

# THE FREETHINKER

Founded 1881

Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

Vol. LXII.—No. 35

Sunday, August 30, 1942

Price Threepence

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## VIEWES AND OPINIONS

### Nazism and Christianity

WE have many times pointed out the fundamental identity between the historic Christian Church and the Nazi (Fascist) policy in Europe, but we shall have to stress the likeness many more times before we are finished with it. What must be kept well in mind is that Nazism-cum-Fascism-cum-Christian Churchism are at bottom phases of essentially the same thing. That it has a stronger, and therefore more hideous phase, in Germany than Christianity had in the whole course of history is, for the purpose of understanding the present situation, not of first-rate importance. Theories of any sort, good or bad, find their expression in action as circumstances permit or warrant. To the Greeks our present common law of blasphemy that one must not talk about a religion in which one does not believe so that the feelings of another citizen are hurt, would have seemed unbelievable if not impossible. That a man might offend the gods by doing this or that, and so get the whole of a nation into trouble, would have provided ground for discussion. But to make "blasphemy" dependent upon whether an ignorant or bad-tempered man might create a breach of the peace would have seemed to the cultured Athenian of about 2,000 years ago the height of foolishness. Yet, less than a dozen generations ago men were put to death for the fictitious, priest-made crime of blasphemy; later they were imprisoned for the same offence. The founder of this journal spent twelve months in prison for the same offence, and our liberty-loving House of Commons refuses to abolish a law that might send the present Editor of "The Freethinker" to prison for the same disregard of some other fellow's feelings concerning religion. Social theories must be judged by their possibilities, not by their momentary expressions.

### An Old Song

Proverbially it is difficult for two of a trade to agree—save when circumstances drive them to join hands against a common enemy. At the outset of the Hitlerian rule, Hitler tried to get the good will of the Roman Catholic Church, as did Mussolini, but not with the success of his fellow ruffian. The bribe Hitler offered was a common

front against "Bolshevism," and the impossibility of that ever being anything other than a deadly threat against the dominance of the Christian religion—particularly the Roman Catholic form of it. Hitler claims that no German can fulfil his duties as a member of the Reich while he remains under the control of a foreign Power such as the Papacy, while the Papacy replies that in certain circumstances and with regard to a certain class of things the first duty of a German Roman Catholic is to obey "Holy Church." Hitler claims that from the earliest years children must be trained to give unquestioning obedience and unstinted service to the Reich. The Pope is equally emphatic that the children of Roman Catholics immediately, and of all children ultimately, must be under the control of the Catholic Church. Both are playing the same game, and from the standpoint of principle it is not easy to distinguish any radical difference between them. The Pope says that his authority is derived from God, and that his Church is the only one that has such authority. But Hitler has on many occasions announced that he has been called by God to his "job," and the evidence for the one seems just as strong as it is for the other. On a world vote the majority would be on the side of the Pope, but it is a case where the majority has no valid voting power. We need not say that either the Pope or Hitler, when they announce they are called by God, are liars. They may be merely exhibiting the same—not uncommon—kind of delusion.

The only evidence the Pope has in favour of his being a mouthpiece of God is his own statement that God "called" him, which is exactly on all fours with Hitler. As I have no experience of God's calls, I remain impartial as to whether God called one or the other or both. Perhaps the "President of the Immortals" likes a scrap, and did call both of them.

Finally, we must bear in mind the fact that the Church claims—in virtue of its divine authority—control over marriage, the family, religion and education. It is these functions of collective life that Hitler also claims. Without it the continuity of Totalitarianism in either the Church or the State cannot be assured—it becomes a question of just how long either will last. Given absolute power, a fairly lengthy career for either or both may be assumed.

### A Contrast

The British Roman Catholic papers—and one may assume Roman Catholic papers elsewhere—have, in accents of horror, called attention to the following remarks by the Nazi Commissar of Thann:—

"A good Catholic cannot be a good National Socialist.

But the officials of the Third Reich must therefore be good Nazis. Therefore, they must choose one or the other, either Jesus Christ or the Fuehrer."

It also appears that a new attack is being made by the Nazis on the clergy. The attack is made on them, not



because they hold office in the Church, or as Catholics, but because they are valets of Churchill or followers of the "Jewish British Gospel." The Catholic papers regard this as shocking, and other papers have cited it as unmistakable specimens of brutality and intolerance in Nazi Germany.

But let us be fair with regard to the Nazis. We Freethinkers can well afford to be fair, even generous, because the case against Hitlerism is so unmistakably damning from the point of view of humanity, decency and philosophy. There is no need to weaken one's case by exaggeration. But is there any fundamental difference between saying that no German can be a good 100 per cent. National Socialist unless he is loyal to Hitler, and the Roman Church saying openly that no man can be completely good as a citizen without being loyal to the Roman Church, or to Jesus Christ?

I agree that to say no German can do his duty to the State unless he is loyal to Hitler is absurd. Over and over again the history of a country shows that loyalty to one's country has involved, not obedience to the Government, the King or some "leader," but deliberate disobedience. In our own history we have cut off the head of one King in the interests of the people as a whole, and kicked off the throne several others. It is absurd, very absurd to make obedience to rules or commands the test of the quality of one's citizenship. The "reference" to the value of one's citizenship is to the welfare of the people as a whole—not to commands issued by a "leader."

But, if we can rid our minds for a moment of the prejudice that inevitably dominates the mind of one country at war with another, is there any radical difference between this Nazi Commissar saying what he did, and much of what we are being told in both words and action by some of the religious "Commissars" in this country? Wherein lies the difference between the Nazi policy of seeing that every child is, so far as possible, saturated with Nazi "philosophy" and the aims of the Churches in this country working to see that our schools are permeated by a religious atmosphere? Is there any difference between the Minister of Education saying he means to give every child in the country a Christian education and Hitler saying he intends giving every child in Germany a Nazi education? If we are to shiver with horror at the assertion that there can be no good citizenship in a German unless he follows Hitler, what are we to think of some of our leading ecclesiastics and professors saying that our morality—not its form, but its essence—must depend upon belief in Jesus and in God? "The principle of Christian ethics," says the present Archbishop of Canterbury, "is one that puts right conduct beyond the range of man's natural capacity." Or the following from Professor J. S. Whale:—

"Man's sense of right and wrong has its sanction in God alone. Belief in the absolute reality of God is the heart of all living morality. The validity of honesty, justice, mercy, reverence for truth"—

rests upon belief in God. And let us remember that this kind of licensed imbecility is not said by one Christian preacher here and there, or by one Church only. It is and has always been a commonplace of Christian teaching. Not, I grant, in its present semi-philosophic form but, until the power of Christianity was crippled, as an inseparable part of the Christian religion. The general philosophy of the

matter was set down in good old English that the doing of good works, "and of good use both to themselves and others, yet, because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith . . . they are therefore sinful and cannot please God." I see very little difference between the teaching of this confession of faith, the philosophy of the Archbishop and the Cambridge professor, and that of the Nazi Commissar. They agree that the normal social life of people can be of no great use in turning out good citizens unless they believe, in the one case, in God or, in the other, in Hitler. They agree, the Roman Church in particular, that those holding public office should be either good Christians or good Nazis. They agree that the education of the young should rest in the hands of Christians in the one case and Nazis in the other; and the Nazi practice towards dissenters, while it may be more drastic in its operations, is identical in kind with the practice of the historic Christian Churches while they had the power to enforce their will.

In short, German Nazism and Italian Fascism, as I have pointed out many times, have exactly the same evils that the historic Christian Churches have manifested. Take away the word "Nazi" and substitute Christian, for "Third Reich" read Society," for Commissar read Archbishop, and for date any period or place where the Christian Church ruled the roost, and the passage cited would read:—

"A Freethinker or anti-Christian cannot be a good citizen. Therefore those holding office must before all things be good Christians. Therefore, they must choose one or the other. Either Jesus Christ or social ostracism and repression."

I admit that the Christian Church never exercised the same degree of brutality over the countries that acknowledged its creed as the Nazis have. But then the Church never held the same complete power over the secular State that Hitlerism has enjoyed. But it did what it could; it went as far as it dare; and no person, party or institution can do more.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## THE APPRENTICESHIP OF A MARXIAN REVOLUTIONARY

WHATEVER opinion we entertain concerning the Revolution in Russia, there can be no doubt as to the patient perseverance and marked distinction of its protagonist. Lenin was tried in a harsh school and his bitter experiences hardened his determination to achieve his aims. Nor is it anything to his discredit that, when realising that his youthful ideals were unattainable, he was determined, despite those critics who accused him as the betrayer of the Revolution, to introduce a new economic policy. For, unlike his unbending adversaries, Lenin was always prepared to profit from the teachings of experience.

When, about 1848, Herzen predicted the possibility that Russia, with her agrarian roots entrenched in supposedly primitive communes, might ultimately lead the world by establishing Socialism, Marx and Engels, with their Germanic mistrust of the Moscovite, received Herzen's suggestion with scorn. Yet, with the peasant unrest in Russia and the revolutionary activities of the intellectuals after the death of the reactionary ruler, Nicholas I., both Marx and Engels reconsidered their earlier opinion, although they remained very sceptical concerning "the flighty ideology of Russians."

Surprising as it seems, the earliest translations of both Marx's "Das Kapital" and Spencer's "Principles of Sociology" appeared in Russian. Among these works' readers were two



sons of Ilya Nicolaevich Ulyanov, an enlightened school director in the province of Simbirsk. His children were carefully educated, and the house in which the family dwelt has been converted into a memorial museum. The two eldest sons of old Ulyanov, Edmund Wilson tells us in his "To the Finland Station" (Secker and Warburg, 1941; 20s.) were named Alexander and Vladimir, whose nicknames were respectively Sasha and Volodya. The commonplaces of domestic life can be reconstructed in the two apartments the boys occupied. Also Volodya's school books may be seen as well as the elder brother Sasha's bookshelves, which contain the writings of "Darwin and Huxley, Spencer and Mill, and the test-tubes and glass pipes with which he performed his chemical experiments."

The younger Vladimir, later known as Lenin, was 16, and his brother Alexander (Sasha) was 20 when the father was smitten with a stroke that ended fatally in 1886. Penalised as a reformer, he had suffered serious humiliation during the reaction which succeeded the assassination of the Tsar, Alexander II., in 1881, when enlightened educationists were viewed with disfavour, and the worry and anxiety thus occasioned hastened his death.

In 1887, Sasha, then a student at the University, was arrested with all his alleged accomplices and charged with complicity in a plot to murder the Tsar and, despite the agonised appeal of his widowed mother for a reprieve, Sasha was pronounced guilty and suffered death. This domestic tragedy confirmed the younger brother in his conviction that there was no hope for Russia apart from Revolution. For, under Alexander III., every aspiration of a progressive character was denounced, suppressed or driven underground while, owing to his close relationship to Sasha, Vladimir, although destined to make history as Lenin, stood in danger of arrest.

Terrorism was regarded by Lenin as a certain failure, and his Marxian studies led to the conclusion that other and more legitimate means for overcoming Tsarist absolutism were available. The industrial development of Russia in recent decades had exceeded all reasonable estimates. Although still far in the rear of Western Europe as a whole, its increase had far exceeded the most rapid progress that Marx had deemed possible. "In the 20 years between 1877 and 1897," notes Wilson, "the production of textiles doubled and the production of metals trebled; in the ten years between 1887 and 1897 the 300,000 textile workers doubled and the 100,000 metal workers increased to 150,000. The eighties had been a period of desperate strikes which had been suppressed with the utmost brutality, but which had the result of procuring some rudimentary industrial legislation: factory inspection, the abolition of child labour, certain restrictions on the labour of adolescents and women, and the regular payment in cash of wages which hitherto had been dribbled out—sometimes only twice a year—by employers as capricious with their hands as the landlords had been with their servants."

Thus, a proletarian population had arrived. So, in the shadowy realm of native Russian psychology, Marxian realism seemed to Lenin the only way out of the impasse. His severely rationalistic intellect, untinged by Moscovite mysticism, his combative character hardened by intense indignation at the people's sufferings, accentuated by a sternly critical spirit, all combined to render him a devoted adherent of Marx. A born evangelist gifted with great persuasive powers, Lenin became a strikingly successful advocate of the Marxian philosophy. Not that he suffered fools gladly, for he proved harsh and caustic with his inconsequential critics, and his dialectical triumphs were in most cases accomplished by personal ascendancy.

Lenin's mother, who seems to have been a remarkable woman, watched her son's proceedings uneasily, and she succeeded in withdrawing him from Kazan. But only just in time, however, for his Marxian associates resident in that city were soon afterwards arrested and sentenced with severity.

An appeal was now made to the Minister of Education for a permit to allow Lenin to enter the final examination as a detached student at the University on the plea that, in default of a degree, he was debarred from following a professional calling. But after the police had been consulted, the Minister rejected the appeal. Undaunted, however, Maria Alexandrovna, Lenin's mother, journeyed to St. Petersburg and, approaching the Minister by letter, touchingly assured him that it had become "an actual torture to look at her son and see how the best years of his life are passing away without his being able to make use of them." Fortunately, her request was granted and in the final examination Lenin stood first in a group of 124 competitors.

Lenin did not trouble to conceal his contempt for the Populists and other Russian Progressives. His sister recorded that they, in return, considered him "an exceedingly presumptuous and rude young man." Yet, this superciliousness was doubtless attributable in some degree to the circumstance that, when his brother Sasha was condemned to death, the political intimates of his family mostly proved fairweather friends. Moreover, as Lenin's meditations over the horrors and injustices of Russian life proceeded, the harsher and more embittered he became. Then, the perusal of one of Chekov's most harrowing and lifelike descriptions of Tsarist corruption and cruelty, with its appalling fidelity to truth, powerfully stimulated his determination to do his utmost to destroy a system in which such atrocities were perpetrated with official sanction.

For a time Lenin led the Russian Social Democratic movement, and the artifices and evasions he was driven to employ, not only against Governmental repression, but in order to overcome the painful apathy and ineptitude of the average Russian, made him a conspirator and organiser of the first rank. Wilson suggests that a Teutonic strain in his ancestry furnished Lenin with those practical and highly efficient endowments which the purely Russian intelligentsia so frequently lacked. According to this view, the emotions tended to dominate the judgment of the most gifted Moscovites, and an extreme instance of this is noticeable in the career and pronouncements of the illustrious Tolstoy. Nevertheless, State despotism, combined with the influences exerted by Western science and materialistic philosophy, were now evolving a logical and realistic type of Russian. Wilson concludes that: "The effect of the Tsar's obduracy and cruelty was to make the courageous fierce, and the effect of the general fear and futility was to cause them to concentrate their forces in an effort to make themselves felt as individuals or in small devoted groups, at the expense of their own annihilation."

Thus the path was prepared for the great Revolution in Russia in 1917 which shocked, stunned and scandalised, as well as intimidated, the Western World. Yet, the whirligig of time has wrought surprising changes, and the then pariah among the peoples has since become the valued ally of the very few communities that thus far retain a modicum of social and religious liberty.

T. F. PALMER.

## ACID DROPS

ACCORDING to Mr. J. Cummins, President of the Catholic Young Men's Society, "the great enemy of to-day is Materialism. That is 'the real opium of the people.'" But opium is a drug, and is used as a sedative. It keeps one quiet and has the power to create a world of fancy where everything is delightful to the subject, and so creates a period of content. But the quality of "Materialism"—as the religious anti-materialist understands the term and its quality—is that it creates discontent, leads to social upheavals and encourages crime of all sorts. We are not going to discuss the truth of the charges, only to observe that whatever Materialism is it certainly cannot be called "opium for the people." It might serve as a stimulant, but that is another question.



We could never understand why Marx's description of one of the functions of religion being that of supplying an "opium for the people" should have created so much antagonism among Christians. It must be partly due to the fact that for one who has read Marx, there are a hundred or more who have read about him. But, at any rate, Marx was saying only what the Christian Churches and apologists have always said and still say. For it is part of the Christian claim that in times of stress and trouble it is faith in Christ that will keep the true Christian patient under injustice and adversity, and will even make him happy. He will, metaphorically, turn one cheek when the other is smitten. Every Christian preacher stresses this even to-day.

Marx repeated what Christian preachers have said and still say. But he said it as something against Christianity, therefore it had to be wrong. But Marx also said that until this form of drug-taking was rejected and men realised that their destiny lay in their own hands, Society would never be what it ought to be and what it might be. And whether Marx's economics were sound or unsound makes no difference to this vital truth.

The "Universe" prints what is considered a remarkable story illustrating the power of prayer. Three airmen—Roman Catholics, of course—were forced to take to the water in their pneumatic raft. God, said one of the airmen, was good to them. They wanted water and prayed, so God sent a storm—bottles of good beer would, we expect, have been better, and the storm might have interfered with other people. More prayers were said concerning the wind, and their needs were promptly attended to. After 34 days God guided them to an island. We are touched. But a quicker way would have been to have taken care of the aeroplane. But then God would not have shown up. God is evidently a good advertiser. No publicity, no service.

Somehow or the other, generally without rhyme or reason, a distinction must be made by theologians between Christianity and non-Christianity which aims at proving Christian teaching to be the better. Whether the direction is right or even intelligible does not matter, provided the important assertion is made that non-Christianity, or anti-Christianity, is hopelessly wrong. The following gem is from the editorial notes of the "Church Times"—a paper which has certainly not improved in character since it lost Mr. Sidney Dark, who, right or wrong, was usually intelligible. Take the following:—

Agnostic humanist philosophers have preached the upward growth of progress until the English-speaking world was saturated with facile and unjustified optimism. Christianity, on the contrary, has always reminded men that only through trial and tribulation can they hope to enter into the Kingdom.

We are not quite certain what exactly this means, except that in any case Christianity is right and non-Christianity is certain to be wrong. Agnostic or humanistic philosophy has taught, so far as we know, that "progress" is dependent upon human endeavour, while orthodox Christianity has held that progress is dependent upon belief in God. Christianity has always held, and still holds, that man by nature is full of "sin"; he is so bad God only can set him straight. In that respect, we rather fancy that underlying this farrago of the "Church Times" is the uneasy feeling that numbers of Christians are beginning to feel that if God exists, and if he is worth anything, the world ought to be a better place than it is. In that case we agree with them.

The war outlook is at present not very bright, but there is hope in the near future. The "Christian Herald" solemnly announces in its issue of July 23 that

"Events are proving that organisation, armaments and big battalions are not sufficient to save the situation. The Lord is at work in judgment, and only a return to Him can bring down His aid."

That looks as though the Lord has his back up, and that Churchill and his Ministers are quite wrong when they think the war will

be decided by more guns, more airplanes, ships and men. It is God who is getting level with us and, by inference, helping Hitler. Things are indeed serious.

But the situation is not without hope. Listen:—

The call has been sounded from Kingsway (there is a "Mission" being held there), and will doubtless resound throughout our land, not only from platform and pulpit, but also over the radio, for the Rev. Colin Kerr has announced the good news that he has been invited to give two broadcasts in October. This is occasion for great thanksgiving.

But why wait till October? Between now and then many thousands of men and women will have lost their lives. He could save these if he would. Perhaps he prefers to watch a good "scrap." Still, we ought to thank God that we have the B.B.C. and Kingsway Mission. For cunning and folly, if not for something worse, we should be thankful for their existence.

As is only too well known, the unfortunate Poles are being slowly but thoroughly massacred in the Poland of Hitler's New Order; but they are to receive one supreme consolation in their death agony. Providing they are "truly sorry for their sins, invoke the Holy Name of Jesus, and accept their death with resignation," the "Holy Father has granted for the duration of the war a plenary indulgence." If the matter were not so tragic, it would be difficult to parallel another case of such stupidity. Men, women and children are being hanged, tortured, starved and machine-gunned out of existence in large batches every day, and the Pope is willing to grant "a plenary indulgence" to them providing they are truly sorry for their sins, call upon Jesus and die with resignation. And some people wonder why we oppose Christianity!

For every person that may be given as having knowingly contributed to freedom of the mind, there have been scores who kept their mouths closed, and keeping them closed have dulled their own intellects. For no man can go on measuring his words by the prejudices of others, keeping his real convictions in cold storage lest he should by speech offend his neighbours, without undergoing a deterioration of character himself and, in the higher sense, acting disloyally to all around him. The Christian Church has been responsible for the deaths of multitudes for the offence of unbelief. But its greatest crime has not been the killing of men and women for heresy or Atheism. It is the type of mind the Church has encouraged and still encourages in which we find the real measure of its infamy.

But the important thing is not the large proportion of men who were not believers in Christianity, but the fact that their lives would have been easier, their thought, in most cases, more plainly expressed, and their contribution to progress greater than it was had it not been for the existence of the Christian Church. They were representative of those who had the courage to speak. But the majority had not that courage. It is the plainest of truths that while man will face cheerfully physical situations where the danger is great, they are generally sadly lacking in the courage to face the consequences of outspoken heresy.

There are many professional interests in the country, but none are expressed with the impudence with which clergymen assert theirs. The sub-committee of the Batley Town Council recently had before it the question of Sunday cricket as part of the "Stay-at-Home" Holiday programme. Naturally but impudently, the local clergy disliked this inroad on their professional interests. The vicar asked the committee whether it wanted to watch children attending a cricket match instead of going to Sunday school, and Mr. W. Burnett emerged from his deserved obscurity to inform the committee that his Sunday school was near a cricket ground, and on one occasion when a match was being played only four boys and two girls attended. We are pleased to report that the committee replied to these impudent dealers in ghostly wares that it was prepared to take full responsibility for the matches. We congratulate them on their decision.



# "THE FREETHINKER"

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

- W. TOLSON.—Next week. Crowded out of this issue.  
J. FARMER.—Thanks for generous offer. We are doing what we can to print another large edition of Paine's "Age of Reason." There would always be a sale at something like commercial rates, but what we are after is to repeat our effort and issue a propagandist issue; and that means—with costs as they are—selling much below cost price.  
FOR distributing "The Freethinker": Peter Cotes, 10s.  
D. FINLAYSON.—Many thanks for the copy of the report on religious propaganda among the Air Force.  
R. N. BELFIELD.—We are pleased you have so high an opinion of "The Freethinker." Hope it will never deserve less.  
WAR DAMAGE FUND.—C. McRobert, 3s.; Mrs. M. Poynton, 3s.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 2-3, Farnival 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, Farnival Street, Holborn, London, E.C.4, by the first post on Monday, or they will not be inserted.

## SUGAR PLUMS

MR. CHAPMAN COHEN'S new book, "An Atheist's Approach to Christianity," is one that should please Freethinkers and enlighten Christians. It will supply the first with ammunition and the second with the material for really understanding the way in which an Atheist approaches the question of religion. It is essentially a book for the times. We can safely recommend it to all. Price, 1s. 3d., postage 13d.

When next we hear the clerical futility that "Christian teachings are necessary for the ethical and moral training of the citizen," we shall be tempted to think of the splendid example set by the Rev. Donald Campbell in Bradford the other Sunday. The Bradford Branch of the N.S.S. were holding a meeting at the same time as the Communist Party, and to avoid inconvenience to the others, each meeting was held a reasonable distance away from the large car park, which can easily accommodate four meetings. Following the evening service, however, the Rev. D. Campbell came to the car park and stood on the wall of a bomb-shelter less than five yards from the secular meeting. There he began one of his religious rantings—a deliberate and studied attempt to interfere with the progress of the Secular meeting; especially so as there was ample room elsewhere on the park. The empty vapourings of religious frenzy could not stay the course, however, and soon Campbell gave up the ghost, having done the Christian cause more harm than good, for, as Mr. F. J. Corina pointed out to the crowd, while politicians and Atheists could agree to conduct their propaganda decently on the same pitch, it required a Christian minister to disturb the peace, and to show how damnably bad-mannered a keen Christian can be.

We have for long had a suspicion that what the world lacks is moral courage, and when a group of publicists manage to pluck up enough courage and tell the public plainly and boldly

what they believe, it is just possible they may be surprised to discover how many people there are who prefer the plain truth to a religious lie or political humbug. Why even our own House of Parliament might be found to contain quite a respectable number of non-Christians and anti-Christians if only the truth could rule for, say, a month.

We should like to mention that these Bradford meetings are causing tremendous interest, and drawing big crowds. Despite organised efforts to upset the meetings, and an attempt to have them banned, Messrs. Day, Searle, Smith, Hayhurst, Corina and a number of loyal supporters are carrying on the good work of intellectual enlightenment, and a good indoor season later is expected as a result of the car park summer campaign.

We have noted more than once what may be done with "The Freethinker" when people put their backs into the job. Mr. Humphrey, of Glasgow, is a case in point. Commencing with no more than six copies of this journal, he has in a brief time raised his weekly order to 120 copies. The Edinburgh Branch of the N.S.S. is also selling four times the quantity that was being sold a few months ago, although it has not yet reached the number of Mr. Humphreys. We have never lost faith that there is a large public for the "Freethinker," and one day it will get the circulation it deserves. Even though we may not see it, we are conceited enough to feel that we have done something to bring this result a little nearer. Meanwhile we thank those who are helping to make this journal better known.

We were pleased to see the following letter in a recent issue of the "Daily Telegraph":—

"Sir,—Both Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt stated in the Atlantic Charter that one of the things for which we are fighting is freedom of religion and thought. Yet by the command of a commanding officer all officers and men on a station are required to attend a place of worship, and frequently week-end passes are cancelled.

"To many earnest Christians, as well as those who profess little interest, this tradition is extremely distasteful. Certainly compulsory church parades are causing an under-current of bad feeling in the Army and R.A.F.

"The 'official' ruling is that if a Service man objects on conscientious grounds he must attend the parade, but he may stay outside the church until after the service. Needless to say, few avail themselves of this concession, as it is more comfortable to sit down.—Yours, etc.,

Beckenham. FLIGHT-LIEUTENANT, R.A.F.V.R."

If a vote were taken, and if soldiers—and sailors—were able to say exactly what the men felt concerning this compulsory church parade, there would be an overwhelming majority for its abolition. But the majority of officers have not yet reached the point of thinking of their men in terms of equality as humans, and the clergy, naturally, lack the honesty to decline preaching to men who are practically forced to come to church, and the men, for the most part, have not yet developed to the point of braving "inconveniences" by declining to attend church "by command." Perhaps the most degraded characters of the whole in this question of compulsory religion are the chaplains. The common attitude of "Hail fellow, well met" adopted by the chaplains is the crowning exhibition of humbug and untruthfulness.

The Rev. Thomas Tiplady—rather a famous name in Christian records—explains in the "Daily Telegraph" that a reason for church parades is that the chaplain would, without them, have no opportunity of meeting the men. But the soldier surely is not on duty all the time, and there is nothing to prevent the soldier seeking out the parson—if the soldier wants him. We fancy that what Mr. Tiplady intended to say was that if the men were not coerced into meeting the chaplain, the latter would see as much of the men during wartime as he does during a time of peace. Can anyone conceive a large body of men rushing, in their own spare time, to listen to the sugary imbecilities of the B.B.C. Wednesday evening "Padre," with his manufactured experiences and idiotic conclusions?



## THE MOABITE STONE

## 2.

TO make quite sure that the reader is impressed with Canon Driver's statement that the language of the inscription on the Moabite Stone is, "with two or three exceptions identical with Hebrew," the "Encyclopædia Biblica" gives us a transliteration in Hebrew square characters, and that, of course, should settle the matter for all reasonable folk.

Unfortunately, Canon Cheyne, the editor of the "Encyclopædia Biblica," was imbued with a very healthy sceptical spirit, and those of us who know a little of his work are pretty certain that this spirit of scepticism was heartily disliked by his Church. Some of the worthy Canon's heretical statements must have made his orthodox brothers gasp in horror.

The kingdom of Moab is dealt with in a very informative article in the "Encyclopædia Biblica," and naturally the Moabite Stone is again referred to. Wellhausen appears to see little difference between Chemosh, the God of the Moabites, and Yahwè, the God of the Israelites, obviously recognising them as nothing but tribal gods, and he claims that the "Moabites, and doubtless also the Ammonites and the Edomites, spoke the language of Canaan as well as the Israelites." He does not tell us, however, what exactly that language was, which is a great pity. If we are to take the evidence of the Ras Shamra discoveries, then it is almost certain that it was *not* Hebrew.

Cheyne's own contribution to the article on Moab is what may politely be called a "damper" on the accounts given by G. A. Smith and Wellhausen. He thinks that "our criticism of the narratives has been, until very lately, too literary, and not quite sufficiently historical." He is extremely sceptical about "some of the historical inferences of earlier critics because of their precarious textual basis." After disputing quite a number of assertions which have been taken for "gospel" truth, Cheyne even claims that we cannot "trust all the records of the conquests of Saul and David"—obviously not even when guaranteed by "Holy Writ." As for the Inscription, he quotes Noldeke to the effect that its style "is essentially that of the O.T."—with which I personally agree. But does this prove that the language of the O.T. was actually spoken? On this point Cheyne finishes his article with, "The inscriptional style may, however, have differed considerably from the type of the actual spoken tongue." This observation is complete proof that, as far as a spoken language is concerned, Cheyne does not agree with the usual glib assertion that the Moabite Stone proves that the Hebrew of the Old Testament was a spoken language.

If we go back to a very orthodox religious work, the Schaff-Herzog "Encyclopædia of Religious Knowledge," the first edition of which was published in 1883, we find that considerable doubt is shown as to the authenticity of the Moabite Stone. After giving a description of it, and a translation, it says:—

"This inscription, *if genuine*, is the oldest Shemitic inscription existing. Besides the Moabite Stone, some Moabite pottery has been found. It is mostly in the museum at Berlin; but its genuineness is still more doubtful than that of the stone, as the manufacture of antiquities has become quite a flourishing industry of late in many Asiatic cities." (Italics mine.)

For a very orthodox encyclopedia, this little extract is in refreshing contrast with the cocksureness now shown by our "authorities."

But if the reader wishes for a thoroughly sceptical account of the Moabite Stone he should consult, if he can, Samuel Sharpe's pamphlet, published in 1879. That doughty Egyptologist refused to be bamboozled into acquiescence on a subject about which his opinion was as good as that of any so-called "authority." The late Chilperic Edwards, in his "Witness of

Assyria," also has a chapter on the Stone, and it is quite interesting to see how puzzled he is at its language—a problem he does not solve, by the way.

Sharpe, however, combats in his most trenchant style the whole claim that the Moabite Stone is authentic, and I transcribe here—with a few passages from his very scarce little work:—

"When the Moabite Stone was first discovered its genuineness was much contested, but latterly its opponents have been silenced and its genuineness seems to be allowed. Against this general opinion I wish to give my reasons for thinking it not genuine but of a date far more modern than the time of Mesha. . . . I shall explain why I do not agree with Dr. Ginsburg's conclusions, why I think it a forgery, but not a modern forgery; and, therefore, scarcely less valuable than if genuine. I shall . . . give my reasons for thinking it was written several centuries later than Mesha's time. . . . I shall point to the year when the Roman Empire was falling to pieces . . . when a prefect of Moab, perhaps about A.D. 260, may possibly have thought it worth while to appeal to history against a Syrian superior by means of this Inscription in order to show that the province of Moab did of old include the land of Reuben. To say that our Inscription was certainly then written would be rash indeed. All that we can hope for is to find a time when it may have been written. . . .

"The Inscription claims for Mesha and the Moabites an amount of civilisation and military power which we cannot readily grant. . . .

"The very agreement of the Inscription with the language of the Book of Kings, while by many is quoted to prove its genuineness, may rather be quoted to prove that the Inscription was written after the Captivity. Its agreement with the Book of Kings goes to prove that it was copied from them. . . .

" . . . There are several words in this Inscription of a yet more modern character, some in their form, and some in the meaning they bear. . . . Our inscription gives to the town of Siran a name used, as far as we know, only after the Christian era. In giving this Inscription to the age of Mesha we are met with serious difficulties . . . the language and the names of some towns seem too modern."

Sharpe goes into great detail on all these points—he is not the kind of controversialist satisfied with mere assertion, and I am very sorry I cannot give here some of his closely reasoned argument. He concludes:—

"Our aim has been to show that there was a time, many centuries after the reign of Mesha, with which the characters, the language, the subject matter of our Inscription, and even the motives of the writer, would all agree; and thus to answer the question very naturally asked by those who defend this Inscription's genuineness: 'If it was not written in Mesha's reign, when, and for what purpose, could it have been written?' The date which we propose for it is about A.D. 260, when Odenathus was ruler of Syria and the East as the friend of Aurelian and Gallienus; and the purpose of it was, we suppose, to argue that the province of Moab included the land of Reuben."

It is not for me to argue in detail as to whether Sharpe or his opponents were right. All I am concerned with in this very inadequate account of the Moabite Stone is to show that the considerable doubt as to its authenticity—a doubt which I share, of course—knocks it out completely as an indisputable proof that Hebrew was a spoken language at some unspecified time. I can only marvel at any well-read Rationalist using it as an argument against the theory about the Hebrew language that I advanced.

H. CUTNER.

I care not so much what I am in the opinion of others as what I am in my own; I would be rich of myself and not by borrowing.  
—MONTAIGNE.



## GOD AND THE SECOND FRONT

IN the midst of what is admittedly the gravest crisis yet faced by the British Empire, and by democratic nations as a whole, the momentous announcement has been made that September 3 is to be a "National Day of Prayer and Dedication."

It could hardly be expected that an occasion like the third anniversary of the beginning of the war would be allowed to pass without the vested interests of superstition taking full advantage to further the bid they are making throughout these days of the nation's suffering and peril to strengthen their weakening hold on the population.

In the national life, as in education, the Services and other fields, the Churches continue to use their fine phrases of national unity to cloak activities aimed at furthering their own interests and promoting their own sectarian claims and privileges.

No one who believes in God can doubt the urgent need that we should as a nation deepen our sense of dependence upon God," states the Archbishop of Canterbury in his announcement; and, supporting the proposal for more grist to the mill in the form of a "National Day of Prayer," Cardinal Hinsley writes: "The issues at stake are so momentous, and the result of the conflict so poised in the balance, that we ought to redouble our prayers and sacrifices to obtain from Almighty God the strength which He alone can give."

Almost at the same time as this touching appeal from bitterly opposed religious camps for "national unity," one also reads in the papers that the talks aimed at raising the school-leaving age and other long-overdue reforms to give our children the best education have broken down, mainly because once more "it has been found impossible to solve the religious problem." The Churches maintain their traditional position, kept so faithfully since the earliest days of popular schools, of being the main obstacle to our children receiving a full education.

In the present instance the Government proposals quite logically would place under public control Church schools which are receiving public money; but this would mean public control of thousands of village schools still controlled by the Churches in their own sectarian interests—"and so far religious opposition has prevented agreement." So much for the willingness of the Churches to contribute to that "national unity" on which so many eloquent sermons will be based on September 3.

Temporarily, at any rate, the war is proving indeed rather a Godsend for the Churches. Pre-war the Churches were definitely losing ground, as their leaders admitted. In days of bloodshed and hate, of suffering and suspense, of doubt and despair, however, people always tend to be more superstitious in the mass. Some know that better than the Church leaders, who, always ready to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, show no hesitation in cashing in on the present "God-sent" opportunity of national and individual suffering.

One need not be put off by the fact that the "day of prayer" has been called not specifically by the Churches, but by "the desire of His Majesty the King." It is part of the King of England's duty to be the spokesman and protector of the rights, privileges and responsibilities of the Church of England, and part of the Church of England's duty to be the spokesman and protector of the rights, privileges and responsibilities of the King of England. Crown, Church and Constitution have been so fashioned in England by centuries of conflict, custom and sanctified bargain that in some instances one wonders whether it is the King or the Archbishop who wears the crown.

So once more—while Soviet Russia goes on bearing the brunt of the Nazi onslaught almost alone—the world is to be treated to the spectacle of the British nation grovelling on its knees to confess its sins and ask Almighty God for forgiveness and strength.

A nation on its knees does not somehow seem the best symbol of a fighting nation battling for "freedom and justice throughout the world" (India always excepted) and for its own very existence.

The clamour for a second front grows; the Nazi onslaught against Russia increases in violence and success; the hell's cauldron of past mis-rule and exploitation and injustice seethes and bubbles over in India, where Hitlerite measures are quite openly taken in the name of democracy; Rommel and his legions are still in Egypt; the Black Dragon of the East gathers itself to swoop on further prey—and Britain goes to church!

How encouraged will be the heroic men and women of Soviet Russia, fighting for their lives against the Nazi hordes, to know that although Britain, despite all appeals, is still holding its fire as regards that much-needed second front in Europe, nevertheless, the British people, led by their valiant Bishops and priests, are going to broadside heaven with prayers for "strength" and for success by the Allied arms—including, presumably, the Red Army!

Or are we supposed to pray for strength and success to be given by God Almighty to the "godless" Red Army—or not? That is a nice little point in Christian logic on which we have not been given any real authoritative guidance. Is the success of the Red Army necessary to the victory of the United Nations (and hence to our own salvation), or not? And if so, do we expect the "godless" Red Army to be able to succeed without that "strength which God alone can give"? If the godless Red Army can succeed without prayers, then surely we can, too, and what is the point of praying anyway? If, on the other hand, prayers are necessary even to the cause of the "godless," then our only chance seems to be to persuade the whole of the Red Army to negotiate a short armistice with the Nazis while they all go down on their knees and ask God to save them!

Other logical difficulties about these "days of prayer" eventually become obvious even to Christian intelligence. Stating in a letter to "The Times" that he thinks these days do more harm than good (presumably to religious interests), the Rev. Eric H. Knell, of Emmanuel Parish Church, Forest Gate, writes: "Either the event appears to be followed by some striking success in the field, in which case many people subconsciously argue that they need not bother again about God until things take another bad turn . . . or else nothing seems to happen, in which case it is asked what is the use of prayer?"

This "doubting Thomas" might have added a third alternative which is possible after a "National Day of Prayer"—that the event seems to be closely followed by some disaster (as happened with the capitulation of France following within 24 hours of an earlier broadside of heaven by the pious British nation).

Our clerical friend whose logic has reached the august columns of "The Times," does not yet seem to have learned that one should not try to be logical in such things as prayer. One either accepts religion, or one rejects it—one certainly should not question it in such a fashion.

However, let us apply the logic. What is the "National Day of Prayer" ostensibly for? To pray for divine strength and for success on our arms, the arms of the Allies. If, then, success does follow fairly soon on the day of prayer, is that a sign that it is a result of God's intervention and an answer to the prayers? Logically, the Christian must answer "Yes." Many do so answer, but others have become a little chary!

But if a success is to be attributed to the will of God, then a disaster or a reverse must likewise be attributed to the will of God. Which, of course, the Christian promptly denies.

What will actually happen, of course, is that the course of the war will proceed exactly the same, for good or for ill, in Russia, in Egypt, throughout the world, as if not a single prayer were offered up from English church or chapel at His Majesty's desire on September 3—from which fact, those whose minds are not enslaved by the superstitious "dictatorship" of Christian "logic" will draw their own conclusions!

RONALD STANDFAST.



## WHAT NOW FOR THE NEGRO?

NEGROES have virtually no human rights which the white man respects. This was said in 1860, before the Civil War, by the chief Judge of the highest Court in the United States, and it is still true.

Negroes have to-day no right of voting in the Southern States. From the negro State of Texas only white representatives are sent to Washington. Only once in 50 years has a negro representative been seen in Washington, and he did not come from the south but from Chicago.

The rich and educated classes among the negroes do their utmost to achieve assimilation to the whites. A negro merchant made a great deal of money by inventing means of smoothing the curly hair of negroes. Our doctors, writers, clergymen are all alike in this urge towards assimilation. They have developed a deep inferiority complex. The poorer negroes imitate the educated ones, but even these latter are not happy. As soon as a negro becomes rich he is surrounded by hatred and envy. If a white man injures a negro in the street and the negro retorts in kind he will be lynched—and later on it will be declared that he attacked a white woman.

In the Northern States of the United States there is no direct persecution, but perhaps the position of the negroes there is even worse than in the south, because the urge to assimilation is much stronger than in the south. Our intellectuals try to suppress in the negro papers every element of our own culture in favour of the so-called higher values of white culture. Officially American trade unions are open to negroes, but in practice the doors are closed against them.

Let me tell you something of my own life. I did well at school, and then studied law. I had to find a lawyer's office to get some practice in my profession. It was likely to be a desperate search, but I was lucky; a white friend of mine liked me because I was a good football player, and took me into his office.

But what happened? His partners were furious. "What is a negro doing here?" The American typist refused to take from my dictation. I left the place, and not only the place but the profession, for we negroes cannot get the necessary experience at the Bar. Even if I had remained in the profession I could not have defended my brethren the Scottsboro boys. The white Judges would not listen to my speech.

So with the medical profession. There are only three good negro hospitals in the country. Everywhere—among doctors, nurses, patients—there is race segregation. That is why many negroes with diplomas and men of good education are working as porters, doorkeepers, sleeping-car stewards. My own brother graduated in Pennsylvania University, and is now working as a railway porter. When I had qualified for my liberal profession I worked for some time as a waiter. On one occasion I happened to act in an amateur performance. I sang, and someone noticed me. I started a new life, that of an artist.

Only the singer, artist and writer are able to break the ban in America. I can now go in America wherever I like, where before I should simply have been thrown out. Not that I do or will go where as a human being I should not be allowed to go and where to this day they would not admit my brother.

We must remember that outside North America there are three other centres of negro population: the Caribbean Islands (Jamaica, Haiti, etc.), Brazil, with the whole of South America, and Africa. In these various regions negroes speak different languages, but in spite of that even the American negroes feel instinctively in sympathy with their own blood, the black men of the whole world.

It is impossible to be optimistic. For a long time Africa will still be under the control of Europeans. But in all countries negroes must stand in one camp, fighting for freedom and social

justice. We have not the slightest idea of Africa, as a united continent of negroes, ever standing against the other races. No, all our hope lies in the development of freedom in the world. But meanwhile negroes should unite and systematically develop their own culture. The world to-day is full of barbarism, and I feel that this united negro culture could bring into the world a fresh spiritual, humanitarian principle, a principle of human friendship and service to the community.

PAUL ROBESON.

(From "The Modern Thinker.")

### A THOUGHT FROM HIPPOLYTE TAINÉ

Until the age of 15 I lived in ignorance and tranquillity; I had not yet thought of the future; I knew nothing of it; I was a Christian, and I had never asked myself what this life is worth, where I came from and what I had to do. . . . Reason appeared to me like a beacon light; I began to suspect that there was something beyond what I had seen, and to grope as in the darkness. My religious faith was the first thing which fell before this spirit of inquiry. One doubt provoked another; each article of belief dragged another down with it in its fall. . . . I felt within myself enough honour and strength of will to live as a good man, even after losing my religion. I esteemed my reason too highly to believe in another authority than its own; I refused to recognise rules for my life and the conduct of my thoughts from any other person; I became indignant at the idea of being virtuous through fear and a believer through obedience.

## OBITUARY

### CHARLES HENRY WILLIAMS

We regret to announce the death of Charles Henry Williams, of Birkenhead, which took place in his 75th year in the Tranmere Infirmary. A member of the N.S.S. for a number of years, he took an active part in Freethought propaganda from the platform and other directions, taking a keen interest in the welfare of the movement. His remains were interred in the Rake Lane Cemetery, Wallasey, on Saturday, August 8.

T. B. J.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 12 noon, Mr. L. EBURY. Parliament Hill Fields: 3-30 p.m., Mr. L. EBURY.

West London N.S.S. Branch (Hyde Park), Thursday, 7-0, Mr. E. C. SAPHIN; Sunday, 3-0, various speakers.

### COUNTRY Outdoor

Blackburn N.S.S. (Blackburn Market), Sunday, 7-0, Mr. J. V. SHORTT, a Lecture.

Bradford N.S.S. Branch. Members and friends meet on Broadway Car Park on Sunday evenings at 7-30.

Blyth (The Fountain), Monday, 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.  
Chester-le-Street (Bridge End), Saturday, 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Edinburgh Branch (The Mound), 7-0, Mr. J. GORDON (Glasgow), a Lecture.

Kingston-on-Thames N.S.S. Branch (Castle Street), Sunday, 7-0, Mr. J. W. BARKER.

Newcastle (Bigg Market), Sunday, 7-0, Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.