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## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### No Other God—and What it Led To

THE Bible provides the death penalty for a great many offences, more, we think, than any other religion. The death penalty is applied for heresy, blasphemy, adopting a strange god, touching holy things, eating meat that has not been ceremonially killed, idolatry, breaking the Sabbath, and many other offences. But of all the evil things that have come down to us wrapped in the religious beliefs of our ancestors, that of seeking, or believing in gods other than the one prescribed by the Bible and the Christian Church has shown itself to be the most disastrous. Here are the words of the Bible which, written in current phraseology, might well read as one of the Hitlerian outbursts threatening all people who refused to bow to German rule. From Leviticus:—

"I am the Lord thy God. . . . If ye will not hearken unto me . . . I will do this unto you; I will . . . appoint unto you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes. . . . I will bring seven times more plagues upon you. . . . I will also send wild beasts among you which shall rob you of your children and destroy your cattle. . . . And I will make your cities waste and bring your sanctuaries unto desolation."

And from Deuteronomy:—

"If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' . . . that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death."

This series of notes is in reply to a question: "What is Christianity?" There are so many forms of Christianity, we declined the task of answering. But Christianity is an historic religion based upon the Bible. The clergy are crying: "Back to the Bible." We take them at their word, and give the essentials of Christianity as presented in the Bible.

And again:—

"If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' . . . thou shalt not consent unto him; neither shalt thou spare him; neither shalt thou conceal him, but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones till he die."

From Exodus:—

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me."

There is much more to this end, but if one takes the various proclamations of German Nazism and set them side by side with the Nazi proclamations to threatened or conquered peoples, the difference from the Bible is rather hard to find. It looks as though Hitler took his orders from the Bible God in directing what should be done to those people who thirsted after gods other than Jahveh (and Hitler):—

"Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly . . . and shall burn with fire the city."

There is no mistaking the essentially religious character of the Nazi crusade. Hitler might well have gone to the Bible for a justification for much that he has done, or at least for a method of punishing people for disobedience. But for those who wish to understand historic Christianity, and that is the Christianity with which we are concerned, it is necessary to note the suggestive language used in the excerpts given from the Bible. The passages cited nowhere even suggest that other gods are not as real as the God who is issuing his commands and threatening his followers if they fall short of loyalty. They are simply warned that they must not offer worship to other gods. That is the whole significance of such phrases "let us serve other gods," "I am the Lord thy God," etc. The threats to the followers of other gods, the references in the Bible to those who belong to Jahveh "whoring" after foreign or strange gods, all point to the same conclusion. Many authorities have even suggested that the Bible God was at one time and originally a storm god, a rain god, or some other nature deity. The passages we have cited are all agreeable to some conclusion of this kind.

In any case, what we know of the origin of gods would lead to the conclusion that man commences with a crowd of gods, and as knowledge grows the gods are gradually diminished in number or undergo a fall in status. Sometimes they are left in charge of some particular branch of nature, or they may descend to a lower order altogether, and as Jahveh made war on these other gods, so did Jahveh's followers. The permanent distinction was that of gods and devils.



The likelihood of this process may be realised when it is remembered that it was not until the end of the seventeenth century that the denial of the real existence of the pagan gods was made by Christians. Until then we have it decisively in St. Paul's dictum that the pagans worshipped devils. And finally, it may be questioned whether the largest section of Christians—the Roman Catholics—have in fact passed that stage. For when one notes the crowd of Saints and angels that lend their help to the faithful, the belief in three gods as one, the swarms of evil spirits against which the Saints are beseeched to give protection, the traffic in magical cords, the prayers for the dead that by the influence of some Saint a residence in purgatory may be shortened, and so forth, there is little difference in substance from the beliefs of our primitive ancestors.

Certainly to the anthropologists the difference between gods and devils is no more than that which exists between the varieties of a single species. They all fall within the general category of the supernatural. Whether certain "spirits" are good or bad is of no importance. Man has always made gods in his own image, and despite the inevitable alteration in the character of gods, as human character develops, they remain untouched in substance.

The story that modern science has to tell concerning the gods is backed by so great a mass of evidence as hardly to admit of misunderstanding, but its essence may be given in a few words.

In that slow development from the animal world which results in Man, there arises a sense of the existence of a strange mysterious force that is ultimately responsible for everything that occurs. At a later stage the investigator finds the growing personification of this semi-human force, and the gods are born—crowds of them. Auguste Comte was not far from the truth when he marked the fetishistic stage of human mentality as the creative age of religion, for beyond that stage man does not make gods, he merely selects some for special worship. He shapes them more and more to his heart's desire. As man grows so do his gods. But this growth has its dangers. There develops a stage when the non-utility of gods gives rise to the question of their existence. With that we enter the twilight stage of Theism. No army can go on fighting a retreating action for ever.

I seem to be proceeding by digressions, but these digressions are essential to the understanding of such Biblical passages as those cited, and also to appreciate what we may well call the naturalisation of religious intolerance under Christian rule and influence.

### The Tyranny of the Gods

Polytheism is of necessity tolerant, and when we are dealing with State or national polytheism there is no great incentive to intolerance. The entrance of one more god makes no essential difference. We know, in fact, from Egyptian, Roman and Greek history that the Pantheon of each was large enough to accommodate new gods. It was, indeed, owing to this liberality that Christianity was able to penetrate the Roman Empire. The most that is asked for by polytheism is that respect shall be paid to the local deities. Had pagan Rome been as intolerant as Christian Rome became, the Christian religion might never have been heard of save as a form of fanaticism which manifested itself at a certain time and soon died out. It is more by its

vices than by its virtues that Christianity was perpetuated, just as it is more by its dishonesty of teaching and practice—where religion is concerned—that Christianity is operative to-day. The assumption that Christianity conquered the pagan world because of its moral superiority is just rubbish. It would be interesting to hear from anyone how many nations or how many persons have really been converted because of the sheer attractiveness of the moral purity of teachings, which Christians, in common with others, are in the habit of treating respectfully. The truth is that people are converted, and then—in modern times—discover moral reasons for their conversion.

But where religion is concerned the Bible provides a complete code of intolerance. True the Jews never had the opportunity of fully carrying out the intolerance of their "sacred" book. The New Testament itself, however, gives presumptive evidence of what it would have done had it ever enjoyed complete power over a subject people. Judaism never had the opportunity of developing a missionary creed. That began with Christianity, which never found a foothold in a Jewish community. And in its missionary crusade Christianity came into contact with the liberality of the Roman Empire, the influence of Greek culture and the influx of religious and other ideas from the East that followed the conquests of Alexander the Great. But whenever, and so soon as Christianity established itself, it manifested an intolerance such as the pagan world had never developed.

It was, indeed, because the jurisprudence of neither Rome or Greece provided the legal machinery necessary for the kind of intolerance the Christian Church established that, at a later period, the Church created the Inquisition, and of that H. C. Lea, the historian of that infamous institution, writes:—

"It introduced a system of jurisprudence which infected the criminal law of all the lands that were subjected to its influence, and rendered the administration of penal justice a cruel mockery for centuries. It furnished the Holy See with a powerful weapon in aid of political aggrandisement, it tempted secular sovereigns to imitate the example, and it prostituted the name of religion to the vilest temporal ends. It stimulated the morbid sensitiveness to doctrinal aberrations until the most trifling dissidence was capable of arousing insane fury and of convulsing Europe from end to end. . . . Energetic only in evil: when its powers might have been used on the side of virtue, it held its hand and gave the people to understand that the only sins demanding repression were doubt as to the accuracy of the Church's knowledge of the unknown and attendance at the Sabbath. In its long career of blood and fire, the only credit which it can claim is the suppression of the Cathari, and in this its agency was superfluous, for those dogmas carried in themselves the seed of self-destruction and more wisely left extinction."

The Cathari was a sect of Christians that was accused of various obscene practices and ceremonies, among which were the ceremonial violation of women. It should be said that the accounts we have of this sect come mainly from its enemies, and Christian treatment of opponents is always suspect.



Still a digression, but a necessary one. Next week we will deal with the social and other consequences of that terrible decree "Thou shalt have no other God but me." It might in its spirit and results be rewritten "Hitlerism from Heaven."

CHAPMAN COHEN.

(To be continued.)

## UNDER THE SOUTHERN CROSS

EUROPEAN explorers reached Australia in the 16th and 17th centuries, while the British, whose destiny it was to occupy the Southern Continent, were later arrivals. In 1770 Captain Cook and his naturalist, Joseph Banks, reached Botany Bay and sailed along the eastern shores of Australia. There, the copious rainfall and other amenities so impressed Banks that his glowing report to the home authorities induced the Government to establish a penal colony in this isolated area. Although the majority of the convicts transported from England were of criminal proclivities, many whose misdemeanours were purely political or anti-clerical in character shared the fate of the evildoers. Thus, a fair percentage were above the average English population of the period in character and culture and, in the sequel, the Antipodes gained by Britain's loss.

The pioneer settlers led a hard life, but the discovery of coal in New South Wales in the district then aptly named Newcastle, and with the fine pastures found in the country further west, it was realised that flocks of sheep grazing in New South Wales were capable of furnishing fleeces exportable to the woollen markets of England. The outlook for the ultimate success of the colonies had greatly improved, and the foundations for Australia's future prosperity were firmly established.

Yet, the inhuman treatment of the aborigines, both in Tasmania and on the Continent, confers little credit on the superior Christian intruder. The natives were still in the Stone Age and, although they were inclined to be friendly, they were so shamelessly outraged by the black sheep among the newcomers that, despite their defencelessness, they sometimes retaliated. Moreover, even Government officials disgraced themselves in their dealings with the natives. As Professor Knaplund remarks in his comprehensive volume, "The British Empire, 1815-1939" (Hamish Hamilton, 1942): "In Van Dieman's Land, Lieutenant-Governor Arthur in 1835 organised a systematic hunt for natives. Although he failed to capture all of them, the aboriginal inhabitants before long shared the fate of the Beothucks of Newfoundland—joining the ranks of vanished races. The blackfellows on the mainland of Australia were more fortunate. The continent provided them refuge until the missionary and humanitarian sentiments in England had become sufficiently interested and powerful to intercede effectively on behalf of the Australian natives."

German and Spanish competition notwithstanding, woollen exports from New South Wales—apart from those of other settlements—increased from 60,000lb. in 1814 to 1,134,000lb. in 1831, while in the latter year the export of fleeces from Van Dieman's Land was still greater. It is estimated that in N.S.W. in 1838, that colony's sheep numbered 2,750,000. Nevertheless, social life continued on a very primitive level, and the recklessly excessive consumption of rum and other intoxicants led to many evils. Still, Governor Macquarie introduced many reforms. Above all, he treated the delinquents as human beings, and he was particularly insistent that a man's past should not be a barrier to employment under Government. He appointed ex-convicts to the bench and invited some of them to the Government House, much to the disgust of the social élite of Sydney.

From 1837 to 1870, Australia made rapid strides. Her population increased tenfold and her opulence had far surpassed all expectation. In this progressive period convictism was

banished, enormous areas of new territory opened up, and gold and copper had been discovered. The previously anarchical settlements had developed into self-governing units, and a solid basis for a future Australian nationality had been prepared.

The stigma attaching to Australia as a penal colony was deeply resented by the free immigrants. Also, the horrors revealed before Molesworth's Committee led to the ending of criminal dumping in New South Wales in 1840. Felons were now landed in Van Dieman's Land on a wholesale scale. The Colonial Authorities and free settlers alike protested in vain, for the Home Government was determined to transport its own undesirables to others' custody. But the difficulty was eased in 1851 when the gold rush began, and confinement in Van Dieman's Land lost its terrors. "Bass Strait," notes Knaplund, "which separates the island from the gold colony, Victoria, is comparatively narrow, and escapes were frequent; hence, transporting criminals to Van Dieman's Land seemed like sending them to Eldorado. Not without regret the home authorities in 1852 abandoned this means of ridding themselves of undesirables, but the colonies rejoiced and sought to wipe out old stains by changing the name of their home to Tasmania."

When cheap convict labour was no longer available, employers sought permission to import coolie labour. Their request was refused on the ground that Australia must be preserved for the white race. Then this vexed question reappeared in another form when, with the gold discoveries, some 40,000 Chinese landed in Victoria and grave racial disturbances induced the authorities to impose an onerous residential tax on the Orientals, while antagonism to the settlement of Asiatic peoples in Australia has prevailed ever since. Still, there was a demand for poorly-paid labour, and the sugar planters of Northern Queensland were parties to the kidnapping of Kanakas from the South Sea Islands, and it is said that "the conditions of their employment probably differed little from actual slavery." But the Aborigines Protection Society and the humanitarians generally, denounced these proceedings, and petitioned the Imperial Power to suppress the traffic, but "blackbirding" in the Pacific was not terminated for some considerable time.

Between 1840 and 1870 the Land and Emigration Commission dispatched over 300,000 emigrants to the Antipodes, but with the gold discoveries of the fifties, assisted emigration was no longer necessary. For in five years the combined population of Victoria and New South Wales increased from 264,000 to 617,000. Doubtless, many prospectors hoped to make money and then depart, but the great majority must have become permanent settlers, for from a population of 150,000 only in 1837, this figure for Australia had risen to 1,668,371 by 1871.

Concentration became conspicuous by 1870, when four-fifths of the inhabitants and even more of the commerce and capital were located in New South Wales and the two daughter colonies—Victoria and Queensland—carved from her domain. Victoria made stupendous progress, and in a couple of decades her population had advanced from 77,000 to 731,526. Little more than a village in 1837, the fine city of Melbourne in 1871 housed a population approaching a quarter of a million.

The competing Christian organisations soon set to work in Australia. Naturally, the Anglican communion was at first the recipient of favourable consideration, as the Establishment was relatively stronger there than in Canada or South Africa, and a synod was formed in 1872. The ubiquitous Roman Catholic Church pursued its customary policy in preserving the faithful for the fold. "This Church," records Knaplund, "showed a great deal of activity after the consecration of its first bishop for Australia in 1834. Anglicans, Roman Catholics, Presbyterians and Wesleyans at first received State aid, but this was gradually withdrawn, South Australia leading by discontinuing Government aid to religion in 1851, Queensland following in 1860 and New South Wales in 1862. The secular government



assumed responsibility for education, and in 1871 Australia had 312,130 children at school. Nor was higher education neglected. The University of Sydney dates from 1852 and that of Melbourne is only three years younger." As early as the thirties it was obvious that rival religionists were sowing the seeds of sectarian strife, and in 1833 Governor Bourke recommended to the Home Office the establishment of secular schools and the withdrawal of support to any of the contending creeds. So two years later, Lord Glenelg instituted religious equality in all parts of the Southern Continent.

In agriculture and industry alike, Australia has achieved substantial progress. In prosperous periods the mass of the population has experienced happy days. But like the rest of the world, Australia has known hard times; yet from these depressed periods she has always recovered despite devastating droughts, the rabbit pest and other disconcerting phenomena.

After a period of apprenticeship and the tuition imparted by the Government officials, Australia, in company with South Africa and Canada, now enjoys complete legislative and economic independence. As a sequel to a prolonged discussion, a federative scheme embracing the several Australian colonies was at last unanimously adopted. In 1900 the Commonwealth of Australia, comprising New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia and Tasmania, was proclaimed as dating from New Year's Day, 1901.

With advanced views both in politics and religion, which they share with the progressive New Zealanders in the adjoining oceanic islands, the Australians have invariably insisted on what they deemed their rights. At times their statesmen have not always seen eye to eye with Britain, and that lively and influential organ, the "Sydney Bulletin," has sometimes been unsparing in its criticism, both of the Commonwealth's political leaders and the Home Country as well. Yet the heart of Australia has ever been true to Britain, and this loyalty and affection was abundantly shown during the South African War, when even English opinion was divided. Moreover, both Australia and New Zealand rendered yeoman's service in the First World War. Nor did they hesitate in the present conflict against the mental, moral and physical degradation of the Fascist States.

T. F. PALMER.

### "CRABBED AGE AND YOUTH..."

MOST of us know middle-aged and elderly people to whom Shakespeare's jibe "crabbed age" applies. Domestic life is full of crotchety old people whose physical ailments and consistent irritableness try the patience of their juniors. Youth is less easily defined, and no upper limit of age can safely be suggested. Were one to define youth as the years between 16 and 35, precocious youngsters of 14 and irate men and women of 36 would resent being excluded.

I was delighted to come across a quotation which conveys precisely my own attitude. "Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind." It comes from a book called "From the Summit of Four Score Years," by Samuel Ullman. I regret that I know little of Mr. Ullman's career, and I am not able to say whether his aphorism was prompted by philosophic meditation or by the appearance before Mr. Ullman of a seductively attractive girl. The wisdom of his comment is unaffected.

Anyone who considers the matter is bound to agree with Mr. Ullman. Men with the mental agility of Bernard Shaw, Havelock Ellis and Bertrand Russell are always young. Original and provoking thoughts are the stock in trade of such men; their intellectual shop window fascinates me more than all the Bond Streets and Fifth Avenues of the world. The ideas set in motion by these geniuses of the 20th century are likely to profoundly affect the pattern of civilisation in future centuries. This is immortality indeed. The earthly pomp and pageantry of

kings, emperors and dictators makes no mark upon posterity. The tiny minority of people who are a good influence upon the thoughts and actions of their contemporaries—still more of succeeding generations—are the salt of the earth.

The ideas of Shaw, Ellis and Russell—and others of equal eminence—are accepted by youth gladly. They are discussed with enthusiasm and insight and accepted or rejected on their merits. When these heterodox ideas strike the minds of middle-aged and old people they arouse fear, unreasonable prejudice and other animal emotions. These instinctive emotions are rationalised, clothed in learned and statesmanlike language, and offered to the world at large and to youth in particular as the authoritative reply of age and wisdom to the absurd ideas of publicity-hunting cranks.

We all of us have friends and acquaintances who are "conservative" in their attitude to life. I do not, of course, mean they are necessarily members of the Conservative Party, though their unrecognised political home is with that party, and the Roman Church should qualify for their spiritual allegiance. Such people are often slow in manner and speech, and so far as fundamental changes in their way of life or the organisation of society are concerned, they instinctively prefer the devil they know to the devil they don't know! In other words, they oppose change and new ideas as tenaciously and automatically as a limpet clings to a rock.

They are not to be blamed for their conservatism. If they have not inherited an instinctive opposition to change, their minds have become static through education and environment. We do not condemn imbeciles to death and we would not indict a child for inheriting some physical abnormality such as stuttering (if, indeed, stuttering can be inherited). Neither would our sense of justice allow us to ill-treat soldiers or chorus girls whose imitations on the barrack square, and the stage, of mechanical and mindless creatures makes some people vomit. Minds can be drilled as effectively as bodies, and we must not condemn those who "make a virtue of necessity" and avow their political conservatism, or those whose thoughts and actions are, despite themselves, conservative.

It is necessary to point out that conservatism is not unintelligent. It takes brains of a high order to refute new and well-thought-out theories; still greater brilliance to camouflage truth. Some of our ablest historians and politicians are to be found in the ranks of Conservatives. The Universities are full of such people. Fortunately, there is a minority of University professors whose views are unsteretyped. Consequently not all undergraduates are double-dyed Blimps.

Blimpishness is commonly thought to be a disease of the aged. It is, of course, primarily; but it is really a symptom of mental constipation. If all Blimps were old this most terrible of all diseases would long ago have been recognised and classified as an accompaniment of senility. Alas, nature is uncharitable in this connection. Blimpishness is to be found in people of all ages. Young Blimps are infinitely more terrifying than old ones, for their blimpiness is adorned with modern clichés and catch phrases, and as likely as not masquerades in one or other of the "progressive" mental uniforms. It takes a degree of intelligence to be a Blimp of any age, for vital societies wage constant warfare against blimpdom. The casualty rate of Blimps does not seem to keep pace with their propagation. We must try harder!

It is no accident that youngsters are often told that their radicalism will change to conservatism as their years increase. This is almost propagated as a law of life and is ingeniously linked with the theory—which I disbelieve on principle—that one's arteries harden with age, one's mental elasticity decreases, and that a tired mind and body conspire to generate conservatism, or its quintessence, blimpdom.

I cannot refute the theory that one's arteries and physical organs generally decrease in efficiency with age. But I certainly



deny emphatically the validity of the generalisation "the older you get the more conservative you become." This is a fiction invented by Blimps, if ever there was one!

The truth is that age brings with it responsibilities for the maintenance of a home and family; it tends, in the kind of competitive society we have created, to exercise ever more caution with advancing years lest a slump or a bad-tempered employer cause unemployment and consequent hardship to self or family. There is no reason to believe that judgment automatically becomes more mature and sensible with age. Conversely, judgment does not necessarily deteriorate progressively after reaching its peak at 30, 40 or 50. Bernard Shaw can say some profoundly wise things at 85. One's views at 25 may well be worth more than one's opinions at 50. Sardonic humorists are bound to smile at the sublime confidence of most people, men particularly, who flatter themselves that their wisdom and capacity to make correct judgments increases with age. All too often this is a fantastic perversion of the truth and is analogous to mass hypnotism. It is illustrated in life by politicians of the Baldwin, MacDonald and Chamberlain schools and by "successful" business men who think that their profits are an index of their intelligence and efficiency.

The politicians mentioned—and their millions of dupes—devoutly believed that their policies would preserve peace and bring stability to a disordered world. Anyone bold enough to deery their efforts, or avow the slightest scepticism as to their outcome, was regarded with contempt or pity—of the kind extended to a leper. Yet when these policies—if feeble vacillation may be called a policy!—ended in catastrophe, some of their most ardent protagonists joined the chorus of "I told you so's," abandoning the pious pipers of the post-war world with cynical absence of sympathy.

The business men to whose string-pulling the puny politicians danced radiated complacent self-satisfaction. Business might have been better, but they weren't grumbling. There were two or three million unemployed, but how could discipline be preserved in industry without a reserve pool of unemployed? Fortunes could still be made by cornering a market or by speculation with other people's money. It was too easy to get tariffs raised to keep out the cheap goods of more efficient competitors. It was very lucrative to sell oil and armaments and raw materials to the dictator countries, and neither lucrative nor politically desirable to assist Abyssinia, Spain, China or Russia. It was so comforting to read the "Financial Times" and know the healthy state of British Industry. How could firms which made profits be other than healthy?

The apostles of appeasement and the soulless gamblers of the Stock Exchange no longer charm the public to such an extent. But it is a safe bet that the "Old Gang" in politics and business will maintain their dominant positions without difficulty. A few refurbished slogans and catch phrases and some ingenious slander of any contenders for the throne of power, and the Gullible British Public, typified by Strube's Little Man, will manfully vote into office the same tribe of hack politicians nominated by big business. And this will be applauded by the Yellow Press as yet another manifestation of British political genius which prefers the wheat of responsible conservatism to the chaff of subversive minorities. Age and experience will triumph over youthful idealism. The "realism" which regards war, disease, poverty and ignorance as permanent features of human society will vanquish Utopian visions of a well-planned world in which these evils are banished.

For myself, I answer critics in advance in the words of William Pitt: "The atrocious crime of being a young man, which the honourable gentleman has with such spirit and decency charged upon me, I shall neither attempt to palliate nor deny; but content myself with wishing that I may be one of those whose follies may cease with their youth, and not of that number who are ignorant in spite of experience."

JOHN DARKER.

## ACID DROPS

WE prefer when a man is dead to let him rest. But the praise that has been lavished on Cardinal Hinsley really calls attention to some of his characteristics. Our mind goes back to the International Freethought Congress that was held in this country in 1938. Never before was there such an avalanche of lies delivered by Christian leaders as on that occasion. And no one contributed more heartily to that avalanche than did the Cardinal, helped by Captain Ramsay, now in detention under the Defence of the Realm Act. Corrections were offered the Cardinal—and others—only to bring forth new lies. An appeal was even made to the Home Secretary (Sir Samuel Hoare), but he expressed his regret to "Dear Ramsay" that he had no power to intervene.

Among Cardinal Hinsley's contributions we need now only note the statement that the Conference was arranged by, or on the orders of, Russia, and that Moscow was paying the costs of the Conference in order to introduce Bolshevism into England. His war cry was "We don't want any Bolshevik Russian Congress in England." He also said that the Conference had been banned in Belgium. Each of these stories was a deliberate falsehood. The International Conference had nothing to do with the choice of London as a meeting-place of the Congress, neither were the funds provided by Russia, nor was it a disguise to introduce Russian Bolshevism. These facts were made public from the outset. But the Cardinal was proof against facts.

The Conference—it had been held in England twice before—came to London on the unprompted invitation of the National Secular Society and the Rationalist Press Association. These two bodies made themselves responsible for the whole expenses of the Conference, and it had nothing to do with any propaganda of Bolshevism. There was no possible excuse for Hinsley's mis-statements. They were deliberate inventions. And when everything else failed, public meetings, organised protests, lies about Russia, a Press campaign, etc., Cardinal Hinsley tried the "Don't put him under the pump" trick. He publicly warned the Government that religious leaders could not be held responsible if public opposition to the Conference "took an active form." "The people," he said, "will not be deceived by this camouflaging of anti-God aims." That was a distinct incitement to rioting on the part of his followers.

The Conference was held, the meetings were crowded, and people were offering guineas for seats in a theatre from which large numbers were turned away. The whole tissue of slanders was exposed, but Cardinal Hinsley never murmured a word of apology or pleaded that he had made a mistake. There was, in fact, no error on his part, and religious leaders never apologise in such circumstances. The country has paid dearly for the religion-fed opposition to friendship with "Godless Russia." Even the war might have been avoided had the lies about Russia and its aims been of a less religious character. And now having said our say, we agree heartily that Hinsley did make a very good Roman Catholic priest.

Mr. Oliver Locker-Lampson is on the side of the gods with regard to theatrical performances on Sunday. He has a perfect right to be where he is, but he need not write so foolishly as he does to defend his position in a letter published in the "Daily Telegraph." He says "there is no demand except from the wealthy elements of the theatre, who wish to commercialise the Sunday as they have commercialised art." But that is all nonsense. What is meant by a commercial Sunday? Railway companies do business on Sunday, so do numerous utility services. Tobacconists, confectioners and publicans make money on Sundays, and parsons earn part of their salaries on Sunday. Monday's papers are prepared on Sundays, and rents are taken by the churches on Sunday. And are those huge vested interests that would prevent Sunday being made a day of real freedom and recreation quite free from the charge of commercialising Sunday?



But suppose it be true that there are "wealthy elements" that, if theatres were open on Sunday, would make money out of it. What then? The theatres are not supported by the public in order that these moneyed people shall make money, and when they lose money the public does not rush to a general subscription to make good the loss. It is the public that should decide whether theatres are open on Sunday or not, and if they are against them the wealthy elements will soon retire on Sunday or on any other day. The worst of these pleas for a closed Sunday is that they smell so strongly of humbug and religious prejudice. If Mr. Locker-Lampson feels that his own moral strength will be weakened by theatres opening on Sunday, let him stay away. We might also suggest that one-seventh of a parson's salary should be docked to prove that *he* is not trying to profit from this fetish day.

After all, "Equity," the actors' trade union, decided by a 3 to 1 majority in favour of Sunday theatrical performances. All the efforts of the religious associations and timid politicians proved ridiculously ineffective. We hope this result will put more courage into those politicians who are afraid of religious bigotry. There is one more step to be taken by "Equity."

The Glasgow Presbytery is making application for religious services to be held in the parks. We see no objection provided that it is also granted that non-religious meetings are also held. The parks are the property of the people of Glasgow, and a liberty that is granted to a Church should be granted to other groups of citizens who are not religious. But we imagine that there would be strong opposition from the Churches to such meetings being held. Still, the Freethinkers of Glasgow have as much interest, and the same degree of justification, that any religious body has for lecturing in the parks. We hope that some members of the Glasgow Council will have the courage and a sufficient sense of all-round justice, when the proposal comes up for discussion, to move that the decision be all or none. It is about time that the rights of citizenship should be lifted to a higher level than it has reached at present.

Lord Daryngon, at the same gathering, said that if all the people over forty stayed away from Church, "the congregation would be so small it would not be worth while opening the Churches." We are impressed, not with the figures, but with the frankness of these parsons and their collaborators. Things must be very bad indeed when Christian advocates are compelled to speak with such unchristian truthfulness.

In times of trouble, God is a help—so is whisky. It depends on personal habits and tastes. But the "Church Times" elaborates the thesis by explaining that we can do nothing for society "except through the conversion of its members." But that seems suspiciously like God will not help anyone who is not able to help himself. Then God comes in and demands the credit for what has been done without him.

We see that a Rev. D. Edwards has just published a book, price 12s. 6d., proving that the virgin birth of Jesus unquestionably took place. We haven't seen the book, but we feel that our slowness in developing belief is excusable, seeing that Mary's betrothed—Joseph—had doubts about the matter, and it was only when an angel came to him, in a dream, that he agreed to marry Mary. Whether he still believed Mary's version is not said. All we know is that Joseph agreed to let bygones be bygones and to say no more about the matter. But Jesus never appears to have called him "Father."

There have been recently many pathetic explanations as to why Easter falls on such a late date this year. The one point that is not stressed is how can the anniversary of an *historical* event shift about in this way? If Jesus were really crucified, say, on March 30, then the anniversary of the event is bound to be always on March 30. The reason, the real one that is, of this shifting date is that the event is purely an *astronomical* one and never was anything else. But we cannot expect that to be stressed in our national and religious journals. Never tell the truth is their motto where religion is concerned.

Here is a gem of wisdom from the Archbishop of Canterbury: "Everything which tends to set people at variance with one another breaks up the community of the family of God." Here be wisdom indeed! Consider its truthfulness. Everything which tends to set members of a political party at variance breaks up a family of politicians, or a family of burglars, or a family of artists, or a combination of wife-beaters, or a gathering of forgers, or of any community. It looks as though all the Archbishop has said is that anything that sets any two people at variance prevents their coming together. Really, the wisdom of religious leaders is stupendous. It stands in a category by itself.

We would put the following simple question to the Archbishop—but not with any hope of getting a perfectly straightforward answer. The question is this: Can the Archbishop do anything, or say anything, that is admittedly true and useful that he cannot say just as well without mentioning or implying the existence of a God? If so, what is it? We are not expecting an answer, but it would be a delightful surprise if one of our leading theologians would answer a plain question. Of course, it might be raised at a Brains Trust, but we have given up all expectations of the B.B.C. acting honestly towards the public where religion is concerned.

An American lady—a Roman Catholic—has written a book to cheer us up a little when we think of the world war. She says that our individual suffering during the war "must be regarded as our Passion." This appears to be a method of linking us up with Jesus, who had his "passion." She also discovers that "the creation of the world is the inevitable result of the love between the three persons of the Holy Trinity." Perhaps that accounts for the mess in which mankind has been, more or less, since the chief member of the Trinity started things off with his magical "Let there be," and there was—a terrible mess.

At Chester Assizes recently a young seaman excused his offence by saying that he was "tempted by Satan." Mr. Justice Staple replied, "That is only a piece of humbug and self-deception. It is not poor old Satan's fault. It is yours." That's the worst of living in a Christian country that really isn't a Christian country. Young people are taught to rely upon Christianity, and then they discover that it "won't wash" when they are in trouble. No doubt the young seaman was quite sincere (he was certainly quite Christian) in assuming that the Devil had tempted him, but he is now probably reflecting upon the utter uselessness of a devil who cannot convince a judge of his devilishness. In this case, at any rate, it cannot be said that "Christianity has not been tried."

The Roman Catholic Press—we ought to keep an eye upon their output—is not easy about Mussolini. The "Catholic Herald," for example, tells us that "Italian Fascism is a very different thing from German Nazism." That is simply not the case. It was from Mussolini that Hitler took his lessons in nation-making. The only difference between Italian and German Fascism is that the degree of brutality has been more violently expressed in Germany than it has been in Italy. But both are at one in the exercise of absolute power, in the denial of the individual right to oppose the established order, in the reliance on force to maintain the Fascist order, and in the setting aside of the rights of other States where the interests of the Fascist State is concerned. And the manner in which Mussolini seized and maintained power is precisely the way in which Hitler maintained his rule. We must not forget Abyssinia and Albania. It was to Mussolini, in fact, that Hitler went for his lesson in ruling.

But Mussolini had to face the power of the Roman Catholic Church, which in its essence and practice is again Fascist. The degree of power exerted by each Fascist State depends upon circumstances. In Rome the Papacy was too powerful to be crushed, so Mussolini bought over the Papacy to silence. This attempt to separate Italian from German Fascism should teach people that when settling day arrives one must look out for the activities of the Roman Church. We have rather too many Papists and semi-Papists in this country for them not to be a potential threat to a world of free democracies.



# "THE FREETHINKER"

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

## TO CORRESPONDENTS

Will those readers who are kind enough to send newspaper cuttings be good enough to add the name of the paper and date. In their absence the cuttings are useless.

E. G. HUGHES.—The story of converted Soviet soldiers runs along the usual lines. The capacity for lying is still strong where religion is concerned.

P. CHENOWORTH.—Thanks for pamphlets. They will be useful.

E. H. YONKEN.—We are considering reprinting the series of articles on Christianity. Yours is one of a large number of letters asking for their preservation.

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

ON Sunday next (April 4) Chapman Cohen will be lecturing in the Cosmo Cinema, Rose Street, Glasgow. His subject will be "Rocks Ahead," a subject that will cover some of the things in the existing world situation that will be of interest to both Freethinkers and Christians. The meeting will be an afternoon one—doors open at 2-30, chair taken at 3 o'clock. Admission is free, but there will be donation tickets for reserved seats.

We have often pointed out how we manage things in this country where real heretics are concerned. We bury them, and their names are taboo in current writings; if they must be named the naming is done in such a way as not to arouse interest. In existing circumstances there are few men of Paine's time whose works will better repay reading than Paine's. Many of the Beveridge suggestions were set forth nearly a century and a half ago. But Paine had attacked the Bible and an hereditary monarchy, and that was enough.

Now we are awaiting the opportunity to publish another huge edition of Paine's "Age of Reason." But there is the paper trouble, and the need to sell at a losing-money price in order that it may do its propaganda work. One day we will manage it, if we live for a few more years only.

Several of the "Pamphlets for the People" have been out of print for some time owing to paper shortage. Two of these, "Must We Have a Religion?" and "Morality Without God," have now been re-issued, and we commend them to all interested, and particularly to those who wish to get a firm grasp of fundamental freethinking ideas. Discussion circles are very numerous to-day, and we commend these pamphlets for this purpose, and also to those who care to drop one of them to Christian friends. Price twopence each, postage one penny.

"Candidus," of the "Daily Sketch," says that since he has written in favour of Sunday theatrical performances he has been depicted "as a rather inferior understudy of Bradlaugh and

Ingersoll." We have read with appreciation many of "Candidus's" articles, and we can assure him that his critics are unconsciously complimenting him when he is marked by them as a follower of the two great heretics named. Let him keep on with the good work.

Most of our readers will, we think, be interested in the following letter from one of our readers in the Navy:—

"I visited one of the naval cinemas in the North recently where an American film was on show entitled "George Washington Slept Here." Excellent entertainment was provided, the film being amusing, light-hearted, and packed full of wise-cracks and entirely devoid of the usual propaganda so often loading present-day films. As the simple story develops, an old boot is excavated from the ground while water drilling is in progress, and later from this boot is extracted a document alleged to have been written by George Washington, and this is read by one of the characters. Much to my astonishment reference is made to the pamphlet written by Thomas Paine during the War of Independence, the opening phrases of his famous pamphlet being quoted, and Washington refers to the author as his friend Tom Paine. When I returned to my quarters I inquired of my mess-mates who had seen the film as to how many knew of the Thomas Paine referred to; only one had heard the name, and it transpired that my friend thought that Thomas Paine was an American; the others were less informed and had no knowledge of this great figure. One asked, "Who was Tom Paine?" and all were very interested in the brief account which I gave of Thomas Paine's life and work. I quoted his famous reply to Benjamin Franklin's, "Where liberty is, there is my country," and they shared my admiration in Thomas Paine's stirring reply, "Where liberty is not, there is mine." It is surely obvious that someone has blundered, for it is most unusual that names such as Thomas Paine should be mentioned, and more surprising still that what they wrote should be quoted. People are bound to ponder over the question which aroused the member of the mess to say, "Who was Tom Paine?" and if the inquirers are interested enough, they may even read "The Age of Reason." The director of the film will no doubt receive a letter from the local bishop, the British Censor will probably be dismissed, or at least transferred to the B.B.C., and the clergy will recommend their flock not to visit the cinema to hear the dreaded name of Thomas Paine coupled with that of honest George Washington."

The "Universe" prints a letter from one of its readers which makes a suggestion to the B.B.C. It seems that at the close of the day's broadcast the speaker says merely "Good-night." So it is thought that a "more manly close" would be "Good-night and God bless you." We shall be surprised if the B.B.C. does not adopt the suggestion. It is stupid enough to charm the Director who has control of this section.

Mr. R. M. Courtauld writes to the editor of the "Universe" that the Catholic Good Friday service already has a prayer for Jews, and it runs: "Let us pray even for the perfidious Jews." He thinks that singles the Jews out for special obloquy. The editor replies that the prayer refers to those Jews who rejected Christ. But suppose God gets confused and he thinks it applies to present-day Jews. What then?

Besides, the Jews were not perfidious in rejecting Jesus; they were only carrying out "Thou shalt have no other God before me," and God never suggested that he had a son, or that he intended having one. It really was not fair for springing such a surprise on the Jews, and as good devotees they behaved as God had originally advised them to. After all, God ought not to give a message that is as ambiguous as a Prime Minister delivering a message.

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. will hold a general discussion on religious criticism at The Key Book Shop, 115, Dale End, Birmingham, to-day (March 28). Mr. Norman Fowler will open the discussion at 3 p.m., and all branch members are asked to make a point of bringing an orthodox friend. Judging from the previous meeting, a very-interesting afternoon should result.



## RICHARD CARLILE

(1790—1843)

## III.

ALTHOUGH it is claimed that Carlile's writing was influenced by Thomas Paine and Francis Place, there is little doubt that his independent spirit would have found an outlet much in the way it did if he had never seen their writings. Carlile was brimful of ideas and he knew how to express them. He was clear, incisive and thoroughly in earnest, and never for a moment is one in doubt as to what he means.

He wrote on all sorts of subjects, but almost always as a vigorous champion of those who required his help—the workers who needed a voice in the name of human freedom to fight for their cause—the oppressed, the disclassed, the “blasphemers.” Freedom was his battle cry—freedom of speech, of thought, and of the Press. And there are few who have contributed more to gain these ends than Richard Carlile. Just a few samples of his eloquence:—

“There is a liberty which does not belong exclusively to the individual. It must be partaken of with others, it must be had in common. It is the liberty of free inquiry, the liberty of free debate.”

“My object is wholly political; for I know nothing of political goodness, but that which increases or preserves the happiness of the greatest number of people.”

“The charge of blasphemy has been reiterated against me for the last twelve months, but I am no more conscious of it than I am that my inkstand has promulgated blasphemy.”

“Religion does not alter the inherent disposition of any man. If he was dishonest before, religion will not make him honest.”

“Many are they who advise me to write more about Deism and less about Atheism; but I heed them not. Honesty is my guide, and truth the end of my journey. I confess that mine is a daring and unblushing Atheism. I feel that I have nothing to fear with it, but from these worse than brutes called Christians; and rather than fear them, I will court premature extinction.”

“Kings and priests have, in some cases, made partial pretensions to patronise the arts and sciences, as a cloak for their enmity towards them. They ever were, and ever will be, in reality, their direst foes.”

“The pen is a silent weapon, but much more effectual than the sword.”

“Simplicity has been avoided by priests of every age and every description; ambiguity, mystery and falsehood are the only weapons they use to extract their part of the public plunder. Priesthood and falsehood are synonymous.”

“There is no such place as heaven, and consequently no such God as dwells in heaven.”

“The first important point in the formation of human character is to impress your children with a love of truth, an inquisitiveness to pursue it, and a boldness to speak it on all occasions and on all subjects.”

It is, of course, impossible to do justice to Carlile by giving such extracts, mostly torn from closely argued contexts; and the difficulty is further increased because Carlile discussed many other things besides ethics and Christianity. For example, he wrote three widely distributed books on Freemasonry. I asked one of my Freemason friends what he thought of them, and it says not a little for his loyalty to that body that he refused to express any opinion whatever. If I like to think that the “secrets” of Freemasonry are fully divulged by Carlile—well, this is still a free country, and I can do so. I can, therefore, give no authoritative opinion as to the value of these three books; but they do seem to me to go into the whole question pretty fully.

Then there is Carlile's tremendous service to the Neo-Malthusian movement, of which he was one of the earliest and bravest pioneers. Owing to birth-control being considered, even by advanced Freethinkers, a rather unsavoury subject during the 19th century at least, many of the details of his close connection with it have been lost. Almost all that is known—and it is a great deal more than one would suppose—will be found in detail in Professor Norman Himes' “Medical History of Contraception”—a work, incidentally, which will bring joy to the heart of any bibliographer who would like to know something about the various editions of very scarce birth-control pamphlets.

Holyoake just mentions Carlile's courage in advocating prevention openly without shame at a time when discussing such things generally brought a gasp of horror from almost everybody. Mr. G. Aldred, in his biography of Carlile (1923) has not a word in it about “Every Woman's Book,” which, in my opinion, was the most important Carlile wrote. It appeared first in the “Republican,” May, 1825, as “What Is Love?” and then was reprinted as a pamphlet in 1826. It is one of the first clear and direct books with practical directions for artificial birth control, and its publication proves that its author fully deserved the eulogium “lionhearted.”

In preparing it, Carlile was much influenced by the famous Francis Place, who was a fervent advocate of Neo-Malthusianism as perhaps the greatest of the remedies for poverty, and who, as Professor Himes points out, “seems to have been the first to venture, at first alone and unaided, upon an organised attempt to educate the masses.” Place objected to Malthus' remedy, “moral restraint” and late marriage. Instead, he strongly advocated early marriage and contraception, and distributed what have been called “diabolical handbills” giving practical information to poverty-stricken people.

It is interesting to note that Carlile's “Every Woman's Book” was never prosecuted, the authorities allowing it, as well as Knowlton's “Fruits of Philosophy” and Robert Dale Owen's “Moral Physiology,” to circulate for over 40 years before attempting to stop the publication of the two latter works. In Bradlaugh they discovered another Carlile, and they were thoroughly beaten, for the “Fruits of Philosophy” enjoyed, after the famous and noteworthy trial in 1877, a huge circulation which spurred on subsequent investigators into the problems of contraceptive technique to more scientific efforts. The authorities did, however, manage to imprison Edward Truelove, then nearing 70 years of age, for four months for publishing “Moral Physiology”—much to the disgust of every liberal-minded man in the country. Since then there has been a plethora of books on birth control, but it is to Richard Carlile's forthright defiance of authority on such matters that so much is owed by the birth control movement.

Several editions of his pamphlet were published, though now the first appears to be almost unprocurable. It was reprinted by Robert Forder in 1892, but according to Professor Himes, this differs very much from Carlile's own edition. Who made the alterations, or why, is not known, though the celebrated author of the “Anacalypsis,” Godfrey Higgins, also produced an abridged version for threepence.

With the entry into the Freethought ranks of Robert Taylor, Carlile saw more than ever that religion was the enemy, and threw himself heartily into the struggle for the defeat of Christianity, even conducting “infidel” tours into the country, and braving the bigotry and intolerance always so strong in the provinces. The infamous second imprisonment of Taylor brought an end to the lectures later given at the Rotunda, and which were prosecuted for “blasphemy,” but Carlile's restless activities never ceased.

He gradually gave up many of the astro-myth theories so ably dealt with in the “Devil's Pulpit,” and threw himself heart and soul into all sorts of movements, coming at last to believe



that Jesus was the only Radical reformer. "In his first work," says Holyoake, "he wrote 'Science is the Anti-Christ'; in his last, 'Science is the Christ.'" Yet through it all, he stoutly asserted his Atheism—only he claimed that he had the true solution of religion and its terms.

I have unfortunately not seen any copies of what must have been his last journal, the "Christian Warrior." But it is in its columns that Carlile tried to weave his fantastic theories about the true meaning of the Bible—a meaning very much, it must be confessed, like that of Swedenborg.

"I have discovered," says Carlile, "that the names of the Old Testament, either apparently of persons or places, are not such names as the religious mistakes have constructed, but names of states of mind manifested in the human race, and in this sense the Bible may be scientifically read as a treatise on spirit, soul or mind, and not as a treatise of time, people and place." In view of his past record, Carlile was again showing all his old courage in making these statements—but it must not be forgotten, as Holyoake insisted, he "was still an Atheist, but veiling his materialism under a Swedenborgian nomenclature."

How much further in propagating such views Carlile would have gone can never be known, for in the midst of all this fight for his special view of the Bible, he was taken ill and died just over 100 years ago. No doubt his many years of imprisonment, and his passionate advocacy of so many causes contributed to his early death.

Richard Carlile left six children—one of them, Theophila, who wrote his biography, actually living until 1914.

If ever a soldier deserved Heine's famous aphorism it was the unconquered and unconquerable Richard Carlile.

H. CUTNER.

## THE BLEED-AND-BURN BRIGADE

IN one of his recent war speeches, in a violet-coloured passage, our Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill, said: "We will make them (the Germans) bleed and burn." As the Daring Old Man on the Flying Trapeze of the war, jumping from Turkey to Casablanca, Winston has said something of which millions of Christians have heartily approved. It is a thoroughly Christian sentiment in line with Christian history and Christian traditions—far more so than when Winston said, "War is an evil thing."

That eminent Christian and Roman Catholic, Adolf Hitler, Winston's opposite number, might have said those very words about making them bleed and burn. Indeed, Hitler has said worse. And the broadcaster of Western Germany who prayed: "May God have mercy on the murderers of our women and children and old folk (the English) when we hit back again," is a perfect example of idiocy and savagery united in superstition. He means, of course, precisely the opposite of what he says!

And why should not the Protestant Winston and the Catholic Adolf believe in bleeding and burning—for others! All Christendom has been engaged, for 1900-odd years, in that delightful pastime, as history tells. It is not Christ-like, but it is thoroughly Christian. Christ made no one bleed and Christ burnt no one—but his followers have made up for his lack of zeal in these directions. Always Christians, or rather the pseudo-Christians of the Churches, have bled and burned their fellow-Christians. Need I particularise: the Massacre of St. Bartholomew in France, the fires of Queen Mary at Smithfield and elsewhere in England, the horrors of the Inquisition and a thousand other religious crimes shriek from the past.

When they cannot burn their fellows in reality they do it in imagination and invent a hell for eternal torture.

From Herod to Hitler, the butchery of the Innocents, too, has continued. Blood-and-fire—bleed-and-burn—has always been the Christian argument against fellow-Christian and non-Christian alike. To-day you see that tragic motto made ridiculous by

being blazoned on the banners of that out-of-date sect the "Salvation Army," which play-acts philanthropy for a living.

Consider Jesus Christ, the titular Lord and Master of those who believe in making not merely "the enemy"—which expression should mean the combatant forces—but also the non-combatant and unarmed old men and old women, the schoolboy and schoolgirl, the expectant mother, and the helpless babe in its cradle, bleed and burn. Such barbarians are the pseudo-Christian world led by its anti-Christ army of clericals. Hear the words of the poor, deserted Jew of Nazareth which his Church followers to-day contradict by every action: "Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you. Turn the other cheek to the aggressor. Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do you even so to them." In such words Jesus, that professed god of war-makers, surely must have been misreported. Ask the Archbishop of Canterbury whether Jesus did not really talk as William our Archbishop talks—justifying war and calling for "justice" and "retribution" like that modern Pharisee.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (or whoever wrote their Gospels) got it all wrong. Jesus fiercely resisted evildoers. He refused to be scourged, or buffeted, or thorn-crowned, or nailed to the Cross. He fought his enemies, those loathsome aggressors; the Roman dictatorship, the chief priests and the rest of them. Jesus, unlike our British forces, was not short of armaments; he could command fire from heaven, thunderbolts and legions of angels. He believed in the type of merely militaristic "Victory" that fools do to-day, forgetful of John Milton's wisdom:

"Who overcomes by force  
Hath overcome but half his foe."

Like the B.B.C., he called fire and killing and wounding and desolation "more good work." Like the B.B.C., he gloried in persons being (to use their phraseology) "annihilated," "liquidated," "accounted for," "wiped out," and other euphemisms for human agony and death. Unfortunately, the four Gospel-writers—not foreseeing this best of all possible wars now engaging the utmost energies of Christendom—forgot to record how great Jesus Christ was at slaughtering other men.

We of the Blood-and-Burn school must re-write Jesus Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Instead of "Blessed are the Peacemakers," let us write "Blessed are the armament-makers, especially the armament-prostituteers." We can leave "Blessed are they that mourn"—for to make mankind mourn is the purpose of war. But "Blessed are the merciful"—this is no day for mercy! And the meek, the poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness—what use are these, whom Jesus praised, to the war effort? These are not the type who will make their human brothers either bleed or burn, I fear.

For war purposes Jesus Christ and his gospel are worse than useless. Jesus, to all war, is a positive menace, like our Quakers and "conscientious objectors." In 1942, the wicked Quakers held a meeting at York and sent out a message. This is what those scoundrels in their loyalty to Jesus said:—

"The whole world is drawn into common suffering. (An exaggeration: pardonable perhaps). Is there no way out of its evils but by waging war yet more ruthlessly? War is evil and wrong. Military victory will not bring true peace. Cannot our common suffering make us aware of our common brotherhood? Let us turn from the terrible deeds we do to one another and seek one another's forgiveness. The way of friendship can overcome evil. We see it perfectly in Jesus Christ. . . . For us as children of a common Father it is time to follow his lead."

It is staggering to find a Christian body actually following its Jesus Christ—especially in war time! Most Christians hardly mention Jesus now. For instance, you hear Hitler and Churchill speak of "God" or "the Lord" (meaning the God of Battles, the Lord of War), but never—not once—of Jesus. It takes a



clergyman, preferably an Anglican one, to pretend that war is a Jesus-business. Neither Hitler, nor Churchill, nor Mussolini, nor Roosevelt, nor Stalin, have committed that foul and miserable hypocrisy. "Clergymen," said Clarendon, "take the worst measure of human affairs of all mankind."

Only a non-Christian has the right to repudiate Christ and his teaching and to choose the Churchill doctrine of bleeding and burning instead. Christians must stick to their Master. Otherwise the rest of the religions—Buddhists, Hindus, Confucians, Mohammedans and all others, can only laugh at them—or weep over them as they pray to their God, "Forgive us our trespasses as we (fail to) forgive those who trespass against us (and make them bleed and burn instead)."

Reading the newspaper adulation of the Churchillian "bleed-and-burn" speech, we may wonder what posterity will say of it? It is not the type of utterance that wears well. Still, the reality behind the words will last all right. For the bleed-and-burn brigade are like Shakespeare—not for an age but for all time. It is not easy to eliminate the ape and the tiger from mankind. Still less easy is it to eliminate the donkey, as Mandel Creighton, an English bishop with some brains, once remarked.

And being what we are—disgusting Yahoos—let us stamp on those feeble and faint-hearted sentimentalists who, like our subconscious selves, have the folly to imagine that there is something better to be done with a helpless human infant than making it bleed and burn. Let us say with the noble Lord Selborne: "There is no refuge for the enemy but hell!" And let us continue to join with our enemy in making a hell upon this afflicted earth. We can out-Hitler Hitler if we only try hard enough and make enough people bleed and burn. Let us shut the gates of mercy on mankind and wade through slaughter to the throne of—preparation for the next war!

But poor Jesus Christ! Betrayed again! In his life there was one traitor out of twelve. Now, after his death, there are eleven out of twelve, and only the Quaker has the courage not to spit upon his Master at the word of a war-drunk world. The Quaker must send out a mission to convert the Archbishops and Bishops of the Anglican Church to Jesus Christ.

C. G. L. DU CANN.

## JAMES BRANCH CABELL—GODHATER

(Continued from page 115)

### II.

I COULD retail every novel at length and then go on to the shorter tales, the vignettes alike of the known and unknown men and women of history: Villon, Pope, Sheridan and the rest. Especially would I deal with the brief "Love Letters of Falstaff," written when the author was still in his early twenties, yet so well wrought that it exceeds in quality many of the later tales. It must suffice, though, that these are but mentioned, for I wish to make a more important point.

At the age of 50 Cabell had won grudging admiration from the older generation of his readers, and much more from the younger. The slanders heaped upon his works had failed to prevent the more acute from realising their strange beauty and their disturbing sense of values. In a word, the writer was a made man; and it is characteristic of him that here, at the peak of his powers, he chose to make an end of the "Autobiography." He has not, of course, ceased to write—the odd volumes of fiction produced since then amply defend him from any charge of "writing himself out"—but, as he explains in the latter half of "The Way of Eaben," he realised why so many authors' later works (he adduces Dickens and Scott among others) were never popular. These writers had given their message to the world; merely to repeat it with variations was not enough. Therefore, the line of Poincésme's heroes and their descendants ceases, the whole series being neatly rounded off in the epilogue "Straws and Prayerbooks."

That, in outline, is the story of my subject. An incomplete outline? No doubt, but the pen of the lexicographer would dry before the task of a complete review of his works. Many things I have omitted—that combination of erudition and wit that causes him to hide himself behind endless "transcriptions" and "interpretations" of entirely imaginary medieval authors, his skill in verse, his lucid judgments of literary standards. His wit has at times a pungent flavour; such remarks as that "the youth of my time were kept happy in the discovery that, while the existence of God might be doubtful, that of the pleasures of coition was not," were largely responsible for the author's unpopularity with the ecclesiastics. His disturbing thrusts of satire must have made many feel less certain of themselves; I will quote one more example. "Then Jurgen mounted his horse and rode away from the ploughed field wherein nothing grew as yet. As they left the furrows they came to a signboard with writing on it in a peculiar red and yellow lettering.

Jurgen paused to decipher this.

"Read me!" was written on the signboard, "read me, and judge if you understand. So you stopped in your journey because I called, scenting something unusual, something droll. Thus, although I am nothing, and even less, there is no one that sees me but lingers here. Stranger, I am a law of the universe. Stranger, render the law what is due the law!"

Jurgen felt cheated. "A very foolish signboard, indeed, for how can it be a law of the universe when there is no meaning to it?" says Jurgen. "Why, for any law to be meaningless would not be fair."

This brings us to our final and—to us—most important aspect of Cabell's work—his attitude to religion. First of all, one must try and get his perspective. He commenced writing in a world where the existence, in a very material and detailed manner, of the Christian God was scarcely ever doubted—at least, among the eminent citizens of the Southern States. Into this millpond the writer cast a stone—nay, a rock, a boulder, indeed!—which washed away like a flood the imposing but all-too-vulnerable "front" of the Established Churches. This more than anything else caused the opposition in high circles to the Poincésme novels. Throughout, they gibe at and undermine the power of Gods, not by denying them—in fact, Cabell has, with singular skill, constructed a whole pantheon of deities—but by the much more effective way of making them look just as silly as they really are.

There is nothing wrong, from the point of view of accuracy, in the incident in the "Silver Stallion," where the two champions, Christian and heathen, after slaying one another, are accidentally carried to their wrong heavens. No, it is just that an accurate description of those places desolated every Sabbath with such fervour, brings abrupt and uncomfortable realisation of absurdity. One reads uncritically, in Revelation, of the Scarlet Woman, but when she is described (always according to the book, mind!) one can emit only a large horselaugh. Funniest still is the case of the Christian snatched up to the highest heaven of all, who sees the All-Father's children making planets for toys, the inhabitants of which immediately commence to exterminate each other in religious squabbles. He is shown, too, the earth he left—now, after uncountable ages, a cold cinder adrift in the void. "How now," they ask him, "can you believe in your ludicrous creed and in the triumphant return of Dom Manuel, your Redeemer?"

But the object of their attentions continues throughout eternity with his daily devotions; what he had witnessed was clearly an heretical trick, since it did not agree in any way with established Christianity!

So I will close this brief survey of Cabell's work. However inadequately I may have dealt with the subject, if I have gained for the great American one more admirer, then neither my time, nor yours, nor "The Freethinker's" has been wasted.

O. HAY.



## WHO NEEDS CONVERSION?

It was on the train to Cornwall. I had the carriage all to myself as far as Plymouth, when a lady came in and sat opposite me. She was about 50, and smartly dressed. She seemed quite well educated. As our train followed the wooded valleys of South Devon we began talking. The conversation soon turned to religion, and without further ado the lady abruptly inquired whether or not I was saved.

"Oho!" thought I.—"So you are an Adventist, my friend. Well. . . ."

However, at that moment I was munching a cucumber sandwich she had given me, and thought it would be neither politic nor kind to reveal my religious (or rather, non-religious) persuasions to her right away. So I smiled and asked exactly what she meant by "saved."

Lady: "Do you read your Bible?"

G. I. D.: "Sometimes." (Which is quite correct: the Bible as a literary work is splendid and dramatic in many parts, and I especially like the Books of Job and Ecclesiastes.)

Lady: "Then you must surely know that you were born in sin, and that God sent his only begotten son into the world as a sacrifice, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish. Surely you have read that many times? Don't you believe it?"

G. I. D.: "No, I must admit that I do not."

Lady: "But it is all in the Bible. There it clearly says that Christ is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. The Lamb of God—God's own sacrifice, given for me—and you! It is up to us: if we remain blind and neglect opportunities, you know what will happen. The Bible tells you again. You will be cast into the Lake of Fire when you die."

G. I. D.: "But the Christian God is represented as being a loving God. How could he endure giving such suffering to his own creatures?"

Lady: "Don't say *Christian* God! There is only one God, for you and for me. And don't think that he likes punishing people. It is because he is so just that he does this. His great love for us would restrain him from casting us into hell, if his love of justice were not greater. Is not that as it should be?"

G. I. D.: "I disagree entirely." (This medieval nonsense was making me hot and impatient.) "I am a human being and supposed to be very inferior to your god in every way. Yet when I think of the suffering that exists to-day throughout the world—the wars, famine, sickness, misery—that makes me so pity humanity that if I were your Jehovah I should see that everyone here went to heaven after their miserable lives."

Lady: "But you must not talk like that. God hates all sin. He would not take sinners into heaven. His justice would not allow it. He must reward the believers."

G. I. D.: "I think it would be a very good plan for him to reward everyone from this planet of his, for sticking it so long."

Lady: "You are being very presumptuous, young man. 'If you were God?'"

G. I. D.: "Yes—if I were God. I think I should run things much better. That is, if I had the power your God is supposed to possess. I shouldn't send down any more sons, either. The one-and-only has caused enough trouble. No, if I had been intelligent enough to create the Universe and set it going to such intricate laws, I think I should find the problems of the human race a mere pastime in comparison. I should not rest in those Jasper Halls of mine until I had seen that every man, woman and child on this earth of mine was happy and well fed, until they were free of slavery and superstition. But—"

Lady (acidly): "But you are not God!"

G. I. D.: "No, I am not; I should not like to be. I'd feel sort of responsible for all this misery."

Here I ended rather lamely. The lady really looked very unchristian. However, she overcame her chagrin and was

sufficiently generous to stuff a bulky bundle of tracts into my hand. These I placed in my coat pocket with a polite "Thank you."

The train steamed into sight of St. Ives Bay. The blue sea, the colourful cliffs, the thought of congenial friends there, held my glad attention. Christian devil-worship was all forgotten in beauty and happiness.

And the tracts helped to ignite the evening fire.

GEO. IVOR DEAS.

### RELIGARE, TO BIND

The Chinese bound their women's feet,

Victorians, a woman's waist;

How quaint, we said, how blind;

But now, to make the tale complete,

The bands and corsets are displaced;

Religion binds the mind.

B. S.

### CORRESPONDENCE

#### SECULAR EDUCATION—THE COMMONWEALTH

Sir,—In your issue of March 14 you point to the success of secular education in New Zealand. British Columbia is an even better example. The Canadian Pacific province owed its origin to a naval station and a gold-mining boom, and has always been one of the least religious places in the world. From their first beginning in 1872 its public schools have been entirely secular. The teacher may, if he chooses, say the Lord's Prayer, but I never heard of one who was pious enough to do so.

The most important result has been the total absence of the squabbles between Protestants and Catholics, which have been a nuisance in every other Canadian province. All children, whether Protestant or Catholic, go to the same schools, and nobody has ever suggested any alteration in the arrangement. When the children grow up they remain entirely indifferent to religious disputes. Nobody in British Columbia knows or cares any more about the difference between a Protestant and a Catholic than people in England care about the difference between a Methodist and a Congregationalist.—Yours, etc.,

R. B. KERR.

### SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

#### LONDON—OUTDOOR

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): Sunday, 12 noon, Mr. L. ENURY.

#### LONDON—INDOOR

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): Sunday, 11 a.m., Conway Memorial Lecture, Sir RICHARD GREGORY, Bart., F.R.S., D.Sc.—"Education in World Ethics and Science." Chairman: Rt. Hon. Lord Snell, P.C., C.B.E.

#### COUNTRY—INDOOR

Barrowford (Women's Guild): Wednesday, March 31, 7-15 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON—"Spiritualism."

Birmingham Branch N.S.S. (The Key Book Shop, 115, Dale End): General discussion on Religious Criticism, opened by Mr. NORMAN FOWLER, 3 p.m.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. Meetings every Sunday at Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate, 6-30 p.m.

Glasgow Secular Society (25, Hillfoot Street, off Duke Street, Dennistoun, Glasgow): Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. A. HARRIS—"What the Commonwealth Stands For."

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