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VIEWS AND OPINIONS

Religion and Life

HOW far the changes in human society are brought about by forces the nature of which we are unconscious, and how far these changes are consciously directed are questions not easy to answer; but there are questions that in the conscious life of mankind religion have played a prominent and powerful part. Of most people it may be said that it begins with birth and ends with death. Perhaps even this is curtailing too sharply the influence of religion, for there are multitudes who declare that our final lot is to live for ever in a heaven that is chiefly remarkable for its dullness or in a hell where the climate is unbearable but the company excellent.

In this country of ours for many many centuries the priest has been ever active where the interests of religion are concerned. His presence has been legalised by custom and law, and up to yesterday he has had things pretty much his own way. The cut of his official dress has varied, but the motives animating his movements have remained unaltered. The heritage of his intolerance has been perpetuated, but, so far as intolerence is concerned, it has varied in its malignance only so far as priestly power has been strong or weak. The greater toleration that exists to-day should not blind us to that fact. The divisions of Protestantism unwittingly made for greater freedom of movement and expression of opinion, but Milton's judgment that "new presbyter equalled old priest" aptly summed up the nature of the changes that took place.

Blasphemy laws, under Catholicism, exercised by the Church, and under Protestantism by the State, are still with us, and little more than a century ago were in frequent operation. Nonsensical and injurious Sunday laws are still enforced in many directions. The law against the priestly crime of blasphemy still remains as part of our law, with occasional prosecutions to remind us that Christianity is not dead, despite its evil influence on the life of a would-be free people. A religion is forced upon our King by an agreement made over 250 years ago. Religiously, the King has less freedom than the poorest of his subjects. In spite of curtailments, the Churches of this country exercise great power; and religion generally makes for hypocrisy in politics and petty tyranny in everyday life. Like Madame de Stael with ghosts, multitudes may not believe in Christianity, but they are afraid of religious bigotry. Finally, what we have said of this country holds good of other Christian peoples. I do not discount the power of religion; if I did I should not have spent my life fighting it.

This being to me an indisputable statement of the character of religiously directed behaviour, I was naturally attracted by the title of an article in the current issue of the "Hibbert Journal." It read: "The Great Secularistic Experiment." I wondered what it stood for. It might be a very serious essay summing up the history of the Secular Movement in this country; it might be an example of religious humour. I soon found it was a very serious criticism. The author was Professor Herbert Stewart, Professor of Philosophy in Dallousi University, N.S. Even that did not provide much enlightenment. I remember that quite recently the Brains Trust discussed that subject, and, as is not unusual, "muffed" it very successfully. And other examples justified the conclusion that the title might be worn with or without ability. I hasten to say that in this case the "Professor" appears to have ability, in spite of his getting the facts very much mixed.

To my surprise he took the dates 1917-1942 as supplying evidence for his conclusions. In that 25 years there have been six great experiments in Secularism. These are "The Russian Revolution, the Weimar Republic, Fascism, Nazism, France and Japan's Co-Prosperity Scheme." Now, I could quite appreciate calling these movements experiments in Secularism; and experiments are efforts that often "gang aglay." But Mr. Stewart marshalls his cases with the obvious aim of proving that, being of a secular character, they were doomed to failure. They are quoted as though they were attempts to "secularise" Europe; and that is not the case. Four of the six were definitely religious efforts, one was doubtful in that direction, and one was distinctly secularistic in its aims. God has played, and plays, his part in every Fascist movement; and, indeed, the way in which Fascism has worked is very suggestive of the way in which the Christian Crusaders applied the "will of God" to the heretics in the Dark Ages.

But consider the six examples. The Weimar Republic was a political move that might be made in any country that was in a state of distress. Even with ourselves there have been some very black patches. One recalls to mind the situation might well have been explained in terms of God's anger when he gave us in succession MacDonald, Baldwin and Chamberlain. A pious critic might well have described this as evidence of God's anger with his favourite people. But Fascism is an essentially religio-political theory of the State. The great classical example to this end would be the reign of Nazism and the Roman Catholic Church. If anyone doubts this Fascistic affinity between God and the State, we suggest the reading of the following statements by J. S. Barnes, F.R.G.S., in his book (published in 1926), "Universal Aspects of Fascism." The book was issued by one of our oldest publishers, Williams and Norgate. Mr. Barnes says:—

> "It is only through the binding force of religion that mankind can be drawn together into wider unities. In the absence of an independent moral authority, such as in the Church, the practical tests are the only tests. Fascism has formally recognised

the Catholic religion as the religion of the State in Italy not only because the Catholic tradition is part of the very soul of Italy. . . . The Catholic religion will remain in honour in Italy as the State religion. . . . The Crucifix is back in the schools and in the law courts. Religious education is again assured to all Italian children unless their parents raise objections. Chaplains are back in the Army and Navy, and form part of the Fascist Boy Scout and Fascist organisations."

To return to our list. Nazism is an offshoot of Fascism, and its leader, Hitler, has more than once assured the world that the Germans were God's chosen people, and that he was appointed by God to place the Germans in their proper place in the world. It will also be noted that the Papacy has never used its instrument of excommunication against the Nazi leaders or their followers. With regard to France, it may be noted that one of its greatest difficulties has been to deal with the various Roman Catholic organisations, most of which aimed at the destruction of the Republic—openly since the Dreyfus case. Laval was, and is, a Roman Catholic.

Japan is a very unfortunate selection for an example of a "Secularist experiment," for the Emperor of Japan is an incarnation of God. He is worshipped as such; and in this matter stands together with our own King, who was incarnated in the Westminster Coronation Service.

We come finally to Russia, which was first on Mr. Stewart's list. That is, as it happens, the only case cited that can be said to be of a Secularistic character; and, from a reasonable point of view, it has not only been fortunate for the Western world that it was so, but it has offered to the world some very useful sociological experiments. No one can say with truth that the Russian people of to-day are not the better for that "experiment," or deny that it is fortunate for ourselves that it was a *new* Russia that gave the first decisive check to Germany. Many of us in this country would not have slept so comfortably in our beds but for Russia.

But it is not for this that sociologists will have to regard the Russian experiment with interest and profit. It has decisively shown that a whole nation may be transformed within the span of a single generation. It has created the greatest transformation of a people known in a single generation and has proved the cry of our social diehards, "You can't alter human nature," to be interested nonsense. That experiment has given the Russian people a new lease of life. In the midst of a war more ferocious than war has ever been the leaders appear never to have lost sight of their social aims. I have been protesting against this stupid "You can't alter human nature" slogan ever since putting pen to paper or standing upon a public platform Human nature is always being altered in form, even while its plastic qualities remain untouched. Mr. Stewart was very unfortunate in selecting Russia as one of the proofs of his thesis.

Mr. Stewart, with all the confidence that one has who fails to understand the problem he is trying to solve, asks:—

"What would become of human nature in Europe if the religious conviction by which it has been moulded and restrained for centuries were suddenly thrown aside?"

I said a little earlier in this article that I did not know what a professor of philosophy means in a given case. It should mean a lover of wisdom, but often enough it means nothing better than an attachment to stupidity. And it is not wisdom that inspires the question just cited. It is an echo of sheer folly by one who has a rare taste for foolishness. After all, there were people on the earth before Christianity was developed. Ancient Egypt created a civilisation—the value of which we have only recently begun to appreciate. Old Rome had its culture and Greece its art and philosophy, both of which shrivelled to near nothing under the Christian cross. There to hand was a dual culture that, properly treated, would have laid the foundation of a progressive social and intellectual life. But the plain fact is before us that the pagan age of enlightenment was displaced by the Christian "Dark Ages"—and that, it should be borne in mind, is a term of Christian origin. Also, it is well to remember that under the rule of the Church warfare did not cease. It was sanctified; and it initiated a period of "holy wars." And, while we are on the subject, it is worth remembering that in the Christian ages the quality of war has not altered very considerably. Conflicting nations have killed, destroyed and plundered to the extent of their opportunities and to the deadliness of the weapons to hand. In a time of war our soldiers receive the affectionate description of "our boys"; once the war is over they will revert to just "men" or "people," and be reminded that they must keep their "proper" place in the social structure.

There is no likelihood of the religious convictions of Europe being "suddenly" cast aside. It will need constant vigilance — as the present manœuvring with the schools shows—to prevent the Churches recovering much of their lost ground. But if these retrogressive measures can be frustrated we can look for a development of human capacity and understanding, and a sense of human brotherhood, that may give us a new golden age. Once before men had to go back to the old pagan world to put an end of the Christian "Dark Ages"; and I think that we are on the way to a recognition of the true character of Christian legends, and also that man has in his own hands the making of a new world. There is no danger of mankind suddenly throwing off the superstitions that have for so long served as a cramp in the intellect and a spasm in the heart. But the speed of human regeneration may be accelerated not for the greater glory of God, but for the increased dignity of Man.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

AN ILLUSTRIOUS AMERICAN HUMANIST

THOMAS JEFFERSON drafted the Declaration of American Independence when the Transatlantic colonies decided to sever their connection with the British Crown. A fine biography of this eminent statesman has been composed by Mr. S. K. Padover (Jonathan Cape, 1941; 21s.), and this volume deals in detail with all the outstanding events in Jefferson's career. This work is quite unconventional in character and realistically portrays the leading personalities of the period, with all their all-too-human frailties and follies.

The son of a stalwart agricultural pioneer in the wilds of Virginia, Jefferson retained his interest in agrarian life to the last, although his versatile activities as scientific student and man of affairs involved the neglect and impoverishment of his

extensive landed estate. He entered the legal profession but never had much faith in lawyers, whose sophistries and legal fictions he strongly condemned.

Originally inclined towards compromise with the reactionary Ministers of George III., Jefferson ultimately became a rebel, and this departure was largely attributable to the pen of Thomas Paine. Indeed, doubt and misgiving were almost universal in America when, as Padover relates: "Suddenly popular opinion crystallised. In January, 1776, when American officers at a mess presided over by General George Washington were toasting the health of the King of England, a fiery pamphlet fell upon America. It was 47 pages long, sold for 2s. and was entitled 'Common Sense.' The author, it turned out, was an Englishman and his name was Thomas Paine. Within three months 'Common Sense' sold 120,000 copies; in time it reached best-seller heights with 500,000 copies."

This pamphlet converted both waverers and loyalists to Britain. It convinced Washington of the inevitability of an independent America. Jefferson was captivated by its conclusiveness, and when Paine was under a cloud owing to his heterodoxy, this statesman still warmly welcomed the heretic. "No writer," avowed Jefferson, "has exceeded Paine in ease and familiarity of style, in perspicacity of expression, happiness of elucidation, and in simple and unassuming language."

As legislator, Jefferson stressed the vital importance of education for all. A legal code was drafted, but his Bill to establish and sustain religious freedom created the greatest sensation. Jefferson regarded clericalism as the inveterate enemy of progress and enlightenment. Wherever the priest ruled persecution and obscurantism prevailed. Toleration is not enough. Every citizen must be free to think and express his opinion on the most sacred subjects. In burning words Jefferson stated his case: "The legitimate powers of government extend to such acts only as are injurious to others. But it does me no injury for my neighbour to say there are 20 gods or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg. . . . Constraint may make him worse by making him a hypocrite, but it will never make him a truer man.

"Is uniformity attainable? Millions of men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured fined and imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity."

In 1779 Jefferson drafted his Bill for the Establishment of Religious Freedom, which was submitted to the House of Delegates. This, with his revised Legal Code, with its land reforms, aroused bitter opposition and the new Code was rejected. But Jefferson and his supporters felt certain of success once the hubbub had subsided. Then they triumphed, for within six years Jefferson's Bill for the Separation of Church and State and the Establishment of Religious Freedom became the law of Virginia, and this reform served as a model for the other States. Evidently, Jefferson was prouder of this achievement than of all the high offices he afterwards held, including the Presidency itself. In old age he requested that his authorship of these measures should be mentioned on his tombstone.

The sweeping character of Jefferson's measure is shown in the following: "We the General Assembly of Virginia do enact that no man shall be compelled to frequent and support any religious worship, place, or ministry whatsoever, nor shall he be enforced, restrained, molested, or burdened in his body or goods, or shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or beliefs; but that all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain, their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge or affect their civil capacities."

Jefferson successively served as Secretary of State, Vice-President and President and, in the latter capacity, he officiated for two terms. But during the first election campaign political and clerical defamation of Jefferson's character, assumed a violence apparently without a parallel in other American contests. As ever, Jefferson championed democracy against the Federalist plutocrats who were the openly avowed enemies of popular Government. In this fiercely fought election of 1800, no quarter was given or expected. Jefferson conducted the campaign with consummate skill. Democratic writings were freely circulated among the electorate, and these included Paine's "Rights of Man." Even when the contest was over, John Adams, infuriated by his defeat, stigmatised his victorious opponents as "a group of foreign liars, encouraged by a few native gentlemen, who have discomfited the education, the talents and the property of the country."

In Jefferson's native Virginia, sectarian animosity carried little weight, but elsewhere, especially in New England, he was denounced as an Atheist, a libertine, a coward and conspirator. The clergy threatened "Christians with all manner of dire consequences if they should vote for the 'infidel' from Virginia." A fine exhibition of Christian charity was displayed by a pastor named Linn, who asserted that Jefferson was determined to destroy religion and foster immorality. As many lies were circulated concerning Jefferson as there were about Voltaire and more recent sceptics. Jefferson's supporters strove to reassure the electors of their candidate's *real* Christianity. Jefferson himself preserved silence, and he was elected, while he left his detractors "to the reproof of their own consciences."

In his old age Jefferson corresponded with trusted friends on religious themes, but remembering the animus of the clergy, he permitted no one to publish his letters during his lifetime. That Jefferson was an advanced Unitarian is obvious, but priests he ever regarded as the inveterate foes of enlightenment. When he was dying someone came into the room and he thought it might be the local minister, so he intimated that he would receive him as a neighbour, but certainly not as a clergyman.

As an octogenarian, Jefferson declared: "I write nothing for publication, and last of all things . . . on the subject of religion. On the dogmas of religion as distinguished from moral principles, all mankind, from the beginning of the world to this day, have been quarrelling, fighting, burning and torturing one another, for abstractions unintelligible to themselves and to all others, and absolutely beyond the comprehension of the human mind. Were I to enter on that arena, I should only add a unit to the number of Bedlamites."

T. F. PALMER.

ACID DROPS

FROM the "Evening News" comes the information that Louis Hand, aged 17, was executed for killing his employer's infant son with a hammer in a fit of rage. We mention this because there is something almost unique in the case. It is claimed that he was an Atheist. What his Atheism was in form or matter we cannot say; no account is given. But there is one thing about which the pious will rejoice. The murderer became, by the grace of God, a Roman Catholic. He died feeling that he had reached the right company at last. He was no longer a misfit. God, as usual, was late in his arrival on the scene.

We may add one more note on this unusual case. We live in a time when we have an hereditary nobility, many of whom are entitled, because some time in the past an ancestor did something useful, or because a female ancestress found favour in the eyes of a king, to exercise a legal power in shaping our laws. We have a king who is not appointed by his contemporary subjects, but by our ancestors who lived 250 years ago. But we are democrats. But prison statistics show that the proportion of Atheists in prison are but a very small proportion of the number of Atheists in the country. Would it not, then, be just to allow a kind of rebate of the portion of the taxes that go to maintain our prisons? At present Christians are being let off—with regard to taxes—too lightly.

The "Church Times" appears highly pleased at being able to say of Liberal Protestantism that "intellectually it is now a thing of the past." But that is also true about the particular brand of "mumbo-jumboism" which the "Church Times" upholds. The decline of Christianity is not only noticeable in a particular sect; it is common to every form of Christianity. These "advanced" Christians feel they can save something out of the wreck by borrowing some of the enemy's thunder. The "Church Times" takes the probably wiser view that there is a greater chance of surviving if the Churches rope in all the more superstitious members of the community On the whole we agree with the "Church Times." The world is on the move upward, slowly perhaps, but still on the move—*away from religion.*

The trade in ready-made sermons seems to be still flourishing. But there is some complaint at the prices asked. One religious paper, for example, asks pathetically, Why should a sermon on the "Vision of Isaiah" cost only 6s., while one on "Religion as a Background of Life" cost 12s. 6d.? And why 10s. 6d. for "Joseph, the First Food Controller," and 12s. 6d. for "Grow More Food"? Well, it looks as though the difference in lower price is due to the appeal to the head, which is not what people go to Church for, and the other appeals to the stomach, to which all Christians will respond.

The Pope is always praying for the return of this country to the fold. He might as well pray for the Nelson Monument to be transported to Rome as an angel once transported a cottage. But there has been a counter move taken by the formation of a "National Union of Protestants to purge Christianity of Popery." Both of them should find work enough to keep them busy. If we were God we should be inclined to damn both. He stands to lose either way.

There were some good things said in Parliament during the passage of the Education Bill, as those who have read the Hansard report will agree. Here are some statements made by Commander Bower (Roman Catholic) that are worth bearing in mind. A previous speaker had referred to the Churches as pioneers in the field of Education, to which Commander Bower retorted:—

> "I cannot help feeling that that is something of an under-statement because until 1870 the State, practically speaking, took no part in education."

That may be called a Christian truth since it says what is correct, only to imply what is false and misleading. Commander Bower might have explained, if he had not been speaking on behalf of Catholicism, that it was his Church which claimed, and claims, to control education, and for centuries was able to make its claim good. Then the growth of Protestantism led to schools, of a kind, but in quality little better than the Catholic ones. But the English clergy enjoyed the monopoly that could not be exercised by the outlawed Catholics. Much against the opposition of the Churches, State schools were established, and would have been much better than they were if it had not been for the religious factor. But the quality of the schools so far as the people were concerned, was a disgrace to a people calling themselves Christians. And the Catholic claim to control education still stands.

Another statement by the Commander is worth noting. He said:—

> "To us the whole object of education is to teach our children to love and serve God in this world so as to live with Him in eternal happiness in the next."

And that, we do not hesitate to say, is about as vile a principle on which to base education as anyone could have. All that goes to make up an education that is worth bothering about is swept on one side as useless. Honesty, cleanliness, loyalty to friends and to one's people, duty to the people around us, the value of clean living and sane thinking, none of these things is of any value. The child must be brought up to believe that the chief things to bother about is to believe in God, to obey God, with the priest bringing the message, and to think chiefly of the next world. We do not wonder that a far larger proportion of Roman Catholics are found in prisons than any other section of the community.

The Archbishop of York says that "without fuller use of women . . . who must be given positions of responsibility and leadership . . . the outlook will be very bleak." In the churches, he says, "she should be commissioned to speak, to take prayers, and in the absense of an ordained minister to read such parts of morning and evening prayers as a layman is permitted to do." What a dare-devil the Archbishop of York is! But Jesus did not pick out a woman disciple, and St. Paul said they must not be permitted to speak in church. So what is to be done about it?

From the "Evening Standard" of January 25:—

> "A doctor recently reported to the London Insurance Committee that an insured person on the list of a medical mission practitioner in East London had applied to him for treatment on the ground that, having arrived at the mission shortly after 10 a.m., she had been refused attention *as she was not in time for a religious service.*

A question was recently asked in the House of Commons whether the Government would release a "key-man" from the Army because of his "expert knowledge" in providing the wine for "Holy Communion." Colonel Llewellyn replied for the Government that it could not be done. So the poor people must go without their sip of sacred wine—for the time being. It is a great pity that Jesus did not reveal the method by which he changed water into wine. Now if the Catholic Church had the matter in hand it would doubtless provide a miracle for the occasion.

The priestly adviser who runs the "Question" column in the "Universe" found himself in trouble when he tried to explain, "If one strike thee on the right cheek, turn to him also the other." The explanation given was that it was a counsel, not a precept. So what Jesus meant was, "You can turn the other cheek if you like, but if you prefer to give him a punch on the nose that is your business." At any rate, the "Father" did not act up to the precept, for what he said—metaphorically—to man was, "You can do as you like while you are on earth, but when you come to my world I shall give you Hell." The delightful thing about Christianity is that it is so full of good wishes and bad actions.

Mr. T. S. Eliot, poet and Anglican, is rather distressed at what he calls Mr. Butler's "National Christianity." He notes that in addressing the Jewish Board of Deputies, that in preparing a religious syllabus, he has no objection to a Jewish representative being called in. Naturally, Mr. Eliot is disturbed. To bring all *Christians* together to discuss what form Christian instruction shall take is one thing. To ask Jews to come and help them in doing so is a horse of quite a different colour. We have some sympathy with Mr. Eliot's uneasiness; he is Christianly logical, even though he is also socially one-sided. Mr. Eliot might reflect that the great lesson children should imbibe in school is social unity. With Butler and the Bishops, the aim is to get separatism well planted in the mind of the pupils. They are working on the old rule, "Give us the children until they are six years old, and we are then quite content to wait events."

We suppose that the moral of what follows is that God arranges the affairs of His favourites. Anyway, it is interesting to learn from a Roman Catholic paper that the new Archbishop of Westminster became such in January; both Cardinal Hinsley and Cardinal Bourne died in January, and that both Bourne and Hinsley got their red hats in the same month. We are duly astounded, but the most interesting fact is that these Archbishops die. So long as that occurs, the exact date is not of great consequence. It is a very dull day through which the sun never shines.

"THE FREETHINKER"

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TO CORRESPONDENTS

Benevolent Fund, N.S.S.—The General Secretary gratefully acknowledges a donation of £1 1s. from Mr. A. Atkinson to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

C. H. Black.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for six weeks.

War Damage Fund.—C. F. Simpson, £2 2s.; Peter Ball, 3s. 10d.

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SUGAR PLUMS

WILL members of the N.S.S. please note that their annual subscriptions are now due for 1944. Subscriptions received to date have been very encouraging, and that in itself is an unsolicited testimonial of confidence in the Society and its work during the difficult years of war. Any change of address should be notified to the General Secretary at 2-3, Furnival Street, London, E.C.4. A number of the communications sent out have been returned marked "gone away."

Elsewhere in this issue we have some notes dealing with the debate in the House of Commons on the new Education Bill. We have already pointed out on many occasions that no system will be satisfactory unless all forms of education are equally open to all irrespective of position or cash. At present that is not the case. The public schools are so called because they are not public at all, but very definitely private. A few children of the "poor" may get there, but in the main it is the sons of our "upper class" that get there, and who make their appearance in highly-placed and well-paid jobs which they would never have got on competitively proved superiority. This is bound to be the case while we have a caricature of a democracy instead of a real one.

In the circumstances this rather lengthy quotation from the official report of the debate on the Education Bill is worth remembering. Speaking of those who praise our schools—the people's schools—Professor Gruffydd (University of Wales), said:—

> "Where do those who praise our education send their sons and daughters? Do they send them to the local primary school or secondary school? And all that vast and most worthy collection of Inspectors, examiners, and civil servants . . . whose business it is to persuade the public that they are getting the best that public money can buy—do they send their children to those schools about which they are so eloquent on prizegiving day? The answer is definitely 'No' in huge capitals. They no more consume their own goods than a manufacturer of ready-made clothes goes about in 'reach-me-downs.' In the case of thousands of statesmen, civil servants and administrators who are produced by the public schools, and are still being produced by them, when there is a vast system of popular education in competition . . . Unless we make radical changes in the basis of our State education, the dice will continue to be loaded in favour of the public schools and the universities. There is no basis of education except the integration of the nation as a whole, to which every class and every rank, both of labour and of leisure, must contribute. Some of us believe in democracy, but we go on educating the democrats of the future in separate cages and still regard our 'village Hampdens' and our 'mute, inglorious Miltons' with all the aristocratic tolerance of the early eighteenth century."

That passage seems to us to deserve wide publicity. But we feel sure that unless the Professor is all bark and no bite, he will never, never do it again. His chance of getting a post is very, very slim.

If any city in the British Empire has the right to call itself a religious city it is Belfast. Apart from the usual sprinkle of fancy religious creeds there, it has great and holy division of Protestants and Roman Catholics. They are intensely religious and they treat and love each other like Christians. They tend to segregate in separate quarters of the city, and when they meet in bodies the police have to keep a sharp eye open, and often use their clubs to prevent the two leading Christian sects from slaughtering each other. Then they both return to their churches and each one thanks God they do not believe what the other lot believes. The local authorities tend to discourage these manifestations of religious faith. We think they should—from the Christian point of view—be encouraged or even subsidised. They take their religion in earnest.

But from the "Belfast Telegraph" for January 22, we gather that in Northern Ireland, like England, there is a marked falling off of Church attendances, but when there is a street rally on the carpet the representatives gather up their arms and meet each as faithful followers of the Cross. But when they should be on their knees in Church thanking God for the victory they have gained, or begging Him in future to help them in slaughtering His enemies, their places are empty, and the preacher is left talking to a vast expanse of vacant seats. The special article writer of the "B.T." laments that while outside the Cinemas are hanging bills, "No seats left," "Seats only at three shillings and three and six," the houses of God—with free admission—are nearly empty.

The writer says that in one of his sample churches the seating accommodation was for 1,000 people. There were less than a hundred. He sat in the seventh row. In the six rows in front of him there were eight people. And other churches have the same tale to tell. He says, "No churchgoer could have failed to be shocked by the smallness of the congregation." If the worshippers feel that way, what must be the feeling of the preachers?

The writer asks for something to be done. Well, let him take a look over the channel to this country, and he may see what can be done. He will find a Tory government, taking advantage of the present popularity of the Prime Minister, and the fact of a war, arranging for re-Christianising the schools, and so saturating the ordinary school life with religion. It will drive Christianity into the minds of the pupils as a broken roof guides dirty water into a bedroom. Taking this as a hint, the Northern Ireland government might either pass a Bill compelling attendance at Church, or it might remove from all government offices non-attenders at Church. The situation is serious. God, we may assume, has done all he could. It is now left for the layman to do his part.

Rev. G. W. Clitheroe, Vicar of Holy Trinity, Coventry, makes a strong appeal to his brother preachers to form a united front against the growth of Atheism. He says that "Roman Catholic Christians, Anglican Christians and the Free Churches are united in their loyalty to Jesus Christ." Quite so, but the unfortunate thing is that while they all follow Jesus they all take different roads. Christians always had the same leader, but the leader never seems to have made it quite clear what it was he wanted them to believe or do. Of course, in a purely business concern a number of partners, each of whom supplied different sorts of goods for the same order, would be bankrupt. In religion things are different.

GOD AND THE CO-OP.

MANY years ago, when I was in that youthful condition where enthusiasm lacks the tempering of wisdom and experience, I put the cat among the pigeons at a Co-operative tea party in Yorkshire.

The party was being held to wind up the proceedings connected with the opening of a new store, and when the chairman announced that grace would be said, before tea began, I jumped up and protested that it was no place to impose religious ceremonies upon people who were working together for purely secular purposes.

For a moment or two you could have heard the proverbial pin drop, but when I sat down again, blushing at my own audacity, the embarrassed chairman had recovered sufficiently to ask the audience to pardon the regrettable interruption, and he mollified the shocked old ladies, whose hair had stood on end during the incident, by saying that grace would be spoken, and those who did not wish to take part need not do so.

Apart from my remaining seated, while the others thanked God for what they had themselves produced, the incident closed, though I suspect that it caused a nasty blot on my reputation as a "safe" co-operator. Not that this worried me at all, for even then I had learned that the way of the honest heretic is hard, and I knew that each blot of that kind closed a door to me. But I have usually managed to open my own doors in life, and this has enabled me to steer clear of hypocritical compromise, and to continue to put cats among the pigeons as and when I thought it necessary.

Now I want to stage a repeat performance, with a much bigger cat, in a much bigger group of pigeons.

This year, 1944, is the Centenary Year of the Co-operative Movement, and it is likely that the first Sunday in July will be observed all over the country as Co-operative Sunday. Already the tea-party-thanks-be-to-God mentality has got to work, and there is evidence that a serious attempt will be made to cash in on this great occasion for the benefit of a deity who was so improvident and unco-operative a hundred years ago (do we forget the Hungry Forties?) that it was necessary for people to form their own movement to feed and clothe themselves, and to make up by human endeavour what the Lord had failed to provide, and what nineteen centuries of the Christian religion had failed to produce. Now read on.

> "Suggestions are put forward asking every society to make the necessary arrangements for local services in churches, chapels, halls, or any available place of worship. . . . It is intended to combine thanksgiving with inspiration, and to make manifest the fact that the principles of our movement are consistent with the best things in all religion."

I quote from a writer in "The Co-operative News"! No, the writer is not a clergyman whose wife deals at the stores; he is a general manager. But you are forgiven for making the error. The resemblance is striking.

This writer, after deprecating the idea of celebrating Co-operative Sunday with processions, brass bands and the like, declares: "It is too bad to visualise a co-operative commercialisation of religion." I am at a loss with his logic here, however, in view of his previous remarks, for how better could one commercialise religion than by lending the strength of the Co-operative Movement to "local services in churches, chapels," etc. How better could one religionise co-operation than by the same process?

The writer also says that they need not be ashamed to use Sunday to proclaim their co-operative faith. I quite agree here. I never could see why Sunday should be reserved exclusively for proclaiming the Christian faith, and the Secular Society has, in fact, for many years set an excellent example of how Sunday can be used intelligently, to promote earthly rather than heavenly interests. But proclaiming the Co-operative faith does not involve the Christian faith in any way, and when the writer says, "but let us draw the line against boloney," it appears that he means all forms of boloney except the boloney of services in churches and chapels.

He also advocates "a simple service wherein we can get close to things that make more abundant life." And this enemy of boloney thinks that such things as make life more abundant are to be found in churches and chapels!

Frankly, however, this idea of Christianising the Co-operative Movement on its hundredth birthday holds a threat to the very foundations of the movement. The poison of religion has always struck paralysis into the principles of human co-operation in every sphere, and I would warn Co-operators, whether they be personally religious or not, that it is necessary to do all possible to keep their movement free from its influence, lest the work of a century be shattered on one Sunday in July by introducing this most discordant and disrupting of all human inventions.

Those who write and talk so glibly of Christian principles, and their value to Co-operation, must know little indeed of the evil that Christianity can do.

It might serve their movement well for them to ponder one question alone—where will Catholic Co-operators stand in this "unified" act of thanksgiving?

Do they think for a moment that Catholics would be able or willing to share in communal thanksgiving in alien churches, or to take part in services which are heresy to the Roman Church?

Have they overlooked the Catholic "atmosphere," or the Christian "atmospheres" generally, in education, that other co-operative human movement which has been half-ruined by religious influence? Are they not aware that it would be a source of joy to many to find a valid excuse for dividing the common Co-operative Movement by starting other societies? It requires no stretch of imagination to visualise a "Catholic Co-operative Society" when one is familiar with the widespread secular intrusions of this holy trading organisation.

Are they not also aware that the vital principle in co-operation was made possible a hundred years ago only because the early pioneers cared little for religion but much for their fellow men and women? And if these people really do think that Christianity can be of use to Co-operation, will they tell us which of the 500 varieties they will choose to serve them, and what they will do about the chagrined and disappointed co-operators who belong to the unchosen churches?

This is dangerous ground, my co-operative friends. So dangerous that even treading warily will not do. This ground should not be trodden at all, and I urge all who have the movement's interests at heart to stop the religious rot at once, before the pious humbugs get their way. Once in the hands of those who run the "churches, chapels and other places of worship," it will be an easy step to the appointment of society chaplains, board-meeting prayers, and general-meeting hymns. Then you'll know what boloney really means.

I write this article in all sincerity, as one who comes from a loyal and long-standing Co-operative family. Although I am in private business, my own loyalty to the Co-operative principle remains steadfast, and I can therefore speak with both candour and honesty, caring naught which doors open and shut.

To all those other Co-operators who care nothing for personal gain excepting that which is to be got from the success of the movement as a whole, I would say this: For a hundred years Co-operators have shown that they understand what co-operation means, and they have worked together for a common end, as co-operators. But for 2,000 years Christians, as such, have shown that they do not understand what co-operation means, and they have failed to work together. Rather have they worked against each other.

"Labour and Wait" has given man something that he never got from "Thus Saith the Lord," and it would be tragic if, at a time when the masses are awakening from the stupefying effects of religion, the Co-operative Movement should slide back and embrace the creed that makes a virtue of the poverty against which the movement has fought for a hundred years.

F. J. CORINA.

HISTORY AS "WRIT"

HERE is an example of reporting which proves that in essence our newspapers have not altered very much, and which we came across while doing some "hunting." Gladstone had just dropped the reins of power and Disraeli entered the House as Prime Minister. Here is the account of his reception by "The Times":

> "Mr. Disraeli was the only one whose arrival created any stir. The people were in ranks when he arrived, but some of his supporters broke the files to continue the demonstration. . . . The members, other than Mr. Disraeli . . . were treated with silence."

Now for the defeated opposition, as per the "Standard":—

> "The conduct of the populace yesterday was more than disappointing. They cheered, it is true, the popular leaders, but it is a remarkable fact that they cheered scarcely less rapturously the outgoing Ministers. . . . It was doubtful indeed who was the true hero of the occasion, the exiled Marcellus or 'Cæsar' with the Senate at his heels."

So our Press, save in size, does not seem to have altered very much. Perhaps the chief thing is that where people once had to read an article to find out what it was about, it is now summarised in very large letters of very simple words.

"QUONDAM."

THE ORIENT CHANGES

The promotion of education in the new Turkey has meant the modernisation of the whole educational programme. Of central importance in this process of building Turkish education on a modern basis is the policy of secularisation of schools.

The starting point for all of the reforms in education was the elimination of the power of the ecclesiastic authorities. For example, co-education, which has increased especially the education of girls, could scarcely have been accomplished under the old regime, when schools were dominated by religion.

One of the modern Turkish leaders, in an interview with me in Ankara some years ago, said: "Other attempts at social reform in Turkey have failed because they did not assert complete independence over religion. Lay education is the only basis of success."

Following out this policy, the schools have been completely secularised. . . .

—From "Moslem Women in a New World," by Ruth Frances Woodsmall (Allen & Unwin, 1936).

CORRESPONDENCE

HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

Sir,—Arguing whether heredity or environment is the more important factor in human nature is rather like arguing whether a lock or a key is more important to a door. Obviously neither will function without the other. Without heredity, there would be nothing to develop; without suitable environment, whatever there is would not be developed.

Mr. R. B. Kerr's letter in your issue of January 30th has several obvious flaws. To say that "skilled labourers are at least as well paid in America as Unitarian ministers" settles nothing, since the skilled labourer's income is at the mercy of the ups-and-downs of the trade cycle, and the Unitarian minister's is not. To talk of the "great" or "considerable educational opportunities" in America is a surprising compliment to pay to an educational system which has produced Fundamentalism and the Dayton "monkey" trial.

As to the opinion of biologists, the verdict depends on the period covered. It is easy to collect a majority by polling dead men. But biology is a developing science, and I suspect that the opinions of living biologists like Julian Huxley, J. B. S. Haldane and Lancelot Hogben are more germane to this issue than anything Darwin wrote two generations ago.

One advantage of levelling-up class differences will be that real, as opposed to artificial, inequalities will then for the first time in history become evident, and it will be possible to apply the lessons of genetics to human society without the vitiating social and political bias which to-day bogs most of our "professional eugenists."—Yours, etc.,

Archibald Robertson.

IMPERTINENT PROPAGANDA.

Sir,—A friend of mine, whose husband was recently lost at sea by enemy action, has been subjected to a particularly offensive form of religious propaganda. A number of associations and individuals have persistently pestered this lady with tracts, letters, appeals and Spiritualistic puffery. I append the names of a few of these inflictions: The Sovereign Grace Union, The Scripture Gift Mission, "The Psychic News," Waymarks War Relief Service, The Trinitarian Bible Society, The Salvation Army, and Mr. A. F. Ropsley, Grantham.—Yours, etc.,

Edgar Syers.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, ETC.

LONDON—Outdoor

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

LONDON—Indoor

South Place Ethical Society (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1).—Sunday, 11 a.m. C. E. M. Joad, M.A., D.Lit.: "How to Commemorate the War."

COUNTRY—Indoor

Bradford Branch N.S.S. (Mechanic's Institute). — Sunday, 6-30 p.m.: A Lecture.

Keighley (I.L.P. House, 15, Russell Street.—Sunday, 3 p.m. Mr. Luke Straight: "What Do You Believe, and Why?"

Leicester Secular Society (75, Humberstone Gate).—Sunday, 6-30 p.m. Mr. Thomas Mosley: "The Bible and Secularism."

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ON SEX, COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

(Concluded from page 55)

NOTWITHSTANDING anything that may be said to the contrary, men and women marry in order that they may live together under the one roof and enjoy each others physical and intellectual companionship. Some there are no doubt who, not understanding married life and its implications, marry merely to have a home and "sex" as such has little or no place in their scheme of things, but we are not here considering the sub-normal. The majority marry, or should do, for the reasons already stated, and if in such a marriage the man or the woman becomes physically or morally repugnant to the other, and if that other has a highly developed and keen sense of the aesthetic there will be—there is bound to be—a rapid widening of the breach and a constant piercing of the heart. To be robbed of what one considers to be, and what in fact is, the most priceless thing known to mankind, sweet and loving companionship, and to have to go through life thus cheated out of that which one holds most dear and so highly desirable, and to have to pretend all the while that all is well, is the cruellest experience that can befall anyone . . . To do so is to know the torments of hell . . . There is no pain of body and mind to compare with that ever-present void and anguish . . .

At times men and women so placed look elsewhere for what they should have within their own four walls: a partner to whom they can turn for comfort and consolation, but that frequently adds to the burden, the anguish of body and mind. Mother Grundy at once becomes all eyes and ears and censorious. She knows, she does, or thinks she does, and of course its her business to put a stop to that sort of thing. In her opinion anyone who thus strays so openly and unashamed from what is to her the straight and narrow path has one thing and one thing only in mind, entirely overlooking the fact—and it is of course a fact—that it is she herself who is thinking of only one aspect of the matter and that her own mind is literally obsessed with the idea of sex.

To be fair to her, in a way and to a degree, Mrs. Grundy probably cannot help being what she is: she is without a doubt the product of a certain set of circumstances: she was wrongly instructed in the first place, and not having the will or the desire to know better than she was taught—granted the opportunity, which maybe was also missing—she has grown up and, unknowingly, gone through life with a distorted mind: a mischief-maker if not actually a menace to all those with whom she comes in contact. The only thing to do is to avoid her, if possible (though that is not always easy) and to regret the fact that she has remained in that condition of mind in spite of all the influences for betterment there are about.

To come back to the point where the cat laughed: all that is meant by the suggestion that the proper mating of a man and a woman is a scientific problem is that, instead of continuing the present hit-or-miss process and leaving things to chance or luck, the proper thing for the couple who are attracted to each other is at least to consider whether they are in fact physically and mentally alike in any way, and if so to what extent. Courting couples do not, it is true, as a rule stop to consider that aspect of the matter, and to suggest it to them would be enough to cause them, or a good many of them, whatever their ages, to join the cat in its hilarity. But however attractive and desirable they may be to each other on the surface of things, in point of fact they may be totally unsuited one to the other.

If some regard were had to the biological, family and social influences to which each had been and still were subjected, of which they were, so to speak, the sum-total, it might be found that they were constitutionally and fundamentally as far apart as the poles. They both may be organically sound—though only a blood test will establish that satisfactorily—but the outlook of one may be vastly different from the outlook of the other, and living together is not bound to alter the fact. In some cases there is the acceptance by one of the views and opinions of the other, but in such a case pre-existing opinions —if not convictions—are likely to be lurking in the background and ready to do sentry duty if an opportunity arises. In other cases, where there is no such mental adjustment, the pair will live in two entirely different mental spheres and seldom if ever meet intellectually; and if added to that the couple become physically unattractive to each other—as is certain to happen, because with the fully and properly developed human being the mind and the body act as one, and the body will not act if the mind is not also functioning at one and the same time and in the same direction—if, to repeat and summarise the thesis, there is not harmony of both body and mind between the parties to the contract 'twere better that they had never met . . .

One of these days, maybe, when the human race has thrown overboard the relics of bygone ages and a cleaner and saner view of human relationship prevails, that attention which is its due will be given to the subject of courtship and marriage, and it will be appreciated that the coming together of a man and a woman is not—or rather should not be—just a matter of luck.

Notwithstanding anything that may be said or done men and women will continue to fall in love and look upon each other as this or that, according to their light and understanding; and it will be a very long time before the importance of eugenics to the human race will be generally acknowledged, let alone universally accepted. But if in the meantime we can get rid of the ingrained notion that the human body is an objectionable thing, and that there is something essentially sinful in sex; and if, still further, we can displace those ancient and crude ideas with the knowledge that the nude human form is something beautiful and to be admired—to be treated with awe and reverence—and that the mingling of body and mind is a sacred procedure—using that word "sacred" in its best and broadest sense and not with a limited theological implication—we shall at least have made a start in the right direction.

To make such a start it is well-nigh useless to try to begin with those of the old school of thought, those who because of their birth and training are quite incapable of appreciating that they may perhaps be in the wrong, and who would probably shrink with horror at the new truth if it were presented to them —who would definitely and most vigorously oppose it, in fact, and talk about this new philosophy as of the devil and unclean, the advocacy of "freelove", and "unbridled licence" and so forth.

It is the young and rising generation to whom this new gospel must be preached—those with young and plastic minds and who are less tainted with false doctrines—and they must be brought up to see that the business of falling in love and marrying is a sacred business—the most important step that any man or woman can take—involving consideration of both body and mind. Indeed, in the final analysis, it is a matter more of mind than of body, because while the one is, so to speak, the vehicle of the other it is only the vehicle, the vehicle of expression, and the mind is always the master of the ceremonies, the dominating factor—for which very good and sufficient reason it requires most attention.

If and when there is any disharmony between a man and a woman there cannot be, from the very nature of things, any real and lasting happiness. But if and when there is perfect harmony of both body and mind there is bound to be ideal companionship and enduring love. That is the whole thing in a nutshell.

G. B. LISSENDEN.

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