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Editor: CHAPMAN COHEN

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CONTENTS

Views and Opinions—The Editor...	233
Precept and Practice—Geo. B. Lissenden	234
Acid Drops	235
To Correspondents	237
Sugar Plums	237
Standing By—S. H....	238
Let Honesty Be Your Watchword—Basil B. Bonner	239
Correspondence	239
Sunday Lecture Notices, Etc.	239
Blood and Fire—S. B. Whitfield...	240

VIEWES AND OPINIONS

Our Pious Ambassador

LORD HALIFAX is our Ambassador to the United States of America. He represents to the American Government the British people, although we feel quite sure that wide-awake Americans will not take the phrase "represent" too literally. For he not merely holds religious opinions which the majority of even Christians in this country repudiate, but he is fond of taking advantage of his position to ventilate these opinions whenever possible. In ordinary matters a conscientious man would keep his personal opinions in abeyance, recognising that a public position creates responsibilities, and one of these should be to very carefully distinguish between what "I" believe in such matters as religion and what "I" believe in an official capacity. But where the Christian religion is concerned, the common rules of right and wrong are very elastic. It is still not clear that the Tory section of the present Government will not take advantage of their position and place the clergy in a more commanding position in the field of education than they have enjoyed since 1870. If this is not done it will not be because honour compels them to wait for a General Election to test the opinion of the people, but because first, the real opposition to it is greater than was expected, and second, because the Roman Catholic Church, which has more back-stair influence than any other body in the country, is demanding more than even this Government dares to grant. So Lord Halifax is quite safe in taking every opportunity to air his religious opinions whenever opportunity offers. We ought not to forget the impudent, lying slogan that we were fighting this war for the preservation of Christianity.

The other day Lord Halifax visited the Laval University of Quebec—the most Roman Catholic ruled part of Canada—to receive the honorary degree of "Doctor." We do not know whether in his discourse Lord Halifax dealt with more than one topic, if he did, the London papers did him the disservice of printing what he had said concerning religion. It was a poor exchange for the honour paid him

to talk about prayer and the decline of religious belief. "No Christian," he said, "could contemplate the present disorders without feeling how largely they are the outcome of the continuous erosion to which Christian conditions of life have been subjected." There must be, he thinks, a restoration of "Christian education to the place it never ought to have lost." And as a means of achieving this restoration of the control of education by the Christian Churches, he suggests, lamely enough, a revival of prayer, for "There is small wonder if men and women are dissatisfied and ill at ease, since in the hour of their greatest need they have lost that which was indeed their birthright—the knowledge of how to pray."

No one denies that for a long while Christianity has been subjected to corrosive influences. That was inevitable. All science, all sound philosophy, the development of the social sense have acted as a corrosive influence on the Christian faith. After all, the world must either stand still or move backward. In any case, we should be pleased to know what real development has not had this effect. "Corrosion" may sound to some as something very bad, but, after all, truth is a corrosive to a lie, justice is a corrosive to injustice, and modern anthropology has been a most deadly corrosive to all religion.

But when Lord Halifax speaks of the evil of divorcing education from religion we may remind him that the only country that has definitely divorced religion from education is Russia, not even he will say that the country or the people have suffered from it. But neither in this country nor in pre-Hitler Germany has religion been separated from education. We except Hitler Germany, although to an anthropologist and to a scientific historian German Nazism must stand as a revival of religion rather than a suppression. It is, indeed, the most religious movement since the Crusades. It was the Kaiser who kept the Bible by his bedside—for reading. He was as certain that he had God behind him as Halifax has that it was really God who sent him as our Ambassador to the U.S.A.

And in England. When was religion and education separated, save in individual instances, such as that of John Stuart Mill. Until 1870 what education there was in this country—poor enough it was—the clergy had a dominating power, and that had to be taken out of their hands because of the mess they had made of it.

As to war and religion. We should like to know from anyone when the established Christian religion was averse to going to war? Ancient Rome had at least the decency to close the Temple of Peace when they opened that of war. The Christian Churches blessed the lethal instruments of war; it gave all honour to the soldiers in our Cathedrals and Churches, there was erected therein monuments to military chiefs, it decorated the walls of cathedrals with tattered military flags and blessed battleships. What the Christian Church did was not to make wars less bloody, less devastating, it simply moralised war. In the opium

wars waged with China, when we forced on the Chinese our Indian products, the main body of the English Churches blessed the war. The Churches blessed the Boer war, they blessed the Burnese war and the lying crusade conducted by sections of the British Press that led up to it.

Of course, wars were cheaper then in both men and money than they are now, but whatever be the size or cost of war, its ethical character remains unaffected. It is not true, as Lord Halifax says, that in times of war we have forgotten how to pray. It was remembered only too well. People prayed before and during wars as they have done in the present conflict, and in every case they got what they get to-day, a re-echo of their own fears and desires. The pattern of the gods always follows the character of their worshippers.

Getting Right With God

We admit that Lord Halifax's advice to Christians to get right with God by the medium of constant prayer is sound theology. It is borne out by both the English Prayer Book and by the Bible. The declaration of the Prayer Book with regard to sickness holds good of the whole of Christendom. The Prayer Book provides that when a clergyman visits a sick person—we presume it applies to the wounded soldier—he shall say:—

“Dearly beloved, know this, that almighty God is the Lord of life and death and of all things to them pertaining, as youth, strength, health, age, weakness and sickness. Wherefore whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly that it is God's visitation.”

God's acrobatics are not confined to the sick bed, they extend over the whole of the world. Turn to the Bible, and we find one of his approved agents saying:—

“Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down.

“I form the light and create the darkness; I make peace and create evil. I, the Lord, do all these things.”

Lord Halifax endorses this when he attributes the state of the world to our not keeping on good terms with God. He believes we are being chastised for our “sins.” The Christian Church—and Lord Halifax—builds upon the omnipotence and the omniscience of God. God knows everything, he could do everything if he would, but he doesn't.

Looking over some old papers we came across an incident which occurred in Lagos, Nigeria, about the end of the last war. England had, for the Christian purpose of not awakening the appetite for plunder, taken over Nigeria. And, perhaps foolishly, we had permitted some of the natives to be educated. Some of them even went to the length of issuing a “Lagos Literary Magazine.” And when it was announced that there would be a day of thanksgiving to God for the British victory, the magazine offered a contribution to the occasion. It published the following under the heading “General Thanksgiving”:—

“We thank thee, O God, for creating us weak and then blaming and punishing us for being weak and sinful. . . . We thank thee, O God, for allowing war so that men may maim and slay each other. We thank thee, O God, for allowing hatred to continue in the world, when with one word thou could'st have put an end to all hatred. . . . We thank

thee, O God, for creating smallpox, yellow fever and epilepsy. . . . We thank thee, O God, for creating lunatics and idiots. . . . We thank thee, O God, for creating mosquitoes to pest our lives and introduce disease into our systems. We thank thee for sending thy only son into the world to save it, although nearly 2,000 years after the birth of the Saviour the world is as much under the influence of sin and wickedness as ever.”

That seems to contain a fair measure of “horse sense,” but there was a Criminal Code in Nigeria, for the protection of God and his worshippers, and that provided if “Any person who commits an act which any class of persons consider as a public insult to their religion . . . is guilty of a misdemeanour and is liable to imprisonment for two years.” There were also people in Nigeria who felt that their religion had been insulted. There was, for example, Bishop Tugwell, of the Church Missionary Society, Rev. A. W. Howels, Rev. C. W. Wakeman, also of the C.M.S., the Superintendent of the Wesleyan Missionary Society and the Rev. Father Terin of the Roman Catholic Mission, and these godly men felt that their religion and their God had been insulted; and to appease these the editor of the “Lagos Literary Magazine” was fined £100 and given six months' imprisonment to meditate on the mysteries of God and the love of liberty possessed by God's representatives in Nigeria.

Yet if Lord Halifax is right in saying that in 1943 a world war has to do with our having given offence to God—we have not praised him enough or flattered him enough—then it seems that the Christians in Lagos in 1918 were right in sending a man to prison for speaking to God in plain language concerning his management of the world. We have, says Lord Halifax, neglected God. We have not praised him enough. Of course, all of us are not guilty. Many have prayed regularly. Lord Halifax has praised God, but God is no respecter of persons. He is patient with us in our sins, but when we neglect him he is indiscriminate in his punishment. He *might* have blasted Germany and saved his faithful in Britain and the U.S.A. But he did not. When God goes into action the good suffer with the bad, the aged with the young. And our duty is not to complain. We must continue to praise him for his fatherly care—even though we have one eyelid closed.

CHAPMAN COHEN

PRECEPT AND PRACTICE

IT is amusing to watch the reaction of the masses to the exhortations of the self-appointed saviours of mankind, of whom there are many, to do this, or that or the other in order that there may be everlasting peace on earth and goodwill towards men. At times the result of these counsels of perfection is precisely nil, simply because the people know perfectly well, by observation and experience, that neither the orators nor those whose spokesmen they really are, are in the least likely to practice what they preach, and that it is largely a matter of “Don't do as I do, but do as I tell you!” At other times the crowd will yell with delight at what they hear, and do precisely what they are told. It depends, of course, upon the particular philosophy which is being preached and the force of its appeal to the people. If it makes for their own security and fills their pockets they sit up and take notice; if it doesn't, they don't.

By way of example: a religious congregation is, of course, comprised of all sorts of people; some, probably the minority, who go there—to whatever assembly place it may be—because of their convictions; some because, knowing better, they haven't the strength of character to stay away; some just because and only because, in their opinion, it is the "thing to do"; while others go purely—or rather, impurely—for business purposes. And although the preachers themselves know this, they try to persuade their adherents—or perhaps it is more correct to say that they tell their congregations this and hope for the best—that all that they have to do is to take it to the Lord in prayer and all will come right in the end. This in spite of the fact that life itself flatly contradicts practically everything they say. It is little to be wondered at that the result here is what it is.

It is probably correct to say that at no time in the history of the world has there been a greater—that is to say, a more widespread—exhibition of double-dealing and trickery and all that goes with it, or rather, results from it—persecution and slaughter and eventually mass murder—than there is to-day. And from the very nature of things, from the constitution of the social order, that evil influence starts in high places, with the people in supreme power in the various countries of the world. And such being the case it follows that the masses are, and are bound to be, affected sooner or later—and usually sooner—by the virus. In other words, the wrongdoing, the misdirection, begins at the top end, so to speak, of the social scale and percolates to those below who, in the main, being mere copyists are quick to follow the example set them by those in authority. This has been particularly noticeable during the last two decades in the East, in Japan, where the militarists and politicians have slowly and deliberately, for their own selfish ends, literally poisoned the minds of a large body of people who were formerly quiet and peace-loving. Germany is, of course, another notorious example of where both young and old—especially the young—have, by example and cleverly designed and persistent propaganda, been led astray, until to-day they appear quite hopeless, beyond recall to sanity and civilisation.

So what? as our American friends would say.

Well, in the final analysis it is the product and the way it is presented that counts—no matter whether the product is something for physical or mental consumption, or whether its presentation is made privately or publicly: from the pulpit, the platform or the Press. Manufacturers of foodstuffs and the like know this quite well and act accordingly; they do not, as a body, try to sell a bodily-injurious commodity by false advertising—or if anyone does, he is, when detected, prosecuted and made to pay the appropriate penalty. But the purveyors of ideas have not so far been subjected to the same or similar restrictions and compelled by law to publish their formula—as is, for example, the manufacturer of patent medicines. The modern equivalent of the ancient medicine man can stuff any sort of rubbish into the minds of the people and get away with it—profit enormously, in fact. It is only the seer—he with the antidote—who is persecuted and prosecuted.

Christ is to Christians the ideal man, but no one who pretends to have so much admiration for him attempts to follow in his footsteps. It's "impracticable," they say, in this awful world of ours. Yet they go on pretending. . . .

Advocates of certain other philosophies—political and economic philosophies—go on in much the same way, pretending one thing but practising another, and they wonder why the crowd laughs at them and go their own sweet way.

Or do they? Do those who continue to put this stuff over slightly believe that anyone—anyone that counts—takes the slightest notice of them, or are they, secretly and cunningly, speaking with their tongues in their cheeks and just pretending. Just that and nothing more?

At times the position appears doubtful: yes, quite often it appears that these people, or some of them, are in the position of Mrs. Gamp, only in their case they are standing on the sands of time, trying their damndest to brush the rising tide of progressive ideas. . . .

In days gone by the peoples of the world—any and all of them—were content to worship false gods, of all sorts, simply because they knew no better. But to-day there is a great and growing inclination on the part of the masses to compare the precept with the practice, to judge by results and, sooner or later, to act accordingly.

Which means that there is a day of reckoning coming for not a few of the false prophets who are living to-day: Hitler and Mussolini, to name only two of the crowd of humbugs who are holding forth just now.

GEO. B. LISSENDEN.

ACID DROPS

THOSE who read Roman Catholic journals cannot help but note the vigorous efforts the Vatican is making to revive that dominance over the secular powers which it once possessed. It has sent a resident diplomat to England, also a chargé d'affaires to the Polish Government, and is intriguing to get political power elsewhere. It is perhaps worth remembering that the stated objection to the Comintern was that it involved British subjects obeying orders from a foreign State. But what about Rome and its network of public and private operations in this and other countries!

On the whole, the Churches at present are not having the easiest of times. For example, there is the famous claim of the development of art under Christian influence that has operated for years. Now the "Church Times" gives the timely reminder to its readers that "a firm distinction has to be drawn between Christian art and the art that happens at any particular moment of history to be available for Christian uses." There is a great deal in this if one has enough sense to assimilate it. The "C.T." also refers to the poverty of early Christian art, and the decline of all art in the early centuries of Christianity. The writer might have added that it is not only art that suffered under early Christianity, but the whole of the intellectual achievements of ancient Greece and Rome. Ruskin, it may be remembered, gave as his considered and mature opinion that the contribution of the Christian Church to art was to degrade it.

There is, of course, no such thing as Christian art. There is only art—plastic and other—which is born from the life of a people and their aesthetic development, and it was solely because the Church with its plundered wealth was enabled to buy the work of artists that so many religious subjects appear in mediæval times. Raphael, for example, did not paint as he did because of his interest in Christianity, but because the Church was wealthy enough to buy his handiwork, and there is perhaps some significance in the fact that in his great picture of the Madonna the model was his mistress. Finally, we advise our readers to consult such an easily-got book as "The Legacy of Islam" (published by the Oxford Press) to see how much "Christian art" owed to Islamic culture. It is also significant that the golden age of what is called (wrongly) Christian art developed only when the western world came into contact with the superior civilisation of the Islamic peoples and the revival of ancient culture.

A number of American papers are printing an advertisement of a "heart-shield Bible," which is almost guaranteed to protect the wearer from bullets. People are advised to give one to a man in the army, and the buyer is advised that by wearing this Bible decorated shield a man's life may be saved. We almost forgot to mention that along with the Bible there is provided "a 20-gauge steel plate which is to be worn over the heart." This sample of God's guardianship is made by the "Know Your Bible Co.," Cincinnati, U.S.A. The company at least knows its customers.

The Rev. W. Wallace writes in the Sheffield "Star" that man cannot be born a Christian—"one becomes a Christian by a personal act of choice." The first statement is true, but misleading. The second is wholly false of ninety-nine per cent. of Christians. A personal act of choice consists in selecting from opposites. Now we should like Mr. Wallace to explain to us how many of the Christians he knows has ever had a choice between Christianity and, say, Atheism? If Mr. Wallace really means what he says he should advise his followers to see that children are informed, along with the Christian side, of a number of other sides, including that of Freethought. We doubt if one Christian in a thousand ever has a really intelligent choice where religion is concerned. Will Mr. Wallace advise his followers to study the Freethought side? We are always advising Freethinkers to know all about the Christian side. Will he reciprocate? We expect not.

One often has to go a long way from home to realise what is happening at one's front door. Thus we are indebted to the "British Weekly" for May 20, an old-established Christian journal, which takes from an American journal a statement of the Roman Catholic writer, Fr. Shields (a Jesuit), on the Roman Catholic principles where non-Catholic policy is concerned. We can only summarise some of the statements made, but all are worth remembering. Here they are.

Fr. Shields begins with the statement that the "irreducible minimum of religious liberty means . . . that every man has the right by nature to follow his conscience, that is, to serve God as he sees God wants to be served." That sounds good, and it is the kind of insincere twaddle that fills so many of the Papal manifestoes. For putting on one side the fact that all rights man has he makes—they are the product of social life, let us note Fr. Shields' interpretation of his own statement. He says that Canon Law says "No man may be forced against his will to adhere to the Catholic faith." That sounds good, but "these words do not imply that a man has the right to refuse allegiance to the true religion." That kind of liberty has been in full spate for several years in Germany.

With regard to religion and the State. "Religious liberty is one thing, broad religious activity is quite another. Every State must preserve the true religion." And as the Catholic religion is the only true religion, every State must prevent the continuation of every religion save that one. To the question: "Should a country which has the true religion allow immigration of people belonging to a non-Catholic religion?" the reply of Fr. Shields is: "Not unless that group can demonstrate to the conviction of the State (a Catholic one) a special divine mandate to carry on its activity." That last sentence must have been written with the writer's tongue in his cheek.

But this record is quite worthy. It endorses what we have always said of the historic Christian Churches as being substantially one of the parents of German Nazism. The brutality and foolish philosophy of the Church did not go so far in its development as did Hitlerite Germany, but in the matter of fundamental principles it was all there. Perhaps Lord Vansittart, instead of reading history with one eye closed, will make a study of the Christian Church in its stages and place the results side by side with what he has to say about Germany. In principle there seems little to choose between the two. But it would require real courage to do it.

God doesn't seem to have been as active as he was during the last war. Or perhaps we ought to say that his followers have not been so ready to tell the rest of the world how God intervenes to save Tom Jones, while next to him John Smith is shot dead. Of course, we have been reminded that some of our generals are Christians, but not told how many are not. We have also been told how Alexander and Montgomery are Bible readers, but also that the two of them worked out their campaign step by step without any advice from God. Both men, too, insisted on having a practically inexhaustible supply of bombs and other persuaders. Even the padres confine their reports to the use they have been to the men; they have nothing to say about the intervention of God Almighty.

In the last war things theological were better managed. We had the great Angels of Mons, backed up by the Bishop of London and a number of prominent preachers who were ready to produce the testimony of eye-witnesses, and with a little encouragement would have produced a curl from an angel's head, or a feather that was moulted from one of his wings. Even the godly—in his closing years—Bottomley produced some angels of his own who held up one of the church towers that had been shattered by German guns. Those were days!

We came across one of these stories of God's intervention belonging to the last war, and it is worth reviving because the clergyman concerned was one of the best-known and most popular in London. He held on to the Angels of Mons to the end. His name was the Rev. Dr. R. F. Horton. He told his congregation:—

"I had news from the Dardanelles last week but one. A sailor on one of our transport ships told me in the simplest language how airships of the enemy came over the troopship dropping bombs. The captain, who is a man of God, gave the order to the men to pray. They knelt on the deck and prayed, and the Lord delivered them. The eighteen bombs, which seemed to be falling from overhead, fell harmlessly into the sea."

Quite simply told. A less truthful man would have made these eighteen bombs hit the water and bounce back on the German airships and sink them. It is the fine restraint shown by the preacher that demands one's admiration.

It is worth noting that woman is the only thing that God made out of *something*. All the other things that breathe the breath of life were made out of *nothing*. Nothing was good enough for man; woman required something of a more sterling character to complete the job.

What a mess God made of his book and of his world! He created worlds that he appears to have quite forgotten; he created all kinds of diseases and left mankind to suffer from them for millenniums before he "revealed" where and how cures could be found. He made the earth *look* as though it were flat; he led people to believe that he controlled earthquakes and sent disease to punish wrong-doers, and all the time the good suffered with the bad. Finally, he gave man a revelation which no one appears to have understood accurately, and over which his most devoted followers quarrel as to its correct meaning.

One of his ten commandants—cribbed without acknowledgment—and given by him as his own, is "Thou shalt not kill." That seems to be causing a great deal of confusion just now. With men being killed by the hundred thousand, non-Christians and Christians are asking what is to be done about this commandment? So some of our well-paid "padres" have helped by explaining that the text as it stands is a misinterpretation. It should have read "Thou shalt not *murder*." The only distinction here is that to kill is to take life under orders, either a soldier in the field or the executioner by order of the State. To murder is to take life on one's own initiative and is a criminal offence.

That seems clear—the definitions. But in that case we ought not to go about talking of punishing the *people* of Germany for the wholesale slaughter of old people and babies, of sick civilians and non-combatants. For the destruction of hundreds of thousands of Jews and Poles, Dutch people and Belgians and others, was achieved under orders. Therefore those who committed these acts were not infringing the teaching of God's book—they were carrying out orders; therefore they were not committing *murder*. They were just killing, and the Bible, in its new reading, does not forbid that. Of course, when God inspired the writing of his book he was an amateur in authorship, but what a pity he did not wait until he could get advice from some competent man of letters! "Hasten slowly" is not a bad motto, even for gods. "Rushing into print" has caused many a man much trouble.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

C. S. DEIRETTE.—We note your comments, but we often print matter with which we are not in agreement. So long as the matter is of interest, and otherwise suitable for publication, it is enough. The impact of another opinion should enhance the value of our own. It at least tests us.

E. L. MORTON.—We are afraid there is no likelihood of reprinting "The Age of Reason" until there is a better supply of printing paper. But we have a number of smaller publications that will be issued as early as possible.

A. W. DAVIS.—Thanks for copy of the B.B.C. reply. We note the reply of the B.B.C. that the rule is "only those who hold the traditional beliefs of Christendom should be invited to broadcast." We only need add that the B.B.C. is an institution partly under Government control, and that Government claims we are fighting for freedom. The outlook after the war does not seem too healthily.

F. COLLIN.—Thanks for note. Will be useful.

J. E. LYONS.—Obliged for excerpt. It will come in handy.

H. B. FLANDERS.—We are flattered to learn that your debating society is working through the editor's "Almost an Autobiography" in weekly instalments. We hope the strain is not too great. We hope to reprint the book as soon as possible.

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

EVERYTHING is now in order for the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. to-day, June 13. The meeting-place will be at Reggiori's Restaurant, 1 and 3, Euston Road, facing King's Cross Station. The President will take the chair at 10-30 a.m. Adjournment for luncheon at the close of the morning session. The Conference is for members of the N.S.S., who should bring their membership cards with them. The signs are favourable for very successful meetings.

Here is a chance to demonstrate to the "Heathen Chinese" the truth and value of Christianity. The "Universe" (R.C.) announces that in China there is a shortage of "altar wine," and in many places missionaries will be unable to have Mass. That, we suppose, is a very serious matter, since the wine—properly blessed—is transformed into the actual blood of Jesus, and the sacred wafer becomes his flesh, so we have the primitive practice of eating a man to absorb his qualities repeated.

But there is another story in the New Testament that might help the situation. At a famous party the host ran short of wine. So Jesus told the servants to bring water, and they did so, and then Jesus placed his hands over the water and it became first-class wine. Now if the priest can, by his ministrations, transform wine into blood and bread into flesh, why can he not transform the water available into wine? Even we might

believe in the second miracle if we could swallow the first. But to say to the Chinese, "We cannot have the Mass because we have run short of wine"—plain, ordinary wine—is enough to make the Chinese smile—inwardly of course. The Chinese are a very polite people.

A great deal has been said of late about the persecution of the Jews by Germans, but without feeling any the less concerning the almost unbelievable calculated brutality of the Nazis, freethinkers, at least, should not permit themselves to forget about the roots of anti-Jewism. The ill-will against Jews, the ever-recurring massacres, being sold into slavery, forbidden to own land, treated as outlaws and worse than criminals, were examples which the Christian Church set generation after generation. Hitler has but given the treatment of the Jews a more vicious turn, and openly declared his intention to slaughter the whole eighteen or twenty million of Jews in the world, if he has the opportunity. If the malice of the Christian Church had not persecuted the Jews generation after generation, the Jewish religion might well have been by this time extinct. That is a lesson we must not, and cannot afford, to forget. Neither ought we to forget that one of the achievements of "Atheistic Russia" was to eliminate—we hope for ever—the massacres and brutalities of "Holy Russia," which the rest of the Christian world bore with tolerable fortitude. And in Russia it was the priests who kept alive the anti-Jewish feeling—later to pass it on to Hitler. It is a pity that so few people appreciate the lessons that history teaches them.

Our contemporary "Picture Post" must be congratulated on having the courage of printing a letter on anti-Jewism which protests against placing before children the fable of the Jews crucifying Jesus. The letter was written by an officer in the army, and he drives the lesson home. What better encouragement could be given than accustoming children from their earliest years to the lesson that the Jews committed the crime of crucifying an innocent man who was in reality God? No detail is omitted, and the evil is strengthened by a pictorial representation of the crucifixion. They are not only told about the crime, they see it, and the seeds of hatred of the Jews are set, reaping its consequences as the child reaches maturity.

We admit the difficulty in which our Christian leaders find themselves. They dare not drop the story that the Jews killed Jesus, because that knocks the bottom out of Christianity. If they do not drop it, then the child gets its first vivid lesson of brutality and crime, and in the name of the "Saviour" receives its first lesson in hatred. It says something for the healthy quality of modern human nature that "Jew-baiting" is not commoner, more brutal, and more stupid than it is.

It is not easy for white people, after their long miseducation, to deal with people of different colour on a level of real equality. They may not always ill-treat them, but with the best of treatment there is with Europeans generally—except in the case of the French—it still is not one of equality. In the U.S.A., to be black, brown or yellow is prima-facie evidence that one is on a lower level than the white man. Heaven, one supposes, is reserved for white people, for in all the pictured angels we have seen we cannot recall a black one. Even Satan is shown as coloured, when nakedly presented, and swathed in black when he is clothed. We suppose the black and white, if damned, will go to the same hell, but if they are saved we feel certain that just inside the heavenly gates will be stuck a notice, "Coloured folk this way."

We have a great many American soldiers fighting side by side with our own men, and most of us appreciate the fact. But it is left for Bishop Wright Leonard, head of the U.S.A. war chaplains, to cast a slur upon their intelligence. The "Sunday Express" recently reported this Bishop as saying, "There are no Atheists among the U.S. front-line men." That sets us wondering how it comes about that many of the Americans have been in contact with us as Atheists. It looks as though there are some pretty tall liars about. But perhaps Bishop Leonard did not come across them. Or perhaps he is just preparing himself for the time he gets back to the pulpit, and so gives his imagination a little exercise on clerical lines.

STANDING BY

THE First-Aid Post, I don't mind telling you, has become increasingly dull since the nightly blitzes on London staggered to a standstill. Those of us who rank as volunteer, part-time personnel still put in the requisite number of hours at the post, but they have tended more and more to become hours spent on a hard bed, uncomfortable and cold, and less and less hours in the performance of an arduous and, in some mysterious way, enjoyable duty.

We have been, in the official jargon of the Civil Defence Services, "standing by." The post is on the outskirts of London, and it has done its bit during the nights when London was so often visited by some hundreds of Nazi aeroplanes. Nowadays our full-time staff show an occasional tendency to grouse, as they can see that they might be earning more money and doing what they deem a more useful job in one of the nearby factories; the part-timers, on the other hand, think of the warmth and (in the case of the married men) of the company which they might be enjoying at home. Darts and billiards and the eternal whine of some dance band on the radio tend to pall after awhile.

And yet . . . and yet . . . Let me tell you the story of Sam Brown and the night on which, in spite of being a mere ambulance driver, standing by, he did his job.

I should point out that we are not merely a First-Aid Post. We are (if I may use the official parlance once again) also an Ambulance Depot, and we are responsible for the general routine of ambulance work in the neighbourhood. If someone falls under a lorry, or has a baby at a time and place which is inconvenient for doctor and nurse, we are given the job of helping to get the necessary assistance to the required spot.

This particular night was a dismal night. It was raining in torrents. There was no moon. Outside the post the whole district was a kind of black mirror. If you shone a light you saw it reflected peculiarly in the wet road; and if you tried to drive a car, you saw your headlamps shining in the most puzzling way from the glassy surface of the highway. A night, in other words, when everyone huddles around their fireside and thanks the powers that be that they have not any reason for going out.

We, too, sat around our fire, though it was but an electric radiator. Victor Strong was reading Shakespeare (he was the literary one of our company), and was oblivious to all the chaff and gossip that was going on around him. I could see his lips moving as he mouthed the lines of "Hamlet." Jimmy Hawker was playing billiards with our commandant, Mr. Grieve. I was scoring for them. Sam Brown was sitting down, looking utterly bored. I don't know when a man appeared more completely "fed up" with his surroundings. I remember that Victor Strong asked me if Sam was the origin of the phrase "browned off."

The telephone rang. "Answer it, will you, Sam?" Mr. Grieve softly said.

Without a word Sam made his sulky way to the telephone. He lifted the receiver from its hook and listened for a moment.

"Yes, this is the First-Aid Post," he said in his broad, rustic accent. "Where?" He whistled softly. "All right, I'll get there if I can."

"What is it, Sam?" Mr. Grieve asked.

"Some gipsies out near St. Algate," Sam said.

"What's the matter with 'em?"

"Maternity case. They want to know if we can get a doctor and a nurse there."

"Take the Ford," Mr. Grieve said, measuring with his eye the possibility of getting in off the red.

"The caravan's in the middle of a field," Sam said slowly.

"Did you find out what field?" asked Mr. Grieve when he had managed to fluke a cannon.

"Yes."

"Can you find it?"

"Yes."

"O.K." Mr. Grieve turned back to his game. You will observe, I trust, that our discipline, though free enough, was at the same time fairly rigorous.

Sam left the room without a word more. What follows is what I heard from him, and it took a deal of dragging out of him. Sam is not a boaster, and regards everything he does as part of the job.

He found the doctor and district nurse, and packed them, with his usual impeccable efficiency, into the back of the car. Then he set out to find a gipsy caravan in the middle of a field ten miles away. The fact that he saw nothing unusual in this is a sign of the sort of fellow Sam is. The rain was now coming down in sheets, and it hit the windscreen with a kind of steady blow, and even the screen-wiper would not keep it clear. Sam had to peer into the black darkness ahead with strained eyes that saw very little. But somehow, as by a miracle, he kept the car going and, by an even greater miracle, he knew where he was.

"Are we nearly there?" the doctor inquired anxiously.

"Couple of miles more, sir," Sam answered solemnly, almost enjoying himself now that he had something to do.

"I haven't any idea where we are," the nurse announced, and she was a woman who had worked in the neighbourhood for many a year.

Soon, however, they arrived at the place. In the middle of a field was a rather dilapidated old caravan. Its fire had been stoked up so fiercely that its iron chimney was nearly white-hot, and sparks poured out of it. Sam grinned at the sight.

"Good piece of black-out there," he announced.

The doctor and the nurse alighted with all possible swiftness and made their way to the caravan, while Sam, after turning the car—a move of some difficulty in that narrow lane—settled down to enjoy a much-appreciated pipe. Now and then he got out of the car and inclined a listening ear towards the caravan. But he could hear nothing.

He puffed at his pipe and wondered how long he would have to wait. It did not appear to him that things would be over very soon. In spite of the fact that he himself was childless, his two years as a driver in the Casualty Services had given Sam a curiously acute insight into the problems of maternity.

He sat there, on and off, for a solid two hours. He smoked pipe after pipe and he grew colder and colder, while each time that he ventured out of the car his thick overcoat acquired another soaking.

At last he heard a shrill cry from the caravan, and he thought that now he would not have long to wait. He was right. In another half-hour or so the doctor and the nurse hurried across the field towards him.

"O.K., doctor?" he inquired as they clambered into the car.

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"A boy. Eight pounds," answered the doctor quietly, and settled down into a comfortable doze.

The journey home was no more outwardly eventful than the earlier trip. Sam peered through the windscreen, streaming as it was, and tried to see something beyond the wedge of light made in the blackness by his headlamps. The car skidded about the road in a way which some drivers would have found alarming, but Sam did not let that worry him.

Soon he was back at the First-Aid Post, his little bit of duty done.

"O.K., Sam?" I said from my bed as he settled down on another bed by my side.

"O.K.," he said, smoothing down the blankets and reaching for the switch which would turn off the light.

"Anything happen?" I asked through the darkness. (It was, as I have said, at a later date when I managed to get out of him the details of the journey.)

"Nothing much." There was a long pause, and I thought that Sam was settling down to sleep.

Then he suddenly murmured: "I say."

"Yes?" I said.

"It's a bloody waste of time, this standing by, isn't it?"

"Do you think so?" I inquired.

"Yes. What the hell are we doing that's any use?"

That is a question which I could have answered, I think. But I deemed it wiser to leave it without comment. S. H.

LET HONESTY BE YOUR WATCHWORD

IT is unethical that men and women should be declaring themselves C. of E. or some other denomination on entering the Forces for no better reason than that their parents had had them instructed in that denomination when young. Any person should be ashamed to declare himself on those grounds.

He has no more reason for believing the tenets of his sect as opposed to another than he would to favour some political group just because his parents did; and this is not an argument in favour of sinking all denominations into a sort of general Christian bloc. If people have not the energy to study religions and decide for themselves—for which they can hardly be blamed—they should withhold their judgment and put themselves down as "None."

There is nothing derogatory in being of no religion in particular; indeed, it is a position infinitely more honest and worthy than that of the man who puts himself down as a member of a sect he knows little or nothing about, let alone about other religions. Also it is quite legal and legitimate to be entered as "None." That question has been raised in Parliament and settled more than once. Tell the military recording official that if he jibs.

Before one can reasonably believe in any particular tenets, it is essential that one should have studied other religions and other tenets, otherwise one's opinions on the subject are almost valueless.

And for this it does not suffice to have read the writings of a Christian on other religions. That would be the same as reading a Liberal on Fascism or a Fascist on Communism. Read a Christian on other religions if you like, but also read a Mohammedan on Mohammedanism and a Buddhist on Christianity.

A man should never be discouraged, as he often is in practice, from declaring himself as of no religion in particular. Indeed, he should be encouraged to do so; and it is not to the credit of military authorities that they so often put a man down as C. of E. if he declares himself to be irreligious.

If those who are not religious and who have not studied other religions were encouraged to put themselves down as of no religious sect, I fancy that over 50 per cent. of our Forces would be so classed, instead of being C. of E., etc., as they are encouraged to be at present.

While this high percentage may show a low standard of knowledge and energy, we could be proud at the honesty it would imply in our fighting men and women; and in the absence of intellectual energy, intellectual honesty is an indispensable virtue.

The present state of affairs shows widespread intellectual slackness and negligence. These things do matter. Let us work for a greater mental courage and independence in the future. Military officials may argue if a man asks to be put down as "None," but that man's position will be strictly correct and far more laudable than that of the man who allows officials to persuade him to be entered in some denomination or other without good grounds.

The man who says "None" must be encouraged, and then encouraged to study the various religions of the world. Be honest and think for yourself; don't be ashamed or led around like a sheep. Only when you have thought, put yourself down as Unitarian or whatever it may be.

BASIL B. BONNER.

No simplicity of mind, no obscurity of station, can escape the universal duty of questioning all that we believe.—
W. K. CLIFFORD.

CORRESPONDENCE

THE JEWS AND JESUS.

SIR,—There is one point in Mr. Cutner's article in your issue of June 6 that I should like to take up. He refers to Justin's "Dialogue with Trypho" and says: "Trypho clearly declares that the Jews know nothing whatever about a Messiah, when he was born, or where."

Some years ago I took the trouble to copy out this passage from Justin in the original Greek. Translated literally, it runs: "But Messiah, even if he has been born and exists somewhere, is unknown, and neither does he himself yet know himself, nor has he any power until Elijah comes and anoints him and makes him manifest to all. But you, accepting a vain report, have fashioned a sort of Messiah for yourselves, and for his sake are now rashly perishing."

Obviously, in the first sentence Trypho is not talking about Jesus at all, but about the Messiah he himself, as an orthodox Jew, expects. In the second sentence he *does* refer to Jesus as a false Messiah; but he does not deny his existence as a man. On the contrary, just before this passage Trypho implies that he did exist. He says: "To one who forsakes God and hopes in a man, what salvation is left?"—i.e., he twits Christians with hoping "in a man."

The "Dialogue with Trypho" may not record a real conversation, any more than Plato's dialogues do. It is therefore evidence, not of what Trypho said, but of what Justin put into his mouth—a somewhat different thing. But so far as it goes, it does not suggest that there was any myth theory going about in Justin's day.—Yours, etc.,

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—OUTDOOR

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

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park): Thursday, 7 p.m., Mr. E. C. SAPHIN; Sunday, 3 p.m., Mr. G. E. Wood and supporting speakers.

COUNTRY—OUTDOOR

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. (Market Place): Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON—a Lecture.

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Car Park, Broadway): Sunday, 6-30 p.m. (if wet, Laycock's Cafe, Kirkgate), a Lecture.

Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. (Mound): Sunday, 7-30 p.m., Mr. A. COPLAND (Glasgow)—"Does Religion Make a Difference?"

Hapton: Friday, June 11, 7-30, Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Manchester Branch N.S.S. (Platt Fields): Sunday, 3 p.m.—Mr. W. A. ATKINSON, a Lecture.

Nelson (Chapel Street): Wednesday, 7-30 p.m. Mr. J. CLAYTON.

Newcastle-on-Tyne (Bigg Market): Sunday, 7 p.m., Mr. J. T. BRIGHTON.

Padiham (Waterside, near Footbridge): Sunday, 11-30 a.m., Mr. J. CLAYTON, a Lecture.

BLOOD AND FIRE

BEFORE her marriage my mother was a Salvation Army officer. My father was then a "soldier" in my mother's corps. When they married, my mother had to resign her commission, and they settled down in a small backward town in Lancashire. They both joined the local Salvation Army corps, my mother becoming the leader of its mothers' union—the Home League, as it was called—whilst my father, possessing a strong, rhythmical urge and keen spirit of militarism, became the big drummer in the band. Both of them were ardent Salvationists and, according to their convictions, the only hope for humanity lay in being "washed in the blood of the lamb." This is a cleansing process I have never been able to understand. It was always explained in tones of unnatural variation, and during such explanation the terms "backslider," "repent," "Hell's fire" and "cry" figured with monotonous repetition.

When I was born I was "dedicated to God" under the flag in customary Salvation Army fashion. I have been told that during this ceremony I recorded my first reaction to Salvationism by causing discomfort and disconcertment to the officer who held me in his arms. On reaching the age at which I was capable of walking without assistance, I had to attend the "Young Soldiers" meetings each Sunday, and often on two or three nights during the week. However, when I was about twelve years old, my father created a furore at the annual prize distribution because I had not been awarded a silver badge for nine years' continuous attendance. I can well remember the exchange of compliments at that function between my father and the "Juniors' Sergeant-Major," who was a grumpy, old, rheumatic railway shunter. My father was very aggressive and finished his harangue by informing the J.S.M. that he had been suspected for some time of dealing unfairly with his (my father's) children. (Such is the spirit of Salvationism.)

I had three sisters, all younger than myself, and we were all withdrawn from the Salvation Army for ever after that. We were delighted at this outcome, but our delight was short-lived. My father took religion very seriously and he insisted that, as an alternative, we should join the nearest Sunday school of the Church of England. This we did, but found it difficult to adjust ourselves to the sombre, pompous, ceremonious Anglican Church after the blustering fervour of the Salvation Army. But we had to stick it, and it was a consolation to realise that the nature of our new creed was not so ostentatiously displayed as in the days of bright-red jerseys, blaring brass, outsize collecting-boxes and the "War Cry."

On leaving school at 14 I confidently hoped that I had finished with religion and its mournful mumblings, its embarrassing ceremonies and primitive chants. I had never doubted the existence of a God, but I could never reconcile a true God with all this nauseating pomp and hocus-poens. I had at times rebelled violently, and inwardly denounced the whole religious set-up. But I still had my God. I took him to myself in mystic style and I secretly whispered a furtive prayer to him whenever things did not seem to be going too well. My father was concerned about my religious education when I left school. He began to observe a diminution of his influence on me, but he applied what he considered to be a suitable remedy. I was very soon compelled to attend the Young Men's Bible Class at the local church. This made me more refractory than ever, but my attitude was without effect. Each Sunday afternoon I attended that class regularly and, just as regularly, when the class was over, six of us—all students—adjourned to a nearby piece of waste ground to play pitch-and-toss. From pitch-and-toss we progressed to "Newmarket," a card game, and it was always with much relish that we left the Bible for a flutter with "bawbees."

This went on until I was about 16 years of age when, becoming more assertive, I suggested to my father that compulsory religion was having an adverse effect on my character. He received my suggestion with reluctant acquiescence, and at last consented to my release from religious enslavement.

My father and mother returned to the Salvation Army a few years after the silver badge incident, but my sisters and I remained continuously aloof.

Since I rejected all religious beliefs I have often tackled my father on religious questions. Before that he was dogmatic in his assertion that the only knowledge worth while was a knowledge of suitable quotations from selected passages in the Bible, and a knowledge of God, who appeared to be, in his conception, wrapped up in a shroud of gory incendiarism. He is more sceptical now, and it was the change in outlook which caused him to relate the following narrative—for which he vouches authenticity.

A noisy prayer meeting was in progress in a large city Salvation Army hall. The general wailing was occasionally interpolated with the raucous voice of the officer-in-charge imploring sinners and "backsliders" to repent by kneeling at an elaborately decorated "penitent" form beneath the officer's rostrum. The band was playing a "soul-swaying" melody as loud "Hallelujahs" and "Amens" punctuated the strains. A number of tear-laden individuals detached themselves from the congregation and walked forward with handkerchiefs to their eyes. The officer-in-charge, who had formerly been connected with the Salvation Army Insurance Department, beckoned to him Brother H—. "Go down, brother, and speak salvation to these poor souls," he whispered. "But," he added as a parting shot, "strike while the iron is hot, and after salvation tell them about our new insurance policy."

The Salvation Army, as a religious organisation—which is its primary function—has its basis on emotionalism. T. H. Huxley called it a manifestation of "corybantic Christianity." Coupled with this emotionalism is the ever-pressing demand by Salvationists everywhere for more money to further the "cause." Mrs. Catherine Booth, the founder's wife, once said at a public meeting: "Never mind righteousness—the Church must be supported, if the money does come out of the dried-up vitals of drunkards and harlots; never mind, we must have it. Never mind if our songs are mixed with the shrieks of widows and orphans, of the dying and the damned! 'Sing away, sing away, and drown their voices.'"

Each corps officer of the Salvation Army receives a salary which is, within a fixed limit, derived from the corps' weekly takings. The officer's principal aim, therefore, is to ensure that he receives his maximum weekly salary. That is why his efforts are directed to the "saving of souls." The more "souls" from whom a weekly contribution can be expected, the greater his sense of financial security. When I attended the "Young Soldiers" meetings it was a serious matter to arrive without the usual penny for collection. Without my penny I was absent, and thereby minus a "star" on my card. Perhaps that is how I lost the silver badge.

The Salvation Army to-day is better known for its social work. In this respect it is doing much good, although this is only a means to an end. Its religion is still the same outlet for primitive emotions. There is still much scope for the unintelligently voluble, the ingenious solicitor of alms and the impressionable half-wit who cannot resist the uniform and the band.

S. B. WHITFIELD.

Slowly the Bible of the race is writ,
And not on paper leaves, nor leaves of stone;
Each age, each kindred, adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.

—J. R. LOWELL.