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## IEWS AND OPINIONS

### Let Us Prey!

THE Day of National Prayer—foolishly and inaccurately advertised as by the special desire of the King—has been and passed, and things have gone on as they would have done had the people been invited to play tiddley-winks. When next we hear of, say, a thousand men who have wickedly wasted ten thousand hours over a labour dispute, some may reflect that we could afford to encourage working men and women to waste three or four million hours in advertising the clergy and the churches. When we think of this performance and the solemn manner in which it was "written up" by the Press, we are reminded of de Rochefoucauld's description of gravity as "a mystery invented to conceal the defects of the understanding." But the defects here belong to those who were almost ordered to prayer, not to those who ordered it. Those who deal in the merchandise of religion know full well that their goods must be kept well displayed in the front window. Otherwise but few will feel enough interest in them to inquire whether they are still kept in stock. The smoker will hunt for his tobacco, the drinker for his beer, the athlete for his games, the reader for his books. But the vendor of religion, if he would continue in business, must keep his goods well displayed, with an old-fashioned "barker" trumpeting the quality of his wares as an equivalent for the once common "Buy, buy, buy" that used to attract the attention of passers-by.

The Day of Prayer was well advertised. It had to be; and the "Church Times" in its editorial note for September 11 drew a picture of thronged churches, playgrounds and village greens, offices and police stations, all with eager crowds anxious to pray—or to form part in a crowd. It also adds that where the churches were not available "the parish priest was invited into the workshops." Unfortunately for the picture we have evidence of protests being made against the entrance of these priests into the workshops and canteens, and it would be interesting to learn what their "invitations" amounted to.

Was it a mass request of the whole of the workmen? Or part of them? Or one of the number? Or made by the manager only? And it is curious that while the editorial notes draw a picture of the "nation at prayer," in the same issue of the "Church Times," the editorial leading article confesses that "a feature of the contemporary religious scene is the widespread indifference of all classes to organised religion." A nation at prayer, with a widespread indifference to religion, hardly seems to run well together. But one cannot expect those who can see the "finger of God everywhere" connecting what is said on one page of a paper with that which is said, by the same writer, three pages removed.

### Why Are the Clergy Exempt?

Let us turn to another aspect of the religious scene. On every hand the war bites deeper into our civic freedom and war-time comforts. Our food, while still enough to maintain health, with a margin to the good, is shorn of its varied character—something which always counts in the maintenance of complete health. Our freedom of movement is restricted, both by decree, and limited modes of transportation, and in many cases that involve an inroad on health. We can still get enough clothing for warmth and comfort, but quantity is limited by coupons and the quality is not what it was. Raids on the home are made for war-work and for the increase of the Forces, raids that include young women as well as men. The latest call is for those of sixteen years of age—male and female. The effects of this cannot yet be gauged. Books are dearer and scarcer, and publishers hold up much writing that deals with the permanent aspects of life. There is no solid ground for objection to any of these things—in substance. Willingly or unwillingly everyone is forced to contribute something to the progress of the war, and it is right that they should be so compelled. We have to face and crush one of the greatest of threats to our civilisation.

There is one class only that is exempt from military service—age and health suitable. Primarily this is the clergy of the State Church. Without that, this exemption would not exist for other churches. But it would be impossible to give exemption to the clergy of the established Church without extending it to others. If it were attempted it would not last a month. The evils of a State Church bite deep. So all qualified preachers in all the churches—Christian and non-Christian, all those who are studying for the ministry of any religious sect are freed from military service. And between the would-be volunteer—if he is already in "holy orders"—and the Armed Forces stands the Bishop. Of course, the priest or the student may defy the Bishop and join the Forces, but in that case he will have to reckon with his religious superiors when the war is over. The scandal of this arrangement cannot well be exaggerated, but its moral may be easily read, and this is that the interest of our church leaders,



from the Archbishops downward, with rare exceptions, lies in the direction of maintaining their own power and privileges. In this matter we are afraid that Archbishop Temple will be found to be treading in the footsteps of his predecessors.

### Privilege and the Press

The silence of the general Press on this matter of clerical exemption is marked. For that reason we were pleased to see in "Reveille," a fortnightly mainly devoted to the interests of the Forces—particularly the lower ranks—a three-column article on "Should the Clergy be Exempt?" The writer, who takes the pen-name of "Pendexter," has no doubt on the subject. He points out that "every country on the Continent of Europe has always conscripted the professional and amateur clergy for military service." In Britain we not merely encourage the Churches to privileges such as no other body of people enjoy, we not merely give the established Church a party of Bishops in the House of Lords, but we relieve all the Churches—established and non-established—from taxation, thus throwing the cost of upkeep upon the public—irrespective of whether they use the churches or not, and we pay extravagant salaries to parsons to play the part of chaplains, and encourage them by writing down as members of the State Church thousands of men who are no more members of that Church than we are. No wonder that the Church of England has been described as "The Conservative Party at Prayer." It is that, although we have our doubts whether it is treating even the Conservative Party fairly in picturing it as being prayerful.

It is not merely the preachers of the State Church that are exempt, but as "Pendexter" says:—

"Lay readers and workers, Bible students. Great shoals of these young men, quite well and fit, are entirely exempt from national service, if they so wish. They are merely consumers who produce nothing. And to call up these men, as we have called up our medical men, teachers and other professional classes, would not seriously affect the Churches."

We do not quite agree with "Pendexter" in this last clause. We do not believe that the Churches would not suffer if the Government treated all preachers as citizens without regard to their vocation. From the earliest, the most primitive times, the Medicine Man has been treated as one apart from ordinary men and women. In the paint-and-feather stage of his existence the priest and his professional dress are distinct from those of his "flock." And ever since, right down to 1942, the clergy have had their distinctive costumes and mannerisms. How else would the people know that they were distinct from the rest of the people? Certainly not by their intelligence or their usefulness. Let them dress as civilians do and behave as civilians do, and the influence of the clergy would sink to zero. Pomp and ceremony play a very important part in the preservation of outworn institutions and absurd customs. The scientist gains little or nothing from the wearing of his academic robe. He is as great a man in an ordinary tweed suit as he would be if clad in cloth of gold with diamond buttons. But take away from the clergy their special clothing, their set tone of speech, the *aura* of "holiness" with which they are surrounded, and they and their pretensions would soon become the subject of contempt or amusement.

Probably "Pendexter" is correct when he says that the Government "dare not" initiate a reform of the status of the clergy, "so strongly is the Established Church entrenched in Britain, and so strongly are the privileges of clericalism supported by other religions and sects." The Nonconformists have never really wanted the State to stand apart from and neutral to religious bodies. They have simply asked for a fair share of the "loot" as between themselves and the Establishment. Here and there individuals belonging to the Nonconformist bodies have fought well for real equality, but as a body their complaint has been that the Establishment had more than its proper share of the plunder of the public. The Churches, Established and other, must *prey* together.

There is one other passage in "Pendexter's" article that is worth quoting. He says:—

"Too often the battling peoples suffer the pompous criticisms of the orthodox and professional champions of righteousness. Unthinking prelates are prone to deluge a warrior nation with patronising lectures and insolent nonsense. For instance, an official Church of England pamphlet says 'Young men are prepared to die for their country, but there is nothing to distinguish them from Nazis.' Bishops and parsons tell us that we are fighting for Christianity, and then tell us how unworthy are our private lives—probably because we do not attend their particular churches. The Bishop of Rochester says 'We are on the verge of a collapse of morals in this country.' Well, well. If the selfless service and personal sacrifice of the British people in the interest of all humanity is a collapse of morals, then lead us to some professional penitent bench—with an axe."

But "Pendexter" must remember that the Church is the Church and parsons are parsons. No one ever goes to a parson—as a parson—for information or guidance concerning this world. They go for guidance about the other world. And if those who go have a dim suspicion that the parson knows no more than they do about God or a future life, they pretend to believe otherwise, and the parson plays up to them by pretending to have the knowledge they credit him with. Folly and roguery have always lived as near neighbours and the association will continue so long as charlatany wears a mitre and folly is common with the population.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### PAPAL POLICY IN SPAIN AND ITALY

BENEDICT XV. ascended the Papal throne in 1914 at a very menacing period, and professed neutrality in the first world war. Later, the Pope's appeal for peace in 1917 was suspiciously regarded by the Governments of the various States then fighting with the Central Powers. In fact, the Italian Foreign Minister, Baron Sonnino, asserted in Parliament at Rome that this plea for peace was secretly inspired by Berlin and Vienna. Yet, when peace was at last restored, a powerful revulsion of feeling against war prevailed, and many optimists were convinced that arbitration and other rational methods would, in the coming years, completely supersede the sanguinary horrors of armed conflict.

Italy suffered severely and gained comparatively little from the war. Although Pope Pius IX. in 1870 had forbidden Catholic electors to participate in politics when United Italy was



proclaimed and the Papacy's temporal power was terminated, during the 1914-18 war, Benedict XV. reversed this policy, and the faithful were encouraged to become active in political affairs. The decree of 1868, operative in 1870, condemning Catholic intervention in elections was officially cancelled in 1919, and an active and eloquent Sicilian priest, Luigi Sturzo, organised and led the Italian Popular Party. This new Catholic group secured 98 seats in the 1919-20 Italian Parliament, thus, at a bound, becoming the second largest party in the Chamber. Its supporters were chiefly labourers and peasants, and its career proved brief. An opposing party called Fascists emerged, who accused the popolari of Bolshevism and other dreadful sins. Clashes involving bloodshed occurred between the competing parties until, with Mussolini's triumph, the Popular Party was eliminated with every other group adverse to Fascist domination.

Pope Benedict died in 1922 and was succeeded by Pius XI, whose prolonged pontificate was chequered by the tension and exploitation which heralded the terrible catastrophe which now saddens the world. Democratic methods were abandoned in Spain, Portugal, the Reich, Italy and other States. Papal diplomacy was necessarily influenced by the spectacular changes that occurred on the Continent. In less than a year from the time of the new Pope's accession the Italian Fascists marched on Rome, and the long-standing dispute concerning the Vatican's political and juridical rights in the Italian State became acute. Sturzo's Populist Party's programme was decidedly anti-Fascist, but Mussolini's adherents proved the more powerful. Thus, the Pope was advised to disavow the clerical party and welcome the Black Shirts as the only certain safeguard against the advancing tide of Communism and Freethought.

A concordat between Church and State was now projected. Mussolini, once as much a priest-hater as the illustrious Liberator, Mazzini, now asserted his devout adherence to Mother Church. He insisted on the necessity for religious instruction in the schools, encouraged secular officials to participate in Catholic ceremonial, and made other friendly advances. So the Pope sanctioned the liquidation of Sturzo's Catholic party, and its founder fled to England. Still, the Duce's promises to favour the Church's educational programme soon proved specious. In fact, in 1926 the Balilla system was established, which indoctrinated Italian youth with Fascist principles, and the outwitted Pope was driven to disperse the Catholic youth groups in 1927.

Heated opinions were expressed on both sides, and the party founded by the Church in 1923, called Catholic Action, which was intended to promote a stricter observance of the Church's social and ecclesiastical behests, the Fascists soon accused as guilty of subversive political agitation. Each contending party became so clamorous that the outside Italian public demanded some peaceful solution of the perennial Roman problem.

The sequel to this political and religious squabble was soon shown in the Vatican Treaties. After more than a year's negotiations the Lateran Agreement was signed in 1929 by Cardinal Gasparri and Benito Mussolini. The Vatican City was to be recognised as a sovereign State consisting of a tiny territory embracing about 100 acres. Of course, there was a monetary transaction, and a sum total of about 92 million dollars in cash and State bonds was accepted by the Church "as a final settlement of its financial relations with Italy resulting from the events of 1870." In addition, the Catholic cult was to be considered the national faith. But the plenipotentiaries had scarcely separated before the Pope indignantly declared that the Fascists had contemptuously violated the concordat, especially in connection with the Church's promised control of the schools.

The Quirinal and the Vatican were at variance for years. Still, Fascism, favoured with full official support, became more and more aggressive, and 1931 proved a critical time. Catholic Action had succumbed to Governmental assimilation and became

a mere appendage of the Fascist Party. The Papacy had evidently conceded the Duce's claims, for by 1932 the Vatican consented to co-operate with the Fascist régime. The reprehensible invasion and temporary conquest of Abyssinia was condoned and, in the closing years of his pontificate, Pius apparently granted the Fascist contention that in all social and economic concerns the secular State stood supreme.

In Spain a more sinister story is unfolded. Poverty and misery cursed the country in the late 'twenties. With great justification the anti-clericals charged the Church with grave responsibility for this shameful state of affairs. It is true that the Pope had advised improvement both in priestly education and morality, but inveterate Spanish indolence was unaffected. A cesspool of corruption, the Church in Spain was called to account, and its very existence was at stake in 1931, when the dictator Rivera retired and King Alfonso abdicated.

Zamora, the head of the new Republican Government, without any consultation with the Vatican, soon proceeded to disestablish the Spanish Church, to dissolve the innumerable monastic and religious orders and confiscate their possessions, to banish the wily Jesuits, and expel the priests from the public schools. These sweeping reforms were expeditiously accomplished with wide popular approval. Indeed, it has been noted that the clergy were utterly astounded at the willing acquiescence of their flocks in their overthrow. Despite the indignities Mother Church had experienced, the Pope was constrained to recognise the Republic as a *fait accompli*. Nevertheless, the Holy Father strongly protested against the Republic's drastic treatment of the Church in an encyclical, and excommunicated its leading statesmen in 1933.

Two years later, however, there was a reaction, and the clerical and royalist parties returned 120 deputies to the Cortes. This religious revival inflamed the Republicans and Progressives and stormy demonstrations against the hierarchy and religious orders were widespread early in 1936. This proved the prelude to the sanguinary civil conflict that convulsed the peninsula in the succeeding July.

From the outbreak of hostilities the Papacy manifested its antagonism to the Republican Loyalists, and in 1938 openly espoused the cause of the obscurantist General Franco. The Vatican thus allied itself with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, countries that provided powerful military aid to the insurgents and ultimately secured their success. Moreover, these rebels received almost unanimous support from Catholics resident in the Americas, France and Britain, although it may be safely said that the Pope's prestige was seriously shaken wherever progressive thought prevailed.

After reigning 17 years as Pope, Pius XI. died in 1939. As Vatican policy was mainly directed by himself, he must bear much of the blame for its serious shortcomings. Informed opinion severely condemned a Papal diplomacy that permitted the suppression of the Italian Popular Party in deference to Mussolini, the Pope's hearty endorsement of the attack on Ethiopia, the support accorded Franco in Spain, his encouragement of dictatorial rule in Austria, and other questionable proceedings. In all these emergencies the custodian of faith and morals sinned against the light.

T. F. PALMER.

Robert Burns's heresy was "four square to all the winds that blow." Oliver Wendell Holmes, indeed, expressed surprise that puritanical Caledonia could take Robert Burns to her straight-laced bosom without breaking her stays. For Burns, like Paine and Voltaire, was a Deist. Of other religion, saved what flowed from a mild Theism, he scarcely showed a trace. In truth, one can scarcely call it a creed. It was mainly a name for a particular mood of sentimentalism, the expression of a state of indefinite aspiration.—MIMNERMUS.



## BIBLE NOTES AND NOTIONS

FROM time to time I have discussed the merits (or demerits) of the Hebrew and the Septuagint "originals" of our English Bible text.

But there still remains a manuscript known as the Samaritan Pentateuch to be considered. Although this was known to be in existence, it was not till 1616 that a copy was procured by Pietro della Valle on his travels in the East. The findings of many "authorities" as to its worth were that the Samaritan copy, as well as the present Hebrew, "came from the autograph of Moses; and that the two are only different recensions of the same original copy." The Samaritans themselves asserted "that not only has their Pentateuch proceeded from the original of Moses, but also that they have now in their possession a copy written by Abishua, the great grandson of Aaron." They also maintain that the only part of the Scriptures actually "inspired" is their own copy of the Pentateuch. They reject both the rest of the Old Testament and the whole of the New.

The Samaritan text is in the Hebrew language, but is written in different characters, held to be the veritable ones used by Moses himself, and called "old" Hebrew. The great bone of contention is its *value* as God's uncorrupted Word. On this Biblical authorities are still at loggerheads.

It differs from the present Hebrew in about 6,000 places. Often it agrees with the Septuagint as against the Hebrew; often its readings are against both; and sometimes its text is considered to be in places superior to that of the Hebrew. The great Hebrew scholar and lexicographer, Gesenius, after an elaborate examination, decided "wholly against the Samaritan version," says Kenyon (though it is *not* a version).

It is interesting to note, however, that "no manuscript of the Samaritan Bible is older than the tenth century." How then do the experts know that it represents the Hebrew text as left either by Moses or as edited by Ezra? I have been unable to discover the answer to this. Why should the traditions of the Samaritan people be accepted on such a difficult question? Here again I cannot find any reply worth considering. I can see no reason whatever on the evidence to suppose that it was impossible to use the Hebrew text of Akiba before it was finally settled by the Massorettes somewhere about the sixth century, and to use a script that could quite well have been simply Phœnician; there being no proof that there ever was any "old" Hebrew. In fact there is a manuscript of the Samaritan text said to have been copied in 1227, which is written in three columns each containing a different dialect, Hebrew, Samaritan and Arabic—all in the same written characters. This proves that any Semitic language could have been written in these characters. In spite of intensive study, the experts have been unable to say for certain in their search for the "original" Hebrew exactly of what value is the Samaritan text. At all events, it has not solved the problem of what is known as the Massoretic text.

Whether Rabbi Akiba or someone else is responsible for the modern Hebrew Bible, most authorities are in full agreement that in its present written form it comes after the beginning of the Christian era. Certainly the square Hebrew characters in which it is composed are of comparatively late origin. Here at the moment it is not possible to discuss whether this alphabet was deliberately designed for "mystical" motives; though indeed it is difficult to come to a different conclusion if what is called the Kabbalah (or Cabala) is taken into account.

In any case, it can be taken as a fact that with the complete victory of the Romans against the Jewish people, and the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the further destruction of a great part of the succeeding generations at the rising of the Jewish Messiah Bar-Cochba (during A.D. 132-135), some of the survivors withdrew from the world to study the "sacred records," or what was called the *Torah*—the Law. Nothing to them equalled

in importance this heavenly task, and schools were formed in Babylon, and later in Jerusalem, for this purpose. They became great centres of activity, records of the classes and discussions were kept, and most of the MSS. and commentaries were collected in a large number of volumes to form the work known as the Talmud. Its language is a sort of jargon, a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic, with possibly other dialects, and it is only in recent years that a complete translation has been available. Much of it is very puerile, but the text of the *Torah* is very minutely examined and commented upon by "learned" rabbis and their pupils.

This probably led up to the work of the Massorettes, a Jewish sect, whose one object was, we are told, to preserve the Word of God in its pristine purity. From about the sixth to the tenth century they worked on the Hebrew text, adding the vowels, as the original Hebrew was written without them—and as it still is on the rolls read out in synagogues. In addition, they made elaborate rules for the preservation of their text, which helped the copyists to avoid mistakes; and they wrote a large number of notes with suggestions for the correction of obvious errors. But the main point to notice is that even in the Massoretic text some authorities are inclined to see a corrupted one, as it could have easily been made in the first place from a faulty copy of some *other* faulty copy.

So far then all that this textual criticism has done is to admit that, in spite of the immense labour of Jewish and Christian scholars in search of a text of the Old Testament which we can be sure approximates the original "autographs" as much as possible, no one yet knows what that text actually is. The Hebrew, the Samaritan and the Septuagint differ not only with each other but often two agree against the other in such a way that confusion is made more hopeless.

And matters are not made better when the other versions are examined. The Old Testament was translated into various Eastern languages, and into Latin at a very early period. There is an "old" Latin text dating, we are told, from the second century. So faulty was it that Jerome made a special study of Hebrew so that he could produce another and more correct version from the Hebrew itself, rather than from a faulty Greek or Latin text. This appeared about A.D. 400 and was not at all enthusiastically received, because Jerome almost always preferred the Hebrew to the Greek, and the Jews and their Bible were intensely disliked. Moreover, he opposed the inclusion of the Apocrypha as it formed no part of the Hebrew canon.

Jerome's version, which was partly in the Old Latin, was the Bible of almost the whole of Europe for over 1,000 years, and is still used by the Roman Church at this day. Moreover, it is this Vulgate, as it is called, from which the Douai translation was made.

In this very short résumé of what Biblical authorities have said about our special Bible texts I have had necessarily to be brief. But reading their works, many of them packed with scholarship, I have often marvelled at the credulous faith of both Jews and Christians where the Bible is concerned. Do these people never read what the critics have said and are still saying? Do the priestly half-wits the B.B.C. engage for us really believe that their Bible lectures, designed to show that the Bible is God's Inspired Word, make converts from a reading and thinking public?

But, of course, a reading and thinking public is a very small one—and it is due to this fact that the Bible is still the great totem or fetish of millions of people.

H. CUTNER.

Give me to die unwitting of the day,  
And stricken in life's brave heat, with senses clear!

—E. C. STEDMAN.



## ACID DROPS

ONCE again the schools, the Government and the Churches. This journal is the only one that has constantly insisted on the existence of a plot between the heads of the Churches and the Board of Education. The President of the Board, Mr. R. A. Butler, it must not be forgotten, is also President of the Conservative Party's Central Committee for Post-War Problems—and the Prime Minister is Chairman of the Conservative Party. The link between the heads of the Established Church and the Conservative Party has always been very close. In some matters and to some extent they stand or fall together.

So we are not surprised to find in the "Methodist Times" for September 10 a leading article in which it is stated:—

"It cannot be emphasised too strongly that the Board of Education is not only willing, but eager, to include this (strong religious instruction) in the new comprehensive Education Measure provided the Churches will present an indubitable scheme."

That is quite plain. So also is the fact that this scheme—or plot—to be successful must be brought to a head either before the war ends or before the Government goes out of office. Nothing less than the return of a strong Tory Government would secure the consummation of the Church-cum-Government plot.

There has been one good sign in the other direction. This is the unanimous vote of the Trades Union Congress in favour of secular education in State-provided schools. The Roman Catholic section—acting one may presume under priestly orders—tried to prevent a vote by the threat that if the motion was agreed on the Catholics might form an independent Union, thus showing that in their view trade union policy must be directed by the Roman Church—openly, as it already influences many things by back-stair methods.

It must be borne in mind—many appear to have forgotten it—that for many years the T.U.C. carried a resolution by huge majorities in favour of Secular Education. It was mainly by the tactics of Roman Catholics that the vote was dropped on the grounds that the agreement year after year was a waste of time. But the Roman Church and the State Church were not then quite so impudent as they are to-day. And there was not a world war on to give the Churches a chance. On the present occasion the Roman Catholics tried the same threat of a separate trade union, but it failed in its purpose.

Those who read the situation aright will not mistake its character, or be slow to draw conclusions. The first is that with Roman Catholics the Church comes first. At least, large numbers of them place the Church first and everything else is secondary. We do not blame them for this. So long as Christianity is genuinely accepted, sincere Christians will place the well-being of their Church before everything else. The leaders of the Russian revolution were right when they made it their task to break the power of the Churches in order to build their new State. Our own reformers may learn a similar lesson one of these days.

The second conclusion is that if the Christian theory be correct, then the welfare of the Church—any Church—must take precedence of all other things. The influence and power of the Churches must be broken if the new and better State is to emerge. We hope the Trades Union Congress will stick to its ground and to its vote. They will be better prepared for the fight that is before them. They should remember that our last war was for a new world. If we wish for a new world this time we must make it. We hope that the Catholic opposition will help people to realise that the war of ideas is the one thing that can destroy the war of brute force and sacerdotal cunning.

What we should now like to see is a corresponding vote from the National Union of Teachers. We know enough of teachers to be convinced that a large majority have no desire to see the clergy again ruling the schools, and who would, in the interests

of their own dignity and in that of education, like to see all clerical influence ended in the schools. Working men have set them an example; teachers should not be too proud to profit by the lesson.

We were pleased to see in the "Slough Observer" for September 11, from the Co-operative Education Secretary, a plain, straight letter on the desire of the Board of Education to establish and subsidise the Christianising of the schools. Mr. Topper says that the considered view of the Co-operative Movement, with its nine million members, is that "religious education should be separate, carried out by denominations at their own expense." He adds:—

"The national system should, in our view, provide free, such secular education as to fit all children—each according to his capacity—for life as they will have to meet it in industry, as citizens of a democratic country, with no barriers of any kind up to the highest education possible."

With the support of the Co-operative Movement, the force of the recent Trades Union Congress resolution, and of all men and women who have a real interest in education, there should be no difficulty in smashing the miserable sectarian plot that is being developed by the Archbishops and the Education Board of this Government. The Co-operative Movement was mainly created by Freethinkers and education—real education was one of their objects.

There seems no end to the stupidity of man where religion is concerned. Here is the well-known preacher, the Rev. W. H. Elliott, providing the readers of the "Daily Sketch" with this justification for trusting God. He says that we sit in a bus, reading, and trust to the driver, although we do not know him. We undergo an operation by a doctor and trust him although we do not know him. Why, then, not trust God in the same manner?

The foolishness of it is almost unbelievable. We trust the driver of the omnibus because we know that before he is permitted to drive he is put through a very severe test. If he drove without it he would be imprisoned. We trust to the doctor operating because we know that he has been tested very carefully by those who understand what an operation means and under what conditions it may be done. We do not trust either driver or doctor without some assurance. When anyone can bring the same trustworthy evidence for God we may consider belief in him. We are left wondering what kind of half-mentally baked people Mr. Elliott thinks his readers are; and what degree of foolishness does he hold to talk to the public in this way. Also, what proportion of semi-idiots does the editor of the "Daily Sketch" think readers are that he can give a report of Mr. Elliott's stupidities?

Here is another sample of equal foolishness. Haverfordwest Council has been discussing whether Sunday cinemas should be permitted. After nearly the whole of the 40 members had spoken, it was agreed that the matter be postponed until the opinion of the Lord's Day Observance Society on the matter had been received. That society is certainly one of the most bigoted and religiously ignorant associations in the country, in spite of the Lord Chief Justice having been its president for some years. What has Haverfordwest done to deserve these Councillors?

A recent issue of the "Church Times" had a curious editorial reference to this journal. The writer says that while there can be no doubt of the infidelity of "the small company of anti-theological Rationalists," yet the propaganda has none of the "fanaticism and effectiveness displayed on the Continent. Even in 'The Freethinker' there is an undeniable half-heartedness about our contemporary's conscientious scolding."

It is not easy for a Freethought journal to please a Christian one, but we confess that we never expected this paper to be charged with half-heartedness, and we should have expected the charge of something more serious than "scolding," which implies mere anger or pettish fault-finding. We can assure the "Church Times" that we are never angry with Christianity, neither are



we pettish, and we believe that never has any Freethought paper carried on a more deadly attack on the religious position; and we are not angry—we are only determined and uncompromising. We do not believe that Christianity can be beaten by kindly phrases or by the mouthing of ethical commonplaces. We believe that Christianity is at no time more dangerous than when it pretends to be liberal and mainly humanitarian.

As to the comparison of British with continental propaganda, "fanaticism and effectiveness" is merely "saying things." British and continental Freethinking propaganda have always had differences in form, and continental Freethinking was generally more united in its utterances. It was more open in its speech, and less burdened with the idea that Freethought could, so to speak, capture the Churches. But the uncompromising attitude towards established religion was never without representatives in this country, strong and as forthright as anything that existed on the Continent. It is the pride of "The Freethinker" that it is in the line of this better and bolder Freethinking tradition—the line that runs direct from Paine, through Robert Owen, Richard Carlile, Hetherington, Bradlaugh and Foote. We are not quite sure what the "Church Times" means when it speaks of continental Freethought as displaying "fanaticism," unless it means that it labelled itself "Atheist" instead of selecting some other half-way term.

The Rev. O. C. Gould sent shivers through the Evangelical Conference at Blackpool the other day when he informed the meeting that he knew of thousands of young men who were pagan in everything but name. We see no objections to their being pagans, but for the fact that the use of "pagan" implies in the mouths of men like Mr. Gould an insinuation of all that is bad. Mr. Gould has resigned his Vicarage of SS. Simon and Jude, High Park, and is now adorned with the rank of squadron-leader with, of course, full pay, and apparently he thinks he is earning his pay as chaplain to people who do not want him by blackening, by insinuation, their character.

But we do wish that these Christians would agree on all telling the same lie. One moment they tell us what fine fellows our young airmen are, animated by the highest of ideals and exhibiting dauntless courage, the next they discover they are not wedded to the puerilities of evangelical absurdities and crudities, and so denounce them as pagans, with all that this word carries to a distorted Christian mind. One of these days we may see these same "pagan" members of the forces turn and give these impertinent chaplains a resounding, metaphorical, kick in the pants. It is time the better elements in the forces stood up against such implied insults.

Another professional godite, R. O. F. Heywood, Assistant Bishop of St. Albans, makes our flesh creep—or hopes to—by informing us "Paganism" is spreading in Europe. If the suffering—we beg pardon—suffragan bishop used "pagan" with any reasonable degree of sense, one might reply with a "Why not?" What he means is: "If you repudiate Christianity you will soon repudiate Christian ethics." Again we are prepared to shiver, but again we do not shiver, because we are not clear what he means by Christian ethics. The only Christian ethics we know of is that of salvation by someone having been crucified in order to satisfy the brutal feelings of his father, salvation by proxy, damnation for unbelief, and a continuous whine that man cannot behave or save himself if he trusted to human feeling and human wisdom. And that is just damned nonsense.

What men such as the Rev. Heywood imply—they have not the courage to say it honestly and openly—is that decent behaviour is improbable, if not impossible, without belief in Christianity. A few generations back this was said openly. To-day it is implied rather than stated, or, as in the case of Archbishop Temple, where it is wrapped up in vague philosophic verbiage, which prevents most people detecting the nonsense it conceals. Once again we put the plain question, but without any hope of receiving a plain answer—What form of virtue—

and, if you will, rascality—is possible with Christianity that is not possible without it?

The plain truth is, there is no such thing as Christian ethics. There never was and there never will be. There are only a number of specific doctrines, stereotyped superstitions, that go to make up the Christian religion. The belief in the innate wickedness of man, his liability to eternal damnation if he does not profess belief in Christian doctrines, is all that can properly be called Christian. And even these are not peculiar to Christianity. Once again we put the critical question—What ethical quality is it that is possible with Christianity that is not possible without it? We offer a year's subscription to "The Freethinker" to any member of the clerical world who will attempt a straight answer to a straight and simple question.

Here is another cock-eyed way of putting a statement. This is from the Vicar of Wisbech St. Mary, as expressed in the Deanery Magazine for September. "The basis of all good citizenship is character, and a man's character depends upon his religious belief." Here are two falsities in a single sentence. Not a bad record, even from a church magazine, from which no one expects either truthful or clear thinking. Considering the number of people who are—on the confession of the clergy themselves—minus religious belief we must be a fairly rotten lot—from the social point of view. On the other hand, we have the clergy themselves singing praise of the courage, the devotion to duty, etc., of "our boys in the services" So there we are. There seems to be some rather tall lying somewhere. And that is a quality which is emphatically neither un-Christian nor anti-Christian. It is part of the Christian tradition.

We think that not many of the very, very strong Christians in this country will thank the "Times" Moscow correspondent for sending a message which is published in the issue of that paper for September 15. The correspondent cites the Patriarch of Moscow as referring scornfully to those who

"willingly forgive us for praying for the success of the Red Army, but become angry when they discover that we are acting in all sincerity, and whose constant interest in 'persecution' in the Soviet Union is a sign either of their political prejudices or of their desire to re-establish conditions for the Russian Church in which they, as their priests, would enjoy unreserved privileges. The common Christian, however, must welcome the dissociation, and the State in the Soviet Union, for its lead to a return of the clergy to the original tenets of simple Christian life based on the example of the apostles."

We feel certain that this deliverance will not be read with approval by the bulk of Roman Catholics, by all the Roman Catholic priests, and by those men and women in high places, and who may be described as "near" Catholics.

For them satisfaction would arise by the revival of the old tales that Christians, as Christians, were undergoing constant persecution for their religion. For there is no doubting that in this country there is a fairly large number of people in good positions who, while not wanting to see Germany annex Russia, would like the war to end with Russia weak, its Atheistic leaders discredited, and our close alliance with "Atheistic" Russia to end, leaving the road clear for a tearing campaign against Russia on the lines that existed before Russia diverted from the rest of unconquered Europe the main strength of Hitler's armies. With these people religion comes first, and a war lost would be well lost if the threat to the Churches caused by the war was removed.

What we have quoted above is taken from a pamphlet issued by the Patriarch of the Russian Churches, depicting the savagery of the German invasion and rebuking those who by their attitude and speeches keep alive the stories of Soviet atrocities that were current before 1939, and which prevented a close alliance between Russia and this country. The one thing certain is that the real peace of Europe can only be established by a genuine friendship between Britain and Russia, and that would naturally involve the co-operation of all the European States.



# "THE FREETHINKER"

2 and 3, Furnival Street, Holborn,

Telephone No.: Holborn 2601.

London, E.C.4.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

W. RAINFORD.—Glad to hear that you get so much personal satisfaction from your attempts to enlighten others. It is the kind of work that brings always satisfaction. We remember the advice of a great French writer, given to a young friend: "Always take up with some work that promises betterment for others and brings no material profit to yourself." We believe that is the only kind of work that always pays.

F. COLLIN.—Many thanks for cutting. It will be useful. We are greatly indebted for those of our readers who forward anything they think may be useful. Even when not used they help in forming a picture of what is taking place.

H. N.—Your account of the quiet pressure brought to bear on members of the forces by some officers and chaplains is interesting and will be preserved. If Christianity breed self-respect it would make such tactics impossible.

F. GUBBINS.—We have done our best to find out the whereabouts of the person named, but without success.

F. GREENING.—Thanks. Shall appear.

R. B. KERR.—We must direct your attention to the nature of the now accepted scientific notion of "levels" or "emergence." We really cannot picture any extension of vision that would enable one to see water in atoms of hydrogen and oxygen. The atom itself is really a hypothetical exist.

To circulating and distributing "The Freethinker"—I. Yettram, 3s.

For distributing "The Freethinker": A. E. Garrison, 1s.

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

WE have said many times that the Churches would not have so openly exposed their plan to control the elementary schools if they had not received promises of support from the Government. We have had placed in our hands a letter from Mr. Chuter Ede, M.P., which supports what we have said. Mr. Ede received a resolution from a Yorkshire debating society protesting against any attempt to abolish the Cowper-Temple clause and the conscience clause from the Education Act. To that Mr. Chuter Ede replies in a letter dated September 1, that no proposal has been submitted to Parliament to amend the 1870 Act in favour of the Churches. I do not think the conscience clause then enacted, or the Cowper-Temple clause which covered the giving of religious instruction in provided schools, is likely to be altered.

This reply makes us wonder whether we have reached a stage when politics and honesty—particularly where the politicians in power are concerned—are absolutely incompatible. Of course, there is no intention openly to repeal the clauses. To do that would require honesty and intellectual courage. But Mr. Chuter Ede is a member of the Board of Education, and he knows that the Churches would never have gone so far as they have gone if the Government had not given some sort of a promise to lend a hand in the plot to make religion a compulsory

subject in all schools, to make it a qualifying optional subject for a certificate, and to see that the religious instruction given to the children is agreeable to the clergy. Mr. Chuter Ede is very artful, but not very subtle. Or perhaps he just miscalculated the strength of Yorkshire intelligence. He should have asked Cardinal Hinsley to help him with a reply.

The other week H. G. Wells asked why the British airmen did not bomb Rome. For many reasons, partly, we agree, sentimental. We should like to see this avoided so long as it is possible. We have the same feeling for Rome that we have for many other historic memories and places, including some of the beautiful cities of old Germany. We regret also the disappearance of the parts of old houses and historic buildings in London, although there existed every justification for their being demolished. "Sheer sentiment," some will say. Well, yes, although there are other things involved than sentiment. But so long as we do not allow sentiment to degenerate into sentimentalism, sentiment is a more powerful incitement to action than mere intellectual activity. Little would be done without feeling and sentiment, although without intellectual action sentiment is apt to degenerate into sentimentality.

We leave our readers to puzzle it out—it will be good exercise—in order to dilate on Mr. Wells's suggestion that Rome should be bombed. We think there are good reasons why the Government need be careful in this matter, not because of any sentiment, but from hard, utilitarian considerations. The most important of these is the fact that Rome is the headquarters of Roman Catholicism. And in this war both the United States and this country have to exercise discretion. The headquarters of the Roman Church is in Rome, and it is the dwelling-place of that curiously pantomimically dressed figure, the Pope. Next, individual Roman Catholics—whether of the educated or the uneducated kind—are incurably fetish workers. The Pope is next to God, actually one suspects that in the minds of the majority. God is next to the Pope. The Pope is as much an object of essential worship as any of the saints, and in many matters our Government is not in a position to defy our own Protestant spiritual guides, much more the Roman Catholic ones. Until the circumstances are such that even the average Roman Catholic sees that Rome ought to be bombed, any British Government that embarked on bombing Rome would be running great risks. And we are not sure that either America or Britain could afford to stir up Roman Catholic ill-feeling on this issue. There are other reasons, but we think the one given is a very important one for the moment. So in spite of the avowed resolve of Rome to have as little to do as possible with the Allies, in spite of the expressed determination of the Roman Catholic priesthood to prevent close relations between this country and Atheist Russia after the war, and so sabotage the hope of a peaceful new world, we do not feel justified in blaming the Government for not bombing the home of the greatest superstition that is now in being.

We have received a letter from Miss Ethel Mannin with reference to a criticism which appeared in a recent issue. It arrived too late for printing in this issue. It will be published next week.

Mr. Humphreys is doing excellent work in Glasgow in securing new "Freethinker" readers, as well as pushing the sales of our pamphlets. "The Freethinker" can, of course, be obtained on order from any newsagent anywhere, but we are asked to publish the following list of newspapers who will be able to supply copies: Carfaro Bros., 163, West Nile Street; A. Maclaren and Sons, 268, Argyle Street; A. Maclaren and Sons, 217, Hope Street; C. Shields, 199, Buchanan Street; J. Shields, 1, 125 Pollokshaws Road; C. McGown, 218, Duke Street; Macdonald, 65, George Street; Strickland Press, 104 George Street; Collets Bookshop Limited, 1a, Dundas Street, C.1; J. Thomson and Company, 12, St. Enoch Square. In view of the paper shortage a regular order should be placed. It is not uncommon for us to have to refuse orders for the paper, although we do our best to equalise supply and demand.



## BOOKS WORTH WHILE

**"Russia's Enemies in Britain."** By Reginald Bishop. (Published by Lawrence & Wishart, London. 1s., by post 1s. 3d. 64 pages.)

TO win the war we must have national unity. Politicians, Press and Pulpit tell us this every day. For spreading defeatist talk men are fined and fined heavily, and rightly so. But we have many sinister forces, often operating in high places, which, if not exactly sabotaging the war effort, display a want of realisation of the issues at stake and a prejudice and hatred of the one country (Russia) that has made more sacrifices than all the other Allies put together. For this reason Mr. Bishop, who is Editor of "Russia To-day," has published his book at an opportune moment. As he truly says, "when the Prime Minister spoke of 'the Russian glory,' it would seem that he had expressed the feeling of the whole nation, from which not a single one would dissent. This was hardly surprising, for had not the achievements of the Soviet people, their leaders, and their armed forces been of epic dimensions? And to add to that there was the fact that to the great majority of Britain's people, these Russian achievements had come as a bolt from the blue."

The author quotes the opinions of some of our armchair strategists on Russia's armed Forces, i.e., "Not only was Russia's military strength doubtful, but widely held was the belief that the Soviet State was unstable, that it would fall to pieces as soon as it was attacked, and that specially in the Ukraine, whole hordes of Quislings would rise up to welcome Hitler as a liberator."

These armchair gentlemen were just as mistaken about Russia as they had been in their over-estimation of France.

The Red Army was more concerned in dishing it out than in taking it, and this country of 200 different nationalities comprising its population did not produce a single Quisling or Loyal. Why? The author answers this question. He says—"The Soviet Government had combined guts and gumption to get rid of its Quislings before they had any opportunities to quizzle."

The defence of Sebastopol won the admiration of the whole world, i.e., the decent world. One would have thought that with the appalling sacrifices of lives, territory and plant made by Russia it would have been impossible to have found anybody in this country so despicable as to maintain hatred for the Soviet Union. Yet such people do exist, and in this book Mr. Bishop openly names them. The first of these is the Imperial Policy Group, who comprise such people as Lennox-Boyd, M.P., the Earl of Glasgow, Lord Phillimore, Victor Raikes, M.P., Sir Herbert Williams, M.P., Major A. R. Wise, M.P. These people were strong supporters of Franco in the Spanish struggle and consistent haters of Russia. The Imperial Policy Group publish a monthly journal, "The Review of World Affairs," which circulates amongst subscribers only at 24s. per annum. The anti-Russian nature of this journal was discussed in the House of Commons on June 16. It was interesting to note that many of the Tory M.P.s attacked it. Thus Commander Locker-Lampson asked if the "Review" was subsidised by the enemy. Another M.P. asked the Minister if he was aware that this publication was sent abroad, and could he say whether it was examined and passed by the Censor before being sent away? The answer was "Yes." And yet the monthly publication, "Russia To-day" (devoted entirely to fostering good Anglo-Soviet relations), is not allowed to be sent out of England. Everything that was mean and petty found its way into the pages of the "Review of World Affairs." Not a single word of admiration for Russia's heroism—not a single word of pity for the sacrifices that Russia has made and is making. (On September 6 the Russian Ambassador in London stated that the Russian casualties were between 6,000 and 7,000 per day.)

The Editor of the "Review," Mr. de Courcy, claimed in January that the circulation of his paper was between 17,000 and 18,000 copies per month, and that amongst their subscribers were high military commanders, Government Departments, military colleges, universities, libraries and business houses, and over 200 Members of Parliament.

The Imperial Policy Group has done its level best to prevent any Anglo-Soviet understanding, and Mr. Bishop proves it up to the hilt over and over again by their own utterances. Major Wise, M.P., one of the Group, speaking on February 24, 1940, said: "The Soviets are a pack of murderers and enemies of God and man. Their armed Forces are worthless as an Ally even had they any intention of co-operation." The "Review" even said that the Scorched Earth Policy had been greatly exaggerated. In fact there was nothing too mean, too caddish, too contemptible for these old-school-tie "patriots" to say about Russia. Such people prove that they have no principles; only prejudices.

The author then deals with the "Catholic Herald" which, as he points out, has a large circulation and is never tired of sniping at our Soviet Allies. Dealing with the Treaty between Britain and Russia made when Russia was attacked, the leading article of the "Catholic Herald" said: "Treaties of the same kind between this country, Germany and Italy would have equally good, if not better effects, had they been concluded with honest intention and in 'good time.'" That remark in itself shows where the Men of Munich got a great deal of their backing from. The "Catholic Herald" has never wavered in its disloyalty to our greatest Ally, nor has it ever written one single generous line concerning the marvellous fight that Russia has and is putting up; nor has it ever commented on the fact that the Russians are fighting to the death because they have something worth fighting for. There is quite an interesting group of reactionaries of various sorts, and their opinions are quoted in this book. We have types like H. Channon, M.P., who once said that he was very pro-Franco; Commander Bower, M.P., of the Anglo-German Fellowship; Sir Charles Petrie, who wrote a book in which he said that Mussolini was a man of strong moral purpose; Major Victor Cazalet, M.P., who was one of Franco's greatest supporters, and many others.

Mr. Bishop shows up the Cliveden Set and its High Priestess, Lady Astor. The book is worth a great deal more than its modest price. After the war is won we will have to win the peace, and it is well to know who are the reactionaries who have plunged us into war and who truckled to Hitler and Mussolini. It is a scandal that these people should still be holding positions of authority and power. However, we can judge their present actions and utterances in true perspective by their rotten past, and one cannot do better than end this review in the words with which the author has ended his book—

"Remember that—the enemies of Russia in Britain to-day are the deadliest enemies of the British people. Let me quote once more the words of Winston Churchill on June 22, 1941: 'Any man or any State who fights against Nazism will have our aid . . . we shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people.' What will be the verdict of history on those who at this crucial hour campaign against our Ally?"

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

## CHRIST AND CHRISTIANS

THE British public as a rule is ill-informed on the nature of movements and organisations. Exaltation or damnation is thrown at leaders and movements by those quite innocent of any understanding of the movements concerned. Hence the large number of people, masquerading as intelligent, who seriously endorse ideas that are self-apparently stupid. We meet people who believe the Freethought movement aims at the destruction of morality, that



Socialists are lazy rascals advocating a general share out of social wealth as a substitute for work, that the Bolsheviks believed in the nationalisation of women and the destruction of culture, and so on. The easy confidence with which such ideas are expressed is only equalled by the almost unbelievable ignorance necessary to nourish them. On the other side of the picture we have the very common belief that the Christian religion is a matter of morals. That a Christian is to be judged by moral standards, and that a Christian state of society would be one in which immorality could hardly exist. Here again such a belief betrays an ignorance of the nature and object of Christianity.

Christianity is not a code of ethics, nor is the inculcation of ethics its object. A Christian is not one differing from a non-Christian by a superior moral outfit. A man with a moral character and record as nearly perfect as becomes a healthy civilized human being is not a Christian in consequence. Actually it is not necessary for any Christian to strive for moral altitude; any moral mediocre can reach the Christian objective.

The Garden of Eden and Calvary are the two ends of the Christian chain. Adam and Eve were not punished for immorality, but for disobedience. Disobedience is, not immoral. It is a relative term which may involve weakness or courage of the highest degree. The Jesus scheme was not to redeem any immorality in the Garden of Eden, but to rectify an act of disobeying God. The process of rectifying was not a moral prescription, but by an unquestioning adherence to a schedule of beliefs in the supernatural for a specific purpose redeemable in another world. So small a part does morality play in that process that a life of the vilest villainy and non-adherence to that schedule is no barrier to a place in the purpose, providing a repentance and acceptance is made during the last lap of life. Jesus said "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned." Belief and baptism is essential, moral conduct is not mentioned.

Now, no group of human beings, whether cannibals or civilized, can exist by committing suicide. Conduct within the group must make for its preservation, and any movement or institution within the group must give indication of its regard for such conduct. Christianity is not exempt from such an obligation, and allusion to or advice on moral matters find a place there as well as in every other social institution. But that does not make Christianity a moral crusade.

That Jesus knew quite well the nature of his mission, and that it was not a moral one is shown when he said "Resist not evil." Jesus did not know, and was not interested, that in evil and the resisting of evil we have the play of factors from which morality is evolved. An evil act involves a beneficiary and a victim. The one benefiting from an evil action is quite satisfied; it is the victim who objects to the evil. As evil actions multiply so do the victims and objections, and by the mere stress of circumstances unsocial actions are condemned and lines of conduct making for their discouragement emerge to play their part in the evolution of morality. Let it then be clearly understood that Jesus was not out to reform the world mentally, morally, or socially. In his scheme this world mattered little; it was only a temporary affair to be used as a jumping-off ground for another life in another world. The salvation of immortal souls for a future life was the job he had in hand, and that salvation was to be achieved, not by the purity of moral character, or an æsthetic life, but by belief in a particular brand of god, sealed by baptism. The lip service to moral conduct by the Church, an institution with a frightfully immoral record, is mere camouflage hiding the obsolete and primitive make-up of Christianity and the trickery of its priesthood striving desperately to maintain its power and influence over a people becoming conscious of the racket in increasing numbers every year.

R. H. ROSETTI.

## DESULTORY THOUGHTS UPON THE MYTH THEORY BY AN ADMIRER OF ITS INGENUITY

(Continued from page 395)

### II.

THE Mythicists strongly and rightly insist upon the contradictions and improbabilities in the accounts which the four evangelists give concerning the Trials of Jesus and his Crucifixion. But the method of these writers shows beyond doubt that they dealt with an existing tradition which they falsified for polemic and apologetic reasons. This fact comes out strongest in the differences of Luke and John from Matthew and Mark, and in those of John from Luke. The common aim is to make the Jews responsible for the Crucifixion and to make the Romans, in the person of Pontius Pilate, try to prevent it. Thus it is clearly evident that these narratives were written at a time when the Christians had nothing either to hope for or to fear from the Jews, but had a very great interest in conciliating the Gentiles. It is difficult to see how such accounts could have gained acceptance except among Christians. The Jews, great and small, must have regarded them as a calumny, whilst the Gentiles would be apt to despise them as a ridiculous travesty of Roman administration. But, as I have already observed, such absurd and frantic efforts to make Jesus appear an innocent sufferer, indicate the existence of a contrary tradition, and thus tend to confirm the belief that he really was a human being, and not a mythical personage. This point may be illustrated by a somewhat similar case. Paul in his I Corinthians xv. 3-8 mentions a number of people said to have witnessed appearances of Jesus after his death, and names himself as the final witness. In every instance the same word is used to signify the appearances, whence it follows that Paul regarded the one made to himself and those made to others as all of the same nature. But the one to Paul is described as visionary, and no doubt the rest were like it. How different is this modest and natural account of the matter from the gross story of the means whereby the risen Jesus proposed to dispel the doubts of his disciple, Thomas called Didymus? In the case of the Trials and the Crucifixion real occurrences would appear to have been falsely reported, whilst in that of the Resurrection objective realities were substituted for subjective illusions.

The Mythicists draw attention to the fact that, out of the 27 books composing the New Testament, the four Gospels and 1 Timothy, a spurious Epistle under the name of Paul, are the only ones to mention the connection of Jesus Christ and Pontius Pilate. In the 23 works other than the four Gospels, the "Cross" of Christ is introduced eleven times; the fact of his having been "crucified" is mentioned 13 times, and the verb "crucify" is twice used in relation with him. This gives a total of 26 references to the Crucifixion in the 23 works concerned. But as in four cases the reference is twice made in the same passage, the accountable number is only 22. Of these Paul is credited with 18, two being in Hebrews, which is certainly not from his pen. The other Epistles concerned are Romans (once), 1 Corinthians (thrice), 2 Corinthians (once), Galatians (six times), Ephesians (once), Phillipians (twice) and Colossians (twice).<sup>2</sup> In none of his references does Paul give any information about the date, place or other circumstances of the Crucifixion. The Mythicists explain this impressive silence by the suggestion that he believed the affair to have been a spiritual and super-terrestrial occurrence. But, more probably, he thought that it took place on earth as the material and sacramental counterpart of a spiritual event proceeding simul-

<sup>2</sup>Cross: 1 Cor. i. 17, 18; Gal. v. 11, vi. 12, 14; Eph. ii. 16; Phil. ii. 8, iii. 18; Col. i. 20, ii. 14; Heb. xii. 2.

CRUCIFIED: Rom. vi. 6; 1 Cor. i. 13, 23, ii. 2, 8; 2 Cor. xiii. 4; Gal. ii. 20, iii. 1, v. 24, vi. 14; Acts ii. 36, iv. 10; Rev. xi. 8.

CRUCIFY: Acts ii. 23; Heb. vi. 6; Cruden's "Concordance," S.P.C.K. Edition; London, 1859.



taneously in a sphere with no relation to either time or space. In explaining any man's behaviour it is necessary to take into account what is known of his mentality and moral peculiarities.

Paul, as reflected in his writings, has a mystical, imaginative mind and a proud, sensitive, ambitious character. He was determined to choose his own course, and to rely firmly upon his own opinions, particularly upon those which he believed to have got by divine revelation. Rest assured, that with such a man, a dream or a vision would have far more weight than any external testimony! This seems to be a valid explanation of the fact that his writings show little, if any, acquaintance with the deeds and the words of Jesus Christ. Firstly, he scorned to learn them from other men, and secondly, he regarded them as utterly negligible in comparison with the importance of what Jesus Christ had accomplished for mankind by his suffering—death and resurrection—each of which had its own part in the scheme of human redemption. How could a man with those sublime, though perverted views, be expected to search for the stable at Bethlehem, or the empty tomb at Jerusalem? The very thought is ridiculous, almost an insult to our common humanity. Hence it is no wonder that he exclaimed: "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. ii. 2.) The last clause indicates plainly that he might have known more about Jesus Christ, but declined to seek the knowledge.

The writer of "The First Epistle General of John," who appears to have been the mendacious author of The Fourth Gospel, says "Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God" (iv. 3). The Mythicists seem to think that Paul was not one of those spirits. Is there any evidence against such an opinion?

Paul says "We henceforth know no man after the flesh; even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now know we him so no more" (2 Corinthians v. 16). Whatever else this strange passage does or does not mean, it certainly means that Paul's knowledge of Christ was on a par with his knowledge of other men. He refers to Christ as "born of the seed of David according to the flesh"; and to the Jews as those "of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh" (Romans i. 3, ix. 5). He mentions "the grace of the one man Christ Jesus," and calls him "the second man" in distinction from "the first man Adam" (Romans v. 15, 1 Corinthians xv. 45-47). He says: "God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Romans viii. 3). Here the emphasis is upon the adjective, not upon the noun, as is made clear by another passage, where we read "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians v. 21). These last two passages also explain the one wherein Paul speaks of Christ as "being made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man," and then as "becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Philippians ii. 7, 8). For certainly he would never believe that the simulacrum of a man would serve for the sacrifice offered upon the Cross. Elsewhere in a letter of the same period he speaks of sinners having been reconciled to God by Christ "in the body of his flesh" (Colossians i. 22). Indeed, it is one of the cardinal elements in Paul's system that the human body is a "body of sin," which means "a sinful body," just as "a man of fidelity" means "a faithful man"; and that, when Christ died in this body upon the Cross, all humanity virtually died with him, and by sharing his death, which paid the penalty of their sin, gained the privilege of being raised up with him to a higher and immortal life, provided, of course, that they fulfilled individually the condition of their being accepted, which is a lively faith in the efficacy of Christ's atonement (Romans vi. 3-10, iii. 21-25). Since the Crucifixion is referred to the thirtieth year of our era, or thereabouts, and since, according to intimations in Acts and in his own Epistles, Paul turned from

Judaism to Christianity only a few years after the aforesaid event, Mythicists look upon him as a legendary figure and regard his writings as forgeries produced in the first quarter of the second century, because, if Paul were, as his alleged works affirm him to have been, acquainted with certain apostles chosen by Jesus Christ himself in his lifetime, then, the existence of Jesus Christ upon earth would be established. Some critics who are not Mythicists deny the authenticity of the Pauline Epistles, although they are disposed to credit the existence of an itinerant preacher bearing the name of Paul and spreading Christianity in the last quarter of the first century. The Mythicists contend that the New Testament Paul is incredible because the views which he expresses would never have occurred to a man of his upbringing; and because the time between his conversion and his appearance as a teacher was far too short for the production of his elaborate and new-fangled system. Now some writer, whose identity I am not quite sure of, has well observed that a plum-pudding appears to be a very wonderful thing until you are shown how it is made! This wisecrack is singularly applicable to Paul's case. C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be Continued.)

## THE MODERN MUSE

### II.

IN the series of short articles of which this is the second I am hoping to demonstrate that during the last 20 or 30 years we have seen an outpouring of verse on such a scale as has rarely before been known.

A good beginning to such a brief consideration of typical modern poets is Mr. John Gawsworth, partly because he is in the old tradition of English verse and partly because there has recently appeared in "Marlow Hill" (Richards Press; Ls.) a selection of his poems which is both representative and cheap. Read this for example:—

Ah, leave the fretful men to chafe,  
The quiet women to make sighs,  
And sleep you soft and sleep you safe  
And close your earth-tormented eyes.

The worthy are not always just  
Nor are the noble always brave,  
And yet all mingle in the dust  
Of the one grave.

When faced with power's dominion,  
With ruin of all good you prize,  
Choose death; spread the dark pinion,  
Fly into final skies.

That is in the grand tradition, as I have said. It might have been written by A. E. Housman or even (an influence which I have nowhere seen suggested as present in Mr. Gawsworth's work) by Landor.

It is clear, indeed, that Mr. Gawsworth is in no way the obscurantist ranter which is the average man's idea of the modern poet. He is a stoic and (in the best sense of that much misused word) a Protestant. In other words, he used his undoubted gift for forceful expression to protest against the many evil things which he finds in the world to-day, no matter whether those evil things are political and economic tendencies or whether they are strange feelings within the mind of man.

And that, I think, is where he is absolutely typical of his generation. He is now in the Royal Air Force, and he may perhaps become no more than the vocal expression of what many of his comrades must be feeling but are unable to put into words. For that reason, if for no other (and there are plenty of others) he deserves to be far more widely appreciated than is the case.

(Continued at foot of next column.)



## CORRESPONDENCE

## OUR DAY OF PRAYER

Sir,—We first knew that we were to take part in the national bombardment of Heaven by prayer by a notice in the mess-room which stated the parson, hour and date.

It was raining heavens hard when we trooped into the mess-room to receive our daily blessing of soup and tea. The mess-room held about a thousand. It was packed and the air was blue with tobacco smoke.

Being explosives workers, we are only allowed a smoke at meal-times, and the workers, mostly women, were still enjoying their smoke when the minister entered with the Bible. The smoking still went on—we were determined to make the most of our extra ten minutes.

I heard some critical remarks passed, such as "damned nonsense," "bl—dy farce," "redeecious," etc. The parson was enjoying the sight of his ready-made congregation, no doubt the largest he had ever addressed—or ever will.

A psalm was sung, then the preacher exhorted us to be humble and God would exalt us. In the sermon the parson attempted to prove the efficacy of prayer by relating the story of three airmen who were shot down. They prayed for water and it rained. They prayed for food and an albatross obligingly appeared on the scene to be shot down by a man-made revolver. Unlike the Ancient Mariner's, this bird proved to be a blessing instead of a curse, for it enabled our praying aviators to reach a friendly island.

If we believed in wireless we must believe in prayer. The parson did not explain, however, what to do when your man-made wireless has conked out and you cannot get a valve for love nor money. Prayer is simpler, only have faith in the receiving end. God will hear you without you having to tune-in the short wave. There is no initial outlay or upkeep.

The workers listened to the parsonic drone in the mess-room which the man of God had failed to transform into a church. They attempted to sing *God Save the King*, then we went back to finish the shift.

Thanks to the detonators that pretty girls are making for beautiful bombs; thanks to the cordite we produce to propel big shells from big guns; thanks to the blood and tears and toil and sweat of all workers in every factory; thanks to the sons of the common people who have fallen, never to rise again in Egypt and the Eastern Front, we will win the noblest fight we have ever known in history—the liberation of mankind from the scourge of Fascism.

And when we have won this war, we workers will know how to take over from those who would keep things as they are, who would rather pray on their knees than stand up and fight on their feet, and would grovel in the dust of Superstition rather than stand erect to face the dazzling light of knowledge.—Yours,  
HUGH MILLAR.

## WAR AND THE PEOPLE

Sir,—Contrary to Mr. R. B. Kerr, I hold that Mr. Rosetti spoke no more than the truth when he denied that the people made wars.

Let us grant that the British Government did not want war in 1939. Is there any evidence that the British people did? The greatest handicap of every advocate of collective security during the twenty years' peace was the cry sedulously raised by the isolationists and power-politicians that collective security meant war. In reality, it would, practised in time, have prevented war. By playing on the people's fear of war, the then Governments destroyed collective security and made war certain.

Mr. Kerr says: "The German people believed Ribbentrop when he told them that we should never fight." Is there any

## THE MODERN MUSE (Continued from page 406)

In future articles in this brief series I shall be dealing with poets far better known than he, but I am certain that none will rank higher in future years. At an almost unprecedented early age he was awarded the Benson Medal of the Royal Society of Literature, but I think that most of his readers will agree that it is only the first of many decorations destined to come his way.

S. H.

evidence that Ribbentrop told the people anything? He gave certain advice to Hitler, and that advice may have been to the effect alleged; but that is a different thing.

A truly intellectual individual, *pace* Mr. Kerr, respects the people for the simple reason that the people are those whom he has to convert. Not to respect the people is to despair of the future. An intellectual who despairs of the future had better cultivate his garden and have a good time while he can. He can have no possible reason to lift a finger in the cause of progress in which he does not believe.—Yours, etc.,

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

## FROM "A LONDON DIARY"

A friend sends me a disquieting story from an R.A.F. Training Unit. "We have always understood," he writes, "that while airmen are obliged to go to Church parade, they cannot be compelled to enter the Church building. Last Sunday, however, an airman refused to enter Church, with the result that he was awarded by order of the C.O., twenty-eight days detention, which the padre subsequently got reduced to fourteen." Incredulously I wrote to my friend to inquire if the facts were really as stated, and, if they were, for further particulars. He assured me that they were precisely as stated, and gave names. The case then would seem to stand as follows: We can still compel men to pretend to worship a God in whom they do not believe, in order that they may obtain His blessing upon their efforts to increase their efficiency in the art of killing their fellow human beings whom incidentally He is supposed to have made.—"New Statesman."

## OBITUARY NOTICE

## EDWARD HENRY MALONEY

The remains of Edward Henry Maloney were interred in Streatham Cemetery, London, on Saturday, September 12. The son of Freethinking parents, he had an early introduction to Freethought principles, which he found acceptable and a source of inspiration to rational thinking. An eyesight affliction was faced with courage and his activities had to be planned accordingly. He was a lover of nature and a staunch humanitarian. Rambling was a favourite hobby and for some time he was secretary of a Blind Ramblers' Club. It was while leading ramblers that he met with an accident which resulted in death in his 34th year. Before an assembly of relatives and friends a Secular Service was read at the graveside by the General Secretary, N.S.S.  
R. H. R.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES. Etc.

## LONDON Outdoor

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 12-0 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, 8-0, various speakers.

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1), 11-0, C. E. M. JOAD, M.A., D.Lit.—"The Educational Ferment."

## COUNTRY Outdoor

Blackburn (Market Place), 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.

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