classes at different periods.

(4) In order that the importance of the religious teaching may be recognised, we urge that it should be inspected in respect of its methods by H.M. Inspectors, or by some other duly authorised persons.

(5) We urge that in all schools the time-table should be so arranged as to provide for an act of worship on the part of the whole school at the beginning of the school day.

The surprising thing at the present time is that these demands are supported by certain Nonconformist leaders. What a descent from the clearly defined attitude of their great predecessors! Such men as Spurgeon and Dr. Parker insisted that the teaching of religion was outside the competence and the responsibility of the State. They contended that religious teaching, because of the importance which they attached to it, was the direct and sole responsibility of parents and the Churches.

This is the position the Secular Education League has always supported.

The State can do some things supremely well—it can improve and regulate the social conditions under which we all live; it can afford protection to life and to property, and it can defend us against the perils of invasion; it rightly supplies an approved system of secular education to our children. These activities are within its scope as a national governing body. But there are other things which it cannot do efficiently, and which it should not be asked to perform. These include the teaching of religion, under the patronage of creeds and the preference of particular churches. It has sometimes tried to do these things, but never without damage to its credit or without injury to the issue concerned. Whenever the State has undertaken the control of religion it has been disastrous both to the State itself and to the religious life of the nation. The State has its own responsibilities, the Churches and the parents have theirs. Let each keep to its own, and let the nation see to it that each does so. Religious matters are far too important to be interfered with by the States, just as secular affairs are of too great a moment to be dominated by the Churches.

At this very moment we are witnesses of a situation produced by nations such as Germany and Italy usurping the complete education of their rising generations. The State in these countries uses education as an aid to national policy, conditioning the minds of the children, with results which are a major curse of mankind.

Shall the nation in a rash moment sell the freedom of opinion so long enjoyed, and call into being a political machinery which may one day be used against it?—

"The religion that becomes the agent of the State will end by becoming the tool of the State; and the tyranny of the priest and the Church will be superseded by the tyranny of the policeman and the soldier."

The following have consented to add their names in approval:—

Mr. H. N. Brailsford, Professor A. Canney, Professor le Gros Clark, Mr. J. Stewart Cook, Lord Faringdon, Professor Farrington, Professor J. B. S. Haldane, Professor H. A. Harris, Mr. Laurence Housman, Professor Hogben, Professor Julian Huxley, Rev. H. McLachlan, Dr. Gilbert Murray, Dr. Joseph Needham, Professor Roy Pascall, Rev. J. A. Pearson, Mr. Eden Phillpotts, Mr. D. N. Pritt, K.C., Lady M. Simon, Rev. Roger Thomas, Dr. C. H. Waddington.

The sweetest and most inoffensive path of life leads through the avenues of science and learning; and whoever can either remove any obstruction in this way, or open up any new prospect, ought so far to be esteemed a benefactor to mankind.—HUME.

FREETHOUGHT—OF A SORT

IT appears that the cause of Freethought is an object of much solicitude to "S. H." In a series of articles in "The Freethinker," which are, I understand, to be continued indefinitely, he has devoted himself to the task of pointing out the dangers which threaten it.

Whether from over-confidence in the strength of their position, or from their proneness to a unilateral view that excludes all arguments but their own, the adherents of Freethought do not, it appears, sufficiently consider the force of some of the objections that are urged against it.

With the design of rousing them to a sense of its defects, "S. H." propounds a number of questions calculated, as he thinks, to place those defects in the strongest light. In doing so he cautions his readers that what he has to say "will appear almost as a denial of Freethought"; but he assures them that his strictures are prompted by the concern he feels for its future, and that he has the welfare of the cause at heart. If I may judge by some of the questions, and his remarks thereon, neither the caution nor the assurance is superfluous. But let us examine a few of the posers with which he seeks to disquiet us.

If I may venture a conjecture, he seems to have gleaned most of them from certain current religious productions of an apologetic or commendatory character, wherein the authors, relinquishing the old discredited methods of Christian controversy, devote themselves to the concoction of arguments and objections which, though they have the merit of newness, are no less nonsensical than the old.

In his opening article on the subject he asks: "Can we afford to be purely destructive in our aims? Is a rather nebulous belief in humanity and its welfare sufficient to replace the intensely emotional belief in God? And, if not, what can take its place?" I will take the last one first: it is the most stupid, but a favourite—for that reason perhaps—with religionists. As usually stated, the question runs thus: "In destroying religion what have you to put in its place?" Like many Christian queries framed to baffle the infidel, it begs the question off-hand. It assumes that the opponent of religion is in some way *bound* to fill the place of that which he has destroyed. But a little consideration should make it plain that, in ridding the world of what he believes to be an evil, he is justified by his action alone, and is under no obligation to supply its place with what could, presumably, be only another evil of the same kind—for what could be a fit substitute for one form of superstition but another? The Secularist maintains that religion is essentially false, and that its influence as such is inimical to human progress. He is not necessarily concerned with putting anything in its place, because he believes that, in destroying religion, he is thereby making way for many reforms which its existence has hitherto made impossible, and which would be the natural and spontaneous result of its destruction.

"Can we afford to be purely destructive in our aims?" is the canting question of those who fail to see that it is not possible to be "purely destructive"—the law of causation does not admit of it. Destruction is not an end in itself, but a means. It is the preliminary condition necessary to construction. Change, the universal law of being, is, rightly understood, but the effect of these two natural forces operating alternately, the one being the inevitable sequence of the other.

"Is a rather nebulous belief in humanity, and its welfare, sufficient to replace the intensely emotional belief in God?" This is another of those slipshod questions dear to religionists. The belief in humanity is the result of our knowledge of man's capacity for progress as exemplified by his past achievements, and is justified by the fact that we know of no other agent that could produce the like effect. The belief in God is the result of man's ignorance and credulity, and has not only produced nothing of any service to him, but stands indicted in the record of history as the cause of some of his worst actions. In what kind or degree of sufficiency is the belief in humanity lacking that it cannot replace—or rather, displace—an emotional belief in God? Are we to suppose that truth and reason are of less consequence to human well-being than emotional falsehood? Is it better to feel wrongly than to think rightly? The question is, besides, misleading in statement. To describe the belief in humanity as "nebulous" is a glaring

misapplication of the epithet which, in this case, could only be applied with truth to belief in a supernatural being. The belief in humanity is a clear logical inference from what man has accomplished in the past. The belief in God has not a particle of tangible proof to support it. No act or object of which we have any knowledge can be adduced as unquestionable evidence of its truth. The very object of his belief—God—is admitted by the believer himself to be incomprehensible. The nearest approach to it that he finds possible is a vague, undefined idea which, though faith may accept as truth, reason rejects as delusion. Which, then, on this showing, is the "nebulous" belief?

"S. H." tells us that the point that stirred the minds of his readers most was his suggestion that "The decline of religion has left a virtual vacuum in the minds of many which neither humanism nor politics can fill." He says that such things "do not seize the imagination of a man in the way religion at its best does so well. Man," he concludes, "wants something to believe."

Has "S. H." himself been made uneasy by a sense of that "vacuum"? If he has not, why should he suppose that others are? I have never felt it myself, and I have yet to learn that any pronounced Freethinker or Atheist has suffered from it. I think if there are any such cases, the "vacuum" is not produced by the loss of religion, but is a congenital condition.

That humanism and politics do not seize the imagination in the way that religion at its best does is merely a truism. The things, not being the same, must necessarily differ in their appeal. But what then—what is the point that "S. H." wishes to make? We might just as well say that humanism and politics do not seize the imagination in the way that poetry, music or art does; but the fact does not, in itself, detract from the value of humanism and politics, nor enhance that of poetry, music or art; it simply signifies their difference. The remark is so loose and pointless that it would not be worth notice but that "S. H." seems to think it in some way strengthens the claims of religion.

If, as "S. H." asserts, "Man wants something to believe," man has only to use his intelligence, and he will find plenty to believe—and to disbelieve, too. Religion will give full scope for the exercise of his credulity, but if his quest is for truth he must look elsewhere.

There are other questions which might be dealt with, but the Editor has other contributors and little space, so I must be content with those I have noticed. They are, for the most part, such as a Sunday school teacher might be proficient in and show little knowledge of the principles and arguments which constitute the case against religion.

A. YATES.

A CUP OF TEA

AS I stated in my article, "A Critic and His Criticism," published in "The Freethinker" of January 18 last, I did not intend to continue the direct controversy with Mr. J. Phillips any longer. He trails his coat so provocatively, however, that I am quite unable to resist a further contribution to the discussion.

Actually, had nothing else caused me to write again, his suggestion that I am afraid of criticism would have forced me to do something about it. My real reason for wishing to bring this series of articles at any rate temporarily to a close was that I felt we were getting nowhere—or perhaps I should say that no constructive end was being reached, and I still think (despite Mr. Phillips' cheerful "What is more constructive than destructive criticism?") that the one real weakness which has gone far to stultify the good work of the Freethought and Rationalist Movement is its apparent lack of a constructive background.

Mr. Phillips requests me to analyse his article paragraph by paragraph. Not having infinite leisure I have neither the desire nor the inclination to do that. Indeed, the very process savours of the atmosphere of the debating room and of that "argument" which Mr. Phillips states he dislikes. He compares argument to beer and discussion to tea, stating his own distinct preference for the latter beverage. Well, I don't know if his palate or mine is most debased.

but to me (and, I suspect, to our readers, if any) his so-called discussion tea has a very distinct flavour of argumentative beer!

But let me return to the main paths of the discussion (or argument). Mr. Phillips thinks that a World Commonwealth would eliminate these hideous international conflicts which the League of Nations was powerless to prevent. Possibly he is right. I have not said that he is wrong. But I do say that such a continuation of the supposed progressive outlook of the past will have to be pushed very hard indeed before it really impresses the people as a whole. Surely even Mr. Phillips can see that there is no difference in kind between the measures imposed in 1919-1939 and those which he proposes for the future.

Mr. Phillips' gentle amusement at my concern for the opinions of the "intellectuals" caused me some amusement, for it proves that my analytical friend has not analysed my arguments or discusses as acutely as he would like to believe. I originally brought these gentlemen (T. S. Eliot, Aldous Huxley and the rest) into a prominent place in my articles because what the intellectual leaders (philosophers, writers, scientists, etc.) think to-day there is a good chance that the ordinary people will think to-morrow or the day after. If there are signs (as there undoubtedly are) of a religious revival in intellectual circles, it may well be that sooner or later a religious revival among the "men in the street" will follow; and once that gets under way it will take a deal of circulation of penny pamphlets, price twopence, even by our doughty Editor, to stop its progress.

My attempts to analyse present-day developments may, of course, be totally inaccurate. It may be that Free-thought is destined to conquer the whole world. But he would be an exceedingly bold as well as an exceedingly optimistic person who would look at present-day Europe and say that there is any evidence of such a process coming about.

Mr. Phillips attributes the comparative failure of Free-thought to attract the multitude to its lack of linkage with working-class interests. I attribute it to the fact that most Freethinkers have continued destructive work in an age when something constructive is demanded; and despite all Mr. Phillips' statements I still hold that those who have ceased to be religious do not automatically become freethinking. They love their religion, but they want something to replace it, something more concrete than a mere belief in progress, which is ultimately all that Mr. Phillips' reforms amount to. If I may take my critic's own metaphor in a different sense, they will not give up their religious beer until they are sure that good, tasty tea will take its place. Our job is to persuade them that Freethought is their cup of tea!

S. H.

CORRESPONDENCE

RUSSIA AND ANTI-SEMITISM

SIR,—Re Mr. Harry Pollitt's letter (March 1 issue), I have never suggested that Communism is tainted with anti-Semitism. I do not think it is. I said that I know supporters of the Soviet system (individuals) who suffer from anti-Semitism. I reaffirm that statement.

The explanation is, I suppose, that no political creed can, of itself, altogether eradicate religious and racial superstitions—not even when those superstitions run counter to the creed. Hence the need for the "further education" of the citizen, provided by the Freethought Movement, if we are to have any truly progressive order of society.—Yours, etc.,

F. J. CORINA.

"CANTERBURY TREASURE"

SIR,—In the "Daily Telegraph" Captain R. W. Keay suggests that the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral should "devote a mass of platinum and diamonds known as "Canterbury Treasure" to the war funds that are being raised.

Captain Keay must be an optimist indeed if he hopes that the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral will restore any portion of the "Treasure." The Church does not part with any of its vast wealth, even to assist in the conduct of a "war against paganism."

A contribution might, however, be a good investment; for if Hitler were to dominate here such a cuckoo in the ecclesiastical nest would be worse than "Bluff King Harry" was.

Let us never forget that the Church is, to paraphrase Byron's line: "Wax to receive and marble to retain."—Yours, etc.,

EDGAR SYERS.

OBITUARY

MR. B. L. BOWERS, OF BRADFORD

With the death of Ben Ledger Bowers, 24, Aireville Road, Bradford, on February 25, the Freethought Movement loses an active and militant worker. An Atheist for more than 40 years, B. L. Bowers never tired of advocating Atheism as the common-sense outlook, and in the various social circles in which he moved in the Bradford district he never concealed his opinions. Aged 86, he died almost "in harness," and as recently as three weeks before his death he braved the snow and the black-out to address the Bradford Branch of the N.S.S. on "Vegetarianism." A "Freethinker" reader for many years, he took a keen interest in introducing it to others, and he was an active member of the Bradford Branch, N.S.S. He was a chess expert, and up to three years ago was a keen swimmer. Following his death he was "grabbed for Jesus," and, with the Editor's permission, I hope to say something about that later. The funeral took place at Nab Wood Cemetery on February 28.

F. J. C.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

Report of Executive Meeting Held March 1, 1942

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the Chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Hornibrook, Rosetti (A. C.), Seibert, Ebury, Horowitz, Griffiths, Miss Woolstone and the secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial statement presented. New members were admitted to Glasgow, Bradford, Kingston Branches and the parent society.

Reports of, and arrangements for, lectures in London and the provinces were submitted. Correspondence from Glasgow, Manchester, Blackburn, Burnley, Bath and the Admiralty was before the meeting and instructions issued. Preliminary details for the Annual Conference were dealt with and a circular to be sent to branches of the society approved.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for April 19 and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

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 Square, W.C.1): 11-0, C. E. M. JOAD, M.A.D., Lit., "Philosophy and Science."

COUNTRY

Indoor

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

Blackburn N.S.S. Branch (Jubilee Hall, Market Hall): Monday, March 16, 7-30 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON, "The Subjective Side of Spiritism."

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate): 3-0. A Lecture.

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